

Politicising Participation

Towards a new theoretical approach to participation
in the planning and design of public spaces

Camilo Calderon

Faculty of Natural Resources and Agricultural Sciences

Department of Urban and Rural Development

Uppsala

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Jacket photo: Square in between the high-rise buildings of La Mina Nueva in Barcelona (photo: Camilo Calderon)

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Abstract

The involvement of local communities in public space planning and design processes is widely promoted as an essential element of landscape architecture and urban design practice. Despite this, there has been little theorisation of this topic within these fields. Furthermore, the implementation of ideals and principles commonly found in theory are far from becoming mainstream practice, indicating a significant gap between the theory and practice of participation.

This thesis aims to contribute to the development of theories of participation in the planning and design of public spaces. It steps away from the prevailing normative and procedural approach to theory development, and instead adopts a critical approach grounded on the deep understanding of the challenges of participation in the planning and design of public spaces. Case studies of two urban renewal projects, in Medellín, Colombia, and in Barcelona, Spain, and their participatory processes, are used for building up the theoretical contribution.

The empirical and theoretical findings foreground the *contextual* and *political* nature of participatory processes. *Contextual*, in the sense that the implementation of ideals and principles found in theory is facilitated or hindered by the social, political and economic context in which a participatory process takes place. *Political*, in the sense that in complex contexts that comprise a wide range of actors, and where contrasting goals and agendas are at stake, the implementation of these theoretical ideals and principles is significantly challenged by politics involving deep differences, conflicts and power relations.

The findings also show that prevailing theories of participation within landscape architecture and urban design do not take into consideration the contextual and political nature of participatory processes. This renders these theories weak in their capacity to respond to the challenges encountered by participatory processes in contemporary public space projects. This is particularly so as the dynamics of increasing pluralisation, multiculturalisation and neoliberalisation of cities create contexts that hinder the implementation of the ideals and principles found in theory, and increase the challenges caused by their political nature. Consequently, this thesis proposes a new theoretical approach to participation in the planning and design of public spaces, that allows context-based distinctions and judgements about the qualities of participatory practices for just decision-making. Difference, conflict and power are central in this approach. This thesis establishes this theoretical departure point and makes a significant contribution towards the development of the proposed theoretical approach.

Keywords: participation, public space, landscape architecture, urban design, planning, politics, context

Author's address: Camilo Calderon, SLU, Department of Urban and Rural Development, P.O. Box 7012, SE-750 07, Uppsala, Sweden
E-mail: camilo.calderon@slu.se

Dedication

To my wife, Natalja, who has held my hand on every step of this journey; and to my mother, Sara, whose love, support and passion for life are always a source of inspiration

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Doing a PhD research is a privileged experience not only because of the knowledge and skills one acquires, but also because of the many people one meets and shares with along the process. This thesis wouldn't have been possible without the help, support and guidance of the many people that I have met throughout these years. I thank you all immensely.

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List of Publications

This thesis is based on the work contained in the following articles, referred to by Roman numerals in the text:

- I Calderon, C. (2012). Social Urbanism - Integrated and participatory urban upgrading in Medellin, Colombia. In R. J. Lawrence, H. Turgut & P. Kellett (Eds.), *Requalifying the Built Environment: Challenges and Responses* (pp. 179-198). Göttingen: Hogrefe Publishing.
- II Calderon, C., & Chelleri, L. (forthcoming). Social processes in the production of public spaces: Structuring forces, actors and public spaces in the renewal of a deprived neighbourhood in Barcelona. *Accepted for publication in the Journal of Urban Design*.
- III Calderon, C. Rethinking participation: A critical examination of participation in the planning and design of public spaces. *Submitted for publication to the journal Urban Design International*.

Article I and II are reproduced with the permission of the publishers.

I am the sole author of Articles I and III, and fully responsible for the ideas and empirical material that they contain.

I am first author of Article II. Lorenzo Chelleri contributed with the collection of empirical material and its analysis. His location in Barcelona allowed me to better understand the social, political and economic context of the neighbourhood where the case study was conducted. He was responsible for the figures of the article. I was responsible for the article's theoretical framework, concepts and ideas and for most of the writing.

1 Introduction

Section 1.1 in this chapter provides a general background of the topic studied in this research, together with an outline of the research problem and the research approach. Section 1.2 subsequently presents the aim of the research and the questions that guided its theoretical and empirical work. The field to which the outcomes of this research intend to contribute, and how that contribution is expected to be made, are also described in this section. The chapter ends with Section 1.3 outlining the structure and organisation of the thesis and explaining the relation between the different chapters and sections.

1.1 Background

The need to involve local communities in the planning and design of local environments has long been debated. Participatory planning and design ideas and practices originated in the 1960's and 70's as a critique of planning and design decisions that ignored the needs of those that had no political voice or representation, and as a solution to the disconnection between experts' technical rationality and people's everyday values, needs and preferences (Carmona *et al.*, 2010; Sanoff, 2000). The focus that landscape architecture and urban design have on the city's outdoor environments has meant that within these fields discussions about participation have emphasised the involvement of local communities in the planning and design of public spaces (Hou, 2010a; Roe & Rowe, 2007; Hester, 1999). This includes public parks, squares, roads, paths, sports fields, playgrounds and green areas, located within a city or nearby its periphery.

Nowadays participation is widely promoted as an essential element of landscape architecture and urban design practice (Matsuoka & Kaplan, 2008; Murphy, 2005; Moughtin, 2003; UDG, 1998) and as one of the cornerstones for successful, sustainable and just public spaces (Madanipour, 2010b; Low *et*

al., 2005; Francis, 2003; DTLR, 2002). Despite this significance, there has been little theorisation of this topic within these fields (as noted by Toker & Pontikis, 2011; Castell, 2010; Roe, 2007; Hare & Nielsen, 2003). The body of literature shared by these two fields has given greater emphasis to the practice of participation than to its theorisation (e.g. Wates, 2012; Faga, 2006; UDG, 1998). As a result, great part of the literature is characterised by being normative and procedural with a focus on: criticising top-down decision-making processes concerning the development of public spaces; promoting the need to include the voices of users and excluded communities in such processes; promoting the benefits that such inclusion brings; reporting on best practice projects that involved the public, or a part of it, in planning and design processes; and on developing or describing participatory methods and techniques (e.g. Toker, 2007; Toker & Toker, 2006; Murphy, 2005; Sanoff, 2000; Hester, 1999). Furthermore, focus has been given to the study of participation in small scale public space interventions (particularly within the field of landscape architecture), in relation to the involvement of local communities in long-term management processes, self-organisation, and in the inclusion of specific groups (e.g. children or people with disabilities) in decision-making processes (e.g. Nordin, forthcoming; Larsson, 2009; Mathers, 2008; Paget, 2008; Delshammar, 2005; Hare & Nielsen, 2003).

Analysis of the prevailing literature on participation within the fields of landscape architecture and urban design shows a significant emphasis on inclusiveness, power-balance and consensus-building as principles for achieving genuine participation in the planning and design of public spaces. At the theoretical level, examples of this can be seen in Thompson's (2009; 2000) use of Healey's (2005) "*collaborative planning*" as a reference for participation in landscape architecture practice. Similarly Sanoff (2006; 2000) refers to Habermas' (1990) "*ideal speech situation*" as a one of the theoretical foundations for his ideas of participation in urban design. At the practical level such emphasis is closely related to some of the guidelines recommended in these fields for achieving genuine participation in the planning and design of public spaces. Among these are: guaranteeing that all participants have an equal position; sharing and giving equal access to knowledge and information to all participants; remaining flexible and being open to learn from others; having no hidden agendas, facilitating a genuinely exploratory and interactive debate; sharing the ownership of ideas; and building consensus (Roe & Rowe, 2007; Murphy, 2005; Barton *et al.*, 2003; Day & Parnell, 2003; UDG, 1998; McGlynn & Murrain, 1994).

Despite the democratic and just ideals that underpin the principles and guidelines found in the above mentioned literature, inclusive, power-balanced

and consensus-building processes are far from being mainstream practice. In contexts that comprise the involvement of a wide range of actors, interests, values and claims, or where contrasting goals and agendas are at stake, the implementation of the genuine participatory ideals and principles is often limited. Participatory processes often fail short in actively involving a wide number of actors in the decision-making process; fail to enter into a meaningful deliberation and collaboration between participants; give priority to some sectors of the public or actors over others; or favour politicians, developers, or designer interests over local values and claims (Carr, 2012; Southworth *et al.*, 2012; Hou, 2010a; Höppner *et al.*, 2008; Petrescu, 2007; Rios, 2005; Hou & Rios, 2003; Hester, 1999). As a result, not only has it become common that scarce professional time and resources are drawn heavily towards weak decisions or a disappointed public, it has also led to the use of participation as a form of placation and the wrongly promotion of decisions that are made elsewhere as being participatory, democratic and just (Carr, 2012; Punter, 2010; Hernandez, 2008; Rios, 2008).

This study argues that the limited applicability of the ideals and principles promoted in the predominant literature represents a significant gap between the ways that participation in the planning and design of public spaces is being theorised and practised. Such gap can be seen particularly in complex contexts and public space projects where the need of participatory processes is highly required, which comprise a wide range of actors or that address multifaceted problems (e.g. ecological decline, urban regeneration, economic development). Solving this gap is typically argued to be a duty of practice, where changes need to be made or new methods need to be developed in order to implement the participatory ideals (see e.g. Juarez & Brown, 2008; Sanoff, 2006; Toker & Toker, 2006; Day & Parnell, 2003). However, in this study it is argued that there is the need for a more critical assessment of this gap; one that problematises the current normative and procedural focus of the prevailing theories and opens up a different approach to theory development. Within such a new approach, theory development would be grounded on the critical exploration of what happens in the real life practice of participatory planning and design processes rather than on normative ideas of how these processes ought to be. This new approach is inspired by Flyvbjerg's and Richardson's (2002) critical approach to planning theory, in which they argue that normative ideals are weak in their capacity to help us understand what happens in the real world and therefore weak in serving as a basis for effective action and change. Following this idea, this research engages in the deep understanding of the challenges of participation in the planning and design of public spaces. The intention is that such understanding can serve as the basis for a better

theorisation, and thus a more critical, reflexive and better practice of participation, particularly in contexts and projects that comprise high levels of complexity.

In this thesis it is argued that for understanding the challenges of participation in the planning and design of public spaces it is essential to recognise that public space planning and design practices are deeply and inevitably *political*. Two main premises serve as the basis for comprehending the *politics* of such practices. Firstly is the recognition that the city and its public spaces are places of struggles where a wide variety of forces¹ and actors² interact (combine, conflict and/or oppress) in order to determine who controls them, who has access to them and who determines how they are developed (this based on Cuthbert, 2006; Massey, 2005; Bentley, 1999; Madanipour, 1996; Castells, 1993; Lefebvre, 1991). And secondly that in today's social, economic and political context, the growing pluralistic and multicultural nature of societies and the primacy of market oriented goals in planning and design practices has made decision-making processes in public space projects to be increasingly complex and immersed and confronted by different and often conflicting interests, values, claims and power relations (this based on Baeten, 2011; Hou, 2010c; Low & Smith, 2006; Watson, 2006; Low *et al.*, 2005; Mitchell, 2003).

Differences, conflicts and power relations in decision-making processes have significantly informed theoretical discussions of participation and (public) space/place in the fields of geography and planning. This has led to several scholars within these fields to question and criticise normative views of participation that are based on inclusiveness, power-balance and consensus-building (e.g. Watson, 2006; Connelly & Richardson, 2004; Hillier, 2003; Pløger, 2001; Mouffe, 2000; Flyvbjerg, 1998b). Also notions of public space development that are unproblematic and open to all (e.g. Staeheli & Mitchell, 2008; Low & Smith, 2006; Massey, 2005; Mitchell, 2003). This has not been the case in the fields of landscape architecture and urban design, where discussions around these topics are still in the periphery and in the early stages of theoretical development (see e.g. Hou, 2013; Hernandez, 2008; Rios, 2008; Hou & Kinoshita, 2007; Petrescu, 2007; Low *et al.*, 2005; 2005; 2005; Hou & Rios, 2003), and where there have been very few studies raising critical questions or doing critical evaluations of participatory processes (as noted by Castell, 2010; Francis, 2005).

1. *Forces* are referred in this thesis as the resources, discourses, regulations and procedures that condition public space practices. This will be explained fully in Chapter 5.

2. *Actors* are referred in this thesis as individuals, groups or institutions that regulate, produce and use a public space. This will be explained fully in Chapter 5.

Problematising the prevailing normative and procedural nature of theories of participation in the planning and design of public spaces does not suggest that the ideals and principles that these theories promote are either undesirable or impossible to implement. They may very well apply in contexts where public space projects and communities are relatively small, homogeneous and stable; where it is in the different actors own interest to collaborate and discard their differences; or where processes are provided with enough time, resources and political support. However, nowadays participatory processes are most commonly used and required in contexts and projects characterised by high levels of complexity (Faga, 2006; Murphy, 2005; DTLR, 2002) with financial and time limitations, and landscape architects and urban designers are increasingly called to work with these kind of projects. Thus, it becomes crucial to develop new theoretical knowledge within these fields based on a deep understanding of such complexity and of the challenges that it brings to participatory planning and design processes in public space projects.

1.2 Aim and research questions

The main aim of this research is to contribute to the development of theories of participation in the fields of landscape architecture and urban design, through a deep understanding of the challenges of participation in the planning and design of public spaces. An iterative process between empirical investigation in the form of case studies and theory is used as the main strategy and source for building up the theoretical contribution. Two case studies are used to progressively establish and develop the research focus, to determine theoretical perspectives and to assess, discuss and illustrate the central theoretical debates and concepts the thesis is concerned with. Theories, on the other hand, are used for empirical analysis, to provide a better understanding and explanation of the empirical findings and to develop theoretical perspectives (a full explanation of this process is provided in Section 2.1). Based on this, two sets of questions, one theoretical and one empirical, guide the research. The following are the Theoretical Research Questions (TRQs) of the thesis:

TRQ1 - How can theories of participation in the planning and design of public spaces respond more adequately to the differences, conflicts and power relations that are found in contemporary public space projects?

TRQ2 - How does the political, economic and social context of a given place facilitate or hinder the way that participatory processes in the planning and design of public spaces are carried out?

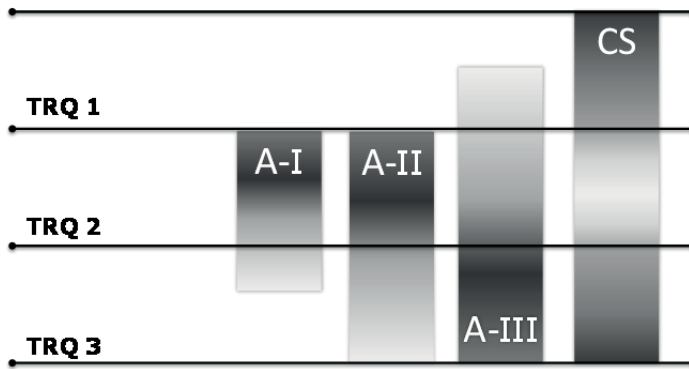


Figure 1. Theoretical Research Questions (TRQ) in relation to the documents of the thesis. The gradient on the columns indicate where the content of each article relates stronger with the research question. A-I: Article I; A-II: Article I; A-III: Article III; CS: Cover Story

TRQ3 - In complex contexts that comprise deep differences and conflict what is the applicability of genuine participatory ideals and principles in the planning and design of public spaces?

Figure 1 shows the relation between the theoretical research questions (TRQs) that guide the research and the documents (articles and cover story) that are part of this thesis.

The empirical focus of this research is on the decision-making processes that define the public spaces of the projects. It is not on their design or technical solutions and characteristics. The analysis focuses on the projects' context and on the factors that influenced the participatory processes; on the way that the participatory process was carried out; and on the influence that the local community had in the decisions that guided the development or improvements of the public spaces. The following Empirical Research Questions (ERQs) guided the empirical work:

ERQ1 - How were the public space projects and their participatory processes framed and conducted?

ERQ2 - Which factors influenced the public space projects and their participatory process?

ERQ3 - How was the local community involved in the participatory process and what was the influence that it had in the decisions guiding the improvements made to the public spaces?

ERQ4 - What challenges came about during the participatory processes?

ERQ5 - How does the local community value their involvement in the planning and design processes?

The theoretical and empirical findings of this research are intended to contribute to the fields of landscape architecture and urban design, specifically

to the research field shared by these two disciplines which focuses on *participation in the planning and design of public spaces*. The outcomes of the research are mainly theoretical and addressed to the research community in these two fields. Despite this theoretical focus it is believed here that theory is highly relevant and useful for practice; not in the way that it provides a tool-kit of suggestions of what to do better, but in a way that allows practitioners to reflect on their work and question ideas, decisions or practices that they often take for granted. This follows Richardson's argument that "*theory does not necessarily work by making life simpler or smoother, but by helping us to be usefully critical (rather than generally cynical) and appropriately positive (rather than naively optimistic)*" (2005, p. 347; and Richardson, 2002). Thus, it is hoped here that practitioners, policy makers and politicians can use these research findings to reach a more critical and better understanding of participation in the planning and design of the city's public spaces, and as a basis for effective action and change.

1.3 Thesis structure

This thesis consists of seven chapters and three articles. Chapter 1 provides a general introduction to the field that is studied, an outline of the research problem and the research approach (Section 1.1) together with the aim and research questions (Section 1.2). Chapter 2 presents the research methodology. This includes a detailed explanation of the research strategy (Section 2.1), a short description of the cases including the reasoning behind their selection (Section 2.2), and a detailed account of the way that the case studies were conducted (Section 2.3). A personal reflection about the research strategy and process concludes the chapter (Section 2.4).

As mentioned in the previous section (1.2), this research followed a strategy of iterating between empirical material and theory (a detailed explanation of this strategy is provided in Section 2.1). Such iteration is reflected in the order of the three chapters that follow (3, 4, and 5) resulting in an unconventional way of presenting the theories of the thesis and the articles that were produced during the research. The idea behind this unconventional order is to create a conversation between the prevailing theories of participation in the planning and design of public spaces (Chapter 3), the empirical and theoretical work that resulted while conducting the case studies (Chapter 4) and the theoretical positions that the research takes (Chapter 5) in order to support and ground its empirical and theoretical findings and its contribution.

Following the above, Chapter 3 contains the theories and concepts that the thesis intends to engage with in a theoretical debate. This includes the different

ideals and benefits that are commonly used for guiding the practice of participation in the planning and design of public spaces (Section 3.1), the way that this has been predominantly theorised in the fields of landscape architecture and urban design (Section 3.2), and the challenges that participatory processes often encounter and the way that the prevailing theories address them (Section 3.3). Chapter 4 gives a general overview of the three articles that resulted from the empirical and theoretical work that was conducted in the two case studies and gives a short account of the empirical and theoretical findings that serve as a basis for the theoretical arguments developed in the following chapter (Sections 4.1, 4.2 and 4.3). The chapter ends with a synthesis of the content of the three articles, their main findings and contribution (Section 4.4). Building on the findings of the articles, Chapter 5 provides the theoretical positions that this thesis takes which serve as the theoretical foundation for answering and discussing the empirical and theoretical research questions and for its theoretical contribution. This includes a discussion on difference, conflicts and how these influence the planning and design of public space (Section 5.1) and the way that power operates within decision-making (Section 5.2).

While Chapters 3, 4 and 5 create a conversation between theory and empirical material, Chapters 6 and 7 intend to engage in a theoretical debate between the prevailing theories presented in Chapter 3 and the empirical and theoretical findings of the research. For doing this Chapter 6 provides a discussion structured around the five empirical research questions (Section 6.1) and the three theoretical research questions (Section 6.2) that guided the research. Section 6.1 gives a full account of the empirical findings that serve as the basis for the debate. Section 6.2 engages fully in the debate by presenting the theoretical findings, discussing their implications for theory and practice, and outlining directions for theoretical development and future research. Chapter 7 concludes the research by presenting its contribution to the development of theories of participation in the fields of landscape architecture and urban design.

The three articles that form the empirical and theoretical basis for this thesis are contained in the Articles Section at the end of the document.

2 Methodology

Section 2.1 in this chapter starts by presenting the research strategy. It provides a detailed description of how the strategy was implemented, and how it guided the research focus both empirically and theoretically. Section 2.2 follows with an explanation of the reasoning behind the selection of the cases. A short description of the cases is also provided. Section 2.3 shows the methodology that was used for conducting the case studies and provides a detailed account of how data was collected in each case. Because of the research strategy that was adopted (and although it is not common for a methodology chapter) short references to significant empirical findings that influenced a refinement in the focus of the research are provided in some of the sections of this chapter. Section 2.4 concludes the chapter with a short personal reflection about the research strategy and process.

2.1 Research strategy: An exploratory and progressive process of iteration between empirical analysis and theoretical development

This research began with the purpose of developing theoretical knowledge that would contribute to the theorisation of participation in the planning and design of public spaces. The kind of theoretical knowledge that the research would contribute with, was left open to discover along the process, and especially after conducting the empirical work. This strategy was inspired by Flyvbjerg's (2004; 2001) advocacy for a "phronetic" approach to research within the social sciences, where he argues that theory should result from a rich and reflexive analysis of real-world situations or practice.

Flyvbjerg criticises research within the social sciences, and particularly in the fields related to planning, that follows the natural science type of research. That is, research that aims at de-contextualised universal truths, or that takes

ideals from theory and applies them to practice in a normative way. For Flyvbjerg, the study of social phenomena through case studies, and the context-dependent knowledge that results from them is fundamental in the development of theory within the social sciences. This is because it is context that gives a certain social phenomenon its meaning, and conditions what counts as good or bad human action (Flyvbjerg, 2001, pp. 135-136). Based on this, he calls for the development of a pragmatic kind of knowledge, or theory, based on a detailed and concrete study of cases and on the relation that the knowledge that emerges from such cases has with more general discussions within science or society.

Drawing on Flyvbjerg³, this research adopted an approach to theory development grounded on the study of what happens in real-world situations or practices and its relation to broader theoretical discussions. This implied following an exploratory and progressive strategy throughout the research process consisting of a constant iteration between empirical and theoretical work (see Figure 2). This iterative process allowed the research to be in a constant state of reflection where empirical and theoretical work was used to establish and refine in a progressive way the focus of the research and its theoretical perspectives. Adopting an approach to theory development like this is considered here to be highly relevant for practice-oriented disciplines such as landscape architecture and urban design. It allows theory to stay at the concrete and context-dependent nature of practice, without becoming abstract or too conceptual.

As will be explained in the following sections, empirical work was used to progressively establish and develop the research focus, to determine theoretical perspectives and to assess, discuss and illustrate the central theoretical debates and concepts the thesis is concerned with. Theories, on the other hand, were used for empirical analysis, to provide a better understanding and explanation of the empirical findings and to develop theoretical perspectives. In line with Flyvbjerg (2001), both the empirical and theoretical work that was carried out throughout the iterative process served to develop the theoretical contribution of this research⁴.

3. It is important to mention that this research follows Flyvbjerg's approach to theory development but it does not follow to full extent the methodological guidelines he establishes for conducting phronetic research (see Flyvbjerg, 2001, pp. 129-140). Although the research touches on the four value-rational questions that Flyvbjerg (2001, 2004) argues should be used as a point of departure for phronetic research, it did not intend to answer these questions in a direct way.

4. There is a risk that the strategy described here could be associated with grounded theory. Because of this it is important to clarify that while in grounded theory, theory development is based exclusively on empirical findings, in the methodological approach described here theory development derives from both empirical investigation and existing theory.

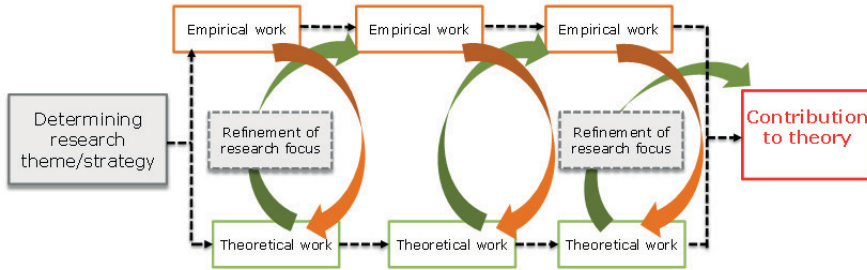


Figure 2. Research strategy

Following Flyvbjerg (2004; 2001) and the above mentioned research strategy, the research used case studies for providing a deep understanding of the phenomena that was studied, using such understanding in the development of theory. Two case studies were conducted: in Medellin, Colombia and in Barcelona, Spain (information about the selection and a description of the case studies will be provided in Section 2.2). The two case studies played different roles in the research strategy and process and were consequently developed in different levels of depth. The role of the case studies and the way that the strategy was implemented is explained in the following three sections. Figure 3 shows the research strategy in relation to the research process.

2.1.1 Setting a theoretical starting point: Case Study 1

Following the exploratory and progressive strategy that was adopted by this research, Case Study 1 was conducted as an exploratory case study for developing and defining the focus of the research and for setting its theoretical starting point. The goal with the empirical and theoretical work that was carried out during this case study (*Empirical work 1* and *Theoretical work 1* in Figure 3) was to provide the research with a theoretical understanding of participation and with empirical knowledge of how it could be applied in the planning and design of public spaces.

The theoretical work focused on the review of communicative, deliberative and collaborative planning theories. The review of both the proponents of these theories (e.g. Innes & Booher, 2003; Forester, 1999; Healey, 1996) and those that criticised them (e.g. Connelly & Richardson, 2004; Pløger, 2004; Watson, 2003; Mouffe, 2000; Tewdwr-Jones & Allmendinger, 1998) was important during the theoretical work that was conducted at this stage. Literature that justified the importance of conducting participatory processes in the renewal of

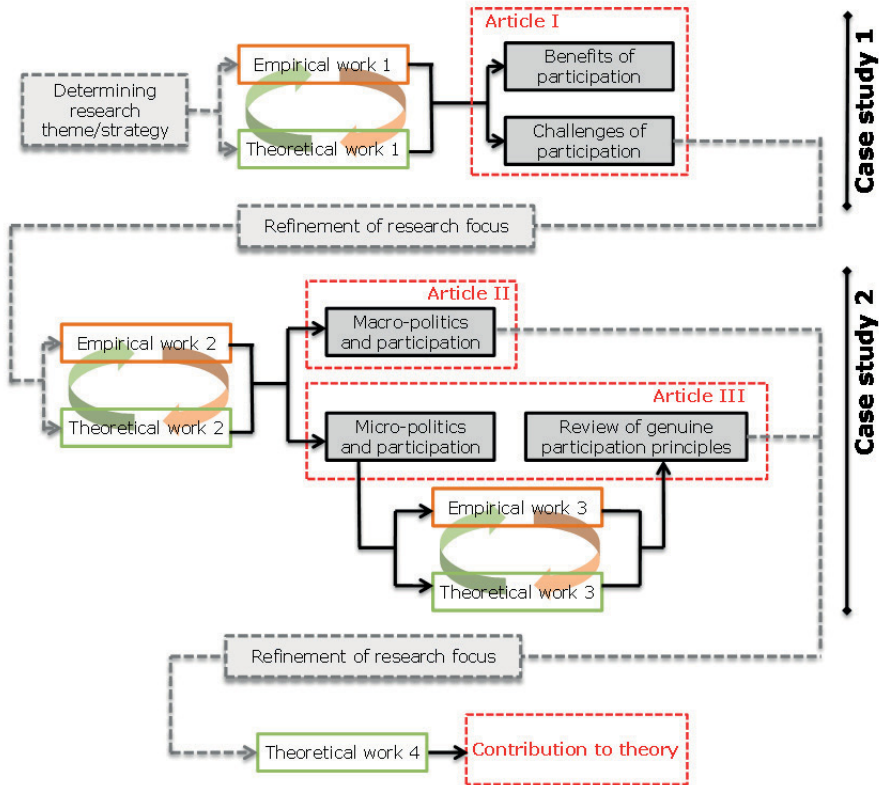


Figure 3. Research strategy in relation to the research process

deprived neighbourhoods⁵ and that provided guidelines on how this should be done was also reviewed (e.g. UN Millenium Project, 2005; Hamdi, 2004; Imparato & Ruster, 2003; World Bank, 2001; Hamdi & Goethert, 1997).

The empirical work that was carried out at this stage had two main foci. The first was to identify the principles behind the case study's participatory process, analyse its development, who participated in it and the outcomes that were achieved. The second was to identify the benefits and challenges that had resulted from conducting this kind of process. The outcomes of both the theoretical and empirical study are presented in Article I in this thesis: *Social Urbanism - Integrated and participatory urban upgrading in Medellin, Colombia*.

5. As it will be explained in Section 2.2, the selection of projects aiming at the renewal of deprived neighbourhoods was done purposefully since this type of projects were considered to be rich in information that was useful for the purpose of the research.

Following the exploratory and progressive research strategy, the results of the first case study were used to refine the research focus and for developing new theoretical perspectives. During the reflexive process that was conducted at this stage, it was identified that much had been said about the benefits of implementing participatory process and how these should be conducted. On the other hand very few studies had looked at the problems that these processes often confronted. Furthermore, very few studies had raised critical questions or done critical evaluations of these participatory processes. This was identified as an opportunity for the research to provide a theoretical contribution. Inspired by Flyvbjerg's and Richardson's (2002) critical approach to planning theory, the research focus was refined towards the deep understanding of the challenges of participation in the planning and design of public spaces.

Due to difficulties with re-establishing contact with interviewees and re-accessing information about the project, it was not possible to develop further the case study and carry out more empirical work based on the refined research focus. Nonetheless, this became an opportunity for the research. It allowed it to reflect about the purpose of the research, about its approach and the way that it had been conducted until this point. It also allowed the research to start a new and fresh case study where the refined research focus could be implemented fully from the beginning. Thus a new project was selected for conducting a new case study.

2.1.2 Developing a critical approach: Case Study 2

Following the exploratory and progressive research strategy, Case Study 2 began by giving a greater emphasis to the empirical work (*Empirical work 2* in Figure 3) and using its findings for the theoretical work that would be conducted after. Based on the critical approach that was adopted at the end of Case Study 1, priority was given to the opinions of residents of the neighbourhood and especially those who took part of the participatory process. The intention with this priority was to access the case without letting the project's official documentation of the participatory process and of its results steer the empirical work.

The results of the empirical work showed contrasting opinions between the professionals and civil servants in charge of the project and the residents. While the former were positive about the participatory process and the improvements made to the neighbourhood's public spaces, the latter were significantly critical and discontent with these. The empirical work also showed that the way that project's participatory process had been implemented and the results that had been achieved by it, had been conditioned and limited

by a wide variety of factors that were beyond the process and the control of those who were in charge and participated in it.

The empirical findings raised two main queries for the theoretical work that followed (*Theoretical work 2* in Figure 3). Both concerning the politics that shaped, conditioned and influenced the decision making processes of the case study and thus the improvements made to the neighbourhood's public spaces. The first, concerned the *macro-politics* affecting the renewal of the neighbourhood, found in the political and professional discourses and in the urban and real estate dynamics that operated in the greater area where the project was located. The second concerned the *micro-politics* of the project's decision-making process, seen in the tensions, conflicts and power relations that existed between the different actors that were involved, interested or affected by the improvements that were done in the neighbourhood.

Healey's (2007; 1999; 1992) institutionalist model for the analysis of the processes shaping the qualities of places was used as a theoretical framework for understanding and analysing the empirical findings related to the macro-politics affecting the case study. The combination of this framework and the empirical findings of the case study made the research to become attentive to the way that participatory planning and design processes are conditioned to contextual factors that can challenge their implementation and reduce the influence that local communities have in the decisions guiding the development of a neighbourhood's public spaces. These empirical and theoretical findings became a central point for the research and one of the two main premises for understanding the challenges of participation in the planning and design of public spaces (see Chapter 5). The outcomes of the empirical and theoretical work that was conducted at this stage of the research are presented in Article II in this thesis: *Social Processes in the Production of Public Spaces: Structuring forces and actors in the renewal of a deprived neighbourhood in Barcelona*.

The question related to the micro-politics that were found in the case study was theoretically addressed in two steps. The first step was to relate the differences, conflicts and power relations that were found in the case study's participatory process to theoretical discussions of public space where these issues could also be found. Discussions about the pluralistic and multicultural nature of today's societies and the primacy of market oriented goals in planning and design practices became central for this theoretical discussion (e.g. Hou, 2010c; Madanipour, 2010b; Low & Smith, 2006; Watson, 2006; Low *et al.*, 2005; Mitchell, 2003; Sandercock, 2003; Van Deusen, 2002). These theoretical findings became another important point for the research and led to

the second main premise for understanding the challenges of participation in the planning and design of public spaces (see Chapter 5).

The second step looked at how the theoretical literature that dealt specifically with participation in the planning and design of public spaces addressed issues of differences, conflicts and power relations in participatory decision-making processes. This was carried out through a new theoretical work (*Theoretical work 3* in Figure 3) that focused on theories of participation within the fields of landscape architecture and urban design and was delimited to literature that dealt directly with public spaces (e.g. Thompson, 2009; Sanoff, 2006; Toker & Toker, 2006; Francis, 2003; 2000; 2000; Hester, 1999; UDG, 1998). This theoretical work was complemented by an empirical work (*Empirical Work 3* in Figure 2) that aimed at assessing the applicability of three of the main theoretical principles that were found in the literature for achieving genuine participation in the planning and design of public spaces: inclusiveness, balancing of power and consensus building. The outcomes of the empirical and theoretical work that was conducted at this stage of the research are presented in Article III of this thesis: *Rethinking participation – A critical examination of participation in the planning and design of public spaces*.

2.1.3 Finding an opportunity for contributing to the development of theory

The outcomes of the empirical and theoretical work that was conducted during Case Study 2 showed some limitations in the prevailing theories of participation in the planning and design of public spaces. Firstly, they showed that despite the importance given to participation in landscape architecture and urban design, there had been little theorisation of this topic within these fields. This especially in literature related to the planning and design of public spaces in the city. Secondly, they showed that the approach to theoretical development that was commonly used within these fields was not sufficient for understanding and addressing the complexity and the *macro-* and *micro-politics* that was found in Case Study 2. Such limitations were considered as a gap in the prevailing theories of participation in the planning and design of public spaces, which the empirical and theoretical work that had been carried out in the research could contribute to.

Following the exploratory and progressive research strategy, the findings of Case Study 2 led to a second and final refinement of the research focus which determined the focus, structure and content of this cover story. Based on such refinement, the empirical work and the theoretical discussions that were conducted while doing the two case studies were brought together and complemented by new theoretical ideas (*Theoretical work 4* in Figure 3) inspired by critical discussions of participation within the field of planning

theory (e.g. Watson, 2006; Connelly & Richardson, 2004; Hillier, 2003; Pløger, 2001; Flyvbjerg, 1998b). The empirical findings and the theoretical discussions that form the content of this cover story are considered to be the contribution of this research to the development of theories on the topic participation in the planning and design of public spaces within the fields of landscape architecture and urban design.

2.2 Selection and description of the case studies

As mentioned before the two case studies of this research played different roles in the research strategy and were consequently developed in different levels of depth. Following the exploratory and progressive strategy that was adopted by this research, Case Study 1 was conducted as an exploratory study for developing and defining the focus of the research and for setting its theoretical starting point. Case Study 2, on the other hand, was used as an in-depth case study where the focus that was obtained from the exploratory study was developed to its full extent. Despite these different roles, the two projects that served as cases for this research were selected using purposeful sampling. Because of the theoretical focus of the research, the cases were considered to be “instrumental cases” and not “intrinsic cases” (Stake, 1995). In other words, the purposeful selection of the cases intended to find information-rich projects that could be used as an instrument or medium for a deep understanding of the topics that the research wanted to engage with and not because there was an exclusive interest to learn about the projects (Stake, 1995). Based on this, the following criteria were used for selecting the projects of the case studies:

- Projects that had significant involvement of the local community in the planning and design of a neighbourhood’s public spaces.
- Projects where the involvement of the community in the planning and design process went beyond consultation or information gathering.
- Projects where the provision or renewal of public spaces had a main role in the improvement of the physical and social conditions of a neighbourhood.
- Projects where the participatory process addressed both physical and social problems present in a neighbourhood’s public environment.
- Projects where the participatory processes dealt with planning and design solutions regarding the physical characteristics of the public spaces, but also proposals concerning their management, the type of social activities and events that ought to occur in them and discussion on how these should contribute to the overall social, environmental, economic improvement of the neighbourhood.

As it will be shown in Sections 2.2.1 and 2.2.2, the two selected cases are located in deprived neighbourhoods. This location was purposefully selected since it was considered to be an opportunity for finding matters that could be overlooked in typical cases. This goes in line with Flyvbjerg's (2006) argument that a representative case or a random sample may not be the most appropriate strategy for studies aiming at achieving a significant amount of information on a given problem or phenomenon. Instead choosing atypical or extreme cases can often reveal more information because they activate more actors and more basic mechanisms in the situations studied (Flyvbjerg, 2006; Stake, 1995). Furthermore it is in this kind of neighbourhoods where it is argued that there is a higher need to involve local communities in the planning and design of their public spaces (CABE, 2010; SHA.KE (2010). 2010; Hernandez, 2008; Toker, 2007; DTLR, 2002).

Within the fields of landscape architecture and urban design it is common that research about participatory process is carried out during the time that the process is taking place. However, in this research it was important to select projects where the participatory process and the improvements or construction of new public spaces had already finished. This decision was made deliberately, since the research was interested not only on the process and the plans and designs that came out of it, but also on the influence that the participatory process and the opinions of those who participated in it had on the improvements made to the neighbourhoods. Because of this another important factor determining the selection of the cases was the availability of a rich and detailed documentation about the project and the process. The location of the projects in deprived neighbourhoods was also useful in this sense, since projects that are carried out in this type of contexts are often well documented.

Because Case Study 1 had the role of serving as an exploratory study, it was decided to use as a case a project where the research could have a fast and easy access. A project that fulfilled the above mentioned criteria and where I had conducted a previous study (Calderon, 2008), the "*Proyecto Urbano Integral de la comuna Nororiental*" (Integrated Urban Project of the Nororiental district) - *PUI-Nororiental* - in the city of Medellin, was selected as Case Study 1. Case Study 2, on the other hand, was chosen after a meticulous selection process where different projects were considered. Among these were several projects from the Community Spaces Programme in the UK, the High Point Redevelopment Project in Seattle and the renewal of the Gl. Valby neighborhood in Copenhagen. At the end the *Transformation Plan for the neighbourhood of La Mina (TPLM)* in the city of Barcelona was the project that most fitted the above mentioned criteria, and thus selected as Case Study 2.

A detailed description of the two projects is given in the articles that resulted from the two case studies. Concerning Case Study 1, Article I comprises the main problems that the *PUI-Nororiental* had to deal with (p. 4), the principles that guided the project (pp. 4-5) and a detailed description of the participatory process and its outcomes (pp. 5-8). Concerning Case Study 2, Article II contains a detailed description of the neighbourhood in which the *TPLM* was carried out (pp. 4-5), including the political ideas that influenced it, the economic dynamics that surround the neighbourhood and the different actors that affected its renewal (pp. 5-7). Article III contains a detailed description of the *TPLM*'s participatory process (pp. 5-7). Article II presents the planning and design solutions that the *TPLM* carried out for improving the neighbourhood's public environment (pp. 7-9) and the outcomes that resulted from such solutions (pp. 9-11). A short description of the two case studies is nonetheless provided in the following sections.

2.2.1 Integrated Urban Project of the Nororiental district – PUI Nororiental – Medellin

The “*Proyecto Urbano Integral de la comuna Nororiental*” (Integrated Urban Project of the Nororiental district) - *PUI-Nororiental* - was the flagship project of the 2004-2007 Administration of the city of Medellin. The project aimed at improving the conditions of one of Medellin's most deprived districts where social, economic and environmental problems were highly present. The project was founded on the idea that the negative externalities caused by the problems present in this district were a prime limitation to improve the international image and the development of Medellin.



Figure 4. Three public spaces of the PUI-Nororiental - before (top) and after (bottom). Source: EDU - Empresa de Desarrollo Urbano

An integrated and participatory approach to urban development called "Social Urbanism" served as the main framework for the development of the project. Based on this strategy the *PUI-Nororiental* project followed an integrated approach based on three main components:

- a physical component, based on new public spaces and facilities;
- a social component, based on the participation of the community in the different stages of the projects, and the appropriation of these by the community;
- an institutional component that coordinated the implementation of existing social programs of the administration and created an arena for collaboration among government agencies.

An approximate of 200 000 square metres, comprising 18 new public spaces (ranging from large district squares and parks to small pocket parks) as well as improvements to pedestrian paths, sidewalks and roads, was carried out by the *PUI-Nororiental* (see Figure 4 in previous page).



Figure 5. Field visits, workshops and examples of documents produced together with the residents of the neighbourhoods during the participatory process of the *PUI-Nororiental*. Source: EDU - Empresa de Desarrollo Urbano

Local communities were actively involved during the planning and design of these spaces as well as during other stages of the project. The participatory process combined a variety of participatory activities which included workshops, field visits, public hearings and information in the media in order to involve, consult and keep informed as many residents as possible (see Figure 5 in previous page). The participatory processes were also accompanied by social activities and events that aimed at enhancing community building and social capital in the neighbourhood.

2.2.2 Transformation Plan for the neighbourhood of La Mina – TPLM – Barcelona

The *Transformation Plan for the neighbourhood of La Mina (TPLM)* was selected due to the significant efforts put to improve the neighbourhood over the last ten years. The neighbourhood of *La Mina* was considered to be one of the most deprived neighbourhoods of Barcelona’s metropolitan area, with a socially diverse, multicultural and highly densified population of approximately 10,000 inhabitants (see Figure 6). In the late 1990s, solving the deprived condition of *La mina* became a high priority on Barcelona’s political agenda. The significant outcomes that were achieved with the large-scale urban transformation that the city’s coastline underwent when hosting the Olympic Games in 1992, encouraged the continuation of the renewal of industrial and working class neighbourhoods located along the coastline, soon reaching the area of *La mina*. This provided strong political and economic support that led to a ten-year urban renewal plan aimed at improving both the physical and social problems of *La mina*.

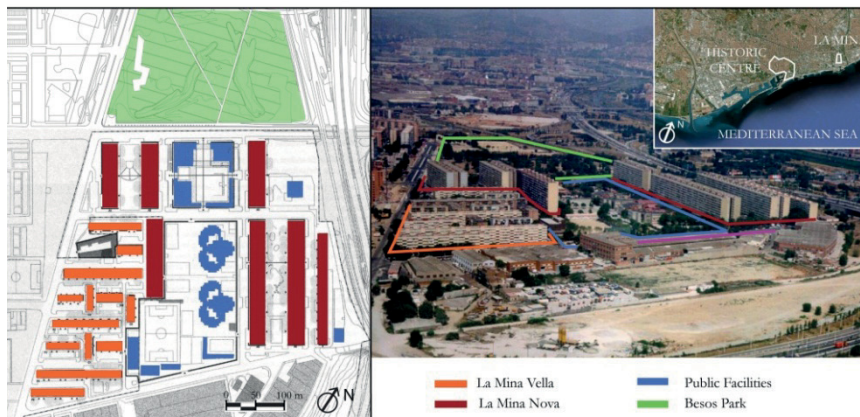


Figure 6. Morphology and areas of La mina. Source: adapted from CBLM (2006)

The TPLM was based on an integrated and participatory urban renewal approach that combined physical interventions with social programmes. Because many of the problems of the neighbourhood occurred in its public spaces the TPLM conducted a participatory process that focused specifically on these problems and tried to find solutions for solving them. The participatory process aimed at bringing together different actors, including residents and users of *La mina* as well as the politicians and professionals in charge of the renewal of the neighbourhood in order to exchange information and ideas and create proposals for the improvement of the neighbourhood's public environment. The process was based on small workshops organised with community-based groups and small groups of residents (see Figure 7). Public exhibitions and hearings at different stages of the process were also used for keeping the wider community involved and informed about the process and its results. The workshops focused on developing social programs and management strategies for solving problems that were highly present in the neighbourhood such as littering, vandalism and insecurity. Design suggestions for both existing and new public space were also made during the workshops. An action plan for carrying out improvements in the neighbourhood's public spaces was the final outcome of the participatory process.



Figure 7. Participants of the TPLM's first stage workshops and examples of documents that resulted from them. Source: Cr Polis (2007)

The urban transformation of La mina entailed the replacement of existing public facilities and public spaces by a rambla (a wide street with a tree-lined promenade in the middle and an international symbol of Barcelona’s public life) running across the neighbourhood, new residential buildings and new city scale public facilities. Improvements to common areas of buildings, the provision of a few playground areas and improvements to existing streets and sidewalks were also made. The TPLM also implemented several programmes to cope with the social problems present in La mina’s public spaces.



Figure 8. Examples of outcomes of TPLM. A) Panoramic view of the rambla and the new buildings. B) Rambla of La Mina and tram line. C) New playground in La mina Nova D) Example of a social programme organised in one of the neighbourhood’s public spaces Source: CBLM (2011)

2.3 Conducting the case studies

The exploratory and progressive strategy adopted in this research demanded an overall and deep understanding of the participatory processes that were being studied. This followed Flyvbjerg’s (2006; 2001) and Johansson’s (2005) argument that such deep understanding can illustrate and make us better understand phenomena that have been theorised about and described in

previous research, and by doing so create the possibility for generalisation⁶. A case study methodology was selected for achieving such understanding, since it is commonly used to help uncover complex situations and identify the multiple and sometimes overlapping factors that eventually lead to particular outcomes (Johansson, 2005; Yin, 2003; Groat & Wang, 2002; Stake, 1995).

As it is typical of case study research, different methods were combined with the purpose of illuminating the cases from different angles (Johansson, 2005). Following the exploratory and progressive strategy that the research adopted, the data collection aimed at having an overall and in-depth understanding of the participatory processes and its results. The empirical research questions (ERQ) that were presented in Section 1.2 served as a framework for gathering such data. In both cases data collection was done by triangulating methods such as different types of interviews, analysis of documents and field visits. Because the two case studies played different roles in the research process (see Section 2.1) the way that data was collected and the amount and level of detail of the information that was gathered was different in the two cases.

The empirical research questions (ERQ) also served as the general framework for the analysis of the empirical information of the two case studies. Nonetheless, because of the research strategy that was adopted, the theoretical perspectives that were developed during the different stages of the process (see Section 2.1.) were used as a more detailed rationale for analysing and processing the empirical data. Throughout all the research process, case study methodology's approach of triangulating different methods for collecting and analysing the information of the case was considered important for ensuring the validity of the study. In line with Johansson (Johansson, 2005), this triangulation allowed the research to compare the information that was collected from the different sources, finding commonalities that would verify the information that was gathered or their findings, and identify discrepancies that would question them. In cases where the latter happened, new data was collected in order to solve or better understand these discrepancies. If such discrepancies were based on data that was gathered during the interviews, interviewees were contacted for clarification.

The description of how each case study was conducted is provided in the following sections.

6. Flyvbjerg (2006; 2001) and Johansson (2005) refer to a generalisation of theory in the form transferability; meaning a collective process of knowledge accumulation in a given field or the transfer of theoretical knowledge to other contexts and not generalization in the sense that theory becomes universal.

2.3.1 Data collection and conduct of the exploratory case study of the PUI-Nororiental

As mentioned before, most of the empirical information that was used while conducting this case study was collected in a previous study done to the *PUI-Nororiental* project (Calderon, 2008). In this previous study there had been an extensive gathering of empirical information which had the purpose of understanding and analysing of the overall urban renewal project and its participatory process. This extensive information was considered to be sufficient for the exploratory goals that the research had at this stage (see Section 2.1.1). The exploratory case study used the information that was specifically related to the improvements made to the neighbourhood's public spaces and the participatory processes were decisions about such improvements were made.

In the previous study the empirical data had its source on official and legislative documents, media material, field visits and interviews. Nonetheless additional documents, interviews and one more field visit was done while conducting the exploratory case study⁷. This additional data collection focused on expanding and confirming the information that was gathered during the previous study and for ascertaining the impact of the project and the sustainability of its results.

Following the exploratory and progressive research strategy that was adopted, there was an interest of having an overall in-depth understanding of the participatory process and of the results that it had achieved. Thus, official and legislative documents were used to understand the principles behind the participatory process and the way that these were implemented (e.g. BID, 2009; Echeverri, 2007; EDU, 2007b; Municipio de Medellin, 2004). Documentation about the participatory process was used to identify who had participated and which topics had been discussed. Planning and design documents were used to see the results and the impact that the participatory process had in the final decisions that were taken (e.g. EDU, 2007c; EDU, 2007a; EDU, 2005). Since most of the information was produced by the public servants in charge of the PUI-Nororiental project, media material coming from local newspapers and local information bulletins was used to find new perspectives about the project and its participatory process.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with public servants and professionals that were in charge and formed part of the project and the participatory process. As with the analysis of the documentation the questions of the interviews focused on the project's participatory process, its outcomes on

7. This data collection forms part of *Empirical work 1* referred to in Figure 3 and Section 2.1.1 of this thesis.

the participants' roles during the process. Unstructured interviews were also done with community leaders as well as informal and quick conversations with residents of the neighbourhood. The goal was to know their opinions about the *PUI-Norororiental* project and its participatory process, focusing on how these had benefited them or the critics they had towards them. Field visits were conducted during January 2008 and August 2009 in order to see the changes that the new public spaces had brought to the neighbourhood both physically and socially. Also to confirm the sustainability of the outcomes that the public space improvements had brought to the neighbourhood.

2.3.2 Data collection and conduct of case study of the TPLM

As with the first case study, the data collection of the case of the *TPLM* was based on different forms of interviews, analysis of documents and field visits⁸. Nonetheless, because of the role that this case study had of developing in an in depth manner the focus that resulted from Case Study 1 (see Section 2.1.2), the collection of data was done in a much more rigorous and exhaustive way. The critical approach that the research adopted at this stage led the empirical work to start by interviewing local residents, community leaders and social workers that had been actively involved in the renewal of the neighbourhood and in the participatory process. The interviews were semi-structured with questions related to their role during the participatory process, their experiences of forming part of it and their opinions about how it had been conducted and the results they had achieved. Questions were also made concerning the result of the improvements that had been done to the neighbourhood and the role that the new and improved public spaces had in it.

Unstructured interviews in the form of informal conversations were also made with a wide number of residents. People with different age, gender and ethnical background and living in different areas of the neighbourhood were approached in the street and asked about their opinions about the improvements made by the *TPLM*. These interviews were conducted together with field visits that aimed at identifying how people used the different public spaces of the neighbourhood and the new public spaces that were made by the *TPLM*. The visits were done periodically between October 2010 and October 2011 at different times of the day and in different days of the week.

Interviews were also made to the public servants in charge of the *TPLM*, the professionals that made the master plan and the design for the renewal of the neighbourhood and the professionals that designed and managed the participatory process. The latter belonged to a research group of the University

8. This data collection forms part of *Empirical work 2* referred to in Figure 3 and Section 2.1.2 of this thesis.

of Barcelona which worked with participatory processes in the planning and design of public spaces. The interviews were semi-structure with questions aiming at understanding how the participatory process had been done and the outcomes that had been achieved with the improvements made to the neighbourhood. Following the critical approach that was adopted in the beginning of the case study, the interviews also aimed at obtaining critical reflections about the way that the participatory process had been carried out and the public space improvements that had been done. Also, reflections about the challenges that the process and the project had encounter.

An extensive collection and analysis of documents was also conducted as part of the empirical work. This included official documents about the project, studies and publications about the neighbourhood both before and after the *TPLM*, media material collected from local newspapers, podcasts from the neighbourhood's local radio station as well as webpages and periodical gazettes made by the community organisations. Reports and constant updates made by the agency in charge of the *TPLM* to the institutional and governmental funders of the project were useful for understanding the projects process and what had been implemented (e.g. CBLM, 2011; CBLM, 2008; ASAB, 2002; Barcelona Regional, 2001). Detailed reports made by the organisers of the participatory process and several research publications that were done based on their experiences in such process provided great detail about how the process was conducted, who participated, the topics that were discussed and what had resulted from such discussions (e.g. Ricart, 2009; Cr Polis (2007). 2007; Cr Polis, 2006). This information was also useful for comparing what had been proposed in the participatory process and what had been included and implemented in the *TPLM*.

The podcasts from the neighbourhood's local radio station and the periodical gazettes made by the community organisations gave access to opinions and complains that the community had about the projects process and the improvements that were done. These were significantly important for accessing information and opinions that residents and community leaders had in the early stages of the project and along its development and its implementation. The gazette for example was published during the first three years of the *TPLM*, from 2001 to 2003, providing the opinions of residents and community leaders about what was happening in neighbourhood during this time. Articles and a section that published letters from residents helped to identify the priorities that the community had in terms of their neighbourhood and its public environment and also the type of solutions that they wanted. The podcasts containing radio shows since the year 2007 gave periodical updates about meetings that community leaders had with the public agency in charge of

the *TPLM* and their opinions of the outcomes of the improvements and programs that were being implemented. Articles in local newspapers and independent studies made to the neighbourhood were also a significant source of information (e.g. GTPU, 2009; Borja & Fiori, 2004; GDES, 2001). They provided an independent analysis of the *TPLM* and of the outcomes of the renewal of the neighbourhood and the improvements made in the public spaces.

As mentioned in Section 2.1.2, the empirical work that was carried out at this stage of the research provided the opportunity to assess how the theoretical literature that dealt specifically with participation in the planning and design of public spaces addressed issues of differences, conflicts and power relations in decision-making processes. In order to complement and reinforce such assessment a set of structured in-depth interviews were done to the organisers of the participatory process⁹. Three interviews were conducted focusing each on the use and applicability in the participatory process of the *TPLM* of the main theoretical principles of genuine participation that were found in the theory. Questions were also asked about the opinion that the organisers, who as mentioned before were academic researchers on the topic participation in the planning and design of public spaces, had on these principles and their applicability in real life practice. The questions used for this interview are presented in Appendix 1 of this thesis.

2.4 Reflections about the research strategy and process

In this section, I would like to make a parenthesis in the thesis and provide some reflections about the research strategy and process. I do this with the intention of making transparent to the reader the difficulties and challenges that I encountered while conducting the research. I believe this is an important thing to do, since a PhD research processes is not always as smooth and ordered as a thesis might picture it.

One of the main challenges that I encountered along this research was to implement in a structured and methodical way the exploratory and progressive research strategy that was adopted. Throughout the different stages of the process it was difficult to know where the research was heading or what would be its theoretical contribution. Although the empirical research questions did not change significantly along the process, the theoretical questions were constantly reformulated. This reformulation, or refinement as I called it in this chapter, was the product of the new theoretical perspectives that resulted from

9. This data collection forms part of *Empirical work 3* referred to in Figure 3 and Section 2.1.2 of this thesis.

the empirical findings of the case studies. It also occurred as my knowledge of the theories widened and developed.

The decision of basing this thesis on a compilation of articles became very resourceful for coping with the above mentioned challenge. The process of writing the articles and presenting their ideas in different academic events (e.g. conferences, courses, seminars and workshops) served as short term checkpoints for evaluating the relevance and quality of the preliminary findings and for directing the research towards topics that were more relevant.

The content of the articles also reflect the exploratory and progressive strategy that was adopted. They show the empirical findings that were more significant at the stage of the processes in which the article was written and the theories that I was engaged with at that moment. For example in Article I, I used mainly theories of participation in planning theory. This was because at this stage of the research the theoretical goal was to contribute to the theorisation of participation more generally with the focus on the planning and design of public spaces. At this stage I did not have the intention of contributing to the theorisation of this topic in the fields of landscape architecture or urban design. While this might seem somehow distant from the theoretical scope that was adopted afterwards, the engagement with the theoretical discussions in planning allowed me to widen my theoretical understanding of the topic and to develop a critical perspective to its investigation and theorisation (see Section 2.1.2). It allowed me to engage later with literature and theories of participation in landscape architecture and urban design in a much more reflective way. I believe this is quite noticeable in the differences between Articles I and II in terms of their content and writing style. While the former is quite descriptive, normative and practice oriented, the latter is more reflective, critical and theoretical. The same applies for Article III.

As mentioned in Section 2.1, the problems that came at the end of Case Study 1 with re-establishing contact with interviewees and re-accessing information about the project, was also a challenge for the process. Nonetheless, this turned out to be an opportunity to step back from the empirical work, look critically to what I had found and what I had produced, and learn from the mistakes that I made while gathering information. I realised that in Article I, I had used much more the project's documentation and interviews with practitioners than the information that I collected from the community. Therefore as described in Section 2.1.2, I began Case Study 2 by interviewing local residents and community leaders. Also by making sure that the project's awards or its recognition as best practice did not to steer my empirical work towards confirming or finding the reasons for such

recognitions. At the end the challenge with Case Study 1, became an important learning opportunity in the development of the critical approach that was adopted.

Another difficulty with implementing the research strategy was that it demanded an extensive amount of information in order to understand the cases in an overall and in-depth way. Nonetheless, the decision of selecting atypical cases (see Section 2.2) made it easy to identify in a quick manner issues and topics that were considered to be interesting for the development of theory. In addition to this, the iteration between empirical material and theory facilitated the prompt confirmation of the relevance of the findings and contributed to the analysis of the empirical information.

It is worth mentioning, that my familiarity with the culture and politics of the contexts in which the cases are located and my knowledge of Spanish contributed significantly to the deep understanding of the cases (in the case of Barcelona this was reinforced by my collaboration with Lorenzo Chelleri, the second author of Article II, who lives in this city). While this did not affected in a direct way the selection of the cases, I can imagine that I wouldn't had been so aware of or had reached a deep understanding of the contextual factors that affected the projects if I would had conducted the case studies in a country or city that I was not familiar with. Particularly, since the understanding of context became such an important focus in the research, as it will be shown in Chapters 6 and 7.

Despite the challenges that came with the adopted research strategy, I consider it to be highly valuable in my training as a researcher. First, because it allowed me to develop a discipline of self-reflection and critique which I now significantly value. Secondly, because it allowed me to engage with theory without becoming too abstract or conceptual, maintaining the concrete and context-dependent nature of practice. Finally because, I think that the research process that came about from such strategy reflects in a truthful manner the messy, flexible and non-linear nature of research and learning.

3 Theoretical Background

This chapter provides the theoretical background of the topic of this research: *participation in the planning and design of public spaces*. Following the thesis structure of iterating between empirical material and theory (see Section 1.3), the purpose of this chapter is to provide the theories and concepts that the research engages in its theoretical debate. Because of this, it is important to mention that this chapter does not intend to provide a full overview of the different ways that participation is used in the fields of landscape architecture and urban design. Within these fields discussions about participation may include studies on the way that residents or community groups through management or maintenance activities, self-organisation, informal processes or over a long period of time “participate” or are “involved” in the transformation of the their public spaces (e.g. Castell, 2010; Larsson, 2009; Delshammar, 2005). However, this chapter, and this thesis in general, does not engage with these forms of participation in its theoretical discussions. While these can be considered as important alternatives of participation, this research has deliberately chosen to focus on participation in formal public space planning and design processes where a wide range of actors¹⁰ are actively involved in

10. Based on Madanipour (2006), *actors* in this thesis imply the individuals, groups or institutions that regulate, produce and use the urban environment. Regulators refer to the government agencies and public institutions and their role in regulating political and economic agendas, which in the urban development process is mainly reflected in planning and city/neighbourhood strategies. Producers include those who build the city, predominantly financiers, developers, land owners and the teams of professionals (planners, designers, engineers, etc.) involved in the planning and design of a project. Users refer to the different social groups and individuals who visit, work, or live in an urban area and use its public spaces. The categorization as regulators, producers and users is for analytical purposes. Therefore, as stressed by Madanipour (2006), it should not be seen as an attempt to narrow people-space relationships instrumentally and economically as mere production and consumption.

decision-making¹¹. As such this chapter makes explicit reference to the literature that discusses this kind of processes and particularly to some of the prevailing scholars on this topic within the fields of landscape architecture and urban design.

Following the above, this chapter starts with Section 3.1 presenting the different understandings, benefits and principles used for guiding the practice of participation in the planning and design of public spaces. This is followed by Section 3.2 which provides an overview of the prevailing way that participation has been theorised in the fields of landscape architecture and urban design. In this section emphasis is given to the concepts and principles that these theories use and promote and which are commonly used to ground the more practice oriented literature on the topic. Based on the critical approach that this research has adopted (see Sections 1.1 and 2.1.2), the chapter ends with Section 3.3 discussing the challenges that participatory processes often encounter and the way that the prevailing theories engage with them.

3.1 Participation in planning and design of public spaces

3.1.1 Ideas guiding the practice of participation in planning and design of public spaces

Nowadays participation is widely promoted as an essential element of landscape architecture and urban design practice (Matsuoka & Kaplan, 2008; Murphy, 2005; Moughtin, 2003; UDG, 1998) and as one of the cornerstones for successful, sustainable and just public spaces (Madanipour, 2010b; Low *et al.*, 2005; Francis, 2003; DTLR, 2002; Hester, 1999). Participation has become a buzzword and a mandatory part of much public space projects in Europe and the USA, being ratified by international conventions and agreements such as *Agenda 21* (United Nations, 1992), the *Århus Convention* (UNECE, 1998) and the *European Landscape Convention* (Council of Europe, 2000) as well as national policies such as the White Paper *Communities in Control* (CLG, 2008) in the United Kingdom (Punter, 2010; Thompson, 2009; URBSPACE, 2009; Roe & Rowe, 2007; Hare & Nielsen, 2003; Romice, 2000).

Different arguments are made for the need of participation in the planning and design of public spaces. Among these are: the abandonment of the notion

11. This focus is based on the adopted critical research approach to theory development (see Sections 1.1 and 2.1.2) which centres on the kind of participatory processes that are most commonly found in practice. The focus also relates to the type of processes that were studied in the case studies.

that professionals know best and the recognition that lay persons have specialised knowledge which needs to be included in decisions that guide the development of their public spaces (Juarez & Brown, 2008; Lawson, 2005; Moughtin, 2003). Also, the claim that participatory processes allow local communities to increase their engagement, ownership and control over the development of their public spaces, and that it empowers those that are normally excluded or not represented within planning and design processes (Carmona *et al.*, 2010; Madanipour, 2010b; Thompson, 2009; Juarez & Brown, 2008; Roe, 2007; Low *et al.*, 2005; Francis, 2003).

Within the fields of landscape architecture and urban design the benefits of participation are often seen as: better understanding and response to local values, needs and problems (Roe & Rowe, 2007; Francis, 2003; Thompson, 2000); facilitate projects with complex, technical, environmental or user requirements (Murphy, 2005; Romice & Frey, 2003); educate the public about “good sustainable” development and improve communication and interaction between different actors (Carmona *et al.*, 2010); balance the different interests and values that underpin a public space project (Madanipour, 2010b; Matsuoka & Kaplan, 2008; McGlynn & Murrain, 1994); provide the opportunity for individuals to understand and learn from differing viewpoints and develop consensus (Roe, 2007; Roe & Rowe, 2007); make design professionals more responsible for the social suitability of the environments they create (Hester, 1999); as well as affirm community values and increase a sense of community and place attachment (Sanoff, 2000). All this understood as contributing to the creation of successful and sustainable public spaces.

Within the fields of landscape architecture and urban design participation is commonly referred to as the involvement of communities in the planning and design of their local urban environments. However, in practice there is substantial variation regarding the purpose of such involvement, how it is done, and the role that the public can and should play during these processes (Carmona *et al.*, 2010; Sanoff, 2006; Moughtin, 2003). Continuums or spectrums of participation, such as Arnstein’s (1969) *ladder of participation* or Wulz’s (1986) *participation in design continuum*, are commonly used in urban design and landscape architecture literature to differentiate the different ways that participation is practiced in these fields. They are also used to determine the degree by which power over decisions is devolved away from professionals into the hands of the public (see e.g. Thompson, 2009; Juarez & Brown, 2008; Hare & Nielsen, 2003; Moughtin, 2003; DTLR, 2002; Romice, 2000). Within these continuums the lower levels of participation refer to processes aiming at gathering information, consulting or informing the public about plans and design proposals. The higher levels refer to processes in which the public has

an active and direct influence during the planning and design process. This is done, either through partnership with planners and designers or by having full control over the decision-making process.

Information gathering and consultation are the most common practices of participation used in public space projects (Carmona *et al.*, 2010; Juarez & Brown, 2008; DTLR, 2002). While it can be argued that information gathering and consultation allows professionals to make informed decisions that correspond to residents' interests, values and claims, several scholars refer to these forms of participation as pseudo or non-participatory processes (Thompson, 2009; Sanoff, 2006; Toker & Toker, 2006; Barton *et al.*, 2003; Romice, 2000). This is because within this type of processes the power to decide how and whose interests, values and claims are included or excluded, remains in the practitioners who are in charge of the process. According to Wulz (1986), this creates the conditions for opportunist politicians, professionals or other powerful actors to "*utilize participation as an alibi for a negative side of their traditional role as experts, in other words, an authoritarian approach to decision making*" (p.153). Furthermore, it gives these actors the opportunity to manipulate or suppress the voice of the public in favour of their own interests and values. According to several scholars this occurs very often, limiting the legitimacy of participation in public space projects (Southworth *et al.*, 2012; Hou, 2010a; Hester, 1999). Because of this, Sanoff (2000) among others (e.g. Thompson, 2009; Juarez & Brown, 2008; Toker, 2007; Hester, 1999) call for a genuine or full participation in which all stakeholders and sectors of a community are involved and are given an equal opportunity to determine the decisions that would guide the development of their local public environments.

A wide variety of methods and techniques are often described in the landscape architecture and urban design literature for achieving genuine or full participation (see e.g. Carmona *et al.*, 2010; Sanoff, 2000; UDG, 1998). Among the methods that are most commonly promoted are workshops in the form of design charrettes, planning for real exercises, action planning events or urban design assistant teams. Selecting which method to use is often said to be dependent on the goals of a given project and the type of public that is trying to be involved (Carmona *et al.*, 2010; Roe & Rowe, 2007; Moughtin, 2003; UDG, 1998). Nonetheless most of the methods aiming at achieving genuine or full participation are commonly guided by theoretical frameworks that argue for the need of involving all stakeholders and sectors of a community, equalizing the power of influencing decisions among those that participate and reaching consented solutions through debate and facilitation (Toker & Pontikis, 2011; Thompson, 2009; Juarez & Brown, 2008; Roe & Rowe, 2007; Sanoff,

2006; Toker & Toker, 2006; Murphy, 2005; 2000; McGlynn & Murrain, 1994). A description of the prevailing way that the fields of landscape architecture and urban design have theorised about genuine or full participation in planning and design processes will be presented in the next section.

3.1.2 Theorisation of participation in landscape architecture and urban design

Despite the importance given to participation in landscape architecture and urban design, there has been little theorisation of this topic within these fields (as noted by Toker & Pontikis, 2011; Castell, 2010; Roe, 2007; Hare & Nielsen, 2003). This especially in literature related to the planning and design of public spaces in the city. The body of literature shared by these two fields has given greater emphasis to the way that participation should be done and to report on projects that have done it rather than to its theorisation (see e.g. Wates, 2012; Faga, 2006; Romice, 2000; UDG, 1998). As will be shown below, much of the theoretical frameworks and concepts that are predominantly in these fields have been borrowed from urban theory and planning theory. More specifically from the strands of theory within these fields that make emphasis on principles of inclusiveness, power-balance and consensus-building as a base for participatory processes.

Henry Sanoff, one of the most known and influential scholars in participation in architecture and urban design, bases his theorisation of participation on the ideas of *participatory democracy* and *deliberative democracy* (Sanoff, 2006; 2000). For him, the involvement of the public in the planning and design of their local environments serves as a basis for a *participatory democracy* where “*collective decision-making is highly decentralized throughout all sectors of society, so that all individuals learn participatory skills and can effectively participate in various ways in the making of all decisions that affect them*” (Sanoff, 2006, p. 133). *Deliberative democracy* on the other hand provides the guidelines for the way that participatory processes should be carried out. Referring to Sirianni and Friedland (2005), Sanoff defines *deliberative democracy* whereby “*citizens and their representatives deliberate about community problems and solutions through reflection and judgement, with the willingness to understand the values and interests of the others in a search for mutually acceptable solutions*” (Sanoff, 2006, p. 134).

Central to Sanoff's understanding of *participatory democracy* and *deliberative democracy* is the concept of consensus. He emphasises that no matter which participatory method or technique is selected, it should enable professionals and citizens to creatively collaborate reaching a consensual decision-making (Sanoff, 2000). Based on Conolly (1969), Sanoff argues that

there is at least one agreeable outcome to which all parties come to a consensus and that in order to achieve this there needs to be an equality framework and an iterative process of social learning. He uses Habermas' (1992) *ideal speech situation* as a communicative framework for achieving consensus within a participatory process in which:

- There must be no constraints in the discussion process. The individual must be free to express his or her personal opinions.

- Each participant must be given an equal platform from which to express his or her concerns. No one participant should have more or less opportunity to discuss personal desires and needs.

- All participants assume equal power. All political hierarchies are abandoned, and no participant is allowed to exercise more influence than others.

- A rational discussion where good reasons are used to persuade others instead of threats (Sanoff, 2000, p. 15).

In the field of landscape architecture the attempts to theorise about participation have also made emphasis on inclusiveness, power-balance, and consensus. Randolph Hester, a predominant scholar on participation in landscape architecture, argues in favour of consensus building instead of solutions based on adversarial planning and litigation (Hester, 2006b; Hester, 1999). He calls for holistic and inclusive processes based on face to face, facilitated, collaborative group decision-making that break barriers of locality, class, ideology and culture (Hester, 2006a; Hester, 1999).

For Selman (2004), participatory decision-making in landscape architecture and planning should be based on a “*deliberative*” or “*communicative rationality*”¹² reached through the dialogue and debate amongst those who make decisions and those who are affected by them. Roe and Rowe (2007) argue that consensus building through deliberation is central to the participatory process and that “*conflict resolution through consensus building is central to the participatory process*” (p. 242). Consequently they argue that part of the landscape architect's role is to be a facilitator that solves problems of communication between different or conflicting groups in order to build consensus.

Thompson (2009; 2000) refers to discussions within planning theory that call for the deliberative or communicative rationality in planning processes as a base for guiding participation in landscape architecture practice. In his book “*Rethinking Landscape – A critical reader*” (Thompson, 2009) he uses extracts

12. Although Selman does not refer to Habermas when using the concepts of “*deliberative*” and “*communicative rationality*”, these are central to Habermas' theory of communicative action and its framework of communicative ethics.

from Patsy Healey's book "*Collaborative Planning: Shaping Places in Fragmented Societies*" (Healey, 2005). In the extracts selected by Thompson, emphasis is placed on the idea that there are different forms of reasoning (instrumental-technical, moral and aesthetic reasoning) which need to be equally included in debates and decision making processes concerning local environments. Multiple and diverse cultural communities should be recognised and included in these debates in order to build shared systems of meaning and ways of acting. As a theoretical guide for such debates, Healey, and thus Thompson, uses Habermas' *theory of communicative action* with its *communicative ethics* which has at its core the unconstrained, unifying, consensus-bringing force of argumentative speech. In this conception, participatory decision-making in landscape architecture becomes a process of interactive collective reasoning, carried out through deliberation and which is guided, as Sanoff does in urban design, by Habermas' framework of *ideal speech situation*.

The above mentioned theories and concepts are commonly used as a theoretical guide for developing methods or conducting processes that aim at achieving genuine or full participation in the planning and design of public spaces. More specifically the emphasis that these methods and practices give to the need of involving all stakeholders and sectors of a community, equalizing the power of influencing decisions among those that participate and reaching consented solutions through debate and facilitation. However there are small number of critical studies within the fields of landscape architecture and urban design that have highlighted the limitations of applying these ideals and principles in practices. This will be explained in the following section.

3.1.3 Gaps between theory and practice of participation

Despite the democratic and just ideals that underpin the theories of participation within landscape architecture and urban design, inclusive, power-balanced and consensus-building processes are far from being mainstream practice. As noted by Hou (2010a, p. 332) "*while most practitioners, theorists, and the public generally support the moral and intrinsic value of participation, few are satisfied with the actual processes and outcomes*". When trying to involve a wide variety of actors or when faced with multifaceted problems, the implementation of the above mentioned principles is often limited falling short in actively involving a wide number of stakeholders in the decision-making process; failing to enter into a meaningful dialogue between participants; giving priority to some sectors of the public or stakeholders over others; or favouring politicians, developers, or designer preferences over local needs and

values (Carr, 2012; Southworth *et al.*, 2012; Hou, 2010a; Höppner *et al.*, 2008; Petrescu, 2007; Rios, 2005; Hou & Rios, 2003; Hester, 1999).

The challenges of implementing inclusive, non-adversarial, deliberative and consensus-building principles into participatory decision-making processes are normally recognised within the literature that is more practice oriented (see e.g. Faga's, 2006, description of one of her case studies as being a "political minefield"). Among these challenges are: the impracticality of including all members of a community; the fact that local communities may be self-interested and not concern themselves with the greater public good; or that sectors of a community or individuals within it may take control over the process despite facilitation; also the pressures that come with projects' limited budgets and timescales; professionals' lack of skills and knowledge on how to include communities in planning and design processes; or the believe by some practitioners that involving the public diminishes the quality of public space plans and designs (Southworth *et al.*, 2012; Hou, 2010a; Roe & Rowe, 2007; Burton & Mitchell, 2006; Francis, 2003; Hou & Rios, 2003; Crewe, 2001; Thompson, 2000; Hester, 1999).

Dealing with these challenges is typically argued to be a duty of practitioners, as scholars often focus on criticising practice and calling for a better implementation of the participatory ideals. For example, Thompson (2009) highlights that Healey does not consider the difficulties involved in reaching consensus as well as mentions some of the barriers to achieve genuine and effective community participation. However, he does not develop this further in his arguments or questions the applicability of these ideals and principles. Sanoff (2000) also recognises some of the challenges of participation. Particularly NIMBYism, conflicts and disputes among people. Nonetheless he argues that these challenges should be solved through the creation of new government institutions and methods that would make the conflicting parties come together, collaborate and reach consensus (Sanoff, 2000, pp. 31-32).

Sanoff, within his understanding of consensus, also recognises the critiques made to this type of processes saying that in an era of "*pluralism, consensus may not be accepted with welcoming arms*" (2000, p. 15). Similarly he recognises that in an agreement oriented process the pressure of arriving at a consensus may constrain the argumentative process and silence those who are marginalised or have dissenting opinions (Sanoff, 2006, p. 139). However he argues that these criticisms are largely unfounded and that the danger of consensus lies in limiting any access to the debate or considering any input more or less valid than others (Sanoff, 2006; 2000).

The limitations with implementing the principles promoted in the theory has led a growing number of scholars to look critically at participation within the planning and design of public spaces (e.g. Hou, 2010c; Rios, 2008; Petrescu, 2007; 2005; 2005; Hou & Rios, 2003). In some cases this has led to new theoretical attempts aiming at creating new theoretical frameworks for participation in the planning and design of public spaces.

Rios (2008; 2005) for example, challenges liberal and community models of citizen involvement in planning and design of public spaces that are based on the equal spatial distribution of social goods or on place-making as practice of establishing a shared identity. Instead he argues for a pluralism model of participation where the goal is to recognise oppositional claims, respect differences in the experience, perception and meaning of public space and build on the conflicts that exist between these, rather than attempting to develop a rational consensus. Similarly, Petrescu (2007, based on Massey, 2005; 2005, and Lefebvre, 1991) argues for a model of participation that questions generic, ideal and uncritical conceptions of “public”, “community” and “space” and that recognises the conflicting and relational nature of public space. Hou (2010a; 2010b) on the other hand has looked at informal processes and insurgent initiatives as new forms of participatory public space planning and design. Nonetheless this theoretical work is still at the periphery of the theoretical discussions within the fields of landscape architecture and urban design or their ideas have not been developed to full extended.

In other cases, the limitations of achieving genuine or full participation has primarily led scholars to the development of new methods and approaches for conducting participatory processes as part of education and research programs or finding best practices that can serve as a model to follow (e.g. Juarez & Brown, 2008; Rios, 2008; Hou & Kinoshita, 2007; Petrescu, 2007; Lawson, 2005; Romice & Frey, 2003; Romice, 2000). Again, these are far from being incorporated into mainstream practice, being implemented mainly in demonstration projects, which sometimes include only a section of the local community (e.g. Lawson, 2005; Romice & Frey, 2003) or are highly challenged when faced with the real politics of planning and urban design.

Another approach has been going back and accepting the traditional understanding of public involvement as merely consultation or information gathering (Burton & Mitchell, 2006). Also, emphasising the need for professionals or city officials in charge of the participatory process to have a clear vision of the desired future that helps them to be proactive towards any obstacle that may threaten the achievement of environmental or social goals within a public space project (Francis, 2003; Hester, 1999). But wouldn't these suggestions open up for what Wulz (1986) refers to as the “*negative side of the*

expert role”? Also, do planners and designers have the power to guarantee the achievement of economic, social and environmental goals? Goals which as argued by several scholars (e.g. Biddulph, 2012; Dryzek, 2009; Campbell, 2002; Rittel & Webber, 1973) are increasingly acknowledged to be highly multifaceted, difficult to define and infinitely malleable depending on the values and perspective of the actors or interests that concern or, more important, are involved in a decision-making process? Or knowing that most of the time planners and designers are only one of the many actors that influences the decision-making process and many times being an actor with low power of influence (Cuthbert, 2006; Madanipour, 2003; Bentley, 1999; McGlynn & Murrain, 1994; McGlynn, 1993)?

The previous questions and the limitations that were mentioned above provide an insight into the challenges that the mainstream practice of participation in the planning and design of public spaces often goes through. As mentioned in Sections 1.2 and 2.1, this research engaged in a deep understanding of the challenges of participation in the planning and design of public spaces. Following the research strategy of iterating between empirical material and theory, the theoretical positions that this research uses for such understanding is based on the empirical and theoretical work that was done while conducting the case studies. Therefore, before establishing such theoretical positions (see Chapter 5) the next chapter presents the articles containing such empirical and theoretical work. The purpose of this is to create a conversation between the theories that were discussed in this chapter, the empirical and theoretical work that resulted while conducting the case studies (Chapter 4) and the theoretical positions (Chapter 5) that form the grounding for the main findings and contribution of the research.

4 Summary of Articles

This chapter provides a general overview of the articles that resulted from the empirical and theoretical work that was conducted in the two case studies. A detailed account of both the empirical and theoretical findings is provided in Chapter 6. This chapter's purpose is to provide an understanding of the reasons behind the theoretical positions developed in the next chapter. The sections that follow, 4.1, 4.2 and 4.3, present the three articles, highlighting the relations that exist between their content and the ideas that were developed in this thesis. The chapter ends with Section 4.4 which contains a table that synthesises the content of the articles and outlines the main findings and contribution.

It is important to mention that certain terms or expressions that are used in the articles can be different from the ones used in the summaries presented in the following sections. This is because these terms and expressions have been refined as the research advanced in the understanding of the concepts or ideas that they referred to.

4.1 Article I: Social urbanism - Integrated and participatory urban upgrading in Medellin, Colombia

Article I focuses on the use of participatory approaches in the context of urban upgrading, specifically in relation to the planning and design of new public spaces. It reports on a integrated and participatory urban upgrading strategy of the city of Medellin, Colombia, called "Social Urbanism" and focuses on the first project implementing such strategy: the *PUI-Nororiental*. Theories of participatory planning are used as a framework for the appraisal of the project's process and its outcomes. By illustrating and discussing the project, the article brings forward both the benefits and challenges of the *PUI-Nororiental*'s participatory process. This discussion touches on the debate in planning theory between theories that promote ideals of inclusiveness, power-

balance and consensus in participation and the ones that argue that in reality there are practical constraints that compromise the implementation of these ideals.

The article concludes that the strategic combination of participation and integrated solutions within the provision of new public spaces can create benefits that go beyond well valued physical improvements. Nonetheless, the article shows that the achievement of these benefits were highly dependent on significant changes in the governance of the city. These changes provided the process with enough political support and resources which made easier the involvement of a significant amount of residents and increased the influence these had in the processes.

Based on the content and findings of the article two main ideas were developed in this thesis. The first concerned the reliance that participatory processes have on contextual factors for achieving their full potentiality. In the case of the *PUI-Nororiental*, these factors were changes in governance, political support and availability of resources. The second idea concerned the difficulties of taking to practice ideal principles promoted in theory.

4.2 Article II: Social processes in the production of public spaces - Structuring forces and actors in the renewal of a deprived neighbourhood in Barcelona

The main purpose of Article II is to illustrate how social, economic and political processes influence decision-making processes within public space projects. This purpose aimed at contributing to the understanding of the reality and challenges of participatory processes (see Section 2.1.2). Also, developing the findings of Article I concerning the way that these processes are influenced by the contexts in which they are located. For doing so, the article introduces an institutionalist understanding to the production of public spaces whereby emphasis is placed on the analysis of structuring forces and actors that operate in the context of each urban project. This institutionalist understanding is applied in the analysis of the *TPLM* urban renewal project in Barcelona.

The result of the analysis shows differences and conflicts between the structuring forces and the different actors operating in the project. It also shows how such interaction led to the prioritisation of the interest and claims of some actors and the exclusion of others. This resulted in significant challenges for the project's participatory processes and for the use and value of the public spaces that were made by the project. Based on this, the article brings forward the differences, conflicts and power relations that are commonly found in public space projects and in their decision-making processes. The article

concludes by stressing the need a higher awareness of the broader social, political and economic processes that influence and condition public space's decision-making processes. Furthermore, it emphasises the need to better understand and address the differences and conflicts of interests, values and claims found in public space projects and the power relations that characterise their decision-making processes.

Based on the content and findings of the article, two main ideas were developed in this thesis. The first is that a deeper understanding of the reality of participatory processes shows how these are highly influenced by forces and actors that operate at different scales, at different times and through different means. This means that participatory processes are conditioned and affected by processes as well as interests, values and claims that are outside the actual process, often beyond the control of the practitioners who are in charge of them. The second idea is that in contexts and projects that comprise a diverse range of actors or that aim at solving multifaceted problems, the interaction between forces and actors can lead to deep differences, conflicts and power relations that challenge the participatory processes and reduces the influence that local communities have in decision-making. Based on these ideas, the research adopted its understanding of public spaces as places of struggles where a wide variety of forces and actors interact (combine, conflict and oppress) in order to determine who controls them, who has access to them and who determines how they are developed. This became one of the main premises for understanding the challenges of participation in the planning and design of public spaces.

4.3 Article III: Rethinking participation – A critical examination of participation in the planning and design of public spaces

The main purpose of Article III was to theoretically argue and empirically illustrate the gap between the ideals and reality of participation. Building on the findings of Articles II and III and following the critical research approach to theory, Article III engages in a review of three of the core principles promoted in the literature for achieving genuine participatory processes: inclusiveness, balancing of power and consensus building. This is done by a detailed understanding of differences, conflicts and power relations in public space projects and a discussion on how these can hinder decision-making processes from being genuinely participatory. The discussion is based on the analysis of the participatory process of the *TPLM* urban renewal project in Barcelona.

The differences, conflicts and power relations that are theoretically discussed and empirically illustrated in the article, bring forward the *politics* that are present in the real life practice of participation in the planning and design of public spaces. The analysis of the *TPLM*'s participatory process serves to show how the theoretical ideals and principles of participation are not sufficient for dealing with such *politics*. As such the article concludes by stressing that there is the need to engage and ground the knowledge and practice of participation in the actual *politics* of participatory decision-making in planning and urban design, rather than on ideal understandings of participation.

Based on the content and findings of the article, two main ideas were developed in this thesis. The first is that the differences, conflicts and power relations that were found in the case of the *TPLM* echoed broader theoretical discussions about current challenges within planning and urban design practices. Particularly discussions about the challenges that resulted from the pluralisation and multiculturalisation of western societies, and the primacy of market oriented goals in planning and design practices. This became another of the main premises for understanding the challenges of participation in the planning and design of public spaces. The second idea is the need to develop a new approach to the theorisation of participation in the planning and design of public spaces grounded on the *politics* of public spaces and of decision-making. This became the main purpose of this thesis and is what underpins the theoretical positions presented in Chapter 5.

4.4 Synthesis of articles and their contribution

Table 1 in this section offers a synthesised version of the three articles. It contains their point of departure, the methods that were used, and the main theories and theoretical concepts that were discussed in them. An outline of their main findings and their contribution to this thesis and to the research field is also provided. The table together with the summary of the articles that were presented in the previous sections serves as the platform for the theoretical positions developed in the next chapter.

Table 1. *Synthesis of articles, main findings and contribution. The text in italic highlights the theories and ideas developed in Chapters 5 (Theoretical Positions) and 6 (Discussion). (to be continued in the next page)*

| | Point of departure | Method | Theory | Findings and contribution |
|-------------------|---|---|---|--|
| Article I | Need to learn and share experiences of projects that have included local communities in planning and design processes | Case study methodology: analysis of official and unofficial documents and media material; unstructured interviews; field visits | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Communicative / collaborative planning theory: ideals and critiques</i> - Participation in urban upgrading/renewal | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Participatory processes can potentially result in benefits beyond well valued physical improvements - <i>Success of participation conditioned to changes in governance</i> - <i>Practicalities of participation leads to exclusion of actors, topics and solutions</i> |
| Article II | Need to understand how decision-making within the planning and design of public spaces are influenced by broader social, political and economic processes | Case study methodology: unstructured and semi-structured interviews; field visits; analysis of official and unofficial documents and media material | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Social production of space and place</i> - Institutional analysis of place and space - <i>Structuring forces and actors interaction and its influence on the development of public space</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Public spaces conditioned to the structuring forces and the different actors operating in each time/space context</i> - <i>Interaction between structuring forces and actors can lead to differences and conflicts of interests, values and claims</i> - <i>Interaction between structuring forces and actors determine power relations between actors</i> - <i>Differences, conflicts and power relations can significantly challenge participatory process</i> |

Table 1. *Synthesis of articles, main findings and contribution (continued)*

| Article III | Point of departure | Method | Theory | Findings and contribution |
|--------------------|---|--|--|---|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Need better understanding of how differences and conflicts of interests, values and power relations challenge participatory process - Need better understanding of the limited implementation of theoretical ideals and principles | <p>Case study methodology: unstructured, semi-structured and in-depth interviews; field visits; analysis of official and unofficial documents and media material</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Participation in urban design and landscape architecture theory</i> - <i>Difference and conflicting use and value of public spaces</i> - <i>Power-knowledge rationalities</i> - <i>Power-communication rationalities</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Reality of participatory processes increasing characterised by differences, conflicts and power relations</i> - <i>Recognition of the political nature of participatory planning and design processes</i> - <i>Ideal principles are not sufficient for addressing the type of politics present in complex context and projects</i> |

5 Theoretical Positions

This chapter presents a theoretical understanding of the challenges of participation in the planning and design of public spaces. Following the research strategy of iterating between empirical material and theory (see Section 2.1) the theoretical ideas presented in this chapter are the result of the empirical work and the development of the theoretical work that resulted while conducting the case studies. The purpose of this chapter is to provide the theoretical grounding for the main findings of the research and the contribution presented in Chapters 6 and 7.

Based on the findings and contributions of the articles, this thesis argues that for theoretically understanding the challenges of participation in the planning and design of public spaces it is essential to recognise that public space planning and design practices are deeply and inevitably *political*. Two main premises serve as the basis for comprehending the *politics* of such practices. Firstly, is the recognition that the city and its public spaces are places of struggles where a wide variety of forces and actors interact (combine, conflict and oppress) in order to determine who controls them, who has access to them and who determines how they are developed. And secondly, that in today's social, economic and political context, the growing pluralistic and multicultural nature of cities and neighbourhoods, and the primacy of market oriented goals in planning and design practices has made decision-making processes in public space projects to be increasingly complex and immersed and confronted by different and often conflicting interests, values, claims and power relations. These premises, and thus the *politics* of public spaces and their decision-making processes, are developed in the following two sections.

5.1 Differences, conflicts and the politics of public space

The empirical and theoretical work of the case studies brought forward the social constructionist perspective of *space* and *place*, in which it is established that different forces¹³ and actors¹⁴ interact (combine, conflict and oppress) in order to determine how public spaces develop (Cuthbert, 2006; Massey, 2005; Bentley, 1999; Madanipour, 1996; Castells, 1993; Lefebvre, 1991). From the global economy, political agendas and the dominant planning and design paradigm to the interests and claims of the actors that regulate, finance and produce an urban project; from the political and economic discourses and agendas guiding the development of a specific neighbourhood to the way that different individuals, groups and institutions value and use it, it is the interaction between these different forces and actors that creates the lenses through which problems are understood and solutions are framed within a decision-making process. This interaction is ultimately reflected in decisions concerning the type of public spaces that are developed, allowing certain forms of collective/social behaviour, uses and functions, and facilitating certain forms of movements, users, relations to the environment, aesthetics or attachments, while excluding or hindering others. This perspective, challenges the narrow view of public space planning and design as practices that are dependent exclusively on the ideas of a planner and a designer. It broadens the narrow focus on the binary interaction between experts and the public to a much more complex understanding of the decisions guiding the development of a public space. It also shows how decision-making processes are influenced by a wide variety of factors that most of the time outside the influence and control of the planner and the designer.

Based on the above, two main arguments are adopted in approaching the analysis the *politics of public space*: firstly that different actors claim public spaces in different ways based on their own interests and values; and secondly that these differences often lead to disagreements and conflicts as different actors make specific claims in order to carry out a desired activity or achieve a desired state (Hernandez, 2008; Madanipour, 2006; Carr *et al.*, 1992). Participatory processes are normally seen as the arenas where such differences and conflicts are mediated and balanced (Madanipour, 2010b; Matsuoka & Kaplan, 2008; McGlynn & Murrain, 1994). However, as will be explained

13. *Forces* in this thesis imply the resources, discourses, regulations and procedures that are present in a specific urban area and that guide the planning and urban design ideal, strategies and practices of a given urban project. (see Article II, pp.2-3, for a full description of the concept)

14. *Actors* in this thesis imply the individuals, groups or institutions that regulate, produce and use an urban environment, (see footnote 10, p. 42 and Article II, pp.3-4, for a full description of the concept).

below, because of recent social, political and economic shifts occurring in most western societies, the degree of these differences and conflicts has increased significantly making their mediation and balance more challenging.

Two main shifts in the social, political and economic contexts of western cities are identified by Watson (2006) and Sandercock (2003) as the cause for the increasing degree of differences and conflicts among the interests and values of different actors. The first one is the pluralistic and multicultural nature of most western cities, product of today's high rates of immigration and of the social and political recognition and strengthening of different social groups (e.g. low income, minorities, subcultures, etc.). The second one is the increasing primacy that neoliberal ideals and values have in the planning and design of the city. Based on these socio, political and economic shifts, Watson (2006) identifies two main, and interrelated, sources of deep difference which are important for the planning and design of the city and which in this study are considered to be relevant for the understanding of the challenges of participation in the planning and design of public spaces. The first is *inter-group differences*, brought about by the claims that different social groups (based on gender, age, class, ethnicity, lifestyle, world views, etc.) and actors (regulators, producers and users) have towards the city. The second one is *state-citizen differences*, referring to contrasts between today's hegemonic, technical and managerial political and planning systems, and the everyday needs and priorities of people. These sources of differences and conflicts, and their implications for the planning and design of public spaces will be presented in the following two sections.

5.1.1 Inter-group differences and public spaces

Inter-group differences and their implications to the conceptualization and understanding of space and place became one of the main focus of urban sociologists and geographers at the end of the XX century (Hubbard et al., 2004). According to McDowell (1997b) the increasing pluralistic and multicultural nature of cities shifted the traditional categories of identity and culture based on class and work, to other important constellations such as gender, sexuality, ethnicity, nationality, life style and self-image. This gave way to the recognition that *space* and *place* were by no means stable entities, with a single, pre-given identity (Massey, 1997). Instead they were experienced, used and valued differently by different people which made them to be relational and contingent as well as multiple and contested (Hubbard et al., 2004).

The multiple and contested nature of space and place can be seen in Wright's (1997) study of Stoke Newington; a district located in the northeast of

London, where an elderly white working-class coexists with a diversity of minority groups and an incoming young middle class. Based on the different values and uses that these different groups give to the neighbourhood, including its public spaces, Wright (1997) notes that nowadays “*people live in different - social and symbolic - worlds even though they share the same locality*; as such he argues that “*there is no single community or quarter*” (p.110). This notion is shared by Massey (1997) who argues that any local consciousness of place, should it exist, will be likely to differ widely in degree and nature between the different groups in an area. For Wright (1997) and Massey (1997, 2005), such differences cannot be considered without also raising questions of conflicts, domination and subordination “*for the worlds inhabited by some groups work against the needs and interests of others*” (Wright, 1997, p.110). This has led McDowell (1997a) to argue that “*places are by very definition exclusive*” (p.2).

In today’s context of increased plurality and multiculturalism, the multiple and contested nature of space and place has significant implications for the planning and design of public spaces (Gaffikin *et al.*, 2010; Low *et al.*, 2005; Rios, 2005; Thompson, 2002; Sandercock, 2000; Zukin, 1998). As argued by Massey (2005, p. 152) “*the tendency to romanticise public space as an emptiness which enables free and equal speech does not take on board the need to theorise space and place as the product of social relations which are most likely conflicting and unequal (...) From the greatest public square to the smallest public park, these places are a product of, and internally dislocated by, heterogeneous and sometimes conflicting social identities/relations*”. This can be seen in studies that draw attention to the challenges that can arise in the provision and management of public spaces due to the way that different social groups’ use of a public spaces overlaps and conflicts (Loukaitou-Sideris & Ehrenfeucht, 2009; Malone, 2002). Similarly it can be seen in the contrasting understanding of what different groups, including professionals, consider to be socially, culturally or ecologically significant (Ernstson, 2013; Low *et al.*, 2005), what they regard as aesthetically valuable (Mattila, 2002) or what they perceive as appropriate, safe or acceptable behaviour within a public space (Castell, 2010; Németh, 2006). In fact, Madanipour (2004) and Hernandez (2008) have shown how in neighbourhoods with a wide variety of social groups and a limited amount of public spaces, deep tensions and conflicts over how to develop and how to use these spaces are significantly present. A similar argument has resulted from critical analysis of policies promoting social mix and interaction between different classes and ethnic groups (see e.g. Walks & Maaranen, 2008; Galster, 2007; Ruming *et al.*, 2004).

Closely related to the way that different social groups value and use public spaces is the interests and requirements that actors (regulators, producers, users) have towards the way public spaces develop. The increasing recognition of the contribution that public spaces have to economic development, quality of life, cultural identity and climate change (see e.g. James *et al.*, 2009; CABE, 2004; Swanwick *et al.*, 2003; Sandström, 2002) adds to the differences and conflicts between different groups and actors. For example contact with nature can clash with recreational needs, economic goals or aesthetic preferences (Ernstson, 2013; Yli-Pelkonen & Niemelä, 2005; Gobster, 2001). Similarly, struggles often happen as different and contrasting interpretations, discourses and ideas on how to achieve sustainable urban environments often exist (Bradley, 2009). This is because when dealing with social, economic or ecological agendas, planners and designers often have to contend problems and solutions that are “*wicked*” (as noted by Biddulph, 2012). This means that they are multifaceted, difficult to define and infinitely malleable depending on the values and perspective of the actors or interests that concern, are involved in or have control over a decision-making process (Campbell, 2002; Rittel & Webber, 1973).

Although different actors may value the role that public spaces have in contributing to better living conditions, to overcome climate change or to achieve sustainable urban environments, their understanding of these issues, of what needs to be prioritised with them and how they are translated into specific planning and design actions may be quite different and contradictory (Ernstson, 2013; Thompson, 2002). For example, while “sustainable development” has become the ethical framework around which planning and design of public spaces is centred, such framework is often shaped in ways that favour economic interests and agendas of political, economic or cultural elites or a few powerful actors (e.g. Pomeroy, 2011; Foster, 2005; Sandercock, 2003). This can also be seen in the way that “place-making” has increasingly become a narrative at the service of economic interests, aiming at attracting specific types of users (tourists, shoppers, affluent residents) and prompt economic return (Aravot, 2002; Turner, 2002). The high influence that elites and market oriented goals have in the way public spaces are developed today is closely related to Watson’s (2006) second source of deep difference: “state–citizen” differences. These differences are discussed in the next section.

5.1.2 State-citizen differences and public spaces

According to Watson the deep differences and conflicts that exists between today's hegemonic, technical and managerial political and planning systems, and the everyday needs and priorities of people, has its foundation on the

replacement of the Welfare State with what is known as neoliberalism¹⁵. The reason why this replacement becomes a main source of deep difference is that it has introduced a new set of values that makes all spheres of life (including the political and the personal) to be submitted to an economic or market rationality (Baeten, 2011; Watson, 2006). This means that all actions, including planning and design practices, become rational entrepreneurial actions, seen in terms of the logic of supply and demand. For Watson (2006), and others (e.g. Brenner *et al.*, 2012b; Swyngedouw, 2010; Low & Smith, 2006), this represents a deep conflict with citizenry values, including individual liberties, freedom of expression, collaborative power sharing, political participation, economic and social equity and a concern for the natural environment.

The new set of values that have been introduced by the neoliberal ideology has had significant implications for the planning and design of cities, including its public spaces (Brenner *et al.*, 2012b; Baeten, 2011; Swyngedouw, 2010; Low & Smith, 2006; Massey, 2005). Several scholars argue that rather than being a proper coherent ideology, neoliberalism has become an internalised strategy, an approach of looking at and doing things within planning and urban design (Baeten, 2011; Brenner & Theodore, 2005). According to Baeten (2011), the result of internalising market principles means that profit maximisation, minimum public intervention, authoritarian top-down interventions, negation or low prioritization of social and environmental issues, privatization of public land and maximum private initiative are becoming some of the new guidelines for planning and urban design. This also includes the ideas and values of planners and designers who as argued by Van Deusen (2002) have moved from the utopian visions of the 1960's and 70's that sought to ameliorate society's ills, to design strategies that reflect today's capitalist market.

Within planning and urban design's new logic of economic and market rationality, any space in the city, including public spaces, is a potential space for profit and inextricably linked to commodity exchange (Low & Smith, 2006; Van Deusen, 2002; Harvey, 2001). This varies according to the strategic or non-strategic location that a public space has in the city. Nonetheless, within this new logic if public spaces ought to exist these have to be planned and designed in certain ways which allows them to equal the economic value of other land uses or activities that render higher profit on private or public capital investment (e.g. housing, commercial areas, roads or parking spaces). Consequently, against their social, cultural, democratic or ecological relevance and utility, public spaces and their constitutive socio-spatial forms are now

15. It is important to note that this replacement has been highly uneven and locally particular within western cities and has been articulated in a great variety of ways (Watson, 2006)

sculpted and continually reorganised in order to enhance their profit-making capacities of capital (Brenner *et al.*, 2012a; Low & Smith, 2006). Such reorganization is what is now known as the commodification of public space (Carmona, 2010; Harvey, 2005; Van Deusen, 2002) and seen in the increasing commercialisation, privatisation, homogenisation and regularization of public life and public spaces through planning, design and management practices (Madanipour, 2010a; Mitchell, 2003; Turner, 2002; Zukin, 1998).

Examples of the primacy of economic or market rationality and values in the planning and design of public spaces can be seen in Loukaitou-Sideris' and Banerjee's (1998) and Turner's (2002) studies of North American downtowns. In these studies they claim that public spaces are a product of purposeful design actions that have effectively sought to shape space according to the needs of a consumerist economy. For Turner (2002), Times Square is perhaps the clearest illustration of this, where he argues that the commodification and privatization generated in this "public space" has gone from raunchy to family-friendly. Similarly, it can be seen in Hou's (2010b) examples of public spaces around the world that are highly privatised and regulated despite their rhetoric of openness and publicness; or in cities where the lack of proper (investment in) public spaces has made shopping malls to become the preferred "public place" for spending a day with the family (Voyce, 2006; Erkip, 2003; Abaza, 2001). Another example, closely related to the market rationality and behind the planning and design of public spaces, can be seen in Madanipour's (2004) study of a wide range of European cities, where he claims that public spaces that are strategically located are the focus of much attention and investment, whereas marginal public spaces located in low income or immigrant suburbs are commonly places of neglect and decline.

According to Brenner *et al.* (2012a) profit-oriented strategies of urban restructuring are intensely contested among dominant, subordinate, and marginal social forces. For them urban space, which includes public space, is continually shaped and reshaped through a relentless clash of opposed social forces, interests and values oriented towards different agendas such as economic benefits, environmental performance, everyday social relations, and so forth. An example of such contestation and clashes can be seen in the high amount of NIMBY (Not In My Back Yard), LULUS (Locally unwanted land use) and NOOS (Not On Our Street) actions that characterise planning and design processes nowadays (van Dijk & van der Wulp, 2010; Schively, 2007). It can also be seen in the unprecedented growth of guerrilla or DIY urbanism initiatives and public space activism movements which defy the way that cities' public spaces are nowadays developed and managed and their struggle

for creating alternative social and spatial environments and relationships (Hou, 2010b).

The differences and conflicts that characterise the politics of public space today, suggests that attention needs to be given to the way that certain agendas, interests and values become predominant or are excluded in a decision-making process. Central to this, is that the differences that were described above are inevitably interpenetrated by power (Watson, 2006; Massey, 2005). Such power creates the lenses through which problems are understood and solutions are framed while at the same time excluding or hindering others. The way that power operates in decision-making processes becomes central in the theoretical understanding of the challenges of participation in the planning and design of public spaces. This will be explained in the following section.

5.2 Power and the politics of decision-making

When discussing issues of power it is important to distinguish between those that address power with a focus on what they normatively would like to see happen and those unveiling the way that power shapes decision-making processes in planning and urban design (Flyvbjerg, 2002; Bentley, 1999). According to Hou and Rios (2003), proponents of participation in urban design and landscape architecture have mainly focused on the normative side of power discussions, with a narrow focus on the binary interaction between experts and the public. While such focus maybe useful for telling what to do at the moment of facilitating the interactions within decision-making process, this thesis argues that such focus overlooks the reality of how decisions guiding the development of public spaces are shaped and influenced by the broader forces and wide variety of actors that operate around a public space project.

In his discussion of the relation between power and urban form Bentley (1999) presents a range of understandings of the way that power influences the decisions that result from planning and urban design processes. He uses the metaphor of a “battlefield” to explain the complex interactions that shapes the decisions which lead to one specific type of physical and social urban environment and not another. For Bentley, built form is generated through the interaction between a wide range of actors, each with access to different levels and sources of power, which include economic or political power, valued knowledge or socio/cultural capital. Within such interaction the various actors deploy their power in the best ways they can devise in attempts to create specific physical and social urban environments.

Different actors have different power and influence capacity, which affects which and whose interests or values are included or excluded from an urban

project (Bentley, 1999; Flyvbjerg, 1998b; McGlynn & Murrain, 1994). The influence capacity of different actors is highly dependent, among others, on the political agendas of a given context, on the source or manner by which an urban project is funded, on the professional discourses and ideas that guide planning and urban design practices in a given city, on the capacity of organization and mobilization that they count on (Cuthbert, 2006). For example depending on whether a public space project is based on discourses that give primacy to economic benefits some actors will receive reinforcing signals that give their interests and values a greater power while diminishing those that may give priority to a project's environmental performance or the social relations it creates. Thus, a project may prioritise some of these issues leading to desired effects for some parties but undesirable effects for others (Maruani & Amit-Cohen, 2007; Foster, 2005). Similarly, depending on whether a public space project is public or privately financed there will be a greater or lesser number of actors included in decision-making processes or there will be more or less restrictions on which topics or discussions these processes may handle or allow (Madanipour, 2010b). Based on this, Bentley's (1999) understanding of the relation between power and urban form can be extended from the interaction of the various actors to include a broader interaction of these with the economic and political interest and agendas that operate in the context of a given city and in a given urban area. As mentioned in the previous section, this interaction will result in specific public space solutions that allow certain forms of collective and social behaviour, uses and functions and prioritise certain forms of movements, users, relations to the environment or aesthetics, while excluding or hindering others.

The above can be related to the more profound understanding of power and its influence in the knowledge, information and ideas that guide decision making processes. Within this understanding, power prioritises knowledge that supports its objectives, while ignores or suppresses knowledge that goes against it (Flyvbjerg, 2002). Through the inclusion and exclusion of knowledge, or information, power frames specific ways by which problems are understood, creates boundaries on possible solutions and determines how results are evaluated during a planning and design process. The relation between power and knowledge can be seen in the strong influence of economic agendas in today's urban policies and how these condition the way public spaces are planned and design. More specifically it can be seen in examples shown in the previous section about how frameworks such as "sustainable development" or "place-making" are often shaped in ways that favour economic agendas, certain elite sectors of a community or a few powerful actors (e.g. Carr, 2012; Pomeroy, 2011; Foster, 2005; Aravot, 2002).

An even deeper understanding of power shows how power relations also occur when participants interact or communicate with one another during the participation processes (Pløger, 2001; Flyvbjerg, 1998a). Within communication, be it through speech, drawings or actions, there are power mechanisms related to language and modes of communication that are difficult to overcome or even anticipate. Other ways in which power is present in decision-making processes can be seen when choosing the type of methods or techniques that will allow the interaction of different actors or the gathering of opinions and claims. It is present at the moment of setting the agenda and topics for discussion, at the moment of guiding the direction of a discussion, or when interpreting the opinions or information that should serve as input for making decisions. While proponents of participatory processes may argue that in order to remove or balance power, the framework and the conditions for the process have to be agreed upon (Thompson, 2009; Sanoff, 2000), this happens only exceptionally. Methods are chosen based on the resources available for a project; agendas, discussions and outcomes are conditioned and framed by city or political strategies and visions, developers' interests, planning and design regulations or trends and discourses guiding urban development in a specific time/space context.

Based on the theoretical discussion in this section, this thesis argues that the differences, conflicts and power relations that characterise many public space projects today and their decision-making processes, represent a major challenge for participatory processes within the planning and design of public spaces. Particularly for processes that are based on ideal and uncritical understandings and acceptance of principles such as inclusiveness, power-balance and consensus-building. It is also argued, that the deep understanding of the politics of public space and of the politics of decision-making, represent a major challenge to the theories that were presented in Section 3.1.2. Particularly since these mainly focus on the binary interaction between the expert and a harmonised public, they seldom discuss the complexity of the processes behind the decisions guiding the development of a public space, they rarely give a deep account of the contested and conflictual possibilities that rise when involving more actors in decision-making, and of the different ways by which power operates in decision-making (these arguments will be further developed in Chapter 6).

The *political* understanding of public spaces and their decision-making processes discussed in this chapter form the theoretical understanding of the challenges of participation. They also form the main positions that support and ground the empirical and theoretical findings that are discussed in the next chapter and the theoretical contribution of this thesis.

6 Presentation and Discussion of Findings

This section presents and discusses the main empirical and theoretical findings of the research. Following the iterative research strategy, the findings are structured in relation to the questions that guided the empirical work and its theoretical discussions (see Section 1.2). In this way, this chapter intends to create a theoretical engagement with the theories that were presented in Section 3.1.2. In Section 6.1, the findings related to the five empirical research questions serve as the empirical basis for the debate. In Section 6.2, the responses to the theoretical research questions engage fully in such debate, identifying the implications of the research findings for theory and practice and outlining directions for future research and theoretical development. In this last section the order of the theoretical research questions has been reorganised (as follows: TRQ2, TRQ3 and TRQ1) in order to facilitate the development of the theoretical debate and its conclusion when addressing the main research question of this study.

6.1 Empirical findings

6.1.1 ERQ1 - How were the public space projects and their participatory processes framed and conducted?

Articles I (pp. 4-5), II (p. 5) and III (pp. 4-5) provide a description and analysis of the main ideas framing the public space projects and the participatory processes of the *PUI-Nororiental* and the *TPLM*. The articles show how at a general level both cases were framed based on an integrated and participatory approach that aimed at combining physical improvements with social programmes and where the involvement of residents in the planning and design process was considered highly necessary for solving the physical and social problems of the neighbourhoods. However, when using the theoretical

premises that were established in the beginning of Chapter 5, a comparison of the analyses made in the articles shows one main difference between the two projects. As it will be explained below, this difference had significant implications for the way that the integrated and participatory approach of the cases were implemented and thus to how the public space projects and the participatory processes were conducted. The difference was seen in the interaction between the forces and actors operating at the city scale, and the actors operating at the neighbourhood scale. Particularly in the alignment and divergence that existed between the political and economic interests and agendas of the city (and their implications for the projects), and the needs, values and claims of the residents and users of the neighbourhoods.

Article I shows how in the *PUI-Nororiental* there was a strong alignment between the two above mentioned scales. This alignment is seen in the politician's and thus the project's interest and agenda of solving in a direct way the everyday problems of residents and the use of this as strategy for improving the international image of Medellin (pp. 4-5). This alignment made the participatory process one of the three main components of the project's integrated approach, giving it a significant role in the overall decision-making process and providing it with enough resources (time, money, personnel and expertise) and political and professional support (as shown in Article I, p. 4-5). This allowed the conduction of a great number of participatory activities, combined with community activities that attracted a greater number of residents. It also increased the influence that residents had over the decisions guiding the improvements of the neighbourhood's public spaces and allowed the community to become highly involved during all the stages of the project (Article I, pp. 5-8). Consequently, the public space projects were conducted reflecting significantly resident's values and claims.

Article II (pp. 11-13), on the other hand, shows how in the *TPLM* there was a divergence between the above mentioned scales, seen in the priority given to consolidating a city scale strategy and using this as the main solution for tackling the everyday problems of residents. This divergence led to public space solutions that gave priority to city scale interests focusing on economic development and global competitiveness (e.g. large scale physical interventions and attracting new high-class residents, users and activities) rather than responding directly to the needs, values and claims of the existing residents (Article II, pp. 12-13, Article III p. 10). Consequently, the participatory process was given low priority, which limited its resources and its influence in the final decisions that guided the improvements made to the neighbourhood's public spaces. This despite the efforts made by the practitioners that were in charge of the process and the different participatory activities they conducted.

These findings relate to the theoretical discussions about the *politics of public space* that were presented in Section 5.1. The comparison between the two projects illustrates the different implications for a public space project and its participatory process of the *state-citizen differences* and the *inter-group differences* that form such politics nowadays. The latter particularly in terms of the differences between actors (regulators, producers and users) as discussed in Section 5.1.1. The findings discussed here show how such differences can vary according to the strategic or non-strategic location of a public space and to the degree in which the neoliberal rationality is internalised in the political interests and agendas, and the planning and design practices that operate in a given context (as referred by Baeten, 2011 and described in Section 5.1.2). This will be developed further in the next section when answering ERQ2 and in Section 6.2.1 and 6.2.2 when discussing TRQ2 and TRQ3.

6.1.2 ERQ2 - Which factors influenced the public space projects and their participatory process?

Based on the theoretical premises that were established in Chapter 5 the factors that influence a public space project and their participatory processes are understood here as the structuring forces (resources, discourses, regulations and procedures) and the interests, values and claims of the actors (regulators, producers and users) that operate in a given context. The differences between the two case studies that were presented in the previous section and that will be developed below, illustrate two different ways in which structuring forces and actors, and more specifically their interaction, influenced the public space projects and their participatory processes.

In the case of the *PUI-Nororiental*, the main *resources* of the project originated from the local municipality. This, together with the strong goals that the presiding mayor had on poverty alleviation, social inclusion, and spatial integration (see Article I, pp. 4-5), made the political and professional discourses guiding the *PUI-Nororiental* and the actors (regulators and producers) that implemented them to be reasonably aligned with the interests and values of the residents of the neighbourhood (users). Both the source of the resources and the focus of the discourses of the *PUI-Nororiental* facilitated changes in the planning and design regulations and procedures, giving the participatory processes the significant role, support and influence that was described in the previous section (6.1.1).

Article II (pp. 5-7), on the other hand, shows a much more complex interaction between the structuring forces and actors operating in the context of the *TPLM*. The location of the neighbourhood within a strategic area of Barcelona highly valued by the real estate market increased the number of

actors affected by and interested in the renewal of the neighbourhood. This added new interests and claims to the project (regional and metropolitan political agendas, economic interests and opportunities, pressure from the real estate market, specific planning and design tendencies) that conflicted with those of the existing residents (as shown in Article II, pp. 11-13). Furthermore, because of the strategic location of the neighbourhood, planning and design practices were highly influenced by the neoliberal rationality that was discussed in Section 5.1.2 (as shown in Article II, pp. 5-6). This led to specific resources, discourses, regulations and procedures that as shown in the previous section (6.1.1) gave priority to city scale interests and limited the role and influence of the participatory process in the overall decision-making process.

These findings help to illustrate more in detail the *political* nature of planning and design practices presented in Chapter 5. They show how public space projects and participatory processes are conditioned by the way that forces and actors interact and the power relations that result from such interaction. Furthermore, they show how these interactions are significantly determined by their contexts. Depending, for example on the city, the location of the neighbourhood, the social configuration of its residents and users, or the period in time where there is a specific political or economic ideology, the *inter-group* and *state-citizen differences* that were discussed in Section 5.1 and the power relations that were discussed in Section 5.2 can be more or less significant. These ideas will be developed further in Section 6.2.1 when discussing TRQ2.

6.1.3 ERQ3 - How was the local community involved in the participatory process and what was the influence that it had in the decisions guiding the improvements made to the public spaces?

Articles I (pp. 72-75) and III (pp. 102-104) show the different ways in which local communities were involved in the *PUI-Nororiental* and the *TPLM*. In both projects the participatory process combined a variety of participatory methods and activities in order to involve, consult and inform as many residents as possible. In line with the methods that are commonly found in the literature (see Section 3.1.1), workshops and field visits were used to discuss problems and solutions; public hearings, information events and information in media were used to consult and inform a wider range of residents of the decisions that were being taken.

A difference between the two projects, however, was the number and type of residents that were invited to the workshops where decisions about problems and solutions were discussed. In the *PUI-Nororiental* because of the significant role that the processes had within the project (see Section 6.1.1), the workshops

that were organised, consisted of open events where anyone from the community could participate and express their ideas. These workshops were combined with community activities in order to make more residents participate. They were also complemented by smaller workshops with community leaders and representatives (*Community Committees*) in order to verify that the ideas that were discussed with the wider community were included in the analyses and proposals. Furthermore, they involved actors (regulators and producers) from the municipality in order to discuss the feasibility of the claims and guarantee that the resulting proposals would be implemented (see Article I, pp. 5-7).

Due to the limitations that were discussed in Section 6.1.1, the workshops of the *TPLM* involved small representative groups of the neighbourhood (community organisations and teenagers) working separately with each of them in both analyses and proposals (Article III, pp. 5-6). Complementary workshops and other participatory activities that aimed at bringing all actors (regulators, producers and users) together were also planned. However, because of the unwillingness of some actors to participate and the lack of resources that were available for the processes these activities never took place (Article III, pp. 6-7).

The difference between the two projects was mainly due to the contextual differences of the two cases that have been discussed in the previous two sections (6.1.1 and 6.1.2). Particularly the political agendas, the presiding planning and design regulations and procedures, the amount and diversity of actors which needed to be involved, the social dynamics that existed between them, their willingness to participate in the process and the disposition that they had of collaborating and giving up their power. All this affecting the role, support and influence that the participatory processes had, and the complexity of the amount of interests, values, claims and power relations that needed to be handled and balanced (see sections 6.1.1 and 6.1.2 for a description of these issues in the two cases).

These findings relate to the theoretical discussions about the *politics of decision-making* that were discussed in Section 5.2. They show how despite the use of common participatory methods, the involvement of residents and other actors, and the influence capacity that participatory processes achieve is significantly conditioned by contextual factors that are often outside the control of the practitioners that manage the process. This finding challenges the strong procedural emphasis of the prevailing theories and literature of participation that were presented in Sections 3.1.1 and 3.1.2. Particularly their focus on what happens mainly within the participatory process and between the professionals and the public. Also, on the emphasis that part of this literature has on creating

and promoting standardised procedures and methods. This will be developed further in Sections 6.2.2 and 6.2.3 when discussing TRQ2 and TRQ1.

6.1.4 ERQ4 - What challenges came about during the participatory processes?

Articles I (pp. 10-11), II (p. 12) and III (pp. 7-10) present the wide variety of challenges that came about during the participatory process of the *PUI-Nororiental* and the *TPLM*. These can be classified in three main categories of challenges.

The first category corresponds to the *difficulties of involving all sectors of the local community in the participatory process*, questioning the representativeness and validity of the information, opinions and claims collected during the process. In the case of the *PUI-Nororiental* the participation of all sectors of the local community was challenged by the large scale of the neighbourhood, the fact that participation in these activities was on a voluntary basis and that no efforts were made to guarantee that all vested interests of the community were represented (see Article I, p. 11). In the case of the *TPLM* this challenge was based on the mistrust that residents had towards the public authorities and the suspicion that their participation would not make any difference. Also based on people's lack of time, their tendency to act when changes are happening or when these affect them in a negative way, and the unwillingness of some actors to collaborate with others (see Article III, pp. 7-8). In addition to this was the limited availability of resources, which led the organisers of the process to focus only on certain groups and actors in order to make the process operational (see Article III, pp. 5-6).

The second category of challenges is based on *the differences between the different actors involved in, interested in or affected by the project*. This led to strong conflicts over what to prioritise in the decision-making process and over what kind of solutions should be implemented. Three sources of differences, and resulting conflicts, can be identified in the two case studies. The first corresponds to the clash between residents' prioritisation of social issues and the projects' focus or prioritisation on physical problems and solutions. As shown in Article I (p. 11), II (p. 11) and III (pp. 7-9), these differences and conflicts were present in both projects (although in a different degree) where residents raised and prioritised issues that were difficult or not possible to discuss or resolve during the participatory process. This, either because of the scope of the projects (as in the case of the *PUI-Nororiental*) or because of the interests and agendas that conditioned them (as in the case of the *TPLM*).

The second source of differences and conflicts corresponds to the different and contrasting ways that different groups used and valued the neighbourhood's public spaces. This was particularly found in the case of the

TPLM, product of the pluralistic and multicultural character of the neighbourhood and the strong fragmentation that existed between the different social groups living in it (as shown in Article III, pp. 7-10). As shown in Sections 6.1.1 and 6.1.2, the third source of differences and conflicts was based on the contrasts that existed between the actors operating at the neighbourhood scale (users) and at the city scale (regulators and producers). Again this was particularly found in the case of the *TPLM*, due mainly to the location of the neighbourhood in an area that was strategic for the development of Barcelona and that was highly attractive for real estate investment. This made the *TPLM* to be influenced by powerful interests and actors that minimised the influence that residents had on how their public spaces should be developed and managed (Article II, p. 9-12; Article III, pp. 7-10).

The third category of challenges was in *the processes' incapability of controlling and balancing the power relations among the different actors*, leading to the prioritisation and exclusion of certain problems and solutions. This challenge was identified at two levels. The first level corresponds to the power relations determined by factors beyond the control of the participatory process which could condition or omit the results of these processes. An example of this was found in the case of the *TPLM* and on the way in which the political agendas, the city strategies and plans and the interests of powerful actors limited the influence that the residents had over the decisions guiding the improvements of their neighbourhoods (Article II, pp. 9-12; Article III, pp. 8-10). The second level corresponds to the power relations existing within the participatory process. This can be seen in the case of the *TPLM* in the way that powerful groups and actors were unwilling to abandon their power and capacity of influence, or their control over what decisions were prioritised and how they were implemented. Also in the power exercised by the practitioners that were in charge of the process and the ways that their tacit knowledge, inherent values, and their need to follow specific policies and assignments (consciously or unconsciously) affected the development of the participatory process and its outcomes (Article III, pp. 8-10).

These findings help to further illustrate the *politics of public space* and the *politics of decision-making* presented in Chapter 5, showing how *inter-group* and *state-citizen differences* and the conflicts and different types of power relations that result from them can affect a public space project and its participatory process. Furthermore, they show how these differences, conflicts and power relations challenge the main principles that are promoted in the literature and theories presented in Sections 3.1.1 and 3.1.2. This points towards the need of a much more critical reflection and understanding of the conceptualisation of these principles, of how can they be implemented and of

their overall applicability. It also highlights the importance of giving discussions of difference, conflicts and power, such as the one presented in Chapter 5, a much more significant role in the theorisation of participation in the planning and design of public spaces. This will be developed further in the Section 6.2.2 and 6.2.3 when discussing TRQ3 and TRQ1.

6.1.5 ERQ5 - How does the local community value their involvement in the planning and design processes?

Articles I (pp. 9-10) and III (p. 10) show how in both projects the residents that participated in the planning and design process valued significantly their involvement in these processes. In the case of the *PUI-Nororiental* the design of the participatory activities as a place to discuss the future of the area and as an arena where the community could get together, and where trust and relations between its inhabitants could be strengthened, was highly valued by the residents. Adding to this was the active role of community organisations during the process and their contribution in the social activities that took place parallel to the participatory process (Article I, p. 9-10). In the case of the *TPLM*, participants also valued the capacity building goals of the process which provided them with information, technical knowledge and tools that allowed them to analyse their territory and make feasible proposals (Article III, p. 10).

Nonetheless, the case of the *TPLM* shows that even if participants valued the good intentions and results that were achieved during the process, this was overshadowed by the fact that their ideas and proposals did not have a direct impact over the improvements that were done in the neighbourhood's public spaces or were handled in other ways than how the participants had proposed or expected. This was reinforced by the fact that despite the high quality of the new public spaces these have not contributed in a significant way to solving the problems that residents considered to be critical (see Article II pp.9-11).

The findings show that more than the way that a participatory process is conducted or the knowledge and capacity that their participants obtain, what is given a higher value by participants is realising that their claims were taken into consideration and that they notably influenced the improvements that are made in a neighbourhood's public spaces. Also, that these improvements respond to their needs and values. This shows the importance of broadening the focus of practical and theoretical discussions that centre on what happens within the participatory process. It also points towards the need to find ways to critically evaluate participatory processes, without suggesting that all processes that give a voice to a community or make efforts to involve it in the planning and design process, represent successful examples of participation or of just

decision-making. This will be developed further in Section 6.2.3 when discussing TRQ1.

6.2 Discussion around the theoretical findings

6.2.1 TRQ2 - How does the political, economic and social context of a given place facilitate or hinder the way that participatory processes in the planning and design of public spaces are carried out?

This thesis has theoretically argued (see Chapter 5) and empirically demonstrated (see Article II and Section 6.1) that public space projects and their participatory processes are influenced by the interaction between the structuring forces and the actors that operate in each urban project. The empirical findings (see Section 6.1) show how the characteristics of such forces and the number and variety of actors, including their different interests, values and claims, are determined by the political, economic and social contexts in which the public space projects and their participatory processes take place. They are determined by the political and professional ideologies, procedures, strategies and goals that preside a certain time and that are established for a specific urban area (political context); by the economic order, interests and real estate dynamics that exist in it (economic context); and by the different driving dynamics, need, interests, values and attachments of the different individuals, groups and/or institutions that live, use or have a specific interest in such area, and the relations that exist among them (social context).

The differences in the political, economic and social contexts of the two projects (see Sections 6.1.1 and 6.1.2) serve to conceptualise at the theoretical level two different forms of interaction between the structuring forces affecting and guiding the projects, and the actors that were interested in or affected by them. As it will be explained below, these two forms of interaction, serve to theoretically explain how the political, economic and social context of a public space project facilitates or hinders the successful implementation of a participatory process as well as the role and influence that it has in the improvements made to a neighbourhood's public spaces.

The first form of interaction between forces and actors is conceptualised in this thesis as an *aligned interaction*. This form of interaction was found in the political, economic and social context of the *PUI-Nororiental*, where political and professional interests and agendas and the actors representing them (regulators and producers) were relatively in line with the interests, values and claims of a moderately homogenous local community (users); where there were no pressures from real estate markets or any other powerful economic

interests funding the project, reducing the number of powerful actors and allowing the political and professional agendas to be executed without any divergences; and where the interests and claims of the different actors that were involved in the process were aiming at the same goals and were in line with the principles and ideas guiding the project.

Based on the empirical findings of this research, it can be argued that in contexts where there is an *aligned interaction* between structuring forces and actors, it becomes easier to manage the *politics of public spaces* and its *inter-group* and *state-citizen differences*, and the *politics of decision-making* with its different forms of power relations. This is because, alignments such as the ones that were found in the *PUI-Nororiental*, provide the processes with enough resources and political and social support; reduce the amount or variety of actors involved, affected or interested in a public space project; and make it easier for them to join a process, collaborate, discard their differences and let go of their power. As a result, there is a greater probability that the participatory process, and the actors that participate in it (especially the users), have a significant role and capacity of influence in the overall decision-making process of a public space project.

The second form of interaction between forces and actors is conceptualised in this thesis as a *divergent interaction*. This form of interaction was found in the political, economic and social context of the *TPLM*, where political and professional agendas and the actors representing them (regulators and producers) prioritised economically driven city scale interests over the values and claims of residents (users); where the resources of the project were based on different funders, public-private partnerships, and highly reliant on the real estate market, reinforcing the need of producing an urban environment for profit maximisation and adding powerful actors with specific interests and values; and where the pluralistic and multicultural nature of the neighbourhood increased even more the amount and variety actors (with their own interests, values and claims) that were affected by or interested in the public space project.

Based on the empirical findings of this research, it can be argued that in contexts where there is a *divergent interaction* between structuring forces and actors, the *politics of public spaces* and of *decision-making* becomes intensified, making it difficult to deal with *inter-group* and *state-citizen differences*, and the conflicts and power relations that can result from them. This is because, divergences such as the ones that were found in the *TPLM*, increase the amount or variety of actors with contrasting interest, values and claims; make it difficult for the participatory process to involve all the pertinent actors; limit their willingness to come together, collaborate, discard

their differences and give up their power; and can reduce the support and thus the resources available for a participatory process. As a result, the probability of a participatory process of having a significant role or capacity of influence in the overall decision-making process of a public space project is much lower or demands greater effort, resources and diligence.

The differences between the contexts of the two cases, the different types of interactions that they created and the different influence that they had on the participatory processes show the significant role that context plays in the successful or unsuccessful implementation of a participatory process. It shows how context determines the way that different forces and actors combine, conflict or oppress in order to determine how public spaces develop (as noted by Cuthbert, 2006; Massey, 2005; Bentley, 1999; Madanipour, 1996; Lefebvre, 1991, in broader discussions of the city's spaces and places). It also shows how contexts significantly influence the power (influence capacity) that different actors have over the development of public spaces, and how the differences and conflicts among them are handled (see Article II, pp. 11-13). While part of the prevailing literature and theories of participation in the planning and design of public spaces recognise the need of context-based approaches to participation, these are mainly based on the goals that a given project has or on the type of public or social groups that wants to be involved (see e.g. Carmona *et al.*, 2010; Roe & Rowe, 2007; Barton *et al.*, 2003; Sanoff, 2000; UDG, 1998). Rarely are there references to the broader and critical aspects of context such as the ones identified in this thesis. For instance, the presiding political and economic interests and agendas and the planning and design regulations, procedures and strategies of a given place; or how the social dynamics of a given city or neighbourhood may facilitate or hinder collective actions (see Sections 6.1.2 and 6.1.3). Similarly, case studies of “good” or “best-practice” participatory processes seldom make explicit reference to contextual factors, such as the availability of resources for the process, or the willingness of different actors or members of a community to participate (see e.g. Toker & Pontikis, 2011; Juarez & Brown, 2008; Sanoff, 2000). Adding to this is the fact that prevailing theorists such as the ones presented in Section 3.1.2 rarely acknowledge and specify the contextual assumptions on which their theoretical ideas and principles are based.

In practice the consequences of the limited understanding and reference to context has meant that practitioners trying to apply the ideals and principles promoted in literature and theories such as the ones presented in Sections 3.1.1 and 3.1.2 or that have been used in “successful” projects may fail in their attempt to do so. This is because the contextual factors that facilitated the applicability of such principles or that led to the success of the process may not

correspond with conditions in their own contexts. Furthermore, practitioners may become discouraged by the fact that, as shown in Section 6.1.3, the contextual factors that may limit or facilitate the applicability of these principles are difficult to replicate and are most of time outside their influence and control.

These observations point towards the need for theory development within landscape architecture and urban design that goes beyond the normative and procedural nature of the prevailing theories and beyond de-contextualised “best-practice” guides, into a deep understanding of context. This is particularly needed for complex contexts and projects, such as the *TPLM*, that are characterised by the *divergent interaction* between structuring forces and actors that was conceptualised in this section.

6.2.2 TRQ3 - In complex contexts that comprise deep differences and conflict what is the applicability of genuine participatory ideals and principles in the planning and design of public spaces?

The previous section brought forward the relation that the political, economic and social context of a given place has to the interactions between the structuring forces and actors of a public space project, and to the way that these interactions facilitate or hinder a participatory process. This relation becomes significantly important in the understanding and theorisation of participation in contemporary planning and design of public spaces. This is because the social, political and economic shifts that are currently occurring in most western cities and that as argued by Watson (2006) and others (Baeten, 2011; Low & Smith, 2006; Harvey, 2005; Low *et al.*, 2005; Sandercock, 2003) are increasingly affecting planning and design practices (see Chapter 5), are creating contexts characterised by the *divergent interaction* between structuring forces and actors that was conceptualised in the previous section (6.2.2). Consequently, participatory processes in the planning and design of public spaces are significantly confronted by the *politics of public spaces* and its *inter-group* and *state-citizen differences*, and the *politics of decision-making* with its different forms of power relations that were discussed in Sections 5.1 and 5.2. As it will be explained below, this creates a situation where the applicability of the genuine principles of participation such as inclusiveness, balancing of power and consensus building becomes increasingly challenging.

Because of the growing pluralisation, multiculturalisation and neoliberalisation of western cities, planning and design processes are increasingly faced with the *politics of public space* (see Section 5.1) and its contrasting economic, socio-political and symbolic interests and values as well as diverse concerns and attachments to the same place (see e.g. Low & Smith,

2006; Watson, 2006; Massey, 2005; Hubbard *et al.*, 2004; 1997; McDowell, 1997a). Thus, when aiming at involving more actors in decision making processes, or in other words achieving the principle of *inclusiveness* that is promoted in the theories presented in Section 3.1.2, the planning and design of public spaces becomes more complex. Firstly, because in contexts that comprise a wide variety of social groups or interests, it becomes somewhat unfeasible to involve all actors and sections of a community and also because the level of representativeness of those involved can be questioned (see Section 6.1.3). Secondly, because there will be a co-existence of a greater number of plausible perspectives of what is considered to be important or necessary, of what the critical qualities of a public space are, of what constitutes an improvement and whose improvement gets to count or should be prioritised (as shown by e.g. Németh, 2006; Low *et al.*, 2005; Madanipour, 2004; Mattila, 2002 and as discussed in Section 5.1). Faced with this co-existence, participatory processes are often confronted by deep conflicts, as different actors (e.g. politicians, infrastructure departments, developers, real estate owners, motorists, pedestrians, retail operators, park users, dog owners, parents, teenagers, children) based on their own interests and values make specific claims in order to carry out a desired activity or achieve a desired state (see e.g. Ernstson, 2013; Hernandez, 2008; Yli-Pelkonen & Niemelä, 2005; Gobster, 2001 and discussion in Section 5.1). This, especially if there is a limited amount of public spaces that can satisfy their needs or if there are different social groups in a limited amount of area (see e.g. Madanipour, 2004; Ruming *et al.*, 2004). In this sense, it could be implied that cities' current tendency of implementing social-mix and densification strategies, or the low priority that some cities give to the provision of public spaces could result in an increasing amount of this kind of conflicting situations. Furthermore, it can be argued that solving such conflicts may become more and more challenging as the increasing influence that neoliberal ideals have on all spheres of life (as discussed by Brenner *et al.*, 2012a; Baeten, 2011; Watson, 2006) creates an increasingly fragmented society, where individual and factional interests are pursued and claims are done without consideration of what others may need (Brown, 2003 in Watson, 2006).

As more and increasingly diverse actors with specific and contrasting interests, values and claims become involved in planning and design processes, the *politics of decision-making*, and its different forms of power relations (see Section 5.2), become more complex. In contexts or projects where a wide variety of contrasting goals and agendas are at stake, actors striving to achieve their own interests might not be willing to relinquish their power and capacity of influence or their control over what decisions are prioritised and how these

are implemented (as shown in Section 6.1.3). Even if they join a participatory process, they may anyhow deploy their power through mechanisms (such as the ones described by Flyvbjerg, 2002; Pløger, 2001; Bentley, 1999 and in Section 5.2) that are difficult to overcome or even anticipate. As such the above mentioned differences are inevitable penetrated by power relations which challenges and limit the applicability of the principle of *power balance* that is promoted in the theories presented in Section 3.1.2. Furthermore, as capitalism becomes more and more the structuring principle of cities' political-economy and spatial organization (as noted by e.g. Brenner *et al.*, 2012b; Baeten, 2011; Low & Smith, 2006 and discussed in Section 5.1.2), it can be expected that the power or influence that residents or other actors have over decision-making would be determined by the contribution that their claims have to economic and market oriented goals (as shown in Section 6.1). These means that as a result of this new political and economic context, decisions are seldom free from domination or manipulation, or in other words, they are seldom free from the influence of power.

Both the challenges and limitation of applying the principles of *inclusiveness* and *power balance*, means that, as argued by Watson (2003) and others (e.g. Richardson & Connelly, 2005; Campbell, 2002; Flyvbjerg & Richardson, 2002; Mouffe, 2000) there is a low probability that participatory processes will arrive at win-win solutions based on the principle of *consensus building* that is promoted in the theories presented in Section 3.1.2. Even if the primacy that economic and market values have in the planning and design of the city is taken out of the equation, in contexts that comprise a wide variety of actors and interests or where contrasting goals and agendas are at stake, it is most probable that any decision that is taken will lead to desired effects for some parties but undesirable effects for others (as noted e.g. by Madanipour, 2003; Campbell, 2002 and discussed in Section 5.1). In this logic, rather than finding win-win solutions based on consensus, it becomes essential to identify whose interests, values or needs are being privileged and to recognise that there will be always be winners and losers within a participatory process (as argued by Flyvbjerg, 2002).

The ideas that are discussed in this and the previous section (6.2.1) can be argued to be some of the main reasons why despite the increasing recognition of the importance of participation in the planning and design of public spaces, and the existence of a wide variety of methods and techniques associated with participatory planning and design processes, the application of inclusive, power-balance and consensus-building principles that are promoted in the theories presented in Section 3.1.2 tends to be limited (see Section 3.1.3). Recognising such limitations, and most importantly having a deep

understanding of their causes, is seldom done in the literature of participation within the fields of landscape architecture and urban design. This has meant that within these fields, theoretical discussions or practical guidelines are rarely based on an explicit recognition or a deep understanding of the *politics of public spaces* (and its *inter-group* and *state-citizen differences*), and the *politics of decision-making* (with its different forms of power relations) that result from the *divergent interaction* between forces and actors. As a result practitioners do not have the sufficient knowledge that allows them to understand and carry out participatory processes in public space projects that have to deal with contrasting economic, socio-political and symbolic interests, values and claims to the same place, or problems and goals that are highly multifaceted and difficult to define.

The fact that nowadays we live in contexts that are increasingly characterised by *divergent interactions*, does not mean that there is a need to aim at achieving societies or political systems that facilitate *aligned interactions*. By no means, should this discussion be interpreted as a justification for social or ethnical segregation in cities, tight immigration policies or an acceptance that cities are economic entities instead of social ones. On the contrary, this means that there is the need to acknowledge and deeply understand the complex pluralistic and struggling nature of today's cities and of the decision-making process that determine their development (as described by e.g. Cuthbert, 2006; Massey, 2005; Bentley, 1999; Lefebvre, 1991 and discussed in Chapter 5). By doing so, participatory processes and the practitioners in charge of them may become better prepared to deal with the complex socio, political and economic contexts that are found more and more in cities nowadays. Accordingly, it becomes crucial to develop new theoretical knowledge that takes into consideration the *politics of public spaces* and of *decision-making* that were discussed in Chapter 5 and which can be found in contexts and projects that comprise a wide variety of actors and interests, or where *wicked* and/or contrasting goals and agendas are at stake. This implies giving discussions of difference, conflicts and power such as the ones developed in Chapter 5 and in Articles II and III, a much more significant role in the theorisation of participation in the planning and design of public spaces within the fields of landscape architecture and urban design.

6.2.3 TRQ1 - How can theories of participation in the planning and design of public spaces respond more adequately to the differences, conflicts and power relations that are found in contemporary public space projects?

The empirical and theoretical findings discussed in the previous sections show some limitations of the theories of participation discussed in Section 3.1.2. As

it will be explained below, these limitations render these theories weak in their capacity to help both academics and practitioners respond adequately to the challenges that participatory processes in contemporary public space projects often encounter (see Sections 3.1.3, 6.1.4 and 6.2.2).

The findings of this research show that the focus of the prevailing theories on how participation should be done, although necessary, does not take in to consideration the broader contextual factors that affect and condition how participatory processes are carried out, and the outcomes that can be achieved by them (see Sections 6.1.2 and 6.2.1). This normative, procedural and context-less nature of the theories presented in Section 3.1.2 has also meant that there is little reference or no deep understanding of the complexity of the contexts resulting from the socio, political and economic shifts that are currently occurring in western cities and affecting planning and design practices (as noted by Baeten, 2011; Low & Smith, 2006; Watson, 2006; Harvey, 2005; Low *et al.*, 2005; Sandercock, 2003 and discussed in Chapter 5). Consequently, the *politics of public spaces* and its *inter-group* and *state-citizen differences*, and the *politics of decision-making* with its different forms of power relations that were found in the case studies and that were discussed in Chapter 5 have not been sufficiently addressed in the theorisation of participation within the fields of landscape architecture and urban design (see Section 6.2.2).

Addressing these limitations is seen here as an important and necessary step in the theorisation of participation in landscape architecture and urban design. The findings of this research provide the basis for making that step, by opening the possibility for a new theoretical approach to participation in the planning and design of public spaces. As will be explained below, this new approach would imply a direct engagement with the *political* and thus the *contextual* nature of participation. This forms the basis for the need of *politicising participation* in theoretical discussions within the fields of landscape architecture and urban design.

Above all, the findings of this research highlight the need to explicitly recognise that participatory processes concerning the planning and design of public spaces are deeply and inevitably *political*. They are *political* in the sense that they bring together different actors (regulators, producers, users) with different driving dynamics and histories, with diverse interests and values, to the same place and with different claims aiming at carrying out specific activities or achieve a particular desired state place (as described by e.g. Low & Smith, 2006; Massey, 2005; Hubbard *et al.*, 2004; 1997; McDowell, 1997a, and discussed in Section 5.1). They are also *political* in the sense that they have become arenas were wicked problems and solutions that are multifaceted and difficult to define are commonly discussed (see e.g. Ernstson, 2013;

Biddulph, 2012; Campbell, 2002 and Section 5.1). This especially as there is an increasing recognition of the contribution that public spaces have to broader economic, environmental and sociocultural agendas. Finally, they are *political* in the sense that they are often sites of struggles, conflicts and power relations, where different actors deploy their influence, capacity, and power, in order to make things happen as they want (as described by Hernandez, 2008; Bentley, 1999 and in Chapter 5). All this influenced and conditioned by broader political, social and economic forces and dynamics that operate in each context at both the city and neighbourhood scales (see Sections 5.1 and 6.2.1).

Recognising in an explicit manner the *political* nature of participation in the planning and design of public spaces, implies that these processes cannot be simply addressed by ideal and universal principles or standardised procedures and methods (see Section 6.2.2 and Article III). As such there is the need to move from the normative and context-less nature of the theories presented in Section 3.1.2, and the use of best practices for grounding them, towards a theorisation based on the *politics of public space* and the *politics of decision-making* that was described in Chapter 5.

Grounding the theorisation of participation in the *politics of public space* implies moving away from the focus on the binary interaction between professionals and the public, to a much more complex understanding of the different actors that are directly and indirectly involved, affected or influencing a participatory decision-making process (Article II can serve as an example for this). Such an understanding would mean leaving behind the cohesive and fixed notion of the *public* involved in a participatory process. Instead, there would be an explicit focus on *multiple publics* where, as argued by Rios (2005), cultural and social difference should serve as starting point for discussions concerning the planning and design of public spaces.

A focus on *multiple publics* requires research in the fields of landscape architecture and urban design such as the one carried out by Watson (2006, 2003) and Sandercock (2003, 2000) in the fields of planning concerning the implications of the increasing pluralistic and multicultural nature of cities and neighbourhoods. Within landscape architecture and urban design focus should be giving to implications of these changes in the development of public spaces and in participatory planning and design processes (the work of Hou, 2013; and Rios, 2005, points in this direction). This entails research in different urban environments (such as the one conducted by Low et al. 2005), that aims at identifying the variety of perceptions, values and uses that different cultural and social groups and individuals attach to the same place. Likewise, it requires research that can identify the different perspectives that exist around concepts such as ‘public’, and ‘sustainable development’, and around strategies

for achieving socially, ecologically and economically sound public environments (the work of Swyngedouw, 2010 and Bradley, 2009, in the field of planning can serve as a reference for this).

Within research looking at the *politics of public space*, focus should be placed on the conflicts and commonalities that could exist among different perceptions, values, uses and perspectives and how these affect or can be coped with during a participatory process. It is important here to avoid ideas that suppress such differences, and thus possible conflicts, by establishing a position of neutrality or authoritarian order during a participatory process. Instead there is a need for ideas and processes that would acknowledge and foster such conflicts in an agonistic manner (see e.g. Rios, 2008; Mouffe, 2005) and see them as productive (see e.g. Flyvbjerg & Richardson, 2002). This would allow the explicit recognition of the above mentioned differences and also would encourage questioning universal, fixed, taken for granted or unjust notions of the above mentioned concepts and strategies.

Grounding the theorisation of participation in the *politics of decision-making* would imply the recognition that participatory decision-making is normally conducted in an unequal power situation (as noted by Bradley, 2009, Flyvbjerg, 2002, and Pløger, 2001 in the field of planning). As such there is the need to identify the different ways in which power operates within participatory processes and see how it can be handled in the planning and design of public spaces. The work of Rios (2008), Hernandez (2008) and Petrescu (2007, 2005) points towards this direction and Section 5.2 and Articles II and III in this thesis can serve as a theoretical starting point and example of how to do this. Further guidance can be found in the field of planning theory where theorisation that has engaged with this kind of *politics* has been based on the critical understanding and evaluation of practice (see e.g. Bradley, 2009; Connelly *et al.*, 2006; Pløger, 2004; Campbell, 2002; Flyvbjerg, 2002). Within such theorisation, an emphasis has been given both to the analysis of the discourses and ideas of the different actors that participate in decision-making processes, to the interaction that exists between them, and to the political and economic systems that guide and condition their work, and to how these frame a specific decision-making process. It has also meant shedding light on the tacit preconditions and values that these processes approve or withhold, as well as exploring the consequences of this framing in terms of what issues and whose impacts are prioritised or excluded during the process.

The findings of this research also point towards the need to acknowledge the *contextual* nature of participation. This means recognising that context matters and that it needs to be explicitly addressed in the theorisation of

participation in the fields of landscape architecture and urban design. As it will be explained below, this requires moving away from the normative and procedural focus of the theories presented in Section 3.1.2, and from the promotion of universal principles and standardized procedures, to a context-based theorisation that allows context-based distinctions and judgements of what constitutes the best type of practice for just decision-making.

Handling context in an explicit way means that there is the need for a careful evaluation of the political, economic and social forces and dynamics in play, as well as of the different actors, their interests and the (power) relations that exist between them. This would allow academics and practitioners to determine what it takes, what needs to be done, or if it is really possible, to carry out a participatory process. The work of Flygvbjerg (2002, 2001, 1998) in planning theory, and particularly his reference to Michael Foucault's focus on situated ethics, contextual-knowledge, conflict and power, can serve as a theoretical grounding for such evaluation of context. Based on this, there is the need for research that would provide both the knowledge and the tools for making the context-based distinctions and judgements mentioned before.

Furthermore, within such context-based theorisation, instead of research focusing on the way that a participatory process was executed (the methods that were used and its outcomes) greater emphasis would be given to a detailed understanding and analysis of the contextual factors that allowed such processes to be carried out, whether successfully or unsuccessfully (the work of Francis, 2005, points in this direction). For practitioners, these context-based distinctions would allow them to relate to and learn from the experiences of other similar contexts, rather than following apparently "successful" case studies without understanding the contextual factors that facilitated their success. This also means that in projects where such contextual factors are not present or cannot be obtained, there is the need to consider other forms of guaranteeing just decision-making. Guidance of how to this can be found in the field of planning in Campbell's (2002) "*situated ethical judgments*", Connelly et al.'s (2006) "*situated legitimacy*" or Watson's (2006, based on Harvey, 1992) and Connelly's and Richardson's (2005) criterion for reaching environmental and social justice.

The ideas mentioned in this section (and this thesis in general) represent the basis for a new theoretical approach to participation in the planning and design of public spaces. They denote a new step that moves away from the normative and procedural nature of the prevailing theory towards a more *critical* and *contextualised* approach to theoretical development. *Critical*, in the sense that it problematises the use of universal principles, standardised methods and best practices as a template for practice. Also because it is based on a critical

analysis and evaluation of participatory practices, without suggesting that they all represent good examples of just decision-making. And *contextualised*, in the sense that it is rooted on an in-depth evaluation and understanding of what happens in different contexts and in the possibilities and limitations present in each of these contexts.

Following this new approach can make theory more relevant to practice. Not because it gives a tool-kit of suggestions of what to do better, or a checklist of steps to follow, but because it provides knowledge for a more critical and reflective understanding of the topic, and of how it is practised. More precisely it would allow practitioners to: design and manage a participatory process accordingly to the context in which a public space project takes place; be more attentive to the different interests, values and claims of the different actors involved in a decision-making process; identify and cope with the different mechanisms of power that are employed; be reflective about their values and the power they exercise before, during and after the process; build critique and reflexivity into their work and the decisions they make; and be able to recognise and make explicit who wins and who loses, whose and which topics have been excluded from decisions made, and what further actions need to be taken to address this. Accordingly, such critical and reflective understanding should serve as basis for effective action and change towards more just decision-making processes in the planning and design of the city's public spaces.

7 Contribution: Towards a New Theoretical Approach to Participation in the Planning and Design of Public Spaces

This research has stepped away from the prevailing normative and procedural focus of theories of participation in landscape architecture and urban design, which tells practitioners what to do and how to do it. Instead, it has brought to these fields a critical approach that problematised such normative and procedural focus and aimed at understanding the reasons behind the gap between the theory and practice of participation. Following this approach, the research engaged in a critical exploration of what happens in real life practice in order to theoretically understand the challenges of participation in the planning and design of public spaces.

The novel approach adopted here, led to new sorts of findings. It showed that although participatory processes can have highly beneficial results (see Article I) such as the ones promoted in the prevailing literature (see Sections 3.1.2 and 3.1.3), their ability to realise these benefits is strongly conditioned and limited by the social, political and economic processes and dynamics of the context in which they take place (see Article II and Sections 6.1 and 6.2.1). The findings of the research showed that in contexts and public space projects that comprise a wide range of actors and where contrasting goals and agendas are at stake, it is highly challenging to implement the ideals and principles found in the prevailing theories (see Article III and Sections 6.1.4 and 6.2.2). This is because these projects often have to deal with deep differences, conflicts and power relations that result from what was conceptualized as a *divergent interaction* between the structuring forces (resources, discourses, regulations and procedures) and the actors (individuals, groups or institutions that regulate, produce and use a public space) that operate in these kind of contexts and projects (see Sections 6.2.1 and 6.2.2).

The importance of the findings of the case studies was that contexts that are characterized by *divergent interactions* and by the differences, conflicts and power relations that it creates are now common to many public space projects where the involvement of local communities in decision-making is highly demanded (see Section 6.2.2). Due to the growing pluralisation, multiculturalisation and neoliberalisation of western cities, and the wicked nature of public space problems and solutions, participatory process are now increasingly challenged by what was conceptualized as the *politics of public spaces* and the *politics of decision-making* (see Chapter 5). In other words they are challenged by the fact that they have to: involve a wide variety of actors with contrasting economic, socio-political and symbolic interests, values and claims (or *inter-group differences*, see Section 5.1.1); deal with problems and solutions that are highly multifaceted, difficult to define and increasingly conditioned by an economic or market rationality (or *state-citizen differences*, see Section 5.1.2); and cope with the different ways that actors deploy their power in order to create specific physical and social urban environments (or power-relations and power mechanisms, see Section 5.2).

Despite this commonality, the research found that within the prevailing theories of participation very little reference was given to the above mentioned *politics* and to how they affect and condition the way that participatory processes are carried out and the outcomes that can be achieved by them. Similarly, that the deep differences, conflicts and power relations, that result from these *politics* and that were found in the case studies, had not been sufficiently addressed (see Section 6.2.1). This was recognised as a significant limitation in the prevailing theories rendering them weak in their capacity to help academics and practitioners respond adequately to the challenges that participatory processes in contemporary public space projects often encounter (see Section 6.2.2). Consequently, the research highlighted the need to address these limitations as an important and necessary step in the theorisation of participation in fields of landscape architecture and urban design.

Drawing on the empirical and theoretical findings in Chapter 6, the research identifies the need for and proposes a new theoretical approach to participation in the planning and design of public spaces (see Section 6.2.3). The main goals of this new approach is to address the limitations that were identified in the prevailing theories of participation and to provide knowledge that allows both academics and practitioners to better understand and address the *divergent interactions* and the *politics of public spaces* and of *decision-making* (the deep differences, conflicts and power-relations) that can be found in many urban contexts and public space projects today. In other words, *politicising*

participation in theoretical discussions within the fields of landscape architecture and urban design.

Both the empirical and the theoretical work contained in this thesis are considered to stand as a significant contribution and a starting point for developing the proposed theoretical approach. Based on the research findings, this new approach should be based on a direct recognition of, and engagement with the *political* and *contextual* nature of participation. Similar approaches to theory development have been developed in the fields of planning (see e.g. Swyngedouw, 2010; Bradley, 2009; Connelly *et al.*, 2006; Watson, 2006; Pløger, 2004; Sandercock, 2003; 2003; Campbell, 2002; Flyvbjerg, 2002; 2002; 2000). Nonetheless, it is argued here that (as this thesis has done) there is the need to develop these approaches in the fields of landscape architecture and urban design and contextualize them in public space planning and design theoretical discussions. This implies moving away from the normative and context-less character of the prevailing theories, and their foundation in best practices. It means critically questioning ideal and universal principles or standardised procedures and methods, and research that focus on the critical evaluation of public space projects that have involved communities in their planning and design processes. Furthermore, such new approach requires a theorisation grounded on the *politics of public spaces* and the *politics of decision-making* that places discussions of difference, conflicts and power at its very centre. Finally, it requires a context-based theorisation that allows context-based distinctions and judgements of what constitutes the best type of practice for just decision-making, and allows the transferability of knowledge and experiences among different contexts (see Section 6.2.3).

Highlighting the limitations of prevailing theories and outlining a new theoretical approach for addressing them can be seen as the main contribution that this thesis makes to the field of participation in the planning and design of public spaces. It adheres and contributes to research that addresses similar issues and that follows similar approaches, but that is still in the periphery of the theoretical development within the fields of landscape architecture, and which needs to develop further its theoretical ideas and come together under a common or related body of theoretical work (see e.g. Hou, 2013; Hernandez, 2008; Rios, 2008; Hou & Kinoshita, 2007; Petrescu, 2007; Low *et al.*, 2005; 2005; 2005; Hou & Rios, 2003). This thesis could be considered as a significant theoretical contribution for the latter two.

Finally it is worth pointing out that although the aim of this thesis is to make a contribution at the theoretical level, it is believed here that the approach to theory development that was adopted, and the kind of theory that has been developed and argued for in this thesis has deep implications to how

participation is understood and implemented in practice. It rises critical and hard to answer questions to practitioners about the meaning of participation and just-decision making in contemporary urban society; about the way that participation is currently practiced; about what it is supposed to deliver; and about how to evaluate its success. By raising these questions, it is believed here that the theoretical contribution of this thesis becomes highly relevant to practice. Not because it provides knowledge that can be unwrapped in a direct, instrumental way, but because the critical and reflective knowledge that it provides and aims at achieving has the potential and goal of making a difference in the practitioner's frame of understanding, and thus his or her frame of actions. Such a difference would allow practitioners to be better prepared when dealing with complex projects and decision-making processes, to be able to understand more precisely and adapt to the limitations and possibilities of each context and each project, and to make better use of the resources that are available, including his or her competence and capability. All this with the ultimate goal of reaching better and more just decision-making processes in the planning and design of the city's public spaces.

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Appendix 1

Questionnaire for interviewing the organisers of the participatory process of the TPLM

Questions related to the principle of inclusiveness

In theory it is said that the involvement of a wide variety of actors (politicians, professionals, institutions, community members) and of all possible sections of a community is a requirement for achieving a genuine participation process.

1. What is your opinion about this principle? Do you agree or disagree with it? In what way?
2. Did you apply this principle as a guide to the participatory process you were in charge of?

If yes:

- To what degree did you apply it? Was it a main objective of the process or was it an implicit principle of the project ?
- How did you apply this principle? What kind of activities/methods did you implement in order to achieve it?
- Did you implement this principle along the whole process or during a specific stage or moment in the process? (ask for details)

If no:

- Why didn't you apply this principle? What factors hindered you from implementing this principle?
- What would you have needed to be able to implement this principle?
- Would it have been possible to have these conditions and thus apply this principle in this project?
- If you would have applied the principle what would had changed in the way you conducted the process and the results obtained by it?

3. Did you manage to achieve the principle to its fullest?

If yes:

- What factors or conditions allowed the implementation of the principle in the process? (e.g. enough resources, time, commitment of different actors, etc.)?
- What factors or conditions challenged its implementing?
- How was the implementation of the principle evident during the process and in the results of the process?
- What were the benefits from implementing such principle?

If no:

- What were the causes for not achieving the principle to its fullest?
- What factors or conditions would have been needed for implementing the principle to its fullest? Would it have been possible to have these conditions and thus implement this principle to its fullest in this project?
- What consequences did it have for the project the fact that the principle was not implemented to its fullest?
- Would you have done anything different in order to implement the principle to its fullest?

4. - Did you encounter any strong contrasting/conflicting interests, opinions or claims among the actors that were directly or indirectly involved in the process or that were outside of it? If yes what were they?
- How did you manage these contrasting interests?
 - How did these contrasting interests affected the process, the decisions that were made in it or the implementation of the results of the process?
5. - Do you think that this principle can and should be applied in practice? Is it too idealistic? Could it have worked in a context different than in La Mina? What are the main (practical/ideological) challenges or limitations of applying this principle?

Questions related to the principle of power balance:

In theory it is argued that in order to achieve genuine participatory processes, equal power or equal capacity of influencing decisions should be given to all participants in the process. And that for doing so there is the need to create processes where power is removed and where hierarchies are abandoned.

1. What is your opinion about this principle? Do you agree or disagree with it? In what way?
2. Did you apply this principle as a guide to the participatory process you were in charge of?

If yes:

- To what degree did you apply it? Was it a main objective of the process or was it an implicit principle of the project ?
- How did you apply this principle? What kind of activities/methods did you implement in order to achieve it?
- Did you implement this principle along the whole process or during a specific stage or moment in the process? (ask for details)

If no:

- Why didn't you apply this principle? What factors hindered you from implementing this principle?
- What would you have needed to be able to implement this principle?
- Would it have been possible to have these conditions and thus apply this principle in this project?
- If you would have applied the principle what would have changed in the way you conducted the process and the results obtained by it?

3. Did you manage to achieve the principle to its fullest?

If yes:

- What factors or conditions allowed the implementation of the principle in the process? (e.g. enough resources, time, commitment of different actors, etc.)?
- What factors or conditions challenged its implementing?
- How was the implementation of the principle evident during the process and in the results of the process?
- What were the benefits from implementing such principle?

If no:

- What were the causes for not achieving the principle to its fullest?
- What factors or conditions would have been needed for implementing the principle to its fullest? Would it have been possible to have these conditions and thus implement this principle to its fullest in this project?
- What consequences did it have for the project the fact that the principle was not implemented to its fullest?
- Would you have done anything different in order to implement the principle to its fullest?

4. Did you encounter any power relations (eg. unspoken hierarchies among the different participants, higher capacity of communicating of some actors, use of certain language, certain method, pressures from outside the process, eg. real estate, political ideas/visions limitations of topics to discuss, limitations of time, ,) during the process? Which? How did you manage these power relations? Did this affect in any way the process, the decisions that were made in it or the implementation of the results of the process?

5. Do you think that this principle can and should be applied in practice? Is it too idealistic? Could it have worked in a context different than in La Mina? What are the main (practical/ideological) challenges or limitations of applying this principle?

Questions related to the principle of consensus building

In theory it is argued that in order to achieve genuine participatory processes, decisions taken during a participatory process should be agreed by all participants. That for doing that the processes should allow a free and open exchange of ideas, based on principles of fairness, openness and trust which continues until agreement is reached.

1. What is your opinion about this principle? Do you agree or disagree with it? In what way?
2. Did you apply this principle as a guide to the participatory process you were in charge of?

If yes:

- To what degree did you apply it? Was it a main objective of the process or was it an implicit principle of the project ?
- How did you apply this principle? What kind of activities/methods did you implement in order to achieve it?
- Did you implement this principle along the whole process or during a specific stage or moment in the process? (ask for details)

If no:

- Why didn't you apply this principle? What factors hindered you from implementing this principle?
- What would you have needed to be able to implement this principle?
- Would it have been possible to have these conditions and thus apply this principle in this project?
- If you would have applied the principle what would had changed in the way you conducted the process and the results obtained by it?

3. Did you manage to achieve the principle to its fullest?

If yes:

- What factors or conditions allowed the implementation of the principle in the process? (e.g. enough resources, time, commitment of different actors, etc.)?
- What factors or conditions challenged its implementing?
- How was the implementation of the principle evident during the process and in the results of the process?
- What were the benefits from implementing such principle?

If no:

- What were the causes for not achieving the principle to its fullest?
 - What factors or conditions would have been needed for implementing the principle to its fullest? Would it have been possible to have these conditions and thus implement this principle to its fullest in this project?
 - What consequences did it have for the project the fact that the principle was not implemented to its fullest?
 - Would you have done anything different in order to implement the principle to its fullest?
4. Were there any topics that were highly controversial and that could not reach an agreement? Which? If there was no agreement about certain topic how was this managed? Did this affect in any way the process, the decisions that were made in it or the implementation of the results of the process?
 5. Do you think that this principle can and should be applied in practice? Is it too idealistic? Could it have worked in a context different than in La Mina? What are the main (practical/ideological) challenges or limitations of applying this principle?

