The proponents of comparative urban studies (for example, McFarlane, 2010; Nijman, 2007; Ward, 2010; Cook and Ward 2012) argue for comparisons of diverse and different cities which have not been traditionally registered on the map of modern urban theory and, analytically, were very distant from each other. The location of the urban, as a level of analysis, between several scales, complicates comparative work immensely because several scales of analysis currently undergo intense methodological scrutiny (for example, in the framework of critique of methodological nationalism (Amelina et al., 2012; Cherchilo, 2006)). Based on fieldwork conducted in Medellin (Colombia) and in several Russian cities, I conduct a comparison of “closed contexts” across global regions. “Close contexts” is the term I use, first, following the political geographer Natalie Koch, to refer to empirical research in difficult, including authoritarian, settings and second, remembering that “there are many ways of assembling contexts and holding them together” (Law and Moser 2010, 348). One commonality between the contexts I want to “assemble” is that in both countries cities are busy with fixing images. It can be said that the cities are also used to improve the highly problematic national images. Both countries thus oscillate between closure and openness, between coping with stigmatization and attempts to come up with alternative images (of the countries and the places). Both in Columbia and Russia, the spectacular urban projects are variously used to raise legitimacy of the governments. The question I pose in this lecture is as follows: How can cities belonging to different world regions be compared?