

IDEOLOGIES OF MEDELLÍN'S MIRACLE

a critique of architecture's new utopia

by
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I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. This is a true copy of the thesis including any required final revisions as accepted by my examiners.

I understand that my thesis may be made electronically available to the public.

ABSTRACT

Once considered the most violent city in the world, the city of Medellín, Colombia has more recently received global notoriety as a model of architecture and urban planning for social development. This notoriety originates with the city's Social Urbanism programme (2004–2011): a developmental model positioned on ideas of social inclusion through territorial, aesthetic, and symbolic strategies of transformation. During the administrative terms of Sergio Fajardo and Alonso Salazar (both members of the new Left party *Compromiso Ciudadana*) an impressive number of aesthetic buildings and public spaces were built in informal communities across the urban periphery, in a political climate praised for its inclusive strategies of development. “The most beautiful for the most humble,” was Fajardo’s famous adage.

Since this period, Medellín has continued to receive significant notoriety. Medellín was named “Innovative City of the Year” by the *Wall Street Journal* and CitiBank in 2013, and was host to UN- Habitat’s World Urban Forum 7 (2014) entitled “Urban Equity in Development.” However, development in the city has recently departed from the Social Urbanism model, transitioning from small scale architecture and public space as points of community intervention, to the implementation of large-scale urban development projects that bear significant resemblance to more conventional, 21st century models of urban restructuring. At the same time, evidence of chronic violence and forced displacement are raising questions about what current development might hide about everyday realities in its production of a new “Global” city.

Many critics concerned with this new direction identify a break in priorities and strategies between the administrative era of the *Compromiso Ciudadana* and the current administration; however, a more critical investigation into the actors and stakeholders involved in Medellín’s recovery process

reveal the way by which today's development might actually be a logical and intended outcome of the success of Social Urbanism. This analysis requires a broadening of the political and historical analysis, to investigate the dynamics of local power that extend through the 20th century. It also requires a critical investigation of Social Urbanism as a program that, while perhaps possessing some transformative and dignifying agency at the local scale, was treated as an iconic spatial "object" that produced a very specific meaning for the city both locally and globally through aesthetic strategies.

Founded on Henri Lefebvre's idea of social space as being actively produced, the thesis investigates to what degree Social Urbanism could be seen as a socially-transformative and political project based on the actors involved and the distribution (or centralization) of power in its recovery process. By framing the city's urban development as the product of a much longer transformation – articulated by underlying social, political, and economic conditions of production – it seeks a more critical understanding of the way Social Urbanism's urban spaces have actually affected everyday life in the city.

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I would like to thank my supervisor, Adrian Blackwell, for his help in turning what began as a curiosity into a much deeper investigation into Medellín's transformation. Thank you for helping me bring the writing to where it is now, and develop the thesis into a surprisingly rigorous research project. Thank you also to Lola, for helping me get this project off the ground right from the start, and supporting where I wanted to take it. And thank you Rick – I brought you into the committee relatively late, but your words have inspired me throughout the process, and continue to do so.

Thank you to friends in Medellín, who were both willing and eager to show me their city, and discuss both its successes and limitations openly. Thank you as well to the architects and academics who agreed to speak with me, whose familiarity with the city and professional expertise were essential in moving the thesis forward. I would like to thank in particular Peter Brand, Jorge Mario Isaza, and Luis Dapena from the Universidad Nacional in Medellín, as well as Camilo Restrepo and Kate Maclean, each of whom agreed to a formal interview and contributed to lengthy and eye-opening discussions on Medellín's past and future.

Thank you to my family, for helping me get to where I am today, including those grandparents who won't have the chance to see this. And thanks finally to my friends, who have both kept me on this path and helped make seven years of memories.

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CONCLUSION

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FIG 0/1 COMMUNA OF SAN
JAVIER, 2015

Cities, like dreams, are made of desires and fears, even if the thread of their discourse is secret, their rules are absurd, their perspectives deceitful, and everything conceals something else.

Italo Calvino, *Invisible Cities*





INTRODUCTION

Once considered the most violent city in the world, the city of Medellín has more recently received global notoriety as a model of architecture and planning for social development. This notoriety originates with the city's Social Urbanism programme, initiated under Sergio Fajardo's administration in 2004 and lasting until the end of his successor's term in 2011. According to the municipality, Social Urbanism was "traditional architecture and urbanism for social inclusion and for territorial, aesthetic, and symbolic strategies for physical transformation," providing the city with "dignified settings that boost social transformation" (ACI, 2011: 25). The programme's high-profile architecture helped catapult the city to a new era of global fame. A significant aspect of the city's appraisal has come from the aesthetic appeal of these new spaces, and their siting within informal areas in the periphery. "The most beautiful for the most humble," said former mayor Fajardo (quoted in Maclean, 2015: 63). Quickly, these projects became iconic to a new political and social era in Medellín, with a rhetoric emphasizing social inclusion and democratization. This success in development led UN-Habitat to choose Medellín as host to the 7th World Urban Forum in April of 2014: "both physically and institutionally," wrote organizers, "Medellín has exemplified its prioritization of vulnerable communities with solutions for accessible mobility, inclusive governance and quality education, together with the recovery of public space" (WUF7, 2014).

While Social Urbanism notably included new policies and funding initiatives, such as vast increases to the municipal education budget, the physicality of the programme quickly became the focus of spectators. Today, Medellín is well known amongst the architectural community. While it continues to be profiled in such popular media as the *New York Times*, *The Guardian*, even *The Globe and Mail*, the city also finds itself regu-

FIG 0/1 (OPPOSITE PAGE) VIEW WEST OVER CITY AND METROCA-
BLE FROM PUBLIC PLAZA IN THE
NORTHEAST, 2015.

FIG 0/2 (TOP) ESCALATOR PROJECT IN SAN JAVIER, BY EMPRESAS DESAROLLO DE MEDELLIN, 2009

FIG 0/3 (MIDDLE) BIBLIOTECA ESPAÑA IN SANTO DOMINGO, BY GIANCARLO MAZZANTI, 2005

FIG 0/4 (BOTTOM) BIBLIOTECA LEON DE GREIFF IN COMMUNA 8, ALSO BY GIANCARLO MAZZANTI, 2005



Introduction

larly covered in journals, lectures, and exhibitions by design professionals looking to illustrate political agency in architecture – the type current discourse continues to idealize. As an architect, it was the related interest in architecture possessing some form of autonomy from a purely economic logic of development that first drew me to the city as a case of analysis. But what I soon realized was for many architectural analyses of Medellín, autonomy was often assessed based on its outcome, represented by aesthetic images of new spaces, rather than a serious analysis of its process of creation. The mere fact this “high quality” architecture could exist in informal areas was definitive proof – for many architects at least – of its triumph over an often closed, economic logic.

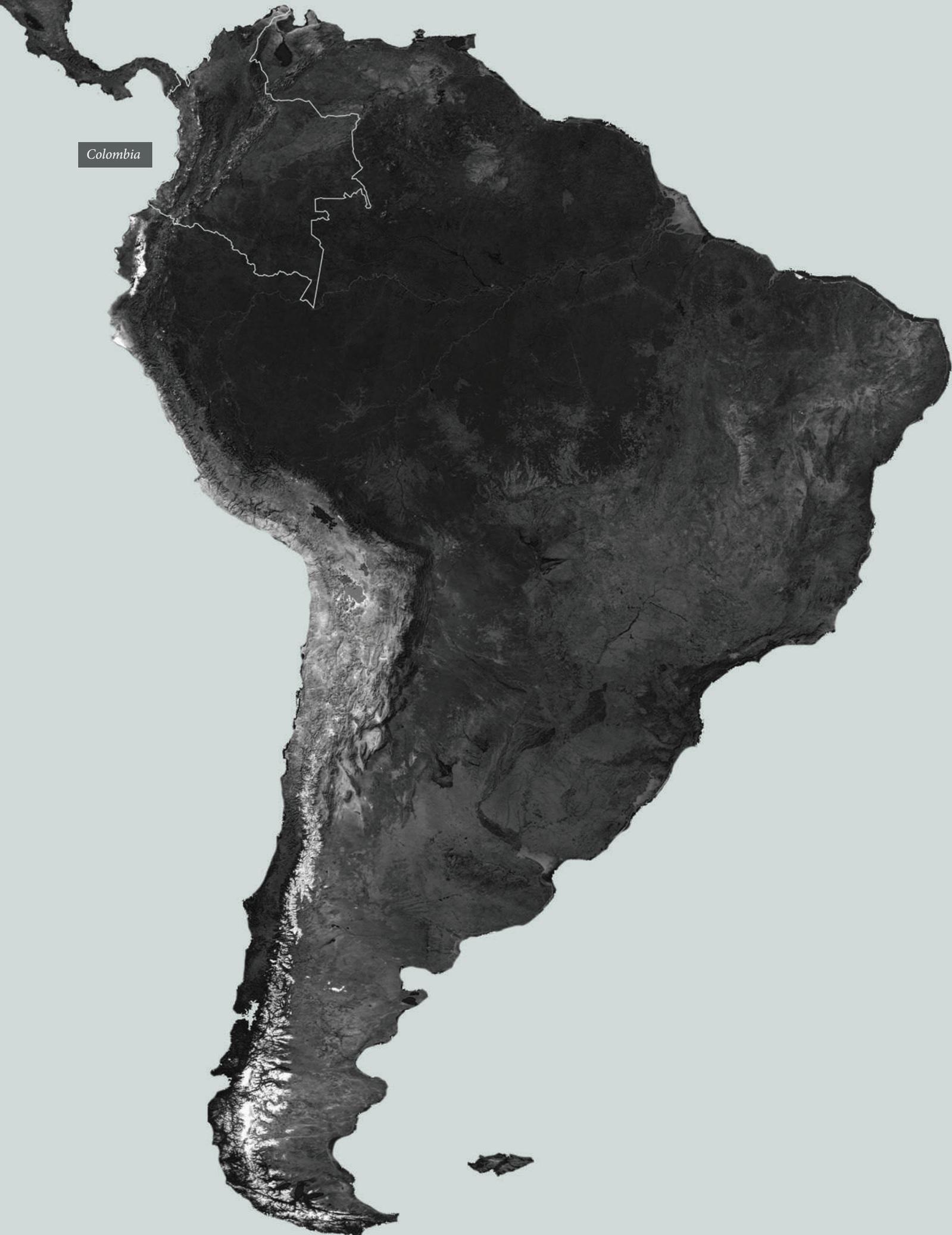
Like all images of urban space, there was an implicit ideology embedded within these aestheticized moments; but given the grand political and social narratives associated with those images, it was unclear how that ideology redounded back on the development of local space, and the rights of citizens living in that space. This brought me to a set of overarching questions that drove the resulting research: what is the nature of the ideology embedded within these images, how do these images either represent or misrepresent everyday life, and finally, what is the effect of these images, with their global dissemination, on the future development of local space?

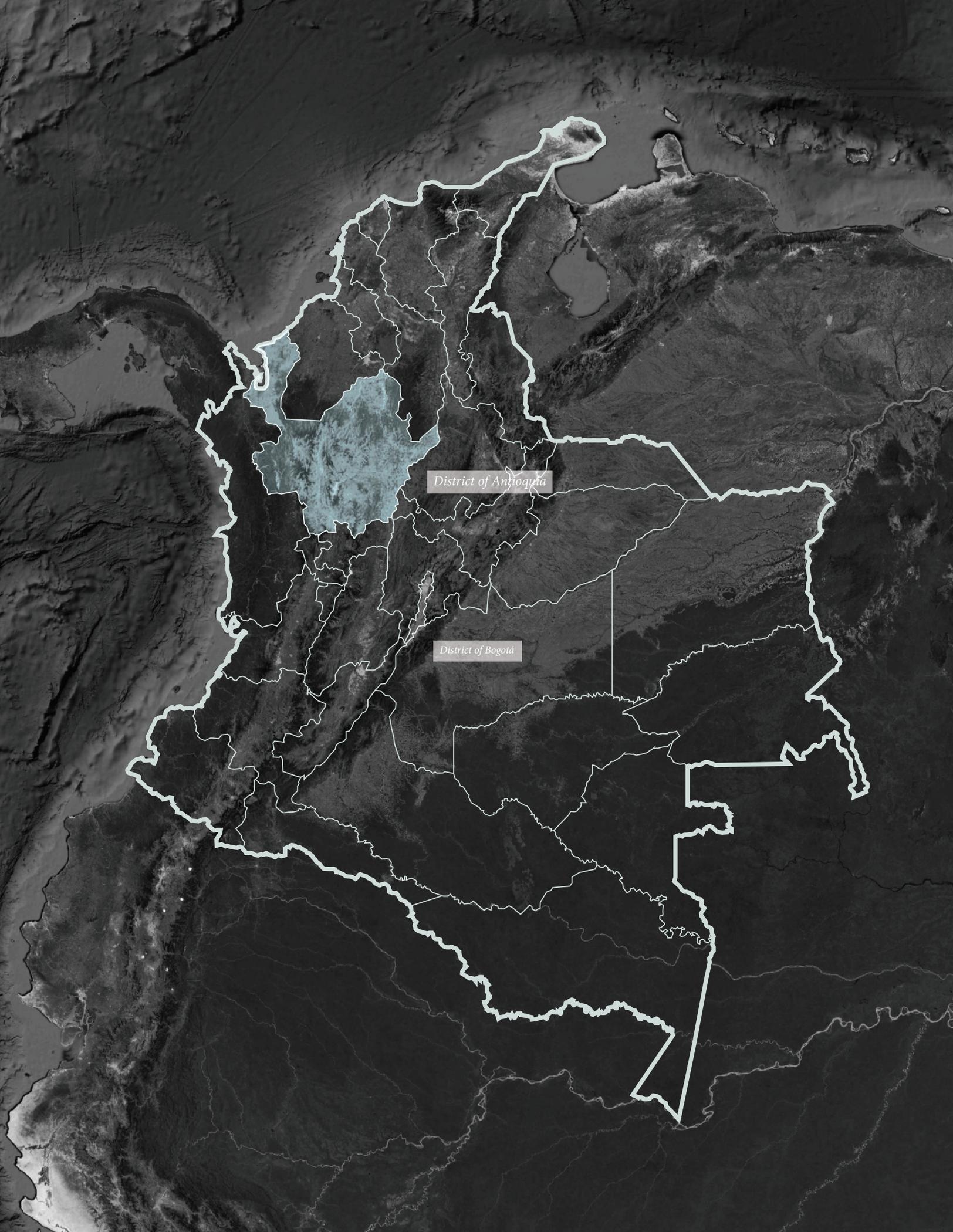
Medellín is a city of 2.5 million people, with about 3.7 million living in the greater metropolitan region. It is Colombia’s second largest city next to Bogotá, and is located in the Aburrá valley in the north of the Andean mountain range. It is the only major urban center in the district of Antioquia.

The city was originally founded as a gold mining town in the 17th century by Spanish colonizers. The region subsequently became an important coffee exporter, and later an industrial hub by the 20th century. The city’s location in the nadir of the valley has meant that as the rate of population growth rapidly increased beginning in the middle of the 20th century, migrants were forced to settle on steeper and more difficult terrain as urban borders progressed up the valley walls. This has had significant consequences on living conditions in the periphery. The violence that erupted in the later twentieth century, further, encouraged the flight of many of the city’s wealthier inhabitants to gated communities in the

FIG 0/5 (FOLLOWING SPREAD, LEFT) MAP OF LATIN AMERICA
FIG 0/6 (FOLLOWING SPREAD, RIGHT) MAP OF COLOMBIA, WITH ANTIOQUIA HIGHLIGHTED

Colombia





District of Antioquia

District of Bogotá



Medellín

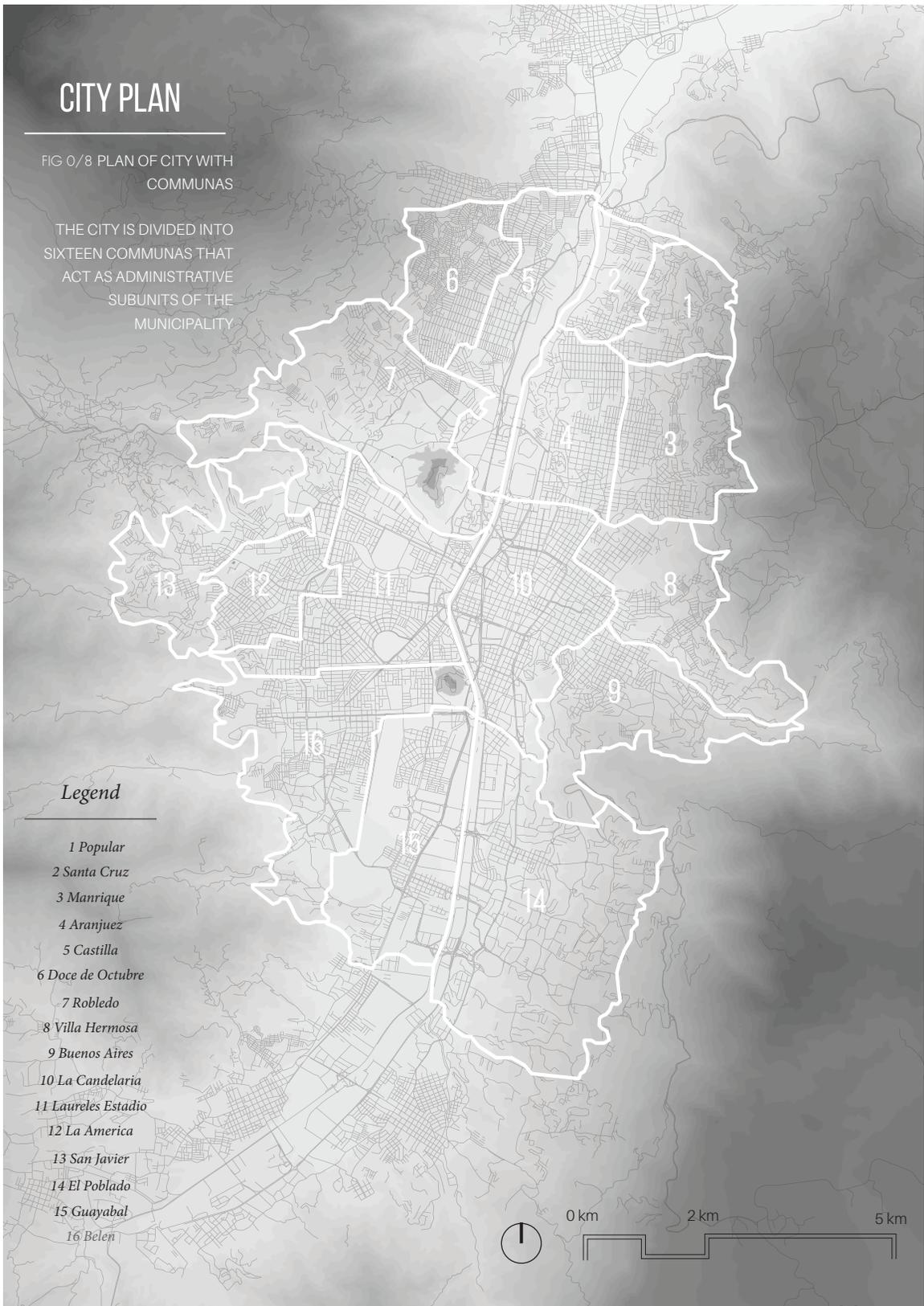


FIG 0/7 AERIAL OF ANTIOQUIA
WITH MEDELLIN'S BORDERS
INDICATED

CITY PLAN

FIG 0/8 PLAN OF CITY WITH
COMMUNAS

THE CITY IS DIVIDED INTO
SIXTEEN COMMUNAS THAT
ACT AS ADMINISTRATIVE
SUBUNITS OF THE
MUNICIPALITY



SOCIOECONOMIC STRATA

FIG 0/9 PLAN OF SOCIOECONOMIC DISTRIBUTION



SOURCE: DANE, 2010

SOCIOECONOMIC CONDITIONS
USING COLOMBIA'S NUMBERING
SYSTEM OF ONE THROUGH SIX.

DARKEST = STRATA 1, LOWEST
LIGHTEST = STRATA 6, HIGHEST

south end (mostly in the eastern communa of *El Poblado*), while the city's poorest continue to reside in the north. As such, social inequality manifests itself particularly harshly between the north and south poles of the city, as well as between flat and steep terrain. These and other physical inequalities were some of the conditions that Social Urbanism was supposedly positioned to address.

While not an urban utopian project in its traditional definition, Medellín's programme still must be situated within the larger legacy of social utopia in Latin America. The larger region, in fact, has a long history as laboratory for the worlds' utopias. Utopian ideas first emerged here in the 19th century, following emancipation from European colonization. As countries sought to define new national images, these ideas found their expression in city form. But it wasn't until the period of High Modernism, when members of CIAM travelled across the Atlantic to experiment with utopian models too grand for their own countries, that the region would fascinate global spectators:

The largely European membership of the CIAM in the early 1930s looked at their own cities and dreamed of having the power to sweep away all the dirty old inefficient streets and buildings and replace them with steel and glass towers set in spacious parks, with traffic speeding past at a safe distance, but nowhere in Europe, of course, were the authorities either willing or able to embark on such a radical programme of urban renewal. In Latin America it was different: the cities were much smaller and there was very little industry, so the need was not so much for renewal as for planned expansion. It seemed possible that with careful planning it would be possible to leapfrog the problems created by the Industrial Revolution in Europe, and plan ahead for urban and industrial growth. . . . [N]ew architecture, especially organized in conformity with the new urbanistic principles, offered Latin American governments the means to appear modern in a variety of senses. (Fraser, 2000: 7)

Many of these schemes involved significant sociospatial restructuring, driven by a modernizing economy that focused on industrializing coun-

Introduction

tries and emphasized the growth of a small number of urban nodes. However, modernizing the nation was not always simply about spatial functionality: rather, states often recognized that “architecture could create a very visible – and often literally high-profile – image of a young, dynamic nation with an expanding economy and a growing industrial infrastructure” (Fraser, 2000: 8). Many projects were undertaken in the belief that national conditions could be transformed simply through the image of modernity. This perhaps reached its apogee in Brazil, where the construction of the new capital *Brasília* was built on the premise that the “plan for a new city can create a social order in its image” (Holston, 1989: 4). In the process of implementing these types of schemes, informality was either cleared or hidden from view based on its inherent “backwardness,” with urban restructuring projects focused on integrating inhabitants into a larger project of industrial employment and economic expansion (Davis, 2014: 377). Photography of cities focused on the new emblems of the International Style, which often intersected with local styles and vernaculars. The worldwide profession praised the region for its boldness in construction. However, by the end of the 1960s, huge failures of these determinist, utopian schemes were rapidly becoming apparent. “For all its bravura,” writes Justin McGuirk, “Latin America is where Modernist utopia went to die” (2014: 8).

For several decades, Latin America largely disappeared from the architectural and urban discourse. During this period, migration to urban centers continued at a rapid pace, while the region’s industrial base crumbled following Globalization in the 1970s. Urban violence has since proliferated through many of the region’s megacities, driven by and reproducing intense social and spatial exclusion. When the Western audience finally turned their attention back towards Latin America in the 1990s, they found spaces of intense conflict and even deeper inequality.

Architecture of the region is now, once again, gracing our magazine covers, editorials, and newspapers; this new architecture is in many ways reactionary to the region’s observed inequalities, with many “partial-utopian” projects like Medellín’s taking the spotlight, often positioned on narratives of social inclusion. But an important ideological shift has taken place: informality is no longer to be cleared or hidden from view, but is integrally tied to the visibility of the region’s architectural renaiss-



FIG 0/10 (TOP) VIEW OF MAIN AXIS IN BRASÍLIA'S ADMINISTRATIVE CENTER, 1960.

FIG 0/11 TLATELOLCO HOUSING BLOCKS IN MEXICO CITY, 1967.

FIG 0/12 NEW PLAZA IN CARACAS, WITH HOUSING SUPER-BLOCKS OF 23 DE ENERO IN BACK, 1956.

sance. Utopian dreams have returned, although in clearly different form. Today we denounce the over-determination of Modernist utopia, a project with the fundamental goal to “willingly destroy an existing order and replace it with a new one” (Lejeune, 2003: 46). The scale of new, popular architecture is much smaller – more nuanced in its mediation of existing space – but there is still a key characteristic shared between the two periods of utopia: a grand social and political narrative attributed to the image of urban space.

Medellín’s programme of Social Urbanism is intricately tied to this broader resurgence of Latin America in a global discourse. The programme’s interventions are typical of the shift from large-scale restructuring to acupuncture design – often inserted within informal communities as catalysts to social transformation. Medellín presents a unique case, though, both because of the sheer number of projects produced, and the holistic programme of Social Urbanism that drove their rapid proliferation and resulted in an impressive collection of highly aesthetic urban projects. As I will argue, this resulting collection and its aesthetic produces a heightened ideological effect in how we interpret social values driving local urban production.

The research seeks to evaluate if, as the image suggests, aspects of a conventionally-Capitalist system of production have indeed been overcome, or if their integration into this mode of production has simply been obscured. This assessment looks to avoid a Tafurian framework that precludes architecture from having any radical or revolutionary agency within a closed system of Capital (Tafuri, 1976). Instead, the thesis looks to Henri Lefebvre and his idea of space as political – a place where resistance can emerge (Lefebvre, 1991 [1974]). The question becomes whether the events that established the conditions for Social Urbanism to emerge developed a foundation from which more inclusive forms of systemic urban development could be produced and reproduced. According to Lefebvre, this might be achieved by a redistribution (or reclamation) of citizen power and agency over space. Despite its often misleading appropriation in popular political movements,¹ this was at the heart of Lefebvre’s call to a “right to the city.” For Lefebvre, a “right to the city” was a demand for the “transformed and *renewed right to urban life*” (Lefebvre, 1996 [1968]: 158); it was the right for citizens to be involved in the pro-

1 / THE APPROPRIATION OF THE “RIGHT TO THE CITY” BY MAINSTREAM POLITICS HAS OCCURRED IN SUCH DOCUMENTS AS BRAZIL’S 2001 CITY STATUTE, OR THE 2005 WORLD URBAN FORUM THEME: “RIGHT TO THE CITY - BRIDGING THE URBAN DIVIDE.” THE “WORLD CHARTER FOR THE RIGHT TO THE CITY” WAS DRAFTED BY STATES PARTICIPATING IN THE PREVIOUS WORLD URBAN FORUM AND PUBLISHED WITH UNESCO IN 2004, WHICH DEFINED THE “RIGHT TO THE CITY” AS THE “EQUITABLE USUFRUCT OF CITIES WITHIN THE PRINCIPLES OF SUSTAINABILITY, DEMOCRACY, EQUITY, AND SOCIAL JUSTICE” (WORLD CHARTER FOR THE RIGHT TO THE CITY, 2004). THE “RIGHT TO THE CITY” PROTESTS THAT TOOK PLACE IN ISTANBUL IN 2013, OVER THE DESTRUCTION OF THE PUBLIC GEZI PARK FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF A LARGE SHOPPING MALL, WAS MUCH TRUER TO LEFEBVRE’S ORIGINAL DEFINITION, PERHAPS BECAUSE THE MOVEMENT STARTED WITH RESISTANCE BY CITIZENS

duction of their own urban spaces. This meant urban space must become a space of encounter. In his later *Production of Space*, he renamed this space of encounter a “social space”: space that can not be reduced to a simple object, but is rather an active result of social interaction (Lefebvre, 1991 [1974]: 73).

Lefebvre openly criticized the systems of knowledge and technical expertise in the professions of politics, planning, and architecture as reproducing hegemonic forms of power. He said these sorts of technocrats “make society into the ‘object’ of a systematization which must be ‘closed’ to be complete; they thus bestow a cohesiveness it utterly lacks upon a totality which is in fact decidedly open – so open, indeed, that it must rely on violence to endure” (Lefebvre, 1991 [1974]: 11). Written in 1974, this was largely in response to the period of High Modernism, reacting to the types of determinist urban schemes exemplified by Latin America’s former utopian era. However, this idea of power over space continues to have relevance today. Participatory planning has come into fashion as a supposed means to overcome the inherent technocracy of professional practice. In Medellín, as we will see, this has resulted in interesting innovations from the perspective of design; however, whether or not power over space has been distributed more evenly seems less convincing. As such, it becomes questionable whether urban production engenders more fair processes of systemic production, or if the space of Social Urbanism was instead treated as an “object” that produced pre-defined meaning for a wide (often global) audience, and resisted appropriation into the local public sphere.

The inability to understand the active component of space is, according to Lefebvre, where the architectural professional falls short in understanding how their own physical designs interface with everyday life. “They know what goes in, are amazed at what comes out, but have no idea what takes place inside” (Lefebvre, 2003 [1970]: 28). Making architecture the subject of critique, this thesis seeks to jump the void often left open by architects: how can we understand the active component of architecture – usually obfuscated within what Lefebvre calls the dark moment or the “black box” – by mobilizing Lefebvre’s ideas on active space to its actual application on specific and existing spaces? To accomplish this, underlying structural forces of spatial production, often divorced

from the conventional study of architecture, must be engaged to reconceptualize these spaces as one part of an active process, rather than as static objects.

Chapter 1 begins by tracing power and urban identity through Medellín and Colombia's longer development, into the period of Social Urbanism. It situates Social Urbanism as a programme that simultaneously sought a reclamation of power by the city's center, while addressing the city's stigma of violence through the production of new urban images through architecture. Chapter 2 looks at the specific aesthetic regime of these new images, and deconstructs their implicit ideology and aesthetic signification. Chapter 3 investigates the political and economic conditions established in the 1990s that opened the space for Social Urbanism to emerge and established the structural foundation of production. It also looks at the new system of violence local society relies on, in both rural and urban areas, as a means of establishing power over space. In this analysis, underlying narratives of urban production not represented in Medellín's visible urban spaces will be revealed so as to demonstrate the type of contradictions between the image of everyday life and its reality. Finally, chapter 4 looks at current forms of development that progressed out of the trajectory set by Social Urbanism and its urban development; it positions the new administration's emphasis on *life* as an ideological apparatus that legitimizes large-scale urban restructuring processes, which today embody an increasingly Neoliberal logic of urban development. This is not presented as a break from Social Urbanism: rather, I will argue that given the structural conditions of production and dynamics of power set in place in the 1990s, this can be seen as its logical outcome.

Architecture remains at the heart of the analysis: not only its design or mediation of local sites, but also its active role in urban production and the ideological power of its image. Under what conditions of production were these spaces produced, and how does the meaning they craft for a local and global audience rebound on the future production of space? To answer this question, architecture has to be situated within a much more complex framework than it is normally afforded, taking into account the political, social, and economic dynamics of urban production through a longer historical trajectory, beyond simply tropes of politicization and social inclusion oft-repeated in the architectural discourse. One

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of the more frequent oversights in evaluating the efficacy of the Medellín model of development has been a tendency to isolate architecture within its own discourse. This analysis seeks, more than anything, to break out of that isolation in order to answer a fairly simple question: what effect do these spaces actually have on everyday life?



FROM CAPITALIST PARADISE, TO MURDER CAPITAL, TO MIRACLE

Tracing power and identity through Medellín's development

Lately, Medellín has become famous for two apparently opposing identities: notoriety relating to its recent urban development since the period of Social Urbanism, and a resurgence of Global interest in the days of the Medellín Cartel and Pablo Escobar, especially in such popular media as HBO's *Entourage* or Netflix's more recent *Narcos*. Attention towards the latter has become a reminder of Medellín's former position as "murder capital of the world," and the brutal nature of its past fame. Social Urbanism and the local culture that surrounds it does not necessarily deny this past – in fact, the policies and interventions associated with the programme were positioned as directly redressing the social and spatial inequalities that emerged in the city during the height of its violent period. However, what the following chapter suggests is that many aspects of the city's longer, more complex history are obscured in the way Social Urbanism – alongside the current fame of the Cartel – reconstruct the city's history; in the process, the longer dynamics of power and more intricate set of actors in the city's development gets washed from an understanding of how inequalities in the city actually emerged.

This chapter seeks to contextualize Social Urbanism within a broader historical context of Colombia and Medellín. Spectacular violence still plays a spectacular role. However, violence does not emerge on its own; rather, the way power is produced amongst various actors and through socioeconomic classes is essential to understanding how and why violence occurs.

Popular media commonly positions Social Urbanism's urban projects as agents of peace within the conflicted city. Statistical reductions of violence in the city have brought many to hail these physical interventions and their new public spaces as literally "fighting crime" (Kimmelman, 2012). In order to produce a more nuanced critique of the

FIG 1/1 (OPPOSITE PAGE)
 IGLESIA DE LA VERACRUZ, 2015. THE CHURCH IS LOCATED IN MEDELLÍN'S HISTORIC DOWNTOWN. THE ADJACENT ALLEY HAS BECOME A WELL-KNOWN LOCATION FOR SOLICITATION OF PROSTITUTION, REPRESENTING THE ODD COMBINATION OF CATHOLICISM AND ILLEGALITY THAT CONTINUES IN THE CITY TODAY



FIG 1/2 OFFICIAL POSTER FOR *NARCOS* SEASON 1, WITH THE CAPTION: "THERE'S NO BUSINESS LIKE BLOW BUSINESS," 2015

programme and its reception, however, the city's longer history of development is essential. Inadequacies in the way popular critics view the city's history and Social Urbanism will also be revealed so as to evaluate the efficacy of the programme in dealing with social conflict and democratizing urban space. This will broadly set the foundation for the subsequent analyses of chapters 2, 3, and 4.

This also includes an overview of the structural processes of producing and maintaining power through the city's longer development, and the interrelated concept of urban identity. Medellín has quite a history of identity formation: in the mid-twentieth century it was hailed as a "Capitalist paradise"; by the 1990s, it had assumed its well-known position of "murder capital of the world"; today, it is increasingly being dubbed a "modern miracle." The first and last of these identities mark moments of prosperity and growth for the city as a whole; but as I will go on to suggest, they also mark moments of growing elite and state control, and prosperity does not necessarily suggest equality or democracy. This fact is essential to understanding the project of Social Urbanism as one that is situated intimately within a reassertion of centralized power over urban space, and prefaces a later discussion on the more visible gentrifying and displacement-inducing processes of urban development taking place in the city today (that will be analyzed in Chapter 4).

Starting with an analysis of power and violence that extends beyond the city proper, the first part of the chapter looks to understand how exclusionary and centralized political structures established the platform for key national armed groups to emerge in the 1950s and 60s – with the stage of conflict more rural in the Antioquian region than urban. Moving into the city scale, this is then followed by an analysis of how violent groups emerged on the urban stage beginning in the late 1970s. Until decentralizing processes of the late 1980s, municipalities were afforded little in the way of power and fiscal resources, with governments appointed by the elected national offices. However, Medellín's insulated history of elite power ties strongly into the municipal politicians who were appointed to office, and helped further reproduce a closed political structure. The city was also marked by its own unique case of paternalism, deriving from a Catholic industrial model that integrated rural migrants into local industry. This model was the foundation for a more comprehensive pa-

ternalistic social order to emerge, one that established its own rigid power hierarchy that was not challenged until the advent of the city's cocaine industry in the late 1970s (Roldán, 1999: 165). In some ways, though, the Cartel would only reproduce hierarchical orders of power. Keeping in mind that Social Urbanism purportedly addressed the spatial inequalities that emerged during the subsequent violent period, this description of the relationship between power and identity becomes essential to understanding Social Urbanism within a broader historical context, as a project that may in certain ways have actually been an “exercise in reinforcing and legitimating State, and elite, power” (Maclean, 2015: 76).

POWER AND VIOLENCE: COLOMBIA

In the latter half of the twentieth century and through to today, two key categories of armed groups have generally dominated within Colombia: the leftist guerilla forces and paramilitaries. The impact of conflict resulting from these armed groups, both in isolation and against one another, has been particularly devastating in rural territory. Official 2014 figures identify more than 5.7 million people as internally-displaced (UNHCR, 2015) – a total number second only to the Sudan. Displacement isn't always a by-product of violence, though; oftentimes displacement is a desired outcome in a national conflict deeply tied to issues of land.

The period of *La Violencia* (1948-1958) represents one of the most brutal decades of national conflict. This period was also the first instance of guerilla forces emerging in rural territory. It began with protests from the more radical faction of Liberal party supporters angry at the unequal distribution of land and resources. The Conservative government responded with an onslaught of violence – which in turn provoked a violent response (Guevara, 1985 [1961]: 269). Guerilla forces formed as key actors in this struggle, acting on behalf of the far left of the country's Liberals. The power-sharing agreement between the Liberal and Conservative parties called the “National Front” marked an official end to this bout of civil conflict in 1958; the pact, though, essentially determined alternating national seats of power between the Liberals and



FIG 1/3 RIOTS IN BOGOTÁ FOLLOWING ASSASSINATION OF LIBERAL PARTY LEADER, JORGE ELIÉCER GAITÁN AYALA. THE ASSASSINATION OFFICIALLY BEGAN THE ERA OF *LA VIOLENCIA*. 1948.

Conservatives, defining a formal, political duopoly that lasted until 1974. This agreement helped halt violence for the next couple decades; but a second wave of serious civil conflict emerged in the mid-1960s as the “underlying causes of the conflict never receded,” and left-wing guerilla groups re-emerged to define a new political platform (Ibañez and Vélez, 2008: 660). For several decades, these forces operated under a platform of reform that sought to “take over the central state and use it as an instrument in the pursuit of a variety of Marxist-Lenninst and Maoist-inspired socio-economic change” (Eaton, 2006: 536).

Following the formation of such guerilla groups as the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (*Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia*, FARC) in the early 1960s, a US political-military strategy for Colombia entitled *Plan Lazo* (1962) legalized paramilitarism and formed new “civil defense” (aka paramilitary) groups as a means to deal with leftist insurgency. Ever since, paramilitaries have played a central role within the social and political realms of Colombia, with guerillas largely representing the radical Left and paramilitaries the interests of the Center to Right.

However, both the roles of guerilla militias and paramilitaries underwent a transition following this period. On the Left, following political decentralization of the late 1980s, guerilla forces altered strategies of achieving transformation after realizing the strategic importance of controlling subnational rather than national offices. Colombia’s political decentralization of the 1980s helps to “explain the stunning gains made by the guerillas in the mid to late-1990s, as well as their successful transition from the Cold war-era ‘fight for land reform’ (*lucha por la tierra*) to the current and much less ideological ‘fight for territory’ (*lucha por el territorio*)” (Eaton, 2006: 536). On the Right, paramilitaries often acted as contract forces to help defend the land of wealthy land owners and the Cartel from leftist militias; subsequently, following the restructuring processes of the 1980s and 90s that slashed trade barriers, deregulated the economy, and further decentralized power and fiscal resources to subnational units of government, paramilitaries became key agents of opening and securing land for both their own purposes (often drug related, following the fall of the Cartel in the early 1990s) and for foreign investment (for more on this, see chapter 3). Though paramilitarism was officially outlawed by the

government in 1989, they could not be unmade by the government as easily as they were made, and were responsible for the vast majority of massacres and political violence against unarmed civilians in the 1990s (Avilés, 2006: 379).

Ironically, political decentralization in the 1980s was first introduced as a pacification strategy for militia forces, with the justification that “political decentralization would simultaneously give the rebels a legal political outlet by opening up the electoral system, partly achieved by the implicit erosion of the political duopoly shared for over a century by the Liberal and Conservative parties” (Ballvé, 2012: 607). In fact, decentralization helped fund armed actors on both the Right and the Left, making fiscal resources more accessible at subnational units of government (Eaton, 2006: 537). Intensifying foreign investment activities in rural territory has also contributed to the increasing scale of violence. Forced displacement in Colombia grew from about 25,000 people forcibly displaced during 1985, to around 100,000 in 1991, to over 400,000 in just 2002 alone (Vidal-López, 2012: 7). Not entirely surprisingly, the rapid increase occurred following the economic and political restructuring processes. Today, more than 150,000 people in the country continue to flee their homes each year (World Report, 2014).

To what degree citizens in general were afforded a more legitimate political outlet through decentralization is questionable as well. This is, on the one hand, because armed forces continue to operate with, through, or against new subnational nodes of power and resources. But as will be seen specifically in the case of Medellín, it’s also questionable to what degree these new subnational units of power are operating to redistribute power more democratically, or rather re-centralize power within the urban and regional scale.

Political decentralization and other Neoliberalist restructuring processes of the 1980s and 90s in Colombia – including deregulation and slashing trade barriers – were in fact an essential prerequisite for the political climate for Social Urbanism to emerge in the 1990s. This is an important aspect of the programme’s history that often goes unrecognized, especially notable as the urban development programme is popularly positioned against Neoliberalist forms of development and power. The exact nature of these political dynamics from that period to today, and

TIMELINE

Growth, Homicides and Political Eras

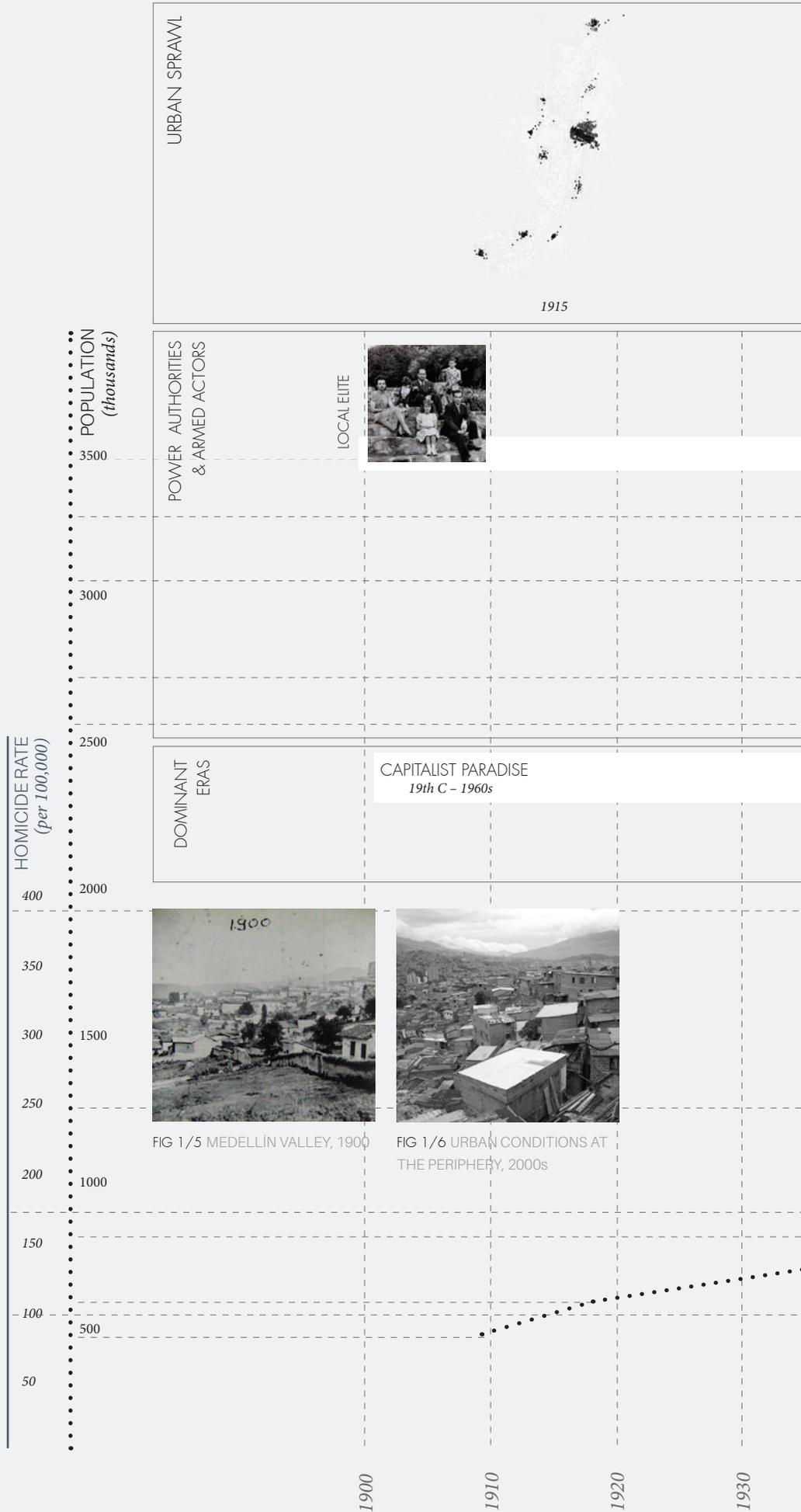
FIG 1/4 TIMELINE SHOWS THE CITY'S POLITICAL ERAS AND ACTORS ACROSS THE CITY'S HISTORY. THE HOMICIDE AND POPULATION RATE (OF THE GREATER METROPOLITAN REGION) ARE MAPPED AGAINST THESE CHANGING SOCIAL AND POLITICAL DYNAMICS. A DOMINANT/RECOGNIZED ERA IS ONE THAT IS POPULARLY COVERED IN THE PRESS. A LESS DOMINANT/RECOGNIZED ERA ARE PERIODS TO WHICH THERE IS EVIDENCE OF A CONTINUATION.

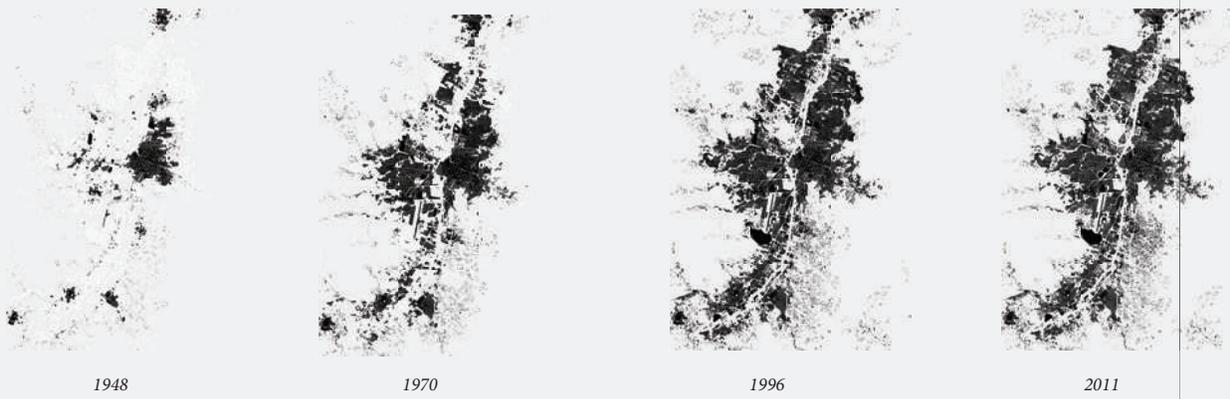
* THE PERIOD BEYOND SOCIAL URBANISM IS ANALYZED IN CHAPTERS 3 AND 4. POPULAR PERCEPTION HAS BEEN THAT THERE IS A CONTINUATION FROM THE PERIOD OF SOCIAL URBANISM TO TODAY.

Legend

Dominant/Recognized

Less Dominant/
Recognized





1948

1970

1996

2011



FROM 'FEAR' TO 'HOPE'



*

COCAINE ECONOMY
1977 - Mid 80s

NEW URBAN WARFARE
Late 1980s - 2003

"BACK TO LEGALITY"
2003 - Pres.

LA VIOLENCIA
1948 - 1958

Homicide Rate peaks in 1991, at 381 people per 100,000

Rate drops following Operación Orion, and other Paramilitary Operations

Don Berna extradited to US

1940

1950

1960

1970

1980

1990

2000

2010

the relationship between the political Left and Right in opening the space for Social Urbanism to emerge, will be further explored in Chapter 3. However, the longer history of paternalist politics in Medellín and its part in developing a spatially segregated city, and fostering the conditions for violence to emerge, is essential to understanding the city's development and dynamics of power leading to the introduction of Social Urbanism.

A RISE AND FALL FROM PARADISE

Medellín was first founded as a gold-mining town in 1675, and was established early on as the center of Antioquia. It wouldn't experience significant growth though until about 1870, however the development of the larger region of Medellín leading up to the late nineteenth century represented an important transformation from a modest colonial town to a modern, urban center (Escobar, 2007: 16–17). Though gold remained an important export of the region, around this time regional coffee exports and urban-based light manufacturing became new foundations to the local economy, with industrial growth reliant on rural migrants.

The social dynamics that emerged between the local industrial elites and the new working “peasants” was based on a rigid hierarchy of employment and life in the city, called “Catholic corporatism” by Forrest Hylton (Hylton, 2010: 342). Textile factories were offered by elites as respectable workplaces for migrants; at the same time, peasants were

FIG 1/7 PLAN OF “VILLA DE MEDELLÍN,” 1791



placed under the “protection” of family firms and the Catholic church. Medellín’s rapid modernization and economic growth far surpassed other national centers; but whereas organized labour “forged an independent class politics in other areas,” in Medellín it did not (ibid: 344).

This rigid hierarchy was in many ways responsible for the city’s early success; however it would also later contribute to the rapid proliferation of violence, uneven urban development, and the emergence of new paternalist actors, like the Cartel, in the later twentieth century. But by the mid-twentieth century, Medellín had grown to a powerful and wealthy industrial center. This golden period can not be overemphasized. In 1947, a correspondent for *Life* magazine visited the city, officially hailing it as a “Capitalist Paradise.” “Medellín,” wrote Dmitri Kessel, “was virtually unnoticed for three centuries. Then, in the last half of the 19th century it came to life as Colombia’s coffee capital. Now, opened up to the world by air transport, it has become the industrial center of the west coast of South America” (Kessel, 1947: 109). Kessel praised the population’s strict adherence to social and moral codes, noting their shared Catholic values. The article showcased the mayor and his “people” – the working class families, most of whom were employed in the textile mill factories, all of whom were said to lead well-ordered and conservative lives (ibid: 112-113). Images juxtaposed the working class and the city’s factories with the home estates of Medellín’s factory owners and ruling family dynasties. These photographs, says Ann Farnsworth-Alvear, emphasized the “contrast between Medellín’s ‘brisk modernity’ and its ‘ancient piety,’ where Catholic traditionalism protected family life from the incursions of modernity” (Farnsworth-Alvear, 2000: 40). Medellín was presented as the best of the old and the new, and Kessel celebrated the paternalistic social order that enabled it.

Until this period, the city had a fairly successful history of urban planning as well, as improving public infrastructure was considered one of the central means of transforming Medellín into a modern city (Correa, 2003: 70). Key early infrastructure included such projects as the Pelton turbine (1897) or the city’s first tramway (1921). The formation of the *Sociedad de Mejoras Públicas* (SMP) in 1899 represented the first institutionalization of urban planning for the city, with members largely representing the city’s elite classes, for the first time uniting the “public and

FIG 1/8 (FOLLOWING SPREAD, LEFT) PAGE 113 OF LIFE MAGAZINE PROFILE ON MEDELLÍN, 1947.

FIG 1/9 (FOLLOWING SPREAD, RIGHT) PAGE 115 OF LIFE MAGAZINE PROFILE ON MEDELLÍN, 1947.



PRIESTS. CATHOLICS RUN VIRTUALLY ALL SCHOOLS, INCLUDING BEST ONES

HIS PEOPLE

extremely conservative lives

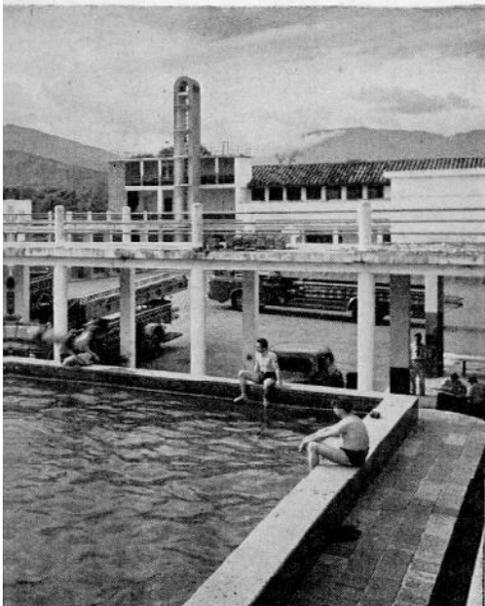
sion of bridge. No nice woman is ever seen on the streets after dark.

All this may seem a little hard on the younger folks, but they too have enjoyed recent concessions. Mixed bathing in swimming pools is now tolerated although not universally approved. Recently upper-class boys and girls have been allowed to go to Saturday-night dances at approved places—if heavily chaperoned.

Lower-class families have less opportunity to get similar concessions, and their social life is centered upon the home, the all-important unit in the city's life. All the classes, rich, middle class and poor, raise families that are large even by Latin standards. There are a great many couples who have from 10 to 15 children. In eight years the population has increased from 168,000 to 270,000.



LARGE FAMILIES LIKE RESTREPOS (ABOVE) ARE COMMON. THREE OF 12 CHILDREN WORK IN TEXTILE MILLS



bar in their firehouse. The city is proud of its civic projects and keeps the latest models of equipment in operation.



FUN FOR LADIES, who are great stay-at-homes, is usually limited in public to cards at the Club Campestre.



FUN FOR FAMILY is found in outings like this one in the Bosque, or public park, where there are soft drinks.



CARLOS ECHAVARRIA, SHOWN WITH FAMILY, IS MEDELLIN'S NO. 1 INDUSTRIALIST

THE RICH

They live in gracious style,
are intricately interrelated

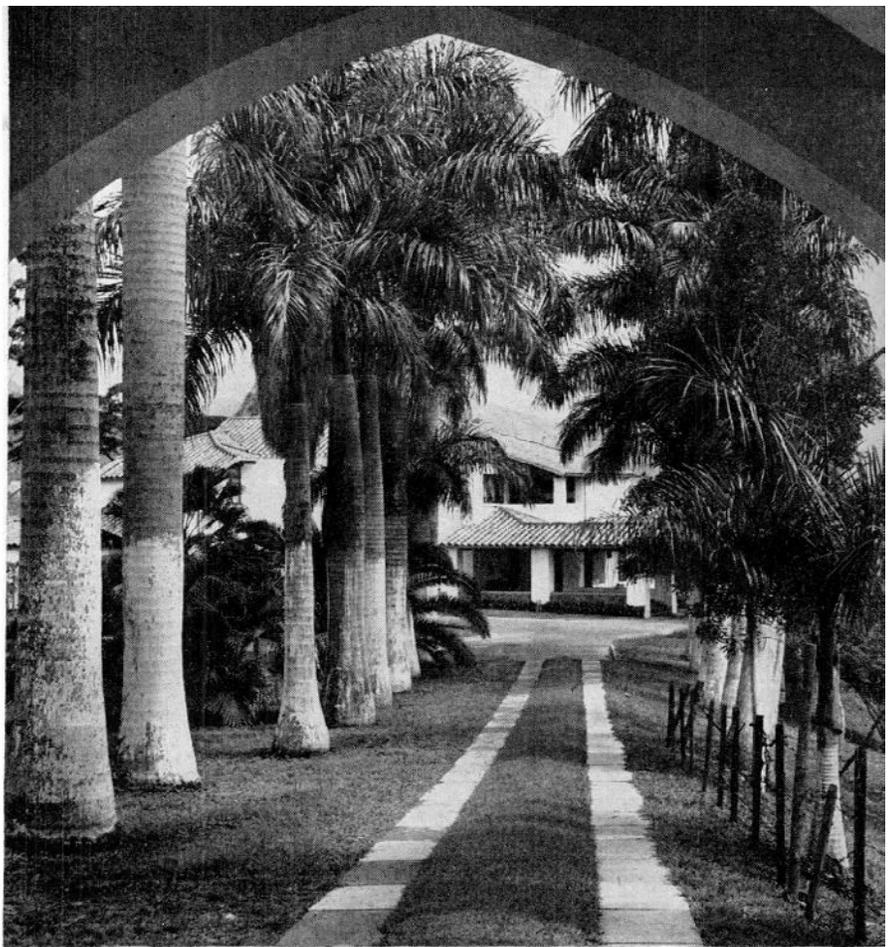
All the houses on this page are owned by members of the Echavarría family, which is split into rival business groups known as "thin Echavarrías" and "fat Echavarrías." Like members of the city's other ruling dynasties, their town houses are grouped together around Bolívar Square. But in the country the men of the various clans genially vie with each other in raising horses, cows, pigs, poultry, pigeons; the ladies compete over their orchids, which thrive well in this high, semi-tropical area.

The leaders in Medellín, like the textile tycoon Carlos Echavarría, are cosmopolitan, usually going to school in the U.S. He himself attended Columbia University in New York, where he played football. His elder daughter is enrolled in a convent at Tarrytown, N.Y. Even his dogs get around. The brindle boxer (above) is Madison Square Garden champion.



FELIPE ECHAVARRIA, DuPont agent and a nephew of Carlos Echavarría, owns home in suburbs where Medellín's leading families all maintain estates.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE



PALM-SHADED LANE leads up to the tile roofed country home (above) of Dr. Gustavo Uribe Escobar, who married into the Echavarría clan via sister of Carlos Echavarría. Below is a view of the castle home of Diego Echavarría, showing part of the formal gardens seen on opposite page.



private sector efforts in improving the city's quality of life" (Correa, 2003: 65). Under the auspices of the SMP, the first master plan for the city, *Plano de Medellín Futuro*, was approved by city council in 1913, with many of its directives addressing health, transport, urban planning organization and legislation (Aldana and Osorio, 2014: 30). Much of the plan would never come to fruition, though, largely because of the city's rapidly changing urban form and increase in urban migration rates. Still, the SMP was responsible for some of the key developments in the city's modernization, including the introduction of urban mail, automated telephones, and the city's first airport. It would be the formation of the *Empresas Públicas de Medellín* (EPM) in 1918, though, that would arguably have the greatest impact on the city's development through the rest of the twentieth century, and to today.¹ While formed as a public utilities company, for many years the EPM would become the city's master planner. The success of the EPM has meant Medellín's informal communities have been relatively well-served with basic utilities through their development in comparison to other informal areas around Latin America and the world (Uran, 2010: 128). But like the SMP, the EPM was and remains for many a "symbol of the extension of elite power, and it has remained in control of the city's elites" (Maclean, 2014: 18).

Thus through the early twentieth century, the city's leadership was marked by an ambition towards modernization and Capitalist growth that deeply affected its efforts to plan and improve the form of the city physically. This was not unlike other Latin American cities at the time. With European modernist sentimentalities flourishing, prominent architects and urban planners, particularly those affiliated with CIAM, visited cities across the region to help state locales modernize both physically and institutionally. Architects were concerned with rationalizing the social, spatial, and economic order. Paralleling the region-wide shift towards an import-substitution industrial model, and with industrial progress the intended aim, "modernist plans prioritized the needs of industry and its workers in redesigning the urban fabric" (Davis, 2014: 377).

In 1948, José Luis Sert (then-president of CIAM) and Paul Lester Weiner drafted a *Plan Piloto* for the city. The plan was intended as a guide for future development, to direct its reorganization and future growth (Schnitter, 1999: 217). Strict zoning and a hierarchical road sys-

1 / THE EPM PLAYS A CENTRAL ROLE IN THE FUNDING OF NEW URBAN PROJECTS IN MEDELLÍN, BOTH DURING THE PERIOD OF SOCIAL URBANISM AND TODAY, WITH 30% OF ITS PROFITS REQUIRED TO GO BACK TO THE CITY BUDGET. MANY OF THESE PROFITS COME FROM EXTERNAL INVESTMENTS MADE BY THE COMPANY, IN SUCH PROJECTS AS THE PANAMA CANAL (MACLEAN, 2014: 47). HOWEVER, A RECENT PRIVATIZATION OF THE CITY'S PUBLIC UTILITIES, THAT AIMED TO STOP BASIC SERVICES PIRATING AND INTRODUCE A CREDIT-BASED SERVICE STRUCTURE, HAS TURNED THE EPM - ONCE THE MOST CHERISHED PUBLIC COMPANY IN THE CITY - TO ONE OF THE LEAST. MORE ON EPM AND ITS RELATIONSHIP TO THE CITY EXPLORED IN CHAPTER 3.

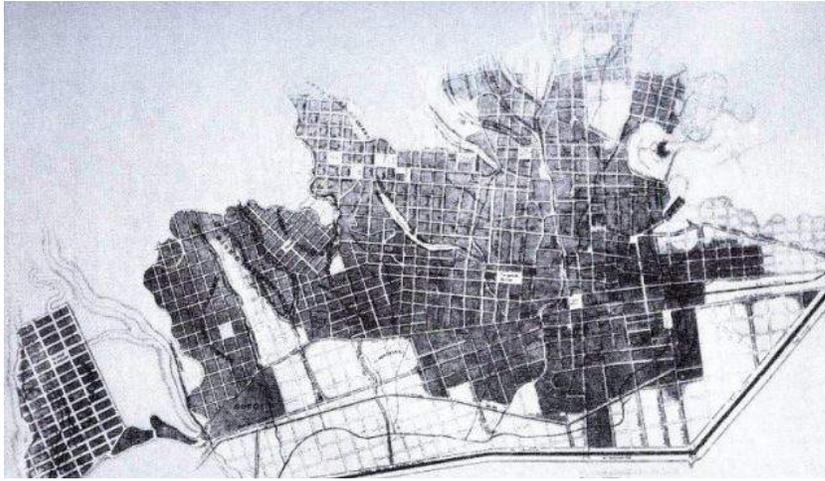


FIG 1/10 (TOP) PLAN OF MEDELLÍN, 1923



FIG 1/11 (MIDDLE) PLAN OF MEDELLÍN, 1932

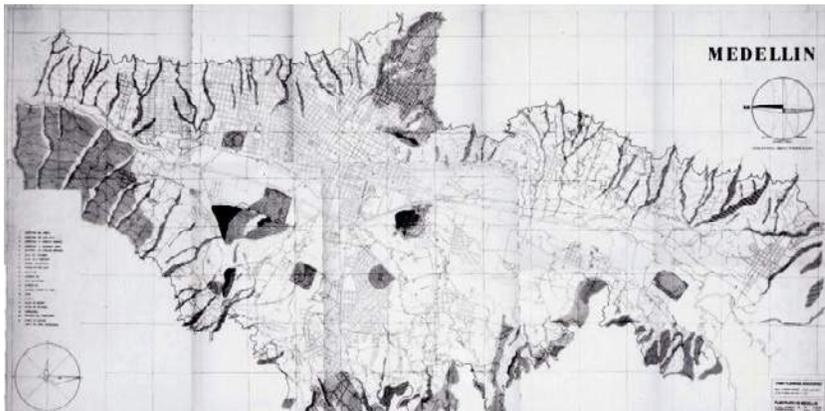


FIG 1/12 (BOTTOM) CITY OVERVIEW OF SERT AND WEINER'S PLAN PILOTO, 1948



FIG 1/13 (TOP) IMAGES SHOWING CENTRAL ARTERIAL HIGHWAY (DARK BLUE) AND SECONDARY HIERARCHY ROADS (LIGHT BLUE)

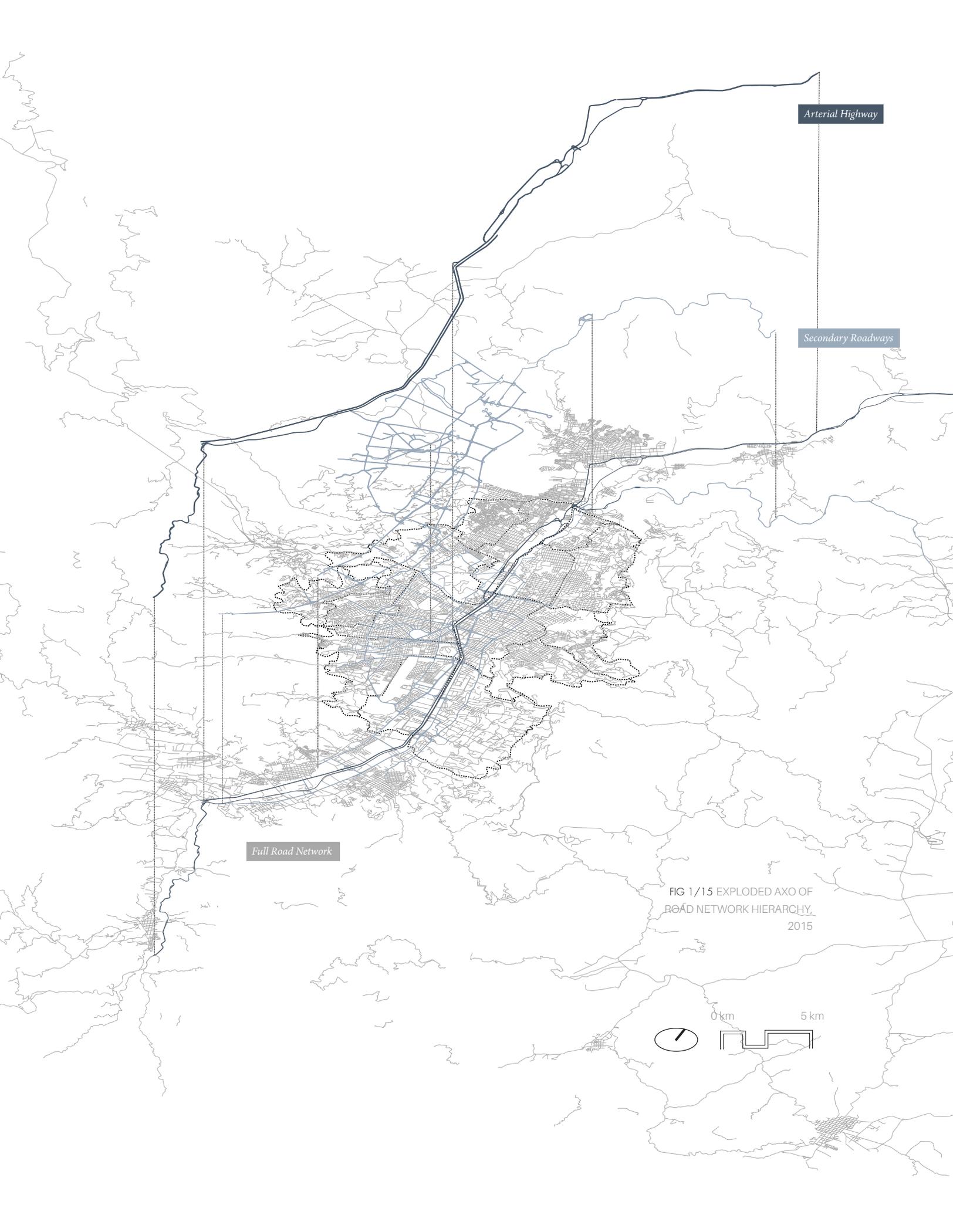
FIG 1/14 (BOTTOM) SAME AS FIG 1/13

tem were the two primary elements. But for a second time, following the failed realization of growth directives outline in the *Plano Futuro* of 1913, the majority of the city's ambitious plans would not come to fruition. The exception is the arterial highway system – today, one of the most divisive physical barriers in the urban fabric, promoting exclusion between neighbourhoods. Sert and Weiner's central highway cuts through the spine of the city, while secondary arterial roads that have since been added allow for isolated transport laterally (see FIG 1/15). For decades it has allowed the city's wealthy, mostly located in the south, to travel through the valley without making contact with the poor communities to the north.

Drafted at the height of Medellín's success, the *Plan Piloto* would be the last great planning endeavour by the city, arguably until the proposal of the Colombia's first (and still, only) urban Metro – which, while first approved in 1982, would not be functional until 1995 due to various delays. This period of about four decades following the *Plan Piloto* corresponds with the proliferation of violence following two major structural shifts in the city: the collapse of the local industrial model, and the concomitant shift in power from traditional elites to other actors, most infamously the Medellín Cartel.

Until this period, Medellín was ironically insulated from much of the violence that plagued the rest of Colombia through its modernization period. Alongside the physical isolation of the city – situated in the Aburrá Valley, of the Andean mountain range – the powerful Capitalist class allowed Medellín to escape much of the nation's political conflicts, with local politicians and elites usually working together for economic and urban growth. The city emerged relatively untouched from the Wars of Independences in the early 19th century, and the War of a Thousand Days between 1899 and 1902 – which helped move Medellín to the center of national economic life as many other competing urban centers drowned in conflict (Hylton, 2010: 344). Then, during *La Violencia* – which began just one year following Kessel's visit of 1947 – Medellín was spared for a third time, with local elite consciously promoting the city as an “oasis of peaceful Capitalist activity, beneficial to the nation” (ibid).

Amongst a wider, more Global audience, most discussions of the violence that erupted in Medellín tend to center around the Medellín Cartel. The recent fame of Pablo Escobar, and the unique association



Arterial Highway

Secondary Roadways

Full Road Network

FIG 1/15 EXPLODED AXO OF ROAD NETWORK HIERARCHY, 2015

0 km 5 km





made for Medellín as the nexus of cocaine violence, though, tends to obscure the complex network of armed actors that existed simultaneously in the city, many of whom continue to operate today. The fact these other actors, such as youth gangs, militias, paramilitaries, and state forces, assume organizational forms that are part of or parallel similar actors in other areas of Colombia, Latin America, or the world, also tends to downplay their role in contributing to the very unique scale of violence that grew within Medellín. That is not to overlook the role the Cartel played, however, in first bringing violence to the once-peaceful city.

Why Medellín became the nexus of cocaine – and cocaine-related violence – has several explanations. First, beginning in the late 1960s, the limits of the Antioquian industrial model were becoming apparent, as Globalization and Asian manufacturing competition began to undermine the foundation of Medellín’s economy (Hylton, 2010: 345). Cocaine thus entered the local economy at the right time, in some ways reacting to a specific economic need. The region’s history of marijuana production and exportation also set it up well to assume the production and exportation of a new illicit substance, one that would prove even more profitable. The adjacent, fertile lands of Urabá were also prime lands to grow coca, and were strategically located next to a gulf and export hub sharing borders with Panama. This strategic positioning turned the large, rural region of Urabá, and the urban node of Medellín, into two of the most dangerous places on earth. That Escobar himself was also from Medellín is not insignificant either.

Though the Cartel entered the city around the 1970s, for years Escobar would be a loved public figure amongst many. As social rights, such as housing and education, had been dependent on the industrial employment structure, recession and deindustrialization in Medellín was felt particularly harshly in the urban periphery (Maclean, 2014: 16). As Escobar and the Cartel moved into urban space, they assumed many of the roles previously held by the former paternalistic elite. Escobar funded social works programs and built soccer fields, stadiums, churches, and even entire *barrios* where people could live (Lamb, 2010: 51). “To the city’s poor and to some of the members of its impoverished middle class,” writes Mary Roldán, “the drug lords were modern heroes – employers, benefactors, and harbingers of prosperity” (Roldán, 1999: 170-171). Cocaine

FIG 1/16 (OPPOSITE PAGE, TOP) PLAZA BERRÍO OF THE HISTORIC DOWNTOWN. PHOTOGRAPHED BY NOTABLE LOCAL PHOTOGRAPHER, MELITÓN RODRÍGUEZ, 1895.

FIG 1/17 (OPPOSITE PAGE, BOTTOM) PLAZA BERRÍO TODAY, A LOCATION FOR ILLEGAL AND INFORMAL GAMBLING, 2015.

drove the local economy, and in many ways cushioned the blow of Globalization. Participation in the illicit economy was not exclusive to those living in traditionally marginalized areas: the inflow of unprecedented amounts of illegal money meant many of Medellín's businesses turned to laundering mechanisms, and for many of these jobs only "well-educated men from decent families would do" (Hylton, 2010: 347).

Ironically, while promoting inclusiveness amongst the poorer classes, in reality the power structure of the Cartel strongly resembled that of the industrial elite, a hierarchy which their rise to power supposedly challenged (Roldán, 1999: 174). It was still a reversal of the "order of things," though, with a significant outcome in destroying inhibitions of poor inhabitants toward "challenging the structure and process of political expression and participation imposed from above" (ibid). But by 1993, the year of his death and the fall of the Cartel, Escobar was no longer the powerful public figure he once was, and the relative peace of the early days of Medellín's cocaine economy were by then long gone.

In 1984, Escobar was forced into hiding following justice minister Lara Bonilla's assassination. This marked a significant moment for the city: when war was declared between the Cartel and the government, and violence that had for years been relatively contained geographically to the margins now exploded throughout the city. Though first viewed as the "harbingers of prosperity" or the new paternal leaders of the city, soon it became obvious what the Cartel was doing: deploying the young boys of Medellín's poor *communas* into the heart of their war. The Cartel encouraged children to put themselves up for hire to exact murder. Youth gangs were being formed under a climate of contract killing. Between 1987 and 1990, more than 78 percent of violent deaths were youth between the ages of 15 and 24 (Riaño-Alcalá, 2006: 2). In her book *Dwellers of Medellín: Youth and violence in Medellín*, Pilar Riaño-Alcalá describes this period as one marked by the transformation of death to commodity: something "highly valued and sought after by obscure political interests" (Riaño-Alcalá, 2006: 2). It was "bought and sold," with young hired assassins becoming its "administrators" (ibid). But these boys were the sons of the former working class and rural migrants; violence tore at the social fabric along the city's edges.

Around the same time Escobar was forced into hiding in the

1980s, urban militias arose from communities' discontent towards what their sons were doing. Alongside a national tradition of vigilante justice established by the emergence of left guerilla militias in the mid-twentieth century, these new urban militias were "born with the revolutionary platform and security objective: to defeat the powerful gangs that had completely taken over" (Sanín and Jaramillo, 2004: 21). At the same time these groups were first being formed, the state would go on to unleash a wave of repression against *communa* inhabitants (Roldán, 199: 176) – a reaction largely fueled by fear, perceiving these communities as responsible for the new urban war. It wouldn't be until 1989 that state security forces would finally confront the urban militia groups, surprised to find "well armed, well trained and disciplined military units that knew the streets and alleys of the *barrios* and had a strong backing from the community" (Lamb, 2010: 97).

The fall of the industrial model and hierarchical social structure of the elites, alongside the rise of the Cartel and subsequent turn towards new urban militias, illustrates a particular underlying power structure in Medellín towards paternalism, something that can supposedly be passed from group to group. And it is not surprising these urban militias eventually lost their support amongst the communities as well: while at first these militias appeared as defenders of their communities, soon their decisions were driven by economic interests, including those based around narco-trafficking and crime (Tapias, 2001: 217). They also began engaging in campaigns to rid their neighbourhoods not only of remaining drug dealers, but also prostitutes, homosexuals, molesters, rapists, and thieves, often through the spectacle of public executions (Roldán, 1999: 146). By the mid-1990s, they had lost much of their community support and larger territorial control, becoming much smaller, *barrio*-sized operations (Sanín and Jaramillo, 2004: 25).

As will be demonstrated in Chapter 3, this also corresponds with an important moment amongst the city's traditional elites and political class that is deeply tied to the eventual rise of Social Urbanism and its associated left-oriented political leaders in the early new millennium. This moment of the early to mid-1990s was one where private and public figures, along with community leaders and citizens, came together to try and figure out how to deal with the crisis of violence that plagued the city;

it was also a moment when these stakeholders looked to revive Medellín economically by opening up its space to foreign investment – corresponding to Colombia's larger restructuring processes – and also reclaim power over the city space. The rise of paramilitarism in Medellín is situated in this moment as well. Paramilitaries moved relatively swiftly following the fall of the Cartel in 1993, supposedly in an attempt to inherit the lucrative cocaine business. They also played a unique role, however, in the assertion of territorial control, eventually taking urban space away from the hands of youth gangs and urban militias, allegedly in collusion with the formal state and partly with the aim of destroying the stigma of violence that had come to define the city in order to open Medellín up to investment (Amnesty International, 2005: 31). However, while Social Urbanism could, through certain lenses, be viewed as an “exercise in reinforcing and legitimating State, and elite, power” (Maclean, 2015: 76), as Kate Maclean suggests, its physical dimension also sought in many ways to address the high levels of spatial – and associated social and economic – inequalities that had come to characterize the city.

Miscalculating Medellín's growth through the mid and late twentieth century proved particularly fatal to its physical development. Migrants flooded the city for decades with few urban provisions. At first drawn to the city for economic opportunities afforded by industrialization, migration continued even after the economic collapse, largely due to forcibly-displaced inhabitants following the rise of rural violence in the later 1960s. While rural migrants had once been necessary to grow Medellín's industries, the increasing pace of migration and a declining economy led them to be perceived as threats by traditional urban dwellers. The eventual lack of economic opportunities once many arrived considerably affected living conditions as well. Hostility between social classes grew quickly. Hostility and physical inequalities were thus in place long before the Cartel and violence emerged in the city, although their emergence certainly exacerbated existing issues.

The formal city's perspective on informal settlements were that they were simply land invasions. Police army units were sent to demolish many of the hillside settlements early on, a symptom of the “crisis of authority over the city's new frontiers” (Hylton, 2010: 345). But attempts to restrain growth went to no avail. If enough people invaded and were able

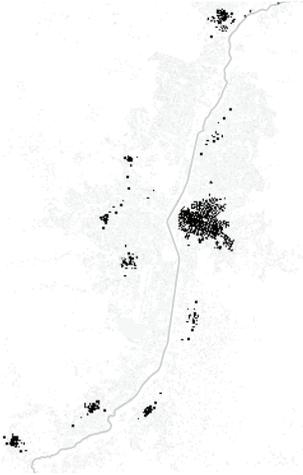


FIG 1/18 1916



FIG 1/19 1948



FIG 1/20 1970



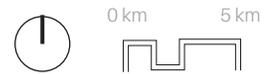
FIG 1/21 1985



FIG 1/22 1996



FIG 1/23 2011



to stay put, eventually these communities were officially recognized by city authorities (Lamb, 2010: 51). This was typical of many rapidly-growing cities of Latin America during the time. The violence and resulting fear that emerged encouraged urban development that almost always intensified sociospatial segregation and exclusion from the formal city towards these rapidly growing areas. This usually included a reduction of the scope of face-to-face interactions, through such means as the “rise of gated communities and other guarded urban and suburban enclaves, where citizens fortress themselves in order to keep out the forces of crime, to the increased use of cars and other private modes of transport . . . to the reduced availability of public space” (Davis, 2012a: 43). Medellín followed this pattern of development quite closely: little public space existed in the city by the 1990s, especially around the periphery; the hierarchical development of highways and roads had designed the larger city almost exclusively for automobiles; gated communities sprouted through the south end as inhabitants vacated the traditional center and downtown following the eruption of city-wide violence and terror. A stark polarity in conditions of life had developed between the north and the south (see FIG 1/27 and FIG 1/28), and between the center – with flat land and pre-1970s development – and the periphery – territory rising up the steep terrain along the Aburrá valley, developed during eras of violence and intensified social exclusion.

These deeply-embedded spatial inequalities are, of course, many of the physical issues of the city that Social Urbanism looked to address. However, what can't be dismissed in their analysis is how the dynamics of power, exclusion, and violence affected their development in the first place. Elite paternalism moved the city to its height of economic development and modernization by the mid-twentieth century; it also helped set the foundations for severe spatial inequalities to develop, and established the conditions for the city's later infamous scale of violence to emerge. Social Urbanism also has to be viewed not as an autonomous programme under the auspices of the *Compromiso Ciudadana* political movement (and its leaders Sergio Fajardo and Alonso Salazar), but rather as the outcome of the merging of left and right interests during the 1990s as local politicians and business leaders looked to re-establish Medellín as an important urban center, in part through the reassertion of control from the armed

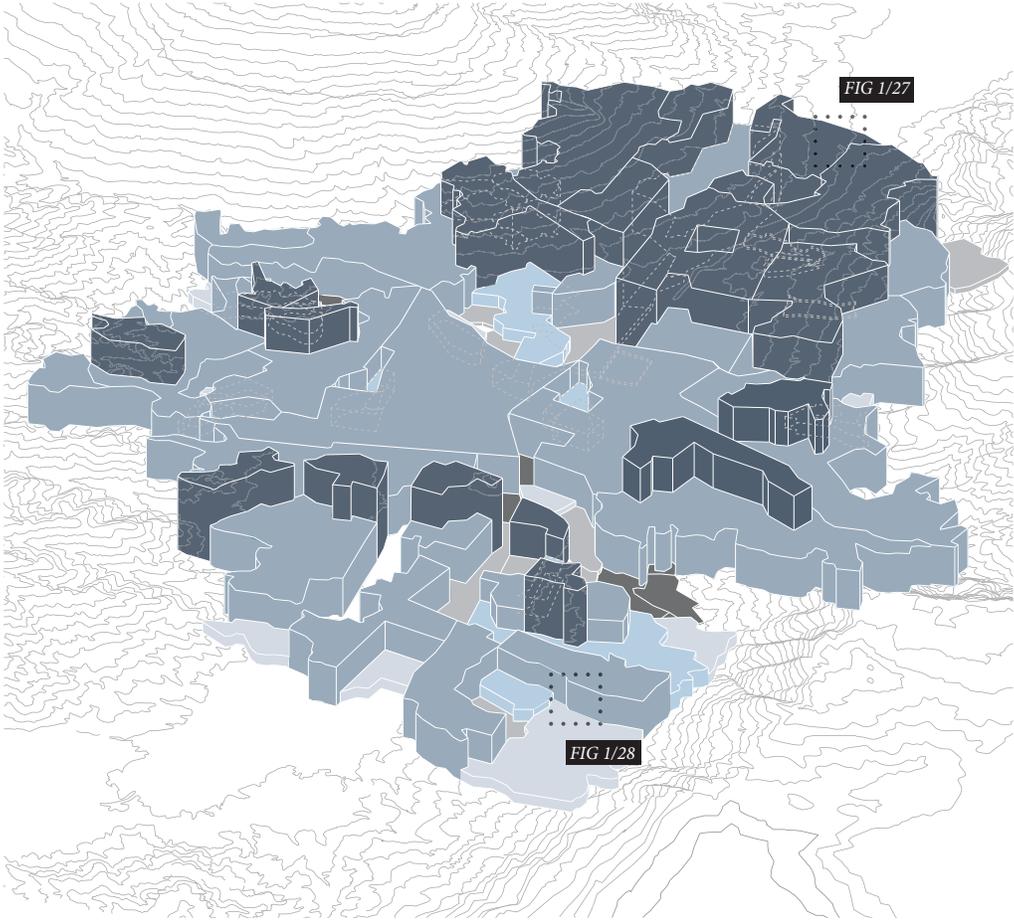


FIG 1/24 COMMERCIAL STREET IN SANTO DOMINGO, NORTHEAST, 2015.

FIG 1/25 VIA PRIMAVERA, COMMERCIAL STREET IN EL POBLADO, SOUTHEAST, 2015.

INHABITANT DENSITY

FIG 1/26 AXO OF DENSITY ACROSS THE CITY, 2015. THE NORTH IS MUCH DENSER THAN THE SOUTH, DESPITE THE SOUTH BEING MOSTLY HIGH-RISES AND THE NORTH INFORMAL FABRIC



Legend

inhab per km²

- 30,000 – 150,000
- 7000 – 30,000
- 5200 – 7000
- 3300 – 5200
- 1500 – 3300
- < 1500



FIG 1/27 AXO OF TYPICAL
URBAN DENSITY CONDITIONS IN
SANTO DOMINGO, NORTHEAST.
1:1000

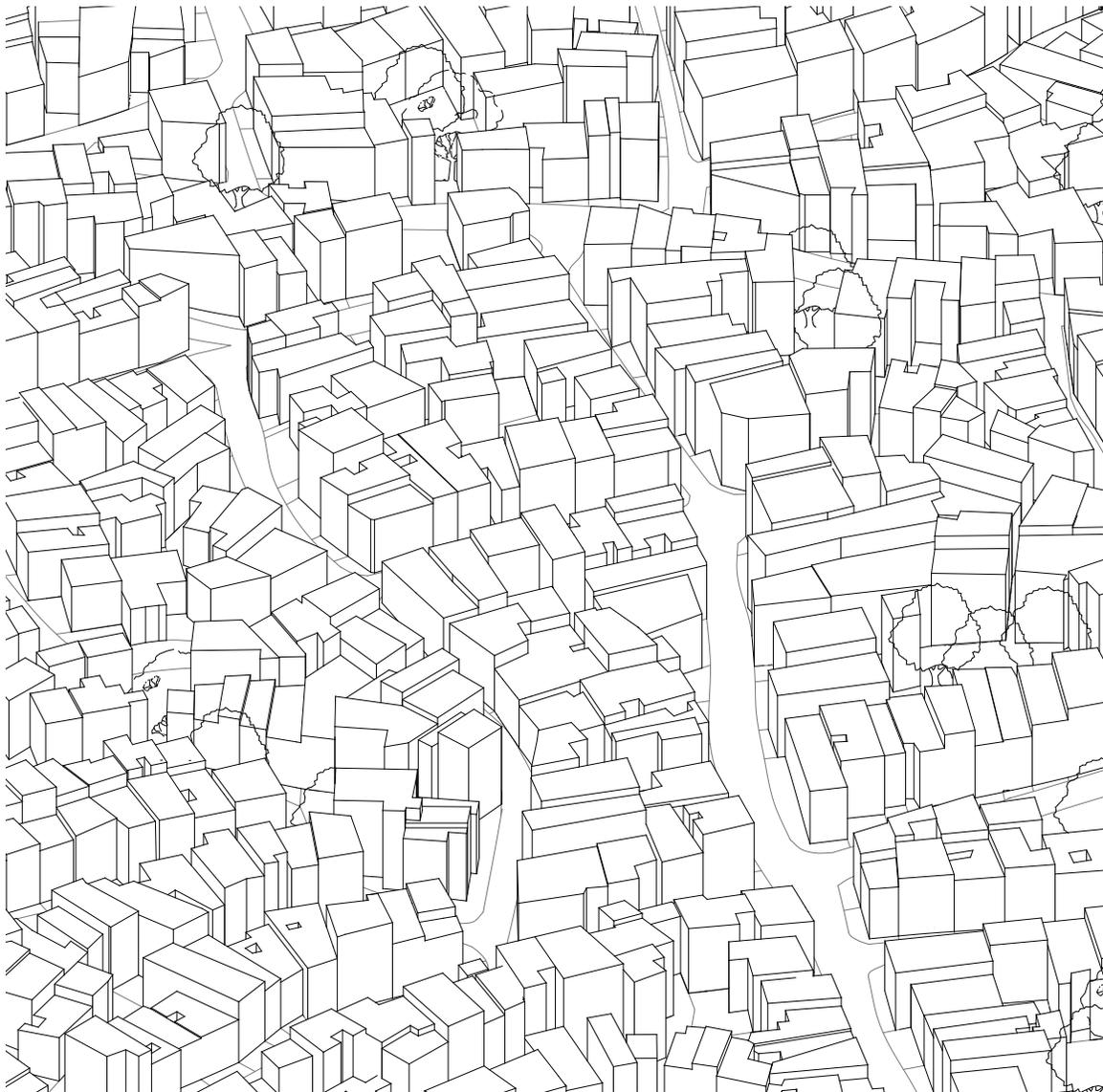
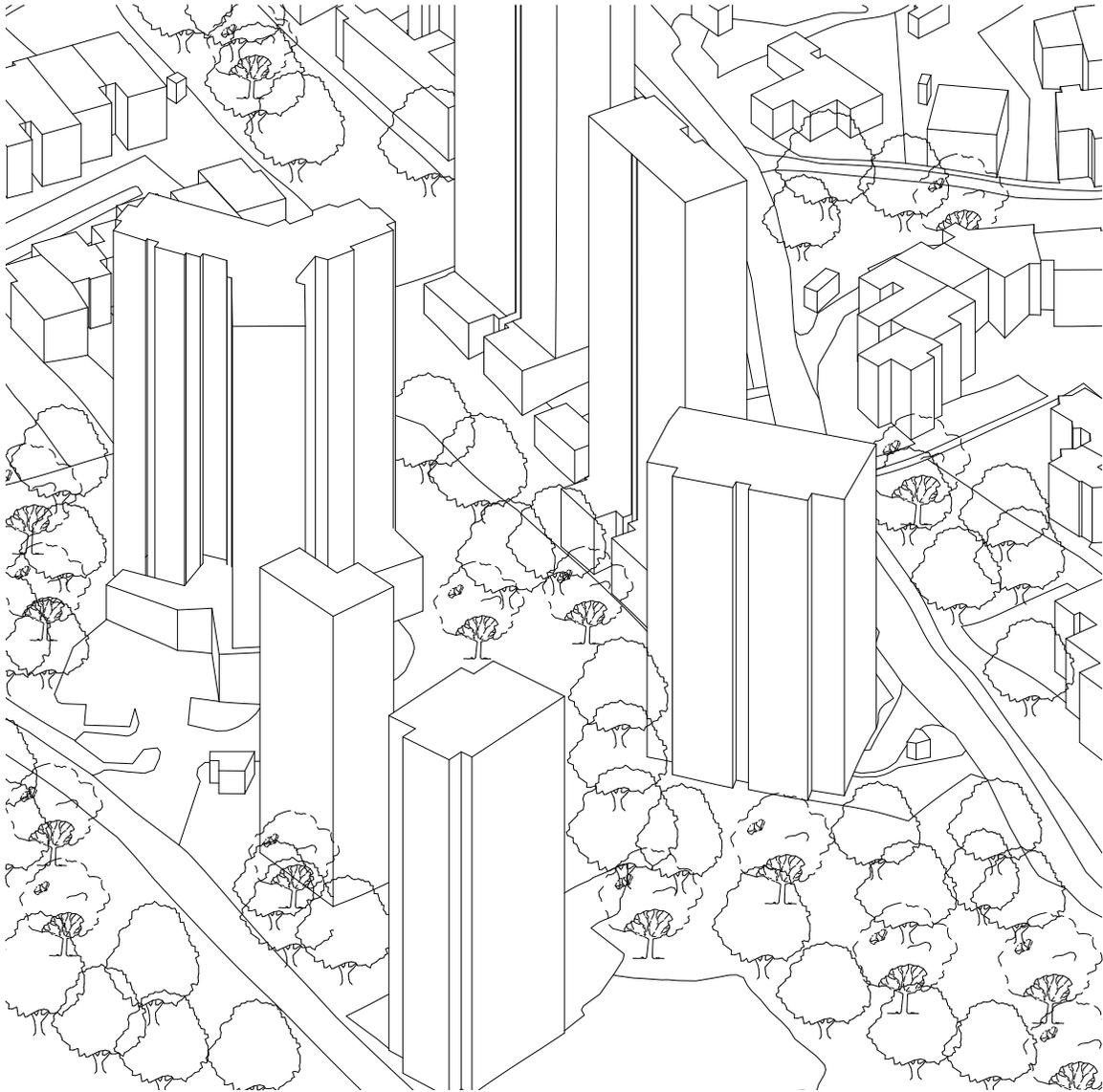


FIG 1/28 AXO OF TYPICAL UR-
BAN DENSITY CONDITIONS IN EL
POBLADO, SOUTHEAST. 1:1000





actors who had dominated in the city since the 1970s.

Spatial inequalities in Medellín were thus an outcome of structural processes of development involving various legal or illegal actors of power. As we saw, this is also true for the surrounding rural region. The operation of armed actors in rural areas, usually with the aim of territorial control, have deeply hindered citizens' rights to land, and have left Colombia one of the most unequal countries in the world in terms of land ownership. But like Medellín, this is the outcome of structural processes of development that have integrated illegal and violent activities into the production of territory. There is also a distinct relationship between the forced displacement of rural inhabitants in the Antioquia and Urabá region, and the mounting issue of rapid over-migration to the urban center of Medellín, which has deeply affected the quality of life and helped intensify social hostility.

This analysis is picked up again in Chapter 3, beginning in the early 1990s and extending to the present, which looks at the specific restructuring processes undertaken by Colombia and Medellín as well as the integration of various illegal armed actors in the physical development that followed into and through the period of Social Urbanism. This is meant, in part, as a means to critiquing the image of the city the programme has helped to produce. However, the overall objective of Social Urbanism relating to both social and physical development, according to its popular rhetoric as well as the programme's critical reception, first needs to be established in the remainder of this chapter, followed by an overview and analysis of Social Urbanism's urban image and its associated ideology in Chapter 2.

DESIGNING THE MIRACLE

The official period of Social Urbanism began in 2003, under Fajardo's new administration. While the city had already been experimenting with new public spaces in the city, such as the *Parque de los Pies Descalzos* (Barefoot Park) near the administrative center, or the *Plaza Botero* in 2004 – with Luis Perez's (Fajardo's predecessor) administration also responsible for

FIG 1/29 (OPPOSITE, TOP)
HOUSING CONDITIONS IN THE
WESTERN PERIPHERY OF COM-
MUNA 13, 2015.

FIG 1/30 (OPPOSITE, BOTTOM)
HOUSING CONDITIONS IN
PERIPHERY OF EL POBLADO,
SHOWING TWO GATED HOUSING
COMMUNITY TYPES: HIGH-RISE
AND LOW-RISE, 2015.

developing the first Metrocable in the northeast – the introduction of Social Urbanism to the city's urban planning represented the first holistic strategy of intervening through similar methods of public space interventions across the greater area of the city. The programme engaged strategies of urban acupuncture, first introduced by Jamie Lerner in Curitiba (see Lerner, 2014), but also adopted by Barcelona for its regeneration project in the 1980s – the city in which Fajardo's Director of Urban Projects,² Alejandro Echeverri, undertook his doctoral studies in the 1990s. Not coincidentally, Barcelona and Medellín's regeneration would demonstrate many similarities: the lexicon of urban acupuncture, the creation of new centralities across the city, a claim to respect the democratic value of public space, as well as indicating a strong desire to “break with the past” (Brand, 2013a: 3).

But even before the new public space experiments taken around the turn of the millennium, Medellín was already experimenting with other strategies of recovery through urban upgrading in the 1990s. The Medellín Integrated Informal Settlement Upgrading Program (PRIMED) was a project undertaken in 1993, which, alongside the general trend across Latin America towards smaller-scale upgrading programmes to deal with urban insecurity, PRIMED focused on such components as land tenure legalization, home improvement, and resettling those inhabiting areas of geological risk (Imparato and Ruster, 2003: 85). While popular through the 1980s and 90s, these urban upgrading projects eventually lost their centrality in Latin American planning, as programmes proved to serve only a fraction of urban inhabitants, and “when implemented, fragmented informal settlements into multiple constituencies . . . undermin[ing] horizontal relations within the community and increas[ing] citizen dependence on political leaders” (Davis, 2014: 338). The *Núcleos de vida ciudadana* was another significant upgrading project undertaken by the city during the late 1990s. The project focused on upgrading existing community spaces, and developing new urban subcenters, which included building such spaces as high schools and soccer fields; it also helped start a program with the United Nations to support small shops as a way of constructing and reinforcing small-scale urban tissue (interview with Luis Dapena, 2015).

Many of these programmes were eventually abandoned across

2 / THE USE OF THE TITLE “DIRECTOR OF URBAN PROJECTS,” AS OPPOSED TO “DIRECTOR OF URBAN PLANNING,” IS INDICATIVE OF THE STRONG APPROPRIATION OF THE URBAN PROJECT MODEL THAT WAS DEFINED DURING THE BARCELONA REGENERATION PROJECT. FOR MORE ON BARCELONA, SEE CHAPTER 2.

Latin America because of their supposed tendency to fragment urban space. Focusing on Latin American urban spaces as “divided cities” through the late twentieth century helped foster a “vision of urban development as promoting very piecemeal, and often reactive, policy initiatives that fail to take into account the unity of cities and only consider one aspect of the urban equation” (Rodgers et al., 2012: 17). In Medellín, urban upgrading programmes were abandoned leading into the new millennium, as the city looked to overcome its spatial fragmentation through more holistic planning and policies. Today, renewed optimism about the Latin American city emerges from a vision that views the city as such a holistic entity (ibid). This was in large part what Social Urbanism claimed to do: focus on reintegrating the city, and foster new solidarity with areas of the city that had not only been marginalized through the city’s development, but which were persistently regarded as “other” from the formal center because of a perspective that viewed the urban realm as divided in two.

In 2003, Fajardo successfully ran and won as the leader of the independent party *Compromiso Ciudadana* (Citizen’s Commitment). Fajardo and the party also ran the election prior, but lost to Perez’s Liberal government. Their victory in 2003 was the first time a municipal election in Medellín was won by someone outside the traditional Liberal and Conservative parties. *Compromiso Ciudadana* was first formed in the 1990s, as a popular citizens organization that had “come together with private business-sector foundations, academics and cultural networks, and union organizations. . . . defin[ing] the moment as a crisis of confidence in a corrupt local government system” (Uran, 2010: 310). This represented an unusual situation of common goals from actors with normally divergent interests, encouraged to come together for the first time to deal with a crisis of violence, insecurity, and general ungovernability. While often-times the private sector’s involvement in the project is heralded as a case of unprecedented philanthropy (see McGuirk, 2014), in fact economic interests were at stake in the revival of Medellín. Overcoming its identity of “murder capital” in many ways implied a revival of its former position as “capitalist paradise.”

Officially Social Urbanism would exist until 2011, the administrative conclusion of Fajardo’s successor, Salazar. Salazar was also a member of the *Compromiso Ciudadana*, originally a secretary under Fajardo and



FIG 1/31 SERGIO FAJARDO MEETING SCHOOL CHILDREN DURING THE LATIN AMERICAN AND CARIBBEAN CONFERENCE FOR SOCIAL SCIENCES, HELD IN MEDELLÍN, NOVEMBER, 2015. INCREASING THE BUDGET OF THE SCHOOL SYSTEM IN THE CITY IS ONE OF THE LEGACIES OF FAJARDO'S ADMINISTRATIVE TERM.

his right-hand man. His term was a logical succession to Fajardo's: Salazar had been a key member of a local NGO group through the 1980s and 90s, and had significant first-hand experience dealing with sources and victims of violence in the city's periphery, writing several books including a famous, graphic exploration of the city's violence in his book *Born to Die in Medellín* (Salazar, 1990). In fact, compared to Fajardo's background as a mathematics professor, Salazar appeared even more qualified, and instituted policies and interventions that were often more measured and informed (interview with Brand, 2015). Interventions during Salazar's era included new preschools across the city called *Jardín Infantils*, with neighbourhoods chosen according to similar criteria as the Library-Parks and High-Quality schools during Fajardo's era. He was also a strong proponent of new women's health centers in poor neighbourhoods, looking to curb poverty and population growth through access to birth control – going head-to-head against the Catholic church.

When Aníbal Gaviria, a member of the traditional Liberal party, won in 2012, the intervention and policy directives of Social Urbanism were officially supplanted by a new development programme: Civic Pedagogical Urbanism. The transition to this later period will be further explored in Chapter 4. However, in the following, the overall strategies for social recovery in the city, and the physical intervention strategies of Social Urbanism, will be explored.

Though the physical dimension of Social Urbanism has taken center stage, in reality the programme extended beyond the mere upgrading of physical qualities of the city. Rather, it was considered a strategic tool to mitigate problems of inequality and segregation, to “connect, integrate, and coordinate” the city, using architecture and urbanism as tools for “working with the community to implement a process for recovery of the city's neighbourhoods” (Castro and Echeverri, 2011: 100). All urbanism is, of course, social. By necessity, urbanism needs to mediate between the existing social relationships of city spaces. But in the context from which Medellín found itself in the 1990s and early 2000s, this idea of holistic physical intervention as catalyst to social recovery took on new meaning.

The climate of violence and insecurity that took place in Medellín through the last three decades of the twentieth century, while cer-

tainly an outcome of a unique set of factors relating to a history of armed actors and opportunity for the cocaine business to thrive, also had much to do with the city's history of population growth and over migration. With "peasants" flocking to the city, many displaced from their rural origins from violence, the urban zones they occupied remained irregular, informal, and, oftentimes, illegal (Tobón, 2012: 229). In Medellín, these places recreated the "conditions for conflict, poverty, marginalization, and inequity . . . [and] exclude[d] their inhabitants from the benefits of urban living" (ibid). Social Urbanism was intended as a means to promote solidarity, and overcome the long-entrenched idea of two different cities existing within the same urban borders. "Medellín is shifting from a society that deemed its population's differences as a factor of conflict," wrote the Mayor's Office, "to building a society that finds in cultural diversity the key for the democratic and plural construction of a renovated civil society" (Mayor's Office of Medellín, 2011: 204).

Social Urbanism included several strategies for this recovery and integration, five of which stand out as particularly central: public space, mobility, participation, cultural and educational programming, and aesthetics. Together, these strategies addressed both existing physical issues embedded in Medellín's urban form, and socially-embedded issues, oftentimes linked to concepts of neighbourhood pride and perception – both from those living at the urban margins, and from those looking outwards from the city core.

First, issues of public space in the city's periphery brought with it two main concerns. To begin, there wasn't much existing public space. Formal planning provisions had been mostly absent during the periphery's key eras of development, through the 1970s, 80s, and 90s. Alongside the stress to densify neighbourhoods as much as possible – with barriers of urban expansion set by the steep terrain of the Aburrá Valley – there was little effort to ensure public spaces were being developed, maintained, or protected from future squatting. Compared to other areas of the city such as *El Poblado*, where residents of gated communities bought lush greenery and aquamarine pools with the keys to their apartments or houses, the lack of public amenities in the periphery appeared particularly dire. Second, following so many decades of conflict in these areas, there was a collective fear of public space that discouraged the type of



FIG 1/32 (TOP) ABOVE-GROUND METRO SYSTEM, INAUGURATED 1996. IT WAS THE FIRST PUBLIC METRO SYSTEM BUILT IN COLOMBIA, AND REMAINS THE ONLY ONE TO THIS DAY.

FIG 1/33 (MIDDLE) NORTHEAST METROCABLE, INAUGURATED 2003. MEDELLÍN'S METROCABLE SYSTEM WAS THE FIRST INSTANCE OF GONDOLA TECHNOLOGY BEING USED AS PUBLIC TRANSPORT.

FIG 1/34 (BOTTOM) METROPLUS BUS RAPID TRÁSIT (BRT) SYSTEM. LINE 2 INAUGURATED 2013. THE SYSTEM BORROWED FROM THE DESIGN OF BOGOTÁ'S TRANSMILENIO BRT SYSTEM, FIRST INAUGURATED IN 2000.

social interactions most urban planners would consider ideal, and left in its wake a city that was so afraid of itself that “people hid in their homes and stayed their” (ACI, 2011: 22). As late as 2003, people in some *barrios* of the city were not even allowed on the streets after five p.m., under strict control by those urban militias still active on the streets (Bullivant, 2012: 121). A key aspect to making the periphery part of the city was encouraging an everyday life that resembled the day-to-day interactions of typical urban life.

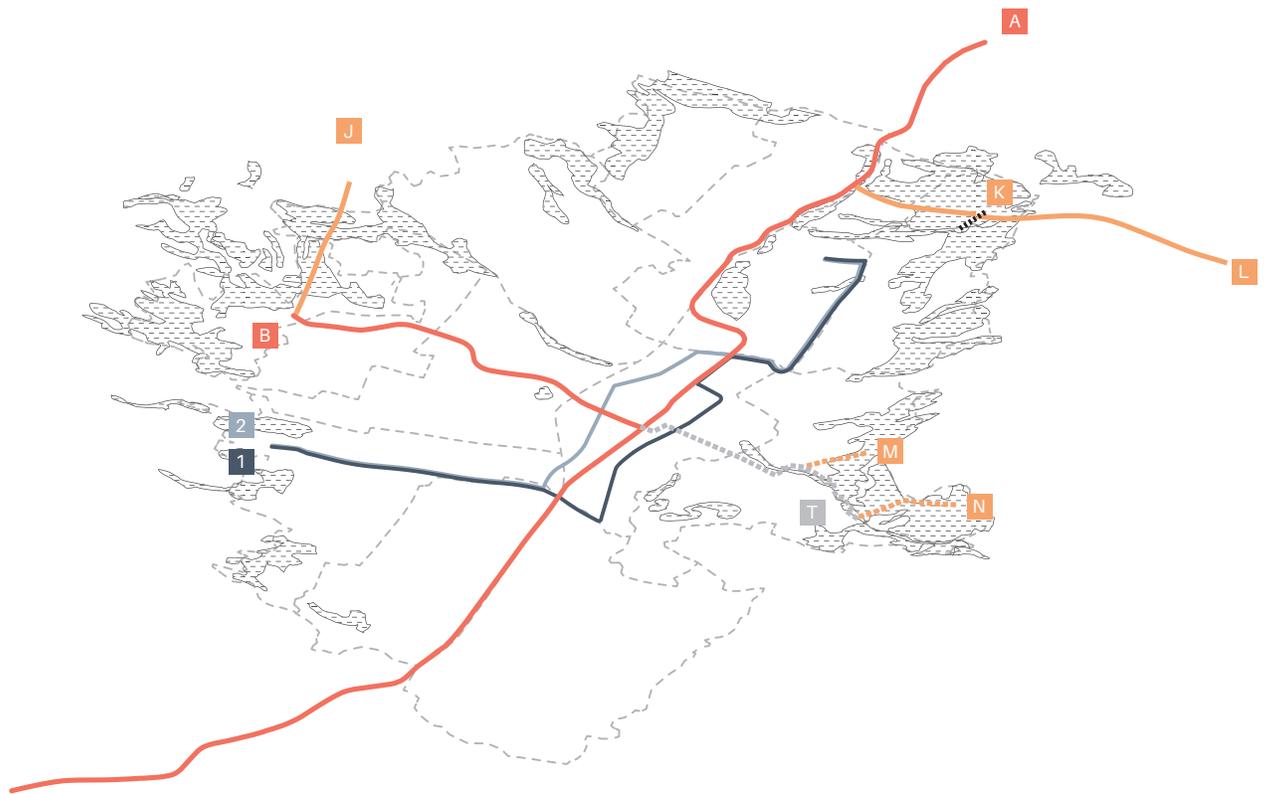
Making these peripheral areas accessible was another key aspect. This both included ensuring inhabitants of the periphery could travel to and from the formal city, and that those in the formal center could, and would, finally visit those at the urban edges. To most people in the city center, informal communities only appeared as a familiar topography visible in the distance, a scale at which daily life is not visible. With the images of Medellín's new projects and peripheral communities that flood magazines, newspapers, and the Internet today, it is important to remember there was a time when many would not have seen informality up close, rarely even in photographs. By introducing new forms of mobility, not only did photography of these areas increase exponentially, but people were drawn towards the edges of the city as new flagship projects were built.

Medellín's Metrocables are of course the most famous example of innovative technology adopted by the city, and represent the first case of gondola technology used for urban transport anywhere in the world. Today there are five operating in the city, with four of them integrating directly into the public Metro system at no extra cost. But the success of these projects in connecting the city physically and affecting the daily lives of travelers is something often debated, with different degrees of success being perceived across different Metrocables depending on the neighbourhood context, and supplementary intervention strategies. The institutional atmosphere of the Metrocable can be discouraging to some users, with strict rules and guidelines on how the system needs to be used; long lines and cues at peak hours are also deterring characteristics.³ Further, the system does not replace the need for proper road infrastructure and other transport systems, which have the capacity to move a higher volume of passengers, as well as allow for transport for the type of large

3 / FOR A DETAILED RESEARCH STUDY ON THE USAGE OF MEDELLÍN'S METROCABLES, SEE AGUDELO ET. AL., 2013.

TRANSPORT & INFORMAL SETTLEMENTS

FIG 1/35 AXO MAPPING PUBLIC TRANSPORT ROUTES (AS OF 2016) AND LOCATIONS OF INFORMAL SETTLEMENTS



Legend

- | | | | |
|------------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| A Metro Line (1996) | K Metrocable (2004) | M Metrocable (2016) | 1 Metroplús BRT (2011) |
| B Metro Line B (1996) | J Metrocable (2008) | N Metrocable (2016) | 2 Metroplús BRT (2013) |
| T Tranvía (2015) | L Metrocable (2010) | | |



items that are prohibited on the Metrocable.

However, one of the Metrocables' more incontrovertible successes has been in how their presence has integrated certain peripheral areas of the city symbolically (Brand and Davila, 2011: 675). "It is more a question of the sensations that the Metrocables produce as symbols of inclusion of those neighbourhoods in the urban agenda," says Peter Brand, "the attention and investment of the city administration, positive media coverage and the arrival of visitors of all kinds" (Brand, 2013b: 117). Further, the visual presence of the Metrocables did help to symbolically integrate the periphery into the image of urban life. Perez, the original proponent of Metrocable technology in Medellín, notes in an interview: "Residents of those neighbourhoods told me 'I used to say I'm going to Medellín, now I say I'm going to the city center.' They didn't grow up as Medellín citizens. This little device integrates them . . . they don't feel discriminated against. We began to tear down those imaginary walls" (Perez, interviewed in Coupé et al., 2013: 61).

Participation, culture, and education were strategies that dealt with the inequalities and inadequacies of existing neighbourhood contexts by tackling these issues in symbolic ways. This doesn't preclude real physical benefits, however, as participation by communities was often directed towards what physical interventions were deemed most essential, and many cultural and educational initiatives emerged through new buildings, such as libraries, museums, and schools. Together these strategies represented a new environment of "citizen culture" – a term first introduced to Colombian public policy by Antanas Mockus, former mayor of Bogotá. In this "citizen culture," participative, cultural, and educational development was intended to initiate a mix of private and public initiatives to "directly influence the manner in which citizens perceive, recognize and use their social and urban environments, as well as the way in which they relate to each other in each of these settings" (Tobón, 2012: 229). In this regard, appropriation by citizens of the urban realm first meant learning how to use it (*ibid*).

The symbolic transfer of power implied by democratic participation was central to gaining collective trust in Medellín. Theories on democratic participation, and the debate regarding to what extent participatory processes are a meaningful transfer of power – or simply

placatory strategies – has existed throughout the twentieth century discourse on participation, in fact a central point of inquiry in Sherry Arnstein’s seminal 1969 work, “The Ladder of Citizen Participation” (1969) (Arnstein, 1969). “Interestingly,” writes Jeremy Till, discussing Arnstein’s ranking of different forms of participation, “the word ‘placation’ sits just over halfway up the ladder . . . [and] awarded an above average rating in this ladder of expectation” (Till, 2005: 25). This seems strange, Till admits, that placation is deemed an acceptable outcome; however, he notes the result of placatory forms of participation can lead to such positive outcomes as the “collective” being more readily accepted, or increased feelings of belong amongst communities (ibid: 26). However at the same time, such forms of participation also encourage the persistence of rigid power structures.

In Medellín, participation may in part have been a form of placation, in an attempt to gain political trust. However, there were also sophisticated mechanisms involved, particularly at the introduction of Social Urbanism that at the very least indicated an attempt to redistribute traditional hierarchies of power. Medellín’s participatory process had several dimensions, including participatory design meetings for proposed architectural and infrastructural projects, as well as the Participatory Planning and Budgeting Programme (PB), which borrowed from Porto Alegre’s PB strategies. First implemented in Medellín under Fajardo’s administration, PB was imagined as a tool for citizens, both in the poor and wealthy areas, to determine where a portion of their existing budget within each *communa* would be allocated. In 2006, the average budget allocated to PB within each *communa* was US \$2,645,503 (ranging up to US \$5,291,392, depending on size, population, and human development index) with decisions by citizens whether money was to be used to solve specific problems, or to treat it as initial capital for larger urban projects (Uran, 2010: 139). “From the start,” said Fajardo, “I knew that a proposal of participatory budgeting in Medellín would be an innovation that would be in line with our way of understanding politics from a civic point of view” (interview with Fajardo, in Uran, 2010: 132). But while PB was a framework that was meant, in part, to disarm politically violent actors and clientelistic politicians (ibid: 127), ironically there remains potential for these processes to be dominated by powerful, and violent, community

members (Maclean, 2015: 71). Thus the realization of the programme in empowering communities varies from *communa* to *communa*, with the more violent and vulnerable communities – arguably those areas to which PB and community participation was intended to help the most – being the most susceptible to coercion and corruption.

The production of spaces of culture, and improving education in the city, were also two key cornerstones to the recovery process. Cultural and educational enterprises were thought to create opportunities both to victims of violence, and also perpetrators of it – many of whom were themselves victims of Medellín's embedded inequalities. In this sense, culture and education were intended as tools that not only addressed the climate of violence, but also the climate of hopelessness and resignation to fear, something that helps to perpetuate the cycle of violence.⁴ Pairing new public spaces with cultural and educational programmes created spaces that facilitated the emergence of individual, group and community projects, and promoted not only the circulation of information, but also promoted creativity and privileged dialogue (Tobón, 2012: 229).

The city's Library-Parks are perhaps most symbolic of this new cultural attitude. The Library-Parks were borne from the new Master Plan of Public Library Services in 2004, which had recognized that only about eight percent of the school age population had exclusive access to libraries, with only ten of the 249 neighbourhoods having a library at all (Osorio, 2011: 115). Alongside other improvements to the public library system, the city's Library-Parks were intended as Medellín's showcase architectural projects, with five built during Fajardo's term, and five during his successor Salazar's term. Most were placed in neighbourhoods with a history of violence, conflict and/or poverty, and which demonstrated a particular need. In addition to many services and amenities linked with the Library-Park model, each also produced exterior public spaces around the new buildings for public occupation. The most famous of these projects was the *Biblioteca España*, one of the first to be built, and integrated with the north-east Metrocable and PUI. Each of the Library-Park designs were chosen through international competition (though nearly all winners were Colombian architects) and exude an appearance of "High" design architecture. These projects have been "pivotal for the recovery of the urban network and have enhanced social capital" (ibid: 122). Placed

4/ THIS IDEA OF A TRANSITION FROM 'FEAR' TO 'HOPE' WAS A CORNERSTONE TO THE POLITICAL ADMINISTRATION OF *COMPROMISO CIUDADANA*. THIS IS IMPORTANT TO THE DISCUSSION THAT PICKS UP IN CHAPTER 4, IN WHICH THIS RELATIVELY NUANCED POSITION ABOUT SOCIETAL TRANSFORMATION IS COMPARED WITH THE RHETORIC DEVELOPED BY THE SUBSEQUENT GAVIRIA ADMINISTRATION OF 2012-2016.

in strategic locations that demonstrate high population densities, precarious living conditions, shortage of public space and facilities, and high-risks for ecological events such as land slides, the Library-Parks have been turned into drivers to help develop these sectors of the city (ibid).

The High-Quality School programme was another instance of architecture's contribution to this new "civic culture," although many of their designs remain distinct from the "High" design of the showcase Library-Park projects – a few, however, such as the Antonio Derka school by Carlos Pardo, do engage in similar aestheticized design strategies. A central tenet of the High-Quality school system was to develop new learning spaces marked as "dignified and safe urban settings," which included "mobility, public space, and infrastructures that meet the education, cultural, scientific, technological, sports, and recreational needs of the residents" (Bonilla and Palma, 2011: 147). One part of the programme included the improvement of existing schools, while another involved building ten new ones in sectors of the city demonstrating such factors as low quality of life indexes (ibid), similar to the Library-Parks.

The High-Quality School programme was intended to mark a new commitment in the city towards education. Forty percent of the municipal budget was allocated to education (Tobón, 2012: 230), much of which emerged in the building of new cultural-educational institutions, but much of which also went into improving the curriculum and other aspects of the educational system itself. Additional institutions in Medellín include new museums and science centers, such as the *Parque Explora*, *La Casa de la Música*, or the recently-inaugurated Museum of Modern Art, each of which represented aestheticized cultural projects, located more centrally in the city than the High-Quality Schools or Library-Parks and geared both to the local population and marketed as tourist destinations.

The discussion of projects introduced around the city also brings to the table the last of the five strategies for recovery: aesthetics. The use of High aesthetics in many of the projects is what positions the architecture of Social Urbanism particularly well for the overarching question of this thesis: what is the effect of the aestheticized and iconic "social" project, based on its agency at various scales, on the longer-term development of a city? A larger discussion around aesthetics – what it means, the role it plays in the ideology of urban spaces, and how aesthetic projects act with

agency at various scales – will be taken up in the following chapter. Before a critique of the use of aesthetics in Medellín's urban projects, however, it is important to understand the role attributed to aesthetics in relation to the social recovery goals of Social Urbanism, in which aesthetics were mobilized to develop feelings of dignity amongst communities.

From the beginning, architectural beauty was key to the project of social recovery. "Where once there was death, fear and disjuncture," said Fajardo, "today we have the most impressive buildings of the highest quality where we can all be brought together by culture, education, and peaceful *convivencia* [urban conviviality]. Thus we are sending a political message about what the dignity of space means to all citizens, and this supposes recognition, it reaffirms self-esteem and creates feelings of belong" (Fajardo, quoted in Tobón, 2012: 230).

Placing some of the city's most aestheticized projects in areas of the city overcoming decades of internal conflict was no doubt a symbolic gesture. The *Biblioteca España*, for instance, arguably at the top of Medellín's showcase libraries, was situated in Santo Domingo, Escobar's neighbourhood and traditionally one of the poorest and most violent sectors in the city. If these projects were about repaying a "social debt," then the high-quality architectural projects were a visual testament to that payment. While providing new, dignified settings for social recovery, these projects were also intended to reinstate confidence in municipal governance, which had long abandoned, ignored, or excluded the more violent areas of the city for many years, and in this sense, helped cultivate the urban conditions necessary for violence to proliferate.

However, the role these projects play in the larger political landscape of the city has been a subject of inquiry by researchers interested in what role these projects play beyond simply providing new spaces of "dignity" – in other words, analyses that look beyond Social Urbanism's own lexicon. This includes Maclean's own interest in the dynamics of power in the city, in which projects might be seen a "reinforcing and legitimating State, and elite, power" (Maclean, 2015: 76). Aestheticization of these projects could act as a point of legitimation to introducing projects in the periphery; reinstating confidence in the state, then, could also be seen as reproducing Medellín's traditional hierarchies of power. Introducing formalized urban objects and infrastructure to the informal city

From Capitalist Paradise, to Murder Capital, to Miracle



FIG 1/36 BIBLIOTECA EPM, UDEB
ARQUITECTOS, 2004-2007



FIG 1/37 BIBLIOTECA LA
QUINTANA, RICARDO LA ROTTA
CABALLERO, 2004-2007



FIG 1/38 BIBLIOTECA ES-
PAÑA, GIANCARLO MAZZANTI,
2004-2007

FIG 1/39 BIBLIOTECA LEON DE GREIFF, GIANCARLO MAZZANTI, 2004-2007



FIG 1/40 BIBLIOTECA SAN JAVIER, JAVIER VERA ARQUITECTOS, 2004-2007



FIG 1/41 BIBLIOTECA FERNANDO BOTERO, G-ATELIERS ARCHITECTURE, 2008-2011



From Capitalist Paradise, to Murder Capital, to Miracle



FIG 1/42 BIBLIOTECA BELÉN
HIROSHI NAITO, 2008-2011



FIG 1/43 BIBLIOTECA HORACIO
BETANCUR, EMPRESAS
DESAROLLO DE MEDELLÍN,



FIG 1/44 BIBLIOTECA MANUEL
MEIJA, EMPRESAS DESAROLLO
DE MEDELLÍN, 2008-2011

FIG 1/45 BIBLIOTECA DOCE DE OCTUBRE, AGENDA, TRES ARQUITECTO, CAMILO RAMIREZ, MASIF, 2008-2011



FIG 1/46 COLEGIO ANTONIO DERKA, CARLOS PARDO, 2004-2007



FIG 1/47 COLEGIO LA INDEPENDENCIAS, FELIPE URIBE DE BEDOUT, 2004-2007



From Capitalist Paradise, to Murder Capital, to Miracle



FIG 1/48 COLEGIO LAS MERCEDES JUAN MANUEL PELÁEZ FREIDEL, 2004-2007



FIG 1/49 COLEGIO ANTONIO JOSE BERNAL, BACQUERO ARQUITECTOS, 2004-2007



FIG 1/50 COLEGIO BENEDIKTA ZUR NEIDEN, HORACIO NAVARRO, 2004-2007

FIG 1/52 COLEGIO DEBORA
ARANGO, JUAN FERNANDO
FORERO, 2004-2007



FIG 1/53 COLEGIO ANGELA
RESTREPO, GABRIEL ARANGO
VILLEGAS, 2004-2007



FIG 1/51 COLEGIO FRANCIS-
CO MIRANDA, OSCAR MESA
2004-2007



From Capitalist Paradise, to Murder Capital, to Miracle



FIG 1/54 COLEGIO JOAQUÍN VALLEJO ARBALAEZ, OSCAR MESA 2004-2007



FIG 1/55 COLEGIO HECTOR ABAD, RAFAEL GARCÍA GAVIRIA, 2004-2007



FIG 1/56 PARQUE DE LOS PIES DESCALZOS, FELIPE URIBE DE BEDOUT, PRE-2004

FIG 1/58 CASA DE MÚSICA
(PARQUE DE LOS DESEOS),
FELIPE URIBE DE BEDOUT, PRE-
2004.



FIG 1/59 PLANETARIO (PARQUE
DE LOS DESEOS), RENOVATED
BY FELIPE URIBE DE BEDOUT,
PRE-2004.



FIG 1/57 PARQUE EXPLORA, ALE-
JANDRO ECHEVERRI, 2004-2007



From Capitalist Paradise, to Murder Capital, to Miracle



FIG 1/60 CAFÉ DEL BOSQUE (JARDÍN BOTÁNICO), ANA ELVIRA VÉLEZ VILLA AND LORENZO CASTRO JARAMILLO, 2004-2007



FIG 1/61 ORCHIDEORAMA (JARDÍN BOTÁNICO), PLAN B ARCHITECTS AND JPRCR, 2004-2007



FIG 1/62 PLAZA MAYOR, GIANCARLO MAZZANTI, DANIEL BONILLA, AND RAFAEL ESGUERRA, 2006.

URBAN PROJECTS PRE-2004

FIG 1/63 SELECT URBAN PROJ-
ECTS COMPLETED BEFORE 2004



- 01
PARQUE DE LOS PIES DESCALZOS
- 02
PARQUE DE LOS DESEOS

Legend

- High-Quality School ○
- Library-Park ●
- Other ⊗



URBAN PROJECTS 2004 – 2007

FIG 1/64 SELECT URBAN PROJECTS SHOWN, COMPLETED BETWEEN 2004 AND 2007 (ADMINISTRATIVE TERM OF SERGIO FAJARDO)

- 01
BIBLIOTECA LA QUINTANA
- 02
COLEGIO ANTONIO JOSE BERNAL
- 03
COLEGIO BENEDIKTA ZUR NEIDEN
- 04
BIBLIOTECA SAN JAVIER
- 05
COLEGIO LAS MERCEDES
- 06
COLEGIO LA INDEPENDENCIA
- 07
COLEGIO ANGELA RESTREPO
- 08
COLEGIO DEBORA ARANGO
- 09
BIBLIOTECA ESPAÑA
- 10
ANTONIO DERKA SCHOOL
- 11
COLEGIO FRANCISCO MIRANDA
- 12
BIBLIOTECA LEON DE GREIFF
- 13
COLEGIO JOAQUÍN VALLEJO ARBELÁEZ
- 14
COLEGIO HECTOR ABAD
- 15
BIBLIOTECA EPM

Legend

- High-Quality School ○
- Library-Park ●
- Other ⊗



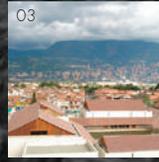


URBAN PROJECTS 2008 – 2011

FIG 1 / 65 SELECT URBAN PROJECTS SHOWN, COMPLETED BETWEEN 2008 AND 2011.

MAJORITY OF PROJECTS REPRESENT THOSE PLANNED DURING FAJARDO'S ADMINISTRATION, BUT INAUGURATED DURING SALAZAR'S TERM.

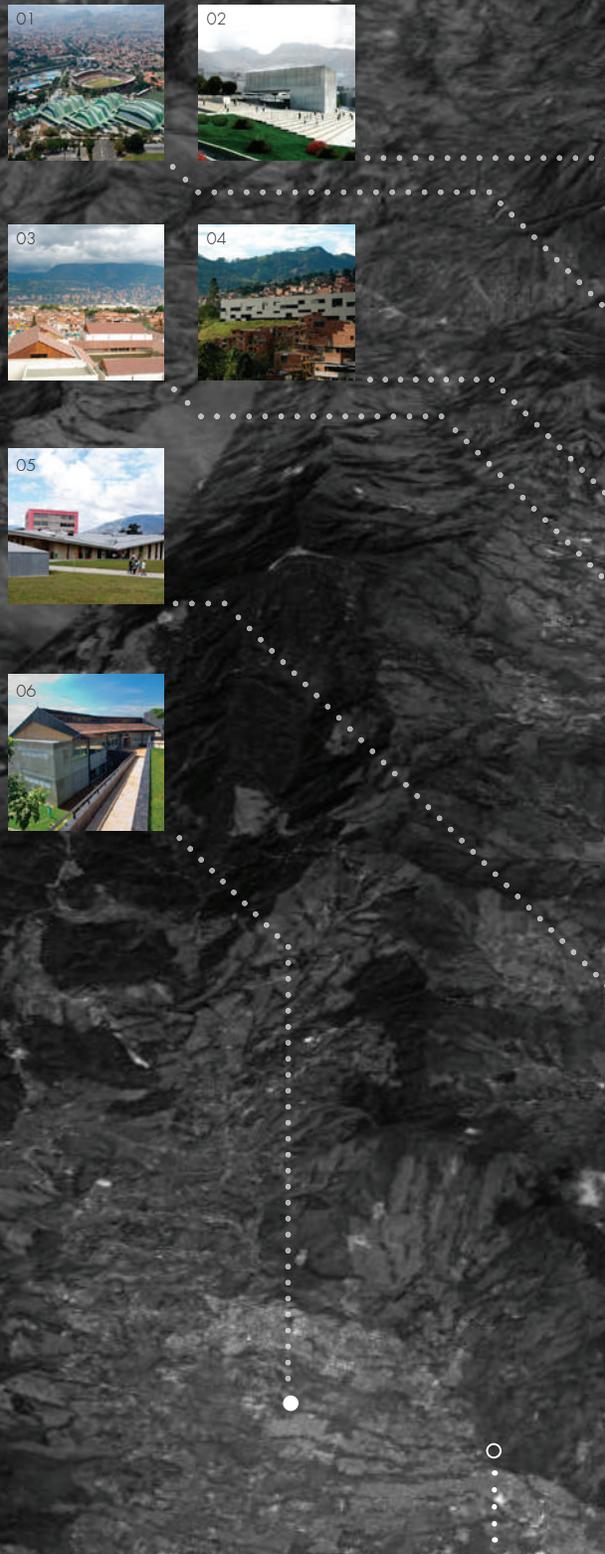
NEW PROJECTS UNDER SALAZAR (2008-2011) ALSO INCLUDE JARDÍN INFANTILS, WHICH WERE SMALL-SCALE CHILDCARE CENTERS. BECAUSE OF THEIR SMALL SIZE AND LESS PUBLIC PROGRAM, THEY ARE NOT SHOWN HERE.



- 01
SPORTS COLISEUM
- 02
BIBLIOTECA DOCE DE OCTUBRE
- 03
BIBLIOTECA BÉLEN
- 04
BIBLIOTECA FERNANDO BOTERO
- 05
BIBLIOTECA MANUEL MEIJA
- 06
BIBLIOTECA HORACIO BETANCUR
- 07
PARQUE EXPLORA
- 08
ORQUIDEORAMA
- 09
CAFÉ DEL BOSQUE

Legend

- High-Quality School ○
- Library-Park ●
- Other ⊗





opens new avenues for state governance to enter previously impenetrable semi-urban, semi-rural spaces. It is important to remember, though, that the informal nature of these communities' development means inhabitants themselves have been their own urban planners and architects for many years; integrating the two "twin cities" by intervening with new, formalized spatial typologies also implies a reclamation of space by the city's centers of power.

Still, one can see cases in which the transformative potential of aesthetics emerged in Medellín. The visual presence of aestheticized interventions, especially when tied to the public realm, do seem to produce dignified urban spaces that many citizens remain proud of. Writing about the similar regeneration project in Barcelona,⁵ Edgar Illas notes: "What is hastily dismissed as fastidious design or urban beautification may sometimes contain transformative directives rather than regressive models. At the same time, we must bear in mind that what ultimately makes possible this progressive dimension of stylish spaces and designs is their public nature" (Illas, 2012: 206).

The symbolic power of aesthetics is perhaps one of the most successful components to Medellín's project of social recovery. However, the success with which these urban spaces, and the surrounding urban realm, are able to be maintained as "public" greatly determines the ability for these types of projects to continue to be transformative in the long term. Davis points out how revitalization programmes may produce their own set of problems and priorities. "Such programmes count on strategies for 'securing' these newly revitalized public spaces, either through more attentive policing or other surveillance methods. Yet these mediating actors and technologies may actually be eliminating public space as much as reclaiming it" (Davis, 2012: 52). This is a popular concern for such projects as the Metrocable, in which surrounding spaces are heavily monitored, and the Metro Culture – a set of regulations that govern the behaviour of users – is enforced (Agudelo et al., 2013: 111). And while the "importance of the symbolic dimension and social potential of public buildings resulting from good design and high-quality construction should not be underestimated," at the same time we must recognize this "does not on its own lead to miracles" (Brand and Dávila, 2013: 53).

The fame that such projects can garner may also help to promote

5 / THE PARALLELS BETWEEN
BARCELONA AND MEDELLÍN'S
PROGRAMS WILL BE FURTHER
EXPLORED IN CHAPTER 2.

the commodification of these urban spaces, in a way that can over time strip their primary public function as spaces integrated into citizens' everyday lives. The aesthetic appeal of Medellín's recovery process brought Social Urbanism in particular a lot of fame. But with a fetishization of Medellín's urban projects based on this appeal, the Medellín model of development also increasingly risks losing some of its more radical strategies for recovery that aesthetics were intended to represent. How Social Urbanism was perceived, then, by locals, researchers, and Global spectators, becomes vitally important to understanding how these aesthetics strategies may simultaneously represent both innovative modes of producing dignified spaces for social recovery and inhibit the programme's own continued reproduction.

RECEPTION TO MEDELLÍN'S NEW IDENTITY

The "Medellín Miracle" is a common term used to describe the dramatic transformation Medellín underwent following Social Urbanism, especially in relation to the city's perceived decline in violence. It's hard to tell when the first case of using the term "miracle" was exactly. But in 2007, beginning with a New York Times article featuring the city's mayor and his nonconformist methods that had turned "blight into beauty," architecture and urban intervention began to take the spotlight in the city's spectacularized narrative of social transformation in the Global media. "Mr. Fajardo hired renowned architects to design an assemblage of luxurious libraries and other public buildings in this city's most desperate slums," wrote Simon Romero (Romero, 2007). The article focused on Fajardo as the agent of change in Medellín: it was his project, his policies, his vision of architecture and urbanism for social recovery.

Relatively quickly, Medellín's presence in popular news sources gained momentum. Through the next five years, other major news sources published articles about the miracle that had taken place in the city. "Medellín, Colombia's Architectural Renaissance" (Los Angeles Times; Hawthorne, 2010), "From Drug Violence to Tourist Destination" (The Washington Post; Trejos, 2010), and "Explore an Urban Renaissance in

Medellín” (New York Magazine; Gill, 2011) were just some of the titles profiling architecture and urbanism’s role in local transformation. Another New York Times article in May of 2012, first entitled “Fighting Crime with Architecture in Medellín” (though subsequently changed to “A City Rises, Along with its Hopes”), unequivocally heralded the city’s ambitious and photogenic buildings as themselves fighting violence, calling the city’s culture of urbanism a new civic calling card for Medellín. “For some time now, if you asked architects and urban planners for proof of the power of public architecture and public space to remake the fortunes of a city, they’d point here,” wrote Michael Kimmelman (Kimmelman, 2012). What Kimmelman says is true: architects and urban planners had, by then, been looking to Medellín’s model of development as the epitome of how physical intervention can mediate within situations of conflict. Studying these popular media analyses within my own research, it became clear Medellín’s new identity was not necessarily about wiping its violent past from Global collective memory. Rather, reminding the world about its history reinforced a narrative of social transformation that, alongside the aesthetic component of the regeneration project, appeared to make Medellín’s recovery process unilaterally appealing. As violence plummeted and foreign investment grew, the Medellín model of development was quickly exported as a model of urban security and governance to other cities of the world dealing with issues of conflict and violence, that had similarly developed alongside rapid migration and underdevelopment of the city’s physical form (Moncada, 2016: 55). Medellín’s fame thus relied on leveraging its current “miracle” with the image of its past. And in almost every analysis of Medellín’s urban planning and architecture, you will find reference to one famous city statistic of 1991: a rate of 381 homicides for every 100,000 people living in the city. While this statistic is certainly revealing to level of violence that took place during that period, it remains interesting that nearly every story of the city relating to the city’s new architecture and urbanism appears to require it. Juxtaposing these stories and statistics of violence and fear next to images of the “beauty” that now represent the city tells a powerful, if not romanticized, story.

But positioning transformation in Medellín as a type of miracle is a dangerous game. To begin, the term miracle itself implies a type of phenomenon unexplainable by logic or reasoning. In a way, when the

perceived transformation is positioned next to architecture and urban projects alone, the word itself does tend to ring true: it is easy for one to claim there is a correlation between aesthetic architecture and urban spaces when placing the images of new projects next to homicide statistics, but how exactly the reduction in violence occurs remains somewhat intangible, and miraculous in that one can not entirely explain how the correlation works, beyond theorizing ideas of pride, perception, or dignity. At the same time, believing in the “miracle” also helps to spectacularize the process of transformation, and in a sense makes it that much more appealing, and thus more consumable.

What many analyses of Medellín’s transformation are desperately in need of is recognition to the less visual processes that took place in the city, that contributed to the reduction (and persistence) of different forms of conflict. This not only has to do with the policies encapsulated by Social Urbanism, but also those put in place during the 1990s, as well as the influence of external actors outside of formal politicians – including NGO groups, community organizations, private businesses, as well as violent actors themselves. Maclean notes that claims made that Social Urbanism is itself responsible for the decline in the city’s violence is rarely made by those actually involved in designing or implementing Social Urbanism or its related policies (Maclean, 2015: 76). Nevertheless, this particular narrative has gained traction amongst outside spectators. And while those actually involved in the design of Social Urbanism may not be making these claims, there are increasingly private and public actors representing the city that aim to market Medellín by presenting it as this type of miracle.

It is, moreover, equally important attention be paid to the forms of violence and coercion that continue to exist in the city today. For example, while Social Urbanism gained traction amongst the international community for its rapid decline in homicides through the 1990s and 2000s, that rate actually jumped significantly between 2007 and 2008, when Don Berna, leader of the BCN paramilitary, was extradited to the United States. “The relative peace established in Medellín appears to have actually been a result of Don Berna’s monopoly on crime in the city,” writes Sibyl Brodzinsky and Max Schoening. When he was finally extradited in 2008, rival armed groups “fought to fill the power vacuum,

and the number of homicides spiked” (Brodzinsky and Schoening, 2012: 110). Thus, it is important to recognize not only that architecture and urbanism were not the only agents in change, but that peace in Medellín remains fragile. Research needs to continue on the forms of violence that persist even in “peaceful” periods of the city. This type inquiry has been taken up by such academic and policy researchers as Alexandra Abello Colak and Jenny Pearce, who have investigated the continuing forms of chronic violence in Medellín through participatory security research, a methodology they say can “open up taboo topics and enable silenced voices to pronounce their own verdicts on security models and discourses about their neighbourhoods, that are often designed at least partly for representational purposes i.e. to help the city compete for global attention and capital” (Colak and Pearce, 2015: 199).

What the above asks, really, is that an understanding of the transformation and recovery processes in Medellín go beyond simply the image of architecture and urban space alone, and that popular narratives of the city that this curated image of the city supports continue to be questioned. As we saw, strategies of Social Urbanism did extend beyond simple physical intervention. However, popular critical reception has tended to focus on the physicality of the programme. While this might seem innocuous, it has certain ramifications on how priorities of city development progress as the city finds itself positioned favourably in its Global representation.

CONCLUSION

This chapter aimed to contextualize Medellín’s process of transformation within its broader history, introduce the city’s historical and contemporary set of political actors, understand the objectives and strategies of Social Urbanism’s process of social recovery, and explore new perspectives on evaluating everyday life in the city that look beyond the way it has been represented through disseminated images of urban spaces. It also sought to set the foundation for analyzing Social Urbanism from the perspectives of power and identity, by tracing these two interrelated ideas through the city’s history. That being said, this section ends asking more

questions than it has perhaps answered.

The following chapters will attempt to answer these questions regarding the image of aesthetic architecture, its reception across scales, the political and economic motivations behind Medellín's urban representation, and finally, reveal where the city finds itself today, almost a decade following the first New York Times article celebrating the subversive and nonconformist urban development strategies. My contention is that the celebration of the image of the city has, over the longer term, led to an emphasis on the aesthetic image of architecture and urban intervention in Medellín, while other policies and programmes that were perhaps more "radical" (and intended to accompany that image) have been increasingly degraded. Further, as the power of branding continues to be recognized in the city, new forms and scales of urban intervention have been introduced to Medellín as more recent political administrations look towards new branding and representational strategies for the city. However, this does not mean that new forms of development necessarily represent a "break" from the past. Rather, certain economic and political stakes set in the city starting in the 1990s demonstrate how the current model of development may actually be a logical outcome of Social Urbanism.

The radical and transformative aspects of Social Urbanism, especially taking into consideration the city's grand yet conflicted history, is not to be ignored. But the formation of urban identity for a city like Medellín requires a much more careful analysis and critique than what most architectural and popular media analyses provide. This line of inquiry asks one to step back from the spectacularized narratives of transformation in Medellín, to question the ideological power of the architectural image in supporting those narratives. In this process, we must understand why they may represent a form of spectacle in the first place and, most importantly, why that has real ramifications on the rights of citizens living in the city today.



ICONICITY OF DIFFERENCE

A political analysis of Social Urbanism's aesthetic regime

The aesthetic component of Social Urbanism is what makes Medellín an interesting case study for this thesis. Its transformation carries with it a strong political dimension – an urban development programme that appears to politicize architecture, with aesthetic spaces being a key outcome, or mediator, of the process. This chapter looks to deconstruct its aesthetic regime. What meaning for the city is produced through it?

A key foundation to the thesis as a whole is the notion that urban space is ideological. The image of the city we see, whether in photographs or in our everyday life, acts as representation for what we cannot see. In the case of Medellín, the Social Urbanism image tells a specific story about the values of local society and the processes of spatial production enabled by those values. Medellín's image suggests, perhaps, that inhabitants of the informal areas are deemed “worthy” by the formal city to receive these projects; or maybe that there is a process of systemic development that is inclusive of the periphery. This image of sleek architecture in informal communities no doubt helps bolster the narratives of citizen culture put forward by the administration itself, in a sense makes us believe it is more than just rhetoric.

Another key point to be made about Medellín's urban projects is they have become iconic to the city. It is the iconic nature of the projects that enable them to produce such clear meaning, and produce a totalizing image based on select urban fragments.

Charles Jencks notes that an icon has always had a “trace of sanctity about it, the aura of a saint, by definition it is an object to be worshipped” (Jenks, 2006: 4). As people lose belief in God, he continues, they begin to believe in anything; and as architectural commissions under late Capitalism grew in size, and the “economic logic of the sculptural gesture, with its many enigmatic signifiers” were recognized

FIG 2/1 (OPPOSITE PAGE) URBAN CONDITIONS IN SAN JAVIER, 2015.

by developers and mayors (*ibid.*), iconic architecture took on a new role as object of worship in the city. However, Medellín's urban projects do not fit the typical mould like the Bilbao Guggenheim by Frank Gehry, Tokyo Prada Headquarters by Herzog and de Meuron, CCTV building in Beijing by OMA, or convention centers by Peter Eisenman and Santiago Calatrava do – all buildings we typically associate with being iconic. Rather, Medellín's projects are of a much smaller size, and while certainly aesthetic they are also formally quite simple. However, as a collective whole these urban projects act iconically. As Leslie Sklair points out, iconicity works by symbolizing something beyond itself (Sklair, 2006: 26). It is the collection of projects in Medellín that produces meaning for the city, which in turn produces a totalizing image of everyday life.

However, there is an ideological trap in the totalizing image: “it implicitly denies the existence of what is not made visible” (Balibrea, 2001: 204). In the process, aspects of everyday life are hidden from view. Taking into consideration the ideological power of these images, two key questions to put forward are whether or not this programme can be considered political, and what role the image plays with respect to the programme's political content. There is certainly a key connotation of it being political, on the one hand because a particular administration was so intricately woven into Social urbanism and its popular coverage, but on the other because it appeared to overcome an overt Capitalist urban development logic by prioritizing intervention in informal areas of the city. But what does it mean for architecture to act politically? Is the outcome of these aestheticized projects a politicizing of space, or may they actually help to further depoliticize the urban realm?

“CONSENSUS POLITICS” AND URBAN AESTHETICS

Aesthetic spaces and a political narrative are two dominant characteristics associated with Social Urbanism. We saw in chapter 1 how quickly the physical dimension of Social Urbanism took the spotlight in popular media coverage. The programme no doubt provides hope that aesthetics can be a key component of equitable urban development.

For architects, the power of this hope likely stems from the profession's conflicted relationship with aesthetics as a driver of contemporary buildings. Today, the aesthetic project is often condemned for its role in making the urban realm more exclusive; this is true in much of urban discourse in general, but especially in contemporary Marxist theory. Here, aestheticizing urban space under current Capitalist modes of production is equated to making the city a consumable entity. In fact, aestheticization is associated with commodification in general. In his book *The Ideology of the Aesthetic*, Eagleton recognizes the broader theoretical association that has emerged between the two:

The aesthetic as a theoretical category is closely bound up with the material process by which cultural production, at an early stage of bourgeois society, becomes 'autonomous' – autonomous, that is, of the various social functions which it has traditionally served. Once artefacts become commodities in the market place, they exist for nothing and nobody in particular, and can consequently be rationalized, ideologically speaking, as existing entirely and gloriously for themselves. It is this notion of autonomy or self-referentiality which the new discourse of aesthetics is centrally concerned to elaborate; and its clear enough, from a radical political viewpoint, just how disabling any such idea of aesthetic autonomy must be. (Eagleton, 1990: 9)

The term “aesthetic,” says Eagleton, was originally formulated by eighteenth century German philosopher Alexander Baumgarten, who used it not to refer to art, but rather to the discourse of the body – specifically, human perception and sensation (ibid: 13). Operating with this reading of aesthetics as a sensate experience, Kanishka Goonewardena has synthesized on its role in urban production in an essay exploring what he calls the “urban sensorium” (Goonewardena, 2005). Here, Goonewardena elaborates on the relationship between space, ideology, and aesthetics. The urban sensorium relies on Louis Althusser's definition of ideology as affective (Althusser, 1971 [1962]) – which Goonewardena points out means simply *aesthetic* (Goonewardena, 2005: 47). In this reading, urban space mediates ideology and produces

hegemony, while aestheticizing politics. And in mediating ideology, the urban sensorium stands in as a representation for a social and global totality, making it coterminous with “everyday consciousness and the lived experience of urban space” (ibid: 57). In this process, our ability to understand the underlying economic, political, and social processes at work in the production of space is obscured.

Aestheticizing urban space thus helps to promote autonomy and self-referentiality, to borrow Eagleton’s terms from above (Eagleton, 1990: 9). It can act to legitimate urban restructuring by attributing inherent value to aesthetic urban space – space that can consequently be consumed by those vying for, and with the resources to afford, their own place within the new urban realm. The ramifications of the appeal of aesthetics within the urban sensorium, and the rights of citizens within and to these spaces, is significant. This is made clearest when one considers Neil Smith’s theory of revanchist gentrification (Smith, 1996), which, as Goonewardena points out, represents the crux of aestheticized strategies of urban renewal involving the “‘innovative’ displacement of poor people and neighbourhoods in central cities by ‘creative’ upper-class districts” (Goonewardena, 2005: 69).

In Smith’s “urban revanchism,” producing aesthetic spaces is a means to legitimate large-scale redevelopment that enables the flow of Capital into a particular urban space. It also encourages spatial consumption (both literally, and in buying into its projected image and/or lifestyle) and aims to ensure its return and profit. This type of contemporary gentrification has significant relevance to the type of urban restructuring processes taking place in Medellín today (see chapter 4), but as we will see only subtly revealed its presence during the 2004 to 2011 period. While there was certainly an aspect of revanchism present in the longer-term vision for the city based on growth objectives set in the early 1990s,¹ this revanchist aspect didn’t necessarily manifest itself in the aestheticization of Social Urbanism projects in any overt manner. And what the above discourse around aesthetics further risks neglecting is the potential for aesthetics to be socially-transformative – something at the heart of the Social Urbanism aesthetic regime. In recognizing this dimension, this analysis begins with the idea of a tension between the transformative and commodifying processes of aesthetic urban

1 / THE POLITICAL SPACE THAT ENABLED SOCIAL URBANISM GOES BACK TO THE PERIOD OF THE 1990S, IN WHICH A LARGE AND DIVERSE GROUP OF ACTORS WITHIN THE CITY LOOKED TO OVERCOME THE VIOLENT PERIOD IT WAS THEN FACING. THIS ALSO INCLUDED AN ECONOMIC REVIVAL OF THE CITY, AND A REVITALIZATION OF THE PHYSICAL URBAN SPACE. THIS WAS IN PART MOTIVATED BY A DESIRE TO ADDRESS THE STIGMA OF VIOLENCE THAT HAD COME TO DEFINE MEDELLÍN GLOBALLY. FOR MORE ON THIS, SEE CHAPTER 3.

production in Medellín. It remains fairly convincing that aesthetics did, in some sense, deliver on its transformative potential, at least in so far as how projects were received and viewed by much of the local population at the time of their inauguration. However as we will see, there was also a clear intention for the image and rhetoric of these spaces to be consumed – by both a local and global audience alike. Given the apparent contradiction inherent to these two processes, are both the transformative and commodifying roles of aesthetics able to co-exist, or is it inevitable that one must be subsumed by the other as development in the city progresses? If we find it inevitable the transformative role of aesthetics be subsumed by the commodifying role, another question to ask is: can the programme be understood as a political project, or does this by definition negate the political qualifications of Social Urbanism?

According to Nadir Lahiji, the political in architecture is synonymous with its “critical project” (Lahiji, 2014: 1). In the 1980s, he says, “neoliberal ideologists from inside the discipline. . . . [m]anaged to align the discourse of architecture and theory with the agenda of contemporary postmodern management of capitalism” (ibid: 6). In Lahiji’s view, architecture has been stripped of its political content ever since. The term “post-political” arose as a means to describe this new age (extending beyond simply architecture) in which the “conflict of global ideological visions embodied in different parties which compete for power is replaced by the collaboration of enlightened technocrats . . . and liberal multiculturalists” (Žižek, 1999: 198).

“Consensus politics” is another term that has come to describe this absence of conflicting ideologies. According to Jacques Rancière, “consensus politics” equates to the end of politics altogether. In clarifying, he makes a distinction between what he calls “policing” and “politics.” The former, he says, is the action by an “order of bodies that define the allocation of ways of doing, ways of being, and ways of saying,” while the latter is “whatever breaks with the tangible configuration whereby parties and parts or lack of them are defined by a presupposition that, by definition, has no place in that configuration – the part of those who have no part” (Rancière, 1999 [1996]: 29-30).

Politics occurs when there is a place and a way for two heterogeneous

processes to meet. The first is the police process in the sense we have tried to define. The second is the process of equality. . . . the open set of practices driven by the assumption of equality between any and every speaking being and by the concern to test this equality. (ibid: 30)

There is a stage, he says, that allows only certain people to be heard in today's democracy. Politics is "primarily conflict over the existence of a common stage and over the existence and status of those present on it" (ibid: 26-27). First, though, the existence of such a stage has to be established. This requires the meeting of conflicting ideologies to render the dominant, ideological stage visible. Conversely, the absence of contesting ideologies helps to obscure its presence. It allows the dominant order to decide what is seen and what is heard, without recognition that something is being hidden in the process.

If we agree that the totalizing image of the city hides aspects of everyday life from view, one can see how Social Urbanism might in certain ways conform to this idea of "post-politics" or "consensus politics." This is easily a controversial statement, no doubt because the programme has been received with such praise on its qualifications as a political project. Moving away from a society that viewed difference as a source of conflict, to one that found in "cultural diversity the key for the democratic and plural construction of a renovated society (Mayor's Office of Medellín, 2011: 204) was, as we saw in chapter 1, a central tenet of Social Urbanism. This type of language – diversity, democratic, renovated society – all suggest Social Urbanism was about bringing the process of politics back into the city. The programme was presented as breaking through existing hierarchies, and establishing a more democratic foundation for the city's future. But what this programme also did was produce a totalizing image of the city that, based on its socially-inclusive narratives, made development in the city unobjectionable, in effect eliminating plausible arguments. Viewed in isolation, Social Urbanism's visible component easily enables consensus because there is relatively little in its main content (related to the rhetoric of social inclusion and paying a "social debt") to oppose. However, situating Social Urbanism within a longer and more in-depth historical trajectory – one that looks to development through the twentieth century, the actors involved, and looks

forward to future development following the success of the programme – illuminates the ramifications of consensus-inducing urban images and highlights their implicit ideology.

In moving away from the popular reading of Social Urbanism as an isolated moment, it is helpful to bring in the example of Barcelona – a city that underwent a transformation process similar to Medellín’s, but which began around twenty years earlier – as a case study to illustrate the longer implications of the consensus-inducing, totalizing image.

Before the “Medellín Model” became an exportable urban development programme, there was the “Barcelona Model.” Barcelona’s transformation, in fact, was used as a precedent for Medellín’s own strategies. As mentioned in chapter 1, Alejandro Echeverri (Fajardo’s Director of Urban Projects) completed his doctoral studies in Barcelona in the 1990s, bringing back with him key ideas about urban development. Exchange between the two cities continue today, no doubt connected in part by their common language.

While these cities shared an emphasis on physical transformation in their recovery projects, both emphasized changes in governance as well. Following the death of General Franco in 1975, Barcelona began its transition from authoritarianism to democracy. With this primary challenge to democratize came others, such as delivering on social welfare and public institutions within the context of a weak local government and a lack of financial resources and experienced personnel; politicians looked to collaborate with business elites and others within civil society (Blakeley, 2005: 151). The physical transformation of the city quickly became a key focus, with the goal being a renewal and redevelopment of existing nuclei in the city. This resulted in a vast number of high quality redevelopment and urban improvements, with the goal of “maintaining and increasing the vitality and urban quality of the different urban ‘centres’” (Monclús, 2003: 417). Rejecting the typical master plan that then dominated urban planning, Oriol Bohigas – head of Barcelona’s Urban Planning department from 1980–84, and subsequently the Councilor of Culture from 1991–94 – emphasized the developmental logic of the “urban project,” which conceived of the city as a sum of small units, giving architecture the “power to intervene in urban contexts beyond the design of single buildings” (Illas, 2012: 150). As signifiers to



FIG 2/2 (TOP) PLAÇA DE LA PALMERA IN BARCELONA. BERNARDO DE SOLA AND PEDRO BARRAGAN, 1982

FIG 2/3 (BOTTOM) PLAÇA DELS PAÏSOS CATALANS, HELIO PIÑÓN AND ALBERT VIAPLANA, 1983

a broader, local culture, these projects were intended to act as agents to social cohesion across a socially heterogeneous society (Degen and García, 2012: 1027).

Many architects who participated in the renewal in the 1980s were Catalan or Spanish, with fewer (yet some) international figures than would eventually be involved in the later 1990s. Bohigas' original strategy for renewal was to clean up the center of the city by inserting sensitive, small urban projects into densely-populated areas, and "monumentalize" the periphery by integrating expressways into the fabric so they no longer divided the city, while at the same time putting new landmarks into peripheral neighbourhoods to enhance their unique character. The winning bid for the 1992 Olympics (won in 1986) led to even greater proliferation of urban projects across the city through the rest of the 1980s and early 90s. There was a "collective euphoria generated by the Olympic Games" (Illas, 2012: 158), which became "catalyst to make the city government's metropolitan ambitions possible" (Degen and García, 2012: 1027). This new euphoria paralleled a strong perception that the interests of city hall and its citizens were one and the same (ibid: 1022). That Barcelona has come to be known as the "city of architects" (Moix, 1994) has to do with the media attention following the rapid implementation of these projects up to the 1992 Olympic games. This perception only grew following the games. The increased presence of works by famous architects during the 1990s, alongside their marketing, helped intensify projects' signification, eventually endowing them with additional roles as signifiers to a "designer" city (Balibrea, 2001: 192).

But around the same time, notes Edgar Illas, the city entered a new period of development that witnessed the reduction of the "city of the people" model to the likes of a trademark (Illas, 2012: 187). He continues by pointing out that what "makes possible the progressive dimension of stylish spaces and designs is their public nature. . . . Due to touristification and Disneylandization, Barcelona's new public spaces acquired many not-so-public functions" (ibid: 206). Mari Paz Balibrea shares a similar opinion, noting that Barcelona "witnessed the progressive erosion of the meaning of the term 'public,' and with it a redefinition of the space occupied by culture" (Balibrea, 2001: 195). In explaining

this transition, Balibrea point out that while the fragmented nature of different urban projects through the 1980s appeared to cultivate individual neighbourhood identities, at the same time it reproduced a totalizing vision of the city based on the cohesive nature of the development projects that extended across it, and allowed citizens (and subsequently, tourists) to look to these curated moments to understand the city as a whole (ibid: 204). This is what is implied in the concept of the “totalizing image,” and it is here that she points out its ideological trap: it “implicitly denies the existence of what is not made visible” (ibid: 204). Despite the progressive erosion of Barcelona’s public sphere through the city’s marketing, the use of aesthetics continues to legitimate development. “The more aesthetics is politically used in Barcelona, the more politics is itself aestheticized so that political consensus and the obedience of the masses are achieved by continually producing for them what is perceived as aesthetic or artistic gratification” (ibid: 192).

According to Balibrea’s reading of the city, Barcelona’s regeneration project was situated as being against the postmodern claim of totality through the nature of urban acupuncture, while at the same time enforcing a process of consensus by producing this totalizing image of the city. Appearing to differentiate urban projects based on local neighbourhood contexts helped the programme evade the criticism usually directed towards the “master plan” – which is often criticized as treating the city as a homogeneous entity – while the cohesive nature of redevelopment still produced a singular meaning for the city. Reading the new physical form of Barcelona as an ideological text, the interventions “change[d] the structure of perception within the everyday urban experience of citizens” (ibid: 189). Further, the rejuvenation of these neighbourhood centralities was met with almost uncontested support, which as Mónica Degen and Marisol García suggest was because of a strong perception that “urban quality and social dignity [were] combined . . . with the aim of enhancing social cohesion and ‘a sense of belonging to the city’” (Degen and García, 2012: 1022). While the first wave of urban transformation may have carried these political intentions (at the very least by some actors involved in its design), what effect it had on future development is where the project lost its political content. But according



FIG 2/4 (ABOVE) RICHARD MEIER'S MUSEU D'ART CONTEMPORANI DE BARCELONA (MACBA). COMPLETED 1996.

to Illas, the resulting “Disneyfication of the new ‘city of the people’ was not an unfortunate deviation from the original plan; given the structural conditions of late Capitalism, it was rather its necessary outcome” (Illas, 2012: 107). The success of the original public “beautification” project, he says, was thus the cause of its eventual failure.

Beyond simply strategies of the “urban project,” and themes of governance restructuring, Medellín and Barcelona were similar in their use of aesthetics as a strategy to produce local culture and promote solidarity. However, while Barcelona imported such “star”-chitects as Foster, Meier, and Isozaki, Medellín’s architects and designers have remained relatively local, even to this day.² While certainly looking to become “Global,” Medellín hasn’t demonstrated the same desire to be considered “International.”³ Medellín borrowed extensively from the Barcelona

Model, but the city also introduced new practices as well, such as an emphasis on innovative public transportation infrastructure, recognizing the city's own unique conditions and challenges (Brand, 2013a: 14). However, the two cases still share another important characteristic: both Barcelona and Medellín's models of development have been subject to change over time, change that has "tended to undermine their political content" (ibid: 14).

From this interpretation of Barcelona's regeneration programme, we can move toward a similar reading of Medellín as its own unique, ideological text. It is clear in the manner with which the municipality presented Social Urbanism that part of its purpose was to allow inhabitants across the city to both recognize their neighbourhood and see themselves as part of a single city; this is what is implied within the idea of promoting solidarity, and is not necessarily negative. However, at what point does the ideal of solidarity become the post-politics of consensus? Like Barcelona's transformation, Medellín's Social Urbanism also promoted a sense of belonging to the city. But did the simultaneous search for "agreement" help silence plausible arguments to the city's larger restructuring?

The issues of subsequent transformation emerging after the success of Social Urbanism, as well as narratives of the city not represented in Social Urbanism's totalizing image, will be taken up in subsequent chapters. This chapter is concerned with the aesthetic regime of Social Urbanism in particular: the meaning produced by its iconic images and why its apparently uncontested aspects can silence more general opposition. If we are to assert that all urban space is ideological, with aesthetics being a key mediator of ideology, then how do aesthetics work in the case of Social Urbanism?

THE "ICONICITY OF DIFFERENCE"

The term "iconicity of difference" is used here to define Social Urbanism's aesthetic regime. It merges two concepts: the fact Medellín's aesthetic projects have become iconic to the larger city culture, and the idea that

2 / FOR EXAMPLE, ALL OF THE HIGH-QUALITY SCHOOL AND NINE OF TEN LIBRARY-PARKS WERE COMPLETED BY COLOMBIAN ARCHITECTS, DESPITE THE LIBRARIES BEING CHOSEN BY INTERNATIONAL COMPETITION. THE ONE LIBRARY-PARK NOT DESIGNED BY A COLOMBIAN ARCHITECT WAS *BIBLIOTECA BELÉN* BY JAPANESE ARCHITECT HIROSHI NAITO. THE FLAGSHIP RIVER PARK PROJECT BEING UNDERTAKEN IN THE CITY TODAY WAS ALSO CHOSEN THROUGH INTERNATIONAL COMPETITION, BUT ONCE AGAIN AWARDED TO LOCAL FIRM LATITUD.

3 / BARCELONA'S DESIRE TO BECOME AN "INTERNATIONAL CITY" RELATES TO THE POLITICAL CLIMATE OF THE TIME, WHICH SOUGHT TO DISENGAGE THE CATALAN REGION FROM SPAIN. THESE "INTERNATIONAL" AMBITIONS WERE ESPECIALLY TIED TO THE USE OF NON-LOCAL ARCHITECTS THROUGH THE 1990S.

FIG 2/5 (OPPOSITE, TOP) BILBAO GUGGENHEIM BY FRANK GEHRY. COMPLETED 1997. THE MUSEUM EXEMPLIFIES THE TYPE OF BUILDING JENCKS REFERS TO AS ICONIC, WITH A SCULPTURAL GESTURE LINKED TO ECONOMIC GROWTH LOGIC FOR THE CITY.

FIG 2/6 (OPPOSITE, BOTTOM LEFT) CCTV BUILDING IN BEIJING, DESIGNED BY OMA. COMPLETED 2008.

FIG 2/7 (OPPOSITE, BOTTOM RIGHT) 30 ST MARY AXE (WIDELY KNOWN AS THE GHERKIN) IN LONDON, DESIGNED BY NORMAN

meaning is produced through an aesthetic juxtaposition between new building forms and what will be called social “difference.”

Iconicity in general has become a popular topic in recent discourse, reacting to its apparent proliferation throughout cities across the world following postmodernism. Jencks’ assessment of the current iconic building is that it is usually of a grand scale employing sculptural gestures, driven by the economic logic in producing signifiers for the city at large and the general public’s ready consumption (Jencks, 2006). This type of iconic building, he says, is here to stay . . . much to the chagrin of contemporary critics. The popularity of the “sculptural gesture” and its economic logic mean architects today find themselves caught in a double-bind: “they are damned if they don’t compete to be outrageous, and damned when their risks look stupid, which is most of the time” (ibid: 10). As we know, Medellín’s iconic buildings don’t fit Jencks’ (popular) definition. Rather, many of the buildings are of a much smaller size than what we typically attribute an iconic status to, and while certainly aesthetic, formally they are quite simple. And yet we can still say they are iconic.

Sklair says that “iconicity works and persists because the buildings in which it inheres are built by architects . . . to symbolize something (possibly several things) apart from the programme (function) of the building itself” (Sklair, 2006: 26). But in its common usage, the term has two defining characteristics:

First, it clearly means famous, at least for some constituencies; and second, a judgement of iconicity is also a symbolic/aesthetic judgement. By this I mean that an architectural icon is imbued with a special meaning that is symbolic for a culture and/or time, and that this special meaning has an aesthetic component. It is this unique combination of fame with symbolism and aesthetic quality that creates the icon. (ibid: 25).

It’s true there haven’t been many projects from Social Urbanism that have become globally famous, the same way a Gehry or H&M or Koolhaas building might achieve fame. The two exceptions are perhaps the *Biblioteca España* by Giancarlo Mazzanti – a famous Colombian

Iconicity of Difference



architect in his own right – and the Metrocables (not architecture, granted, but a piece of physical that has a certain aesthetic appearance representing urban “innovation”). Collectively, though, the city’s architecture and urban interventions have still assumed significant fame. In fact, it is this fame of the projects as a collective whole, under the banner of Social Urbanism, that grants them such power in producing a totalizing image for the city. This is the power Balibrea attributed to Barcelona’s regeneration programme, which simultaneously rejected the postmodern totality while still producing a totalizing image for the city all the same. Just as more typical iconic buildings appropriate and produce special meaning for the city, so too does the greater project of Social Urbanism, which is reinforced and reproduced through the images of each of the programme’s individual projects.

Positioning architectural iconicity within the current era of Capitalist globalization, Sklair also points out that iconicity in architecture is a “resource in struggles for meaning, and by implication, power” (ibid: 22). While previously this was dominated by those at the head of the state or religion, increasingly this is driven by the corporate sector. Just as the image of advertising is developed with the purpose of driving consumption, so too is the image of architecture driven by the desire for people to “buy (both in the sense of consume and in the sense of give credence to) the buildings and spaces and lifestyles” (ibid: 26). Those in the position to produce iconic architecture – i.e. those with the capital resources – are thus afforded the power to craft new narratives of the city that will be consumed by a wider audience. The aestheticization of buildings help their circulation in that it makes them recognizable, identifiable, or simply interesting. This aesthetic production, then, becomes a tool in producing meaning and reinforcing power by producing totalizing images (and thus narratives) of the city.

So how does Medellín’s aesthetic regime operate, and what is the meaning behind the iconicity it produces for the city? A fundamental aspect to this iconicity, again making it unique from other Globally-iconic buildings, is its reliance on specific physical juxtaposition in the production of meaning. Namely: the nature of the projects’ sites, often located in informal communities, produce an aesthetic effect that extends beyond the architectural form alone. In photography in particular, there

is an intriguing contrast made between the condition of “High” formal design and the condition of informality. In person, the feeling of this juxtaposition is poignant as well: the clean, formal lines of many of these projects suddenly appear as one approaches on foot, with the dense, informal fabric opening up to the cleared public spaces that surround the projects. Separating these buildings from the surrounding fabric helps, on the one hand, to reinforce architecture as an urban node, a new centrality. On the other hand, it reinforces its potential to be consumed as a singular, aestheticized object. But with this overt juxtaposition made between the formal centrality, against the ubiquitous, informal fabric, very clear meaning is produced that helps to reinforce the social-inclusion narratives flooding the rhetoric of Social Urbanism.

The fact such a formal-informal juxtaposition can become iconic and valued amongst a Global audience indicates a larger shift that has occurred regarding the perception of informality in general. While once considered the cancer of rapidly-growing cities, today informality is increasingly seen as a typology that can offer its own solutions to many contemporary urban problems. This is especially true in Latin America, where such architects as Teddy Cruz or Urban Think Tank have made the study of the region’s informal communities popular. This shift also corresponds to a resurgence in interest towards community participation, originally given life near the end of the 1960s and early 70s, following the publication of such essays as Giancarlo de Carlo’s “Architecture Public” (1970) and Sherry Arnstein’s “Ladder of Citizen Participation” (1969). John Turner also began his research on informality in Peru around this time, which would eventually be published as *Housing for People* (1976). Turner’s research positioned informality as an urban condition from which the world might learn based on its participative qualities – a reaction to the “social housing costs of massive housing schemes, and of high-rise buildings” that had been unilaterally applied during the span of Latin American High-Modernism (Turner, 1976: 18). It was around this same period that Henri Lefebvre first published his *Right to the City* (*Le droit à la ville*, 1968) and *The Production of Space* (*Production de l’espace*, 1974) in their original French, and many ideas embedded in the participation discourse would overlap with his new urban philosophy. But participation took a back seat near the end of the 1970s. The attention directed toward



FIG 2/8 APPROACH ALONG
DESCENDING RAMPS TO PUBLIC
PLAZA AND BIBLIOTECA ESPAÑA
IN SANTO DOMINGO, 2015

informal production also died, especially in Latin America where the epidemic of violence enhanced stigma directed towards informal areas in the region's growing megacities.

Renewed interest in architecture and participation – and its association with informality – began again in the 1990s, and not surprisingly also corresponded with the English language translation of *Production of Space* (1991) and the first significant foray of Lefebvre's ideas into Western literature. His ideas have since become very much integrated into the wider political discourse, demonstrated by the mainstream appropriation of his term “Right to the City” in popular politics across Western and Eastern Europe, the United States, and of course Latin America. One of Lefebvre's most popular beliefs, that citizens must be given the right to produce their own environments while society embraces social difference, is key to understanding Medellín's aesthetic regime.

In *Production of Space*, Lefebvre defined difference as that which is

excluded. “Differences,” he wrote, “endure or arise on the margins of the homogenized realm, either in the form of resistances or in the form of externalities” (Lefebvre, 1991 [1974]: 373). According to this definition, the informal settlements of Medellín are examples of space that avoid the abstraction of formalized urban space, and thus embody difference. Inhabitants of the periphery would still be categorized as “other,” then, in that they are alternatives to the homogenized urban realm – although here the connotation of “otherness” is far more positive than how it is commonly used today. In this case, the homogenized realm and the heterogeneous realm form a type of social dichotomy. This heterogeneous realm, however, is sparse in today’s society, according to Lefebvre.

Lefebvre’s definition of difference is not synonymous to what the Mayor’s Office called “cultural diversity,” as implicit to this cultural diversity is the idea that inhabitants of the formal city are part and parcel of it as well, and that in promoting solidarity, the formal city is also welcoming the informal city into its own idea about what urban life should be. However, Lefebvre’s description of differential space is still key to understanding Medellín’s positioning as a political project.

Medellín’s iconicity is one based on this acceptance and value of difference (or at least, its image). The “iconicity of difference” is thus the image of anything that is “other” – typically marginalized, persecuted, or thought repugnant – making its way into the image. The inclusion of this differential space is what makes the image iconic, because the juxtaposition of formal and informal typologies is what produces meaning. The aesthetic regime of this juxtaposition helps to define a cultural, social, and political brand for the city.

With the clearest use of High aesthetics – most designs determined by open competition – and their strategic location in informal communities – the city’s Library-Parks are one of the most obvious examples of this iconic juxtaposition. And with its wider architectural fame, Mazzanti’s *Biblioteca España* in particular is one of the regime’s clearest embodiments.

The library has become a showcase project for Social Urbanism. In many ways, this project intensified the formal-informal juxtaposition by placing likely the most famous and experimental architectural project in a neighbourhood with one of the most violent histories. It’s common

for critical studies and reviews of the building to note this neighbourhood, Santo Domingo Savio, was Pablo Escobar's own, and represented the epicenter of the Cartel business.

The form of the building is itself obviously unique: three jet-black prisms erupting from the rocky terrain, with their movement projecting upwards and outwards (see FIG 2/32). At night, the prisms glow like a signal down to the city below. According to Mazzanti, the buildings make a clear reference to the surrounding topography as they “seek to stand out as a building-landscape, an icon that constructs the site and maintains the existing tension between geography and urban texture” (Giancarlo Mazzanti & Architects, 2008: 106). As noted by some critics, this largely amounts to the reconstruction of rocks emerging from the terrain, which produces a form that risks appearing closed, to the point of seeming defensive (Carranza and Lara, 2014: 340). Forrest Hylton has gone so far as to declare a resemblance to a military research institution, the “architecture pacification has enabled, with security functions built into design” (Hylton, 2007: 162). Others see the project quite differently. “There is not a shadow of a doubt about the message this library sends to the community,” writes Justin McGuirk (2014: 249).

That it is valued, that it has a future. From the gaps between its two towers, visitors have a dramatic view of the city laid out before them. But it is the opposite view, from the valley below, that is most significant. The importance of the Biblioteca España is as a beacon, signaling to the city as a whole. There has been much derision of iconic architecture in recent years, but this building needed to be iconic. Its very purpose was to draw the gaze of the prospering paisas to the hills that they had blinkered from view as if they didn't exist. The library has a symbolic purpose, which is to make the informal city visible (McGuirk, 2014: 249).

This relationship with the informal city is, for both those who condemn or celebrate the design, at the center of discussion. Despite the avant-garde qualifications of the architecture itself, it is still the juxtaposition that gives it its most iconic qualities. Though its particular siting within Santo Domingo is done in part with the intention to provide a public



FIG 2/9 (ABOVE) AERIAL OF THE LIBRARY, AND ITS SURROUNDING FABRIC

FIG 2/10 (LEFT) PUBLIC PLATFORM AT ENTRANCE TO LIBRARY, WITH VIEWS DOWN TO THE CITY



FIG 2/11 (TOP) BIBLIOTECA ESPAÑA IN 2015, WITH SCAFFOLDING AT PEELING FAÇADA SEEN AT CORNER

FIG 2/12 (MIDDLE) INTERIOR WORKSPACE, BIBLIOTECA ESPAÑA

FIG 2/13 (BOTTOM) CONNECTION BETWEEN THE INHABITABLE CORE STRUCTURE AND THE OUTER FAÇADE.

amenity in a community that most needs it, a very specific aesthetic relationship is nevertheless produced: the stark monotone of the building's dark stone against the faded vermilion housing, with the latter blending into the topography and infilled greenery like a blanket of brick, and the former emerging out of it; the carved edges of the library's three prisms in the cleared plaza, next to the chaos of the dense, self-built fabric. Not only is this relationship highly visual, but working off one another the architecture and its surroundings produce an iconographic symbolism alluding to the narratives of Social Urbanism as well. With the increasing popularity of informality as an urban typology, this juxtaposition appears to have become highly valued aesthetically. Thus, it is not surprising this project has been afforded the status of Global icon.

General consensus has been that the building itself is more resolved outside than in. McGuirk admits as much, noting "it's clear the whole budget went into making a striking image," with the interior being noticeably cheaper (*ibid*: 248). Beatriz Colomina has expressed a similar observation, though she still praises the pride it has generated in the neighbourhood (interview with Colomina in Zabalbeascoa, 2013). More recent concerns about the quality of the building have emerged, however, as now barely a decade after its inauguration in 2007, construction work has begun to repair serious structural and water-related deficiencies that began emerging as early as 2013. Ever since, the buildings have been covered by black tarps, as the expensive slate cladding has been peeling from the surface. The façade does not meet requirements to withstand wind loads, says engineer Jospeg Farbiarz, and it is not fully waterproof – a clear issue for a building perched on an area prone to severe rain and landslides (Jolly, 2014). Repairs have just begun on the project, meaning the building was covered for about three years altogether. Estimates say the repairs could cost half (potentially more) of the original US\$4 million construction cost. What was once recognized by McGuirk as a beacon that projected a sense of worth to the surrounding communities, has become, in several senses, a symbol of decay, even neglect.

This isn't the symbol most of the Global audience imagines, though. Photographs of the building have helped freeze it in time. Many architects know the project relatively well; far fewer are aware of its construction deficiencies, and their consequences. There are, moreover,

other projects that have experienced notable construction issues, such as the *Colegio Debora Arango* and *La Independencia*. What this suggests about the construction process and the ambitious timeframe with which Fajardo's administration inaugurated these projects is beginning to be questioned. The idea of projects belonging to the "collection" of Social Urbanism, though, and producing meaning for the city as a whole was certainly bolstered by that same timeframe of completion.

Other Library-Parks in the city operate with a similar aesthetic regime to the *Biblioteca España*. The *Biblioteca Leon de Greiff* (see FIG 2/35) – the less famous Library-Park by Mazzanti – and the *Biblioteca Fernando Botero* by G Ateliers Architecture (see FIG 2/38), both share in the production of a "striking image" with bold object-form architecture, relating to informality at an immediate scale in photographs. Other projects, such as the *Biblioteca San Javier* (Javier Vera; see FIG 2/41) and *Biblioteca La Quintana* (Ricardo La Rotta Caballero; see FIG 2/44) develop a subtler relationship to their surroundings and topography – although photography still manages to capture them at their most striking angles, often positioning them as foreground to the informality seen behind.

The High-Quality Schools present a slightly different case to the Library-Parks, as most were done with lesser-known architects, and the primacy of functionality over High aesthetics does seem to hold for many. Many of the schools are of a much larger size than the libraries, and can appear ominous with their reliance on bare concrete. The scale of these schools represented a departure from the smaller community schools that were traditional amongst the city. Schools that current mayor Gaviria continue to build are of a similarly large size, and are referred to as *megacollegios* (interview with Jorge Mario Isaza, 2015). Theoretically, centralizing education by building larger institutions allows for easier regulation and control over the quality of education; it also means schools are sometimes very far away from homes. "They are so big they can just make a few schools, and then boys and girls have to travel long distances" (interview with Jorge Mario Isaza, 2015). The combination of bare concrete and massive size can also give them a somewhat menacing presence, especially those with their periphery secured by chain link fence.

It's clear from their designs and the relative lack of publicity they weren't intended for the same wider consumption as the Library-Parks.

FIG 2/14 NORTH ENTRANCE TO COLEGIO BENEDIKTA ZUR NEIDEN, ONE OF THE HIGH QUALITY SCHOOL PROJECTS DURING FAJARDO'S ADMINISTRATION



There are several exceptions, however, of buildings clearly designed with High aesthetics in mind, and which have come to act as representations for the larger High Quality School program.

The first is the *Colegio Las Mercedes*, by Juan Manuel Peláez Freidel (see FIG 2/47). The discrepancies between how the project was imagined in preconstruction renderings and realization is significant. It has been subject to the same aesthetic degradation of the concrete as other projects, while renderings projected a pristine white. The dull grey, though, makes it appear more utilitarian. The design of the project itself is quite interesting still, with a new ground plane that is cut below street level, a series of pods that operate as classrooms, a skinny building hugging one corner with offices and a large, rectangular building anchored in another corner that acts as the school's gymnasium. Unlike many of the other projects, *Las Mercedes* is located on a generally flat site, which has significant effects on how photography reads the project in relation to its surroundings: though some informal buildings exist immediately to the west of the site, they have a less visual appearance in the bird's eye view, appearing less as a housing-topography hybrid. Like *Las Mercedes*, *Colegio La Independencia* by Felipe Uribe de Bedout could be described as playful (see FIG 2/50). The articulation of concrete strips read from the exterior lend the project a design aesthetic clearly setting it apart from its surroundings. Located in San Javier, traditionally the most violent area

in the city, its siting and accompanying history intensifies the formal-informal narratives. Like many of the libraries, there is also an overt juxtaposition made between the form of the building, and the ascending topography of vermilion brick that can be seen in the background – one of the densest areas across the entire city.

No doubt the showcase school project for the city, though, was Carlos Pardo's *Colegio Antonio Derka* (see FIG 2/53). The school sits further up the hill from the *Biblioteca España*, although due to the undulating topography in the area, one is not visible to the other. Notably, the building received its own building feature in a special 2011 issue of *The Architectural Review* on Colombian architecture. “The challenge was to combine a sense of openness and security in one of the poorest, most violent neighbourhoods of Medellín,” wrote issue editor Michael Webb, “to implant the new building with two existing schools down the slope to either side, and to provide gathering places for local residents” (Webb, 2011: 206). To do this, the building inserts itself into the existing steep grade, with entry to a public platform at street level and classrooms stacked below. The scale, materiality and positions of the volumes on the ground give the “school a presence without the need for monumentality” (Hernández, 2011: 70). The stacking of these volumes also lends it a certain formal relationship to the stacked housing that surrounds it. As such, a dialogue is made both with the building's interpretation of the topography and the informal fabric that climbs the steep slope at the furthest edge of the city. It is in fact so far in the periphery, that it almost represents the boundary at which informal housing can no longer be built, transitioning into a steep, green landscape above. But once again, photography often positions the school strategically against informal housing: sometimes informality is the foreground, with the green landscape ascending behind the building, and sometimes informality is in the background, as the camera is often positioned to look down from the building's site lines.

Of course, the Metrocable needs to be included within this list of urban projects using juxtaposition in the production of meaning as well. At some level, it seems to resist this interpretation as an object that forms a juxtaposition with informal landscape based on its qualities as a linear transportation model. However formally, the way the Metrocable



FIG 2/15 (TOP) PHOTOGRAPHIC COMPOSITION OF METROCABLE WITH CAR CLOSE IN FOREGROUND, 2014.

FIG 2/16 (BOTTOM) WIDE PHOTOGRAPHIC COMPOSITION OF METROCABLE ASCENDING UP NORTHEAST NEIGHBOURHOOD, 2007

is read and photographed, it shows many similarities. This has to do with its elevated qualities, like capsules flying in the sky, removed from the chaos below. In this way, the project is clearly read as visual objects. “Innovation” is always a key word when the Metrocables are discussed, and the juxtaposition of this innovative technology with the rudimentary character of the neighbourhoods below certainly produces its own meaning.

Two of the three existing metrocables link directly into the Metro with no additional fare; these were the first two built (2004 and 2007), with the third (2010) acting as a tourist line that links to *Parque Lleras* above the Aburrá valley peak, passing mostly through a natural landscape. But for the urban Metrocables, there are two popular compositions to capture them in photography. The first composition is with a cable car close in the foreground, and informal housing in the background below. The second is a wider aerial view, which usually captures a long stretch of the cable, extending to a station in the background or disappearing past the frame into the distance while cutting through dense urban fabric. Relatively few images capture the Metrocable from street level. This may be for a couple reasons: first, there are no tourist destinations between the first and terminal stations for either of the Metrocables and therefore fewer opportunities for the cable to be photographed; second, informal neighbourhoods have a much more pleasing aesthetic from a distance than they do up close.⁴

The Metrocables are a good illustration of the way the aesthetic image can coerce our understanding of their functionality and meaning to communities. While the photography and rhetoric surrounding these first two Metrocables appeared quite similar, notions exist that much of the necessary research and strategy involved in making the first line in the northeast a success was subsequently abandoned with the western line. Peter Brand and Julio Davliá note this second line lacked close articulation with other social elements, such as public buildings, spaces, and new business networks compared to the first. “The topography was more difficult, complementary interventions were spatially disconnected from each other, there were low levels of community participation and . . . to a large extent [it] sought to leap-frog neighbourhoods closer to the Metro station in a bid to connect as efficiently as possible the newly

4 / THE EXCEPTION IS THE BOTTOM OF THE NORTHEAST METROCABLE, WHERE THE SIMULTANEOUS INTEGRAL URBAN PROJECT (PIU) REDEVELOPED THE MAIN STREET BELOW, BY BOTH WIDENING THE PEDESTRIAN SIDEWALK AND RESURFACING THE ROAD. PROFILES OF THE NORTHEAST PIU OFTEN CAPTURE THE STREET VIEW WITH CABLES SUSPENDED ABOVE IT.

developed area of *Ciudadela Nuevo Occidente*” (Brand and Dávila, 2013: 53; see comparison of Metrocables in FIG 2/27 and FIG 2/29). For the northeast, the Metrocable’s symbolism is relatively strong, perceived as a thread connecting the periphery and the center of the city. The addition of the Metrocable was seen by many as an enhancement to existing transportation options: for example, the existing bus service is still the preference by many, either because it is faster, less crowded, or simply less expensive. However for the second line, the simultaneous development of social housing high-rises in *Ciudadela Nuevo Occidente* at the metrocable’s terminal station – an area with almost no existing housing – meant residents relocated to this area, beyond the far edges of the city, are more often at the mercy of the metrocable system, with fewer alternative transportation options. The image of these two projects, however, imply equally-powerful notions of inclusion.

The escalators in San Javier, completed in 2008 by the municipality under Salazar, became another example of the city’s “innovation” in public transportation. Since its completion, the project has been featured heavily in both the popular and architectural media. The aesthetic juxtaposition is perhaps enhanced even further here, with the simultaneous house painting of surrounding housing; photography of the project often limits its frame to this colourful section, although it’s not entirely surprising, when one visits the site, that around the corner from the frame the brick remains its natural vermilion.

While the project can reduce the travelling time significantly for some inhabitants, its overall reach is relatively small, especially compared to the metrocables. It was also noticeable during my visit (on a Saturday mid-day) that most riders I came across were tourists. One is immediately confronted with the institutional atmosphere of the project, with city workers greeting you at the top and bottom in red municipality jackets, handing out flyers that describe the history of the escalator project, with recommendations about how they are to be used. There is likely still a symbolic power to the project for many inhabitants. However, one gets a sense from the San Javier escalators they are perhaps illustrative of the increasing reduction of “Medellín Innovation” to trademark.

Regarding the overall aesthetic regime of Social Urbanism, there are two projects affiliated with the programme that stand out as potential



FIG 2/17 (ABOVE) VIEW SOUTH
OF COLEGIO ANTONIO DERKA
FIG 2/18 (RIGHT) STREET LEVEL
VIEW FROM ANTONIO DERKA'S
UPPER PLATFORM TOWARDS
THEATER BLOCK





FIG 2/19 (LEFT) PART OF THE NEW *CIUDADELA NUEVO OCCIDENTE* HOUSING DEVELOPMENT, LOCATED ABOVE THE TERMINAL STATION OF THE WESTERN METROCABLE (LINE J)

FIG 2/20 (FOLLOWING SPREAD) ESCALATORS IN SAN JAVIER, WITH PAINTED HOUSES SURROUNDING.

outliers: the Juan Bobo housing project and the Moravia Cultural Center. While their programs are vastly different from one another, they share in the use of a local vernacular style and a desire to integrate into their surroundings rather than set themselves apart from it.

The Juan Bobo housing project was an innovative rehousing program launched by *Empresas de Desarrollo Urbano* (Urban Development Company, EDU) in 2004 along the banks of the Juan Bobo stream; the project aimed to resettle inhabitants living in precarious conditions – usually because their housing was prone to ecological risk and lacked basic services. The innovation of the project was that inhabitants were resettled within their same neighbourhood, as opposed to other resettlement projects which had forced inhabitants to move into social housing projects at or beyond the edges of the city (such as *Ciudadela Nuevo Occidente* described above). It was widely recognized for its good practices in urban upgrading and sophisticated integration of participatory planning, winning the 2010 UN-HABITAT Dubai International Award for Best Practice. The resulting housing was six-storey mid-rises, integrated into the community with new public infrastructure such as bridges and roads alongside new public squares.

The Moravia Cultural Center, on the other hand, was the last project by famous Colombian architect Rogelio Salmons, who died in 2007, one year before its inauguration. Like Juan Bobo, it was built with





Comunidad Sostenible
Española
Comunidad 13

ZAPATERIA



FIG 2/21 (TOP) JUAN BOBO
STREAM, WITH NEW HOUSING
DEVELOPMENTS SEEN IN BACK-
GROUND. THE BRIDGE WAS ALSO
AN INFRASTRUCTURAL ADDI-
TION RELATED TO THE LARGER
JUAN BOBO SCHEME
FIG 2/22 CULTURAL CENTER IN
MORAVIA BY ROGELIO SALMONA

the local brick and was also typical of Salmona's architectural style, using intersecting geometric shapes in its design. The area of Moravia was originally developed informally, and is situated along the center of the city spine (but relatively far to the north). This north-central location means it is one of the densest and poorest areas in the city. It is interesting the Cultural Center doesn't gain the same international recognition as Social Urbanism's other projects, although surprisingly locals described it to me as one of the city's more famous projects. This may be because Salmona has greater name recognition within Colombia than he does outside. The aesthetics of the project are certainly different from the others: it employs a style linked to the famous yet older Colombian architect, which stands out in comparison to Social Urbanism's other buildings that were designed by much younger designers (most under 40) and which tend to be read as autonomous objects contained within their very simple object forms. Like the Juan Bobo housing project, the Cultural Center from street eye view appears to seek more integration into the fabric than isolation from it. For both projects, the aesthetic juxtaposition is certainly weakened as a result. The aesthetic differences between these and other projects of Social Urbanism could be one reason Juan Bobo and the Moravia Cultural Center receive less Global distribution as urban images. There does seem to be a consensus though that, regardless of their smaller circulation, both are still examples of good urban planning and architecture respectively, and have generally been well received by their communities.

These all represent physical interventions officially affiliated with Social Urbanism during the eight-year period of Fajardo and Salazar, most of which (though as we saw, not all) employ a similar aesthetic regime. Other interventions were made around the same time, however, and are also worth mentioning as they all acted as signifiers to the "citizen culture" embedded within the era of Social Urbanism as a whole. But while iconic to the city's larger transformation, they also do not necessarily employ the particular "iconicity of difference" aesthetic regime – not necessarily because of the formal characteristics or materiality of the new buildings themselves, like Juan Bobo or Moravia, but because their locations closer to the center means they are placed out of immediate proximity to informal housing. These three projects are

also larger-scale revitalization projects, but notably all included multiple high-profile, cultural buildings within their plans.

The first is the revitalization of an existing sports complex near the center of the city, to the west of the river. The revitalization included renovating three existing sports coliseums and constructing two new ones, all under the design of Mazzanti and Felipe Mesa. It also included an upgrade of the Aquatic center, by Paisajes Emergentes, with four new pools added and the site flooded with a landscape of wetland plants. Construction occurred quickly over eighteen months in preparation for the 2010 South American Games.

The second is the revitalization of the Alpujarra administrative center (see FIG 2/62). This is the epicenter of Medellín, adjacent to the historic downtown, and yet until recently much of the land was used for parking, or left vacant. This was the site of the first “urban acupuncture” experiment for the city, *Parque de los Pies Descalzos* (Felipe Uribe de Bedout, 2000), placed adjacent to the EPM Intelligent Building (1993).⁵ *Pies Descalzos* also included the construction of the new EPM Interactive museum, and the site was filled with interactive elements for children to play. This was followed by the construction of the *Plaza Mayor* (Mazzanti, Daniel Bonilla, and Rafael Esguerra, 2006), which was the stylish new convention center where such famous events as the World Urban Forum have since been held.

To the north of the site is the Biblioteca EPM (one of the city’s Library Parks, the only placed in a central location) within the newly designed *Plaza de las Luces* (Felipe Uribe de Bedout, 2005). *Plaza de las Luces* is a redevelopment of the former *Plaza Cisneros* – a previous market square that was once an infamously dangerous place, and center of crime in the downtown. Crime proliferated here following the flight of many of the city’s wealthier inhabitants to *El Poblado* in the mid to late twentieth century. The heritage 19th century Vásquez and Carré buildings still anchor the east end of the site. For many years they were abandoned, and were occupied by the city’s homeless, drug users, and were known spaces for prostitution (and related violent crimes). Today one of these buildings now houses Medellín’s Ministry of Education – no doubt a symbolic location. Since most of this land was left empty, and was a non-residential area, there was little clearance involved in the revitalization

5 / THE EPM INTELLIGENT BUILDING WAS THE HEADQUARTERS FOR THE DEPARTMENT, BUILT IN 1993. THE BUILDING FEATURED HIGHLY AUTOMATED FACILITIES, AND ITS DESIGN AND SHEER SIZE IS INDICATIVE OF EPM’S ASPIRATIONS TO BECOME A MODERN AND CUTTING EDGE COMPANY. THE BUILDING HAS SIXTEEN TRANSPARENT ELEVATORS, THAT CAN SIMULTANEOUSLY CARRY 320 PEOPLE TO THE TOP FLOOR IN UNDER 60 SECONDS. THERE IS A ROOFTOP GARDEN, AND THE MONUMENTAL, OPEN-AIR LOBBY FEATURES GREEN WALLS RUNNING UP ITS WALLS. THE DOMINANCE OF THE EPM WITHIN MEDELLÍN’S POLITICAL CULTURE IS EVIDENT FROM ITS PHYSICAL PRESENCE IN THE MUNICIPAL CENTER OF THE CITY, AND ITS BRANDING OF MUCH OF THE PHYSICAL SPACE DEVELOPED THROUGH ITS DONATED FUNDS

6 / THIS IS BESIDES THE CLEARANCE OF THE CITY’S HOMELESS FROM CISNEROS, WHICH HAS, ADMITTEDLY, BEEN HANDLED SOMEWHAT POORLY AND HAS LED TO A MIGRATION OF A HOMELESS POPULATION TO THE HISTORIC DOWNTOWN, OR ALONG THE RIVER BANKS. HOMELESSNESS IN MEDELLÍN IS STILL A SIGNIFICANT LOCAL ISSUE.



FIG 2/23 (ABOVE) MEDELLÍN'S NEW SPORTS COMPLEX. NEW AND RENOVATED COLISEUMS BY MAZZANTI WITH GREEN UNDULATING ROOF. NEW AQUATIC CENTER SEEN BACK LEFT. FIG 2/24 (FOLLOWING SPREAD) VIEW OF CASA DE MÚSICA IN PARQUE DE LOS DESEOS IN THE EARLY EVENING, AS VISITORS PREPARE FOR THE WEEKLY OUTDOOR CINEMA PROGRAM. PARQUE DE LOS DESEOS CONTINUES TO BE A VERY POPULAR PUBLIC SPACE IN THE CITY

project as a whole.⁶

This is similar to the case of the North Revitalization (see FIG 2/65). The North Revitalization includes such famous projects as *Casa de Música* and the renovated *Planetario Medellín* (both part of *Parque de los Deseos*, Felipe Uribe de Bedout, 2004) which represented the second urban acupuncture project in the city, following *Pies Descalzos*. The project was constructed during Luís Pérez's administration. It was developed on the site of the existing planetarium of the city, with the adjacent abandoned lot used for the *Casa de Música*. The buildings not only offered cultural facilities, but the square also transforms into a large amphitheatre during weekly outdoor cinema nights. Like *Pies Descalzos*, *Deseos* also included interactive landscape elements in its design, such as sand pits and water features.

The success of *Parque de los Deseos* led to the expansion of a revitalization project in the north. This included the addition of an interactive museum and aquarium *Parque Explora* by Alejandro Echeverri (2008) and the revitalization of the adjacent Botanical Gardens, which includes the famous Orchidarium by Plan B and JPRCR and the *Café del Bosque* by Castro Arquitectos (2005). Subsequently, the innovation center *Ruta N* by Alejandro Echeverri (2009) was built just south of the revitalization site.

In each case, the revitalization projects emphasized the development of architecture with cultural programming. Many of the resulting projects bare resemblance to the architectural styles of other Social Urbanism projects, either in their simplicity of form, scale, use of materials or the design of open, surrounding public space. However, there is still an obvious difference in their aesthetic regimes: in most cases, there isn't any clear juxtaposition with informality that appears to produce meaning. In some cases, such as in photography of the *Parque Explora*, one notices the blanket of vermilion brick covering the hillsides in the distance. But the siting of many of these projects means they are relatively isolated from informal, residential space.

Yet the rhetoric that surrounds the more peripheral projects relating to social inclusion and "citizen culture" is largely reproduced here in the center. All these projects are linked to the cultural revitalization of the city, which is often positioned as the catalyst to the city's larger

social recovery. The formal similarities between these projects and those around the periphery also helps to relate projects within the banner of Social Urbanism. The development of these central nodes of culture has significant legitimacy when considering the more holistic transformation of Medellín, rather than simply fragmenting the city into self-contained neighbourhoods. However these revitalization projects have since evolved, building on the momentum established in these spaces during Social Urbanism, but today representing a very different vision of urban development. This the least true for the Sports Complex, as this development was more isolated from the urban fabric and existed within its own self-contained campus. However, as we will later see, the current, large scale redevelopments planned for the city have established their two central nodes at Alpujarra and the North site, and have expanded development outwards from these points. There are certain logical cases to be made for the continued development of these urban nodes, however the gentrifying logic embedded within such plans as the river park, technology district, and new housing development reveals the insidious potential of producing these typically iconic, central spaces within the urban fabric, despite their original intentions to be open spaces of culture.

It is the collective whole of these projects, together alongside the rhetoric of Social Urbanism, that imbues the physical component of the programme with a special meaning: in this process, projects assume an iconicity for Medellín as a whole. But the juxtaposition produced in many of the individual projects is the foundation to this production of greater meaning for the city. The trap of the totalizing image, as Balibrea notes, is that it hides anything that is not made visible. It allows curated spatial moments to stand in as representation not only for the expansive space of the city and its inhabitants, but also for the political and economic processes that determine its production. Thus these images of the city help to produce ideas about the systemic form of urban development as “inclusive” as well. They suggest difference is encouraged to proliferate in the city’s development, overcoming typical associations to the homogenizing, abstracting processes of Capitalist urban production. So while we may see value in many of these projects from an architectural standpoint – and admire the way they mediate within immediate communities, even promote pride and dignity for some – there also needs



↘ Zona de Comidas
↓ Plazoleta Parque de los Deseos

Fundación epm

Parque de los Deseos

Casa de la Música

Salones de Música y Sala de Arte 
Acceso Casa de la Música 



to be recognition about what this totalizing image hides from view.

DIFFERENCE AS IMAGE

If we agree the totalizing image can be used as a means to promote consensus, it seems unlikely this could coexist with a real value placed on difference. In fact, it feels like an impossible paradox. However, if differential space is not being produced, but rather a simulacrum of difference is being shown through the new image of the city, then one can begin to understand the paradox.

There is certainly a new value placed on spaces visually embodying aspects of Lefebvre's social difference: this is true within the architectural and urban professional discourse, but also within more general politics and mainstream media. The "iconicity of difference" is based on the associated ideal of greater social inclusion. And yet, while these projects may promote solidarity and dignity at the local scale, one can see how the aesthetic value of these spaces can lead to their consumption as commodified images, and eventually catalyze exclusionary forces over a longer stretch. The new development taking place in the city today is illustrative of this trajectory, as we will later see.

The key question in solving the above paradox is whether or not these spaces can actually lead to the continued production of difference, or if the image simply captures a pre-existing differential space, while encouraging the production of more homogenizing forms of urban development for the city in the future. The implication of this is particularly insidious, as one can see how the value we place on political processes in today's discourse could be coopted by a post-political urban production process. Another important point to consider in assessing the programme's overall political content is whether there were motivations to produce and leverage this particular aesthetic regime by certain stakeholders, or whether the regime is happenstance – a logical outcome of the nature of Social Urbanism development and siting strategies. This is why the previous chapter sought to situate Social Urbanism within a broader historical context and set of actors than what is usually addressed in most analyses of the programme. But there is a lingering question that requires further exploration: if the totalizing image of the city hides what

is not made visible, how do we inquire about what has been hidden? This is one goal of Chapter 3 – to uncover narratives and meaning to Medellín’s urban production process that are not represented in the visible image of urban space, and to decide what motivations existed in producing this image of the city. Just as this is not neatly inscribed within a limited timeframe, it is neither neatly inscribed within the city’s borders, but extends outwards to the regional and Global scale as well.

Inherent to this idea of the “iconicity of difference” is the concept of the simulacrum i.e. a representation of the production of difference rather than producing difference as a reality. If we are to go beyond the popular reading of the isolated moment of Social Urbanism as “political,” we can see that, at least in some sense, it sought to promote consensus amongst a local and global audience. For many political and economic stakeholders, this could be of particular value for a city marked by its identity of conflict. However, if the programme does not itself engender real social difference to proliferate, then this consensus, really, becomes just another mechanism of establishing power over space.



FIG 2/25 BIBLIOTECA LEÓN DE
GREIFF, 2015

SPATIAL ANALYSES

The following includes a set of analytical drawings for a selection of urban projects described in this chapter. These drawings act as another means to deconstruct projects' designs, with particular attention given to the surrounding residential density and the specific siting conditions for each. They are understood as one tool amongst others – including words and photography – to understand how specific projects operate in their surrounding space.



METROCABLE LINE “K”

Line “K” (2004) was the first metrocabable to be built in the city. It connects to the Acedevo Metro Station at the north end of the city, and continues east up the ascending topography. The fabric surrounding the cable is consistently dense, and was preexisting before the implementation of the cable. The *Biblioteca España* can be reached from the terminal station. This terminal station also connects with the Line “L” metrocabable station, which can be taken up above the Aburrá valley to *Parue Lleras*.

This metrocabable is often considered the most successful, with the highest ridership, and located in a very dense residential neighbourhood. It’s notable existing housing had to be cleared to make space for the poles and the intermediary and terminal stations, but otherwise much of the existing residential neighbourhood was left untouched.

FIG 2/26 (OPPOSITE PAGE)
LINE K, 2015



Colegio Antonio José Bernal



Acevedo Station

Andalucía Station

1:5000

LINE "K", 2004





Popular Station

Biblioteca España

Santo Domingo Station

Line "L"

METROCABLE LINE “J”

Line “J” (2007) was the second metrocable in Medellín. It connects to the terminal station of Medellín’s second metro line in the western community of San Javier. This line is longer than “K,” and travels over more undulating topography. Two intermediary stations are situated at the center of informal residential areas of moderate density. The housing development of *Ciudadela Nuevo Occidente* surrounds the terminal metrocable station. It was developed following the construction of the metrocable, and its completion has significantly increased ridership numbers of the metrocable.

An obvious contrast between Line “K” and Line “J” is that the first is integrated within a consistently dense residential neighbourhood, while the other leaps over areas of residential development in order to reach the terminal station. This area was planned for the social housing development *Ciudadela Nuevo Occidente* as the metrocable was being constructed.

FIG 2/28 (OPPOSITE PAGE)
LINE J, 2015





Biblioteca San Javier

San Javier Station

1:5000

LINE 'J' 2007



Juan XII Station

Vallejuelos Station

La Aurora Station

Ciudadela Nuevo Occidente

BIBLIOTECA ESPAÑA

The library sits on the lip of a ridge in the community of *Santo Domingo*. The terminal Line “K” metrocable station is in walking proximity, and a series of open public spaces have been designed between the terminal station and entrance to the library. A preexisting school (not part of the High-Quality program) is located near the station. A Cedezco center for small business is situated on the new public plaza by *Santo Domingo Savio* metrocable station.

Entrance to the library site includes a ramp down to an open public plaza, followed by a climb up to the exterior platform surrounding the library. This creates a cleared space surrounding the project which, alongside its siting on the peak of a ridge, helps to separate the building from its surroundings. Some housing clearance was done to make room for the building itself as well as the metrocable station and public plazas. The site of the library was deemed an ecological risk for much of this fabric that had to be cleared down the west slope from the library.

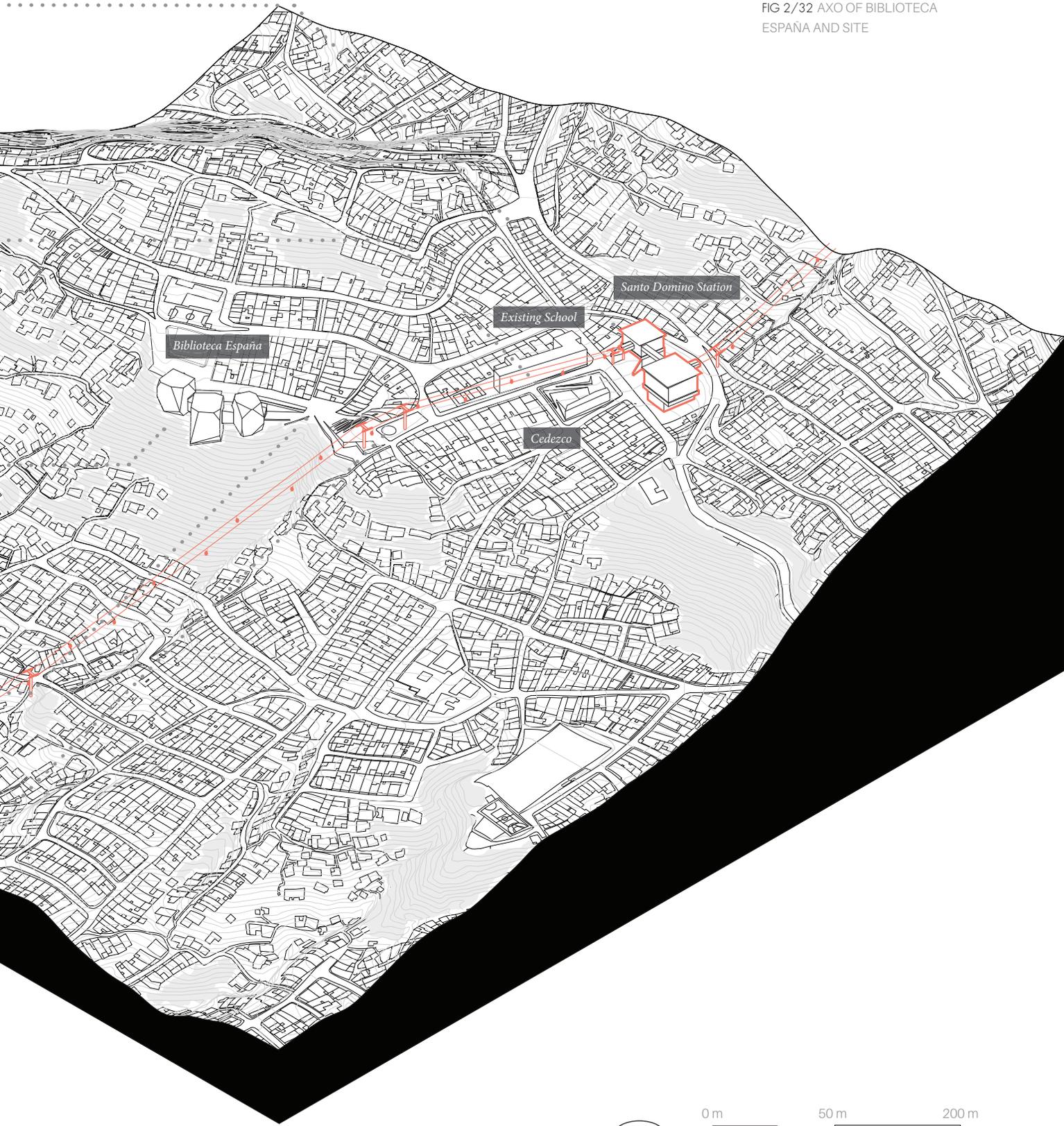
FIG 2/30 (OPPOSITE PAGE, TOP)
BIBLIOTECA ESPAÑA, VIEW FROM
THE WEST

FIG 2/31 (OPPOSITE PAGE,
BOTTOM) PUBLIC PLATFORM
SURROUNDING LIBRARY





FIG 2/32 AXO OF BIBLIOTECA ESPAÑA AND SITE



BIBLIOTECA LEON DE GREIFF

Leon de Greiff is the second Library-Park in Medellín by Giancarlo Mazzanti. It is situated in a pre-existing park, in the central east area of the city. Conditions in the area are relatively poor, with a mixture of formal and informal urban elements. It shares the formal characteristic of the *Biblioteca España* with the program spanning over three individual volumes, connected on the interior by a linear strip that is open to above. A Cedezco small business center is located in the lower level of one of the volumes.

The siting is unique to other projects as the cleared space surrounding the library was pre-existing. This is rare in other neighbourhoods, where most of the open space was consumed by informal sprawl. The project is built on the site of a former prison. According to Mazzanti, the library inherited some of the original design elements of the prison.

FIG 2/33 (OPPOSITE PAGE, TOP)
BIBLIOTECA LEON DE GREIFF
FIG 2/34 (OPPOSITE PAGE, BOT-
TOM) CORRIDOR LINKING THE
THREE VOLUMES TOGETHER,
OPEN TO THE SKY ABOVE



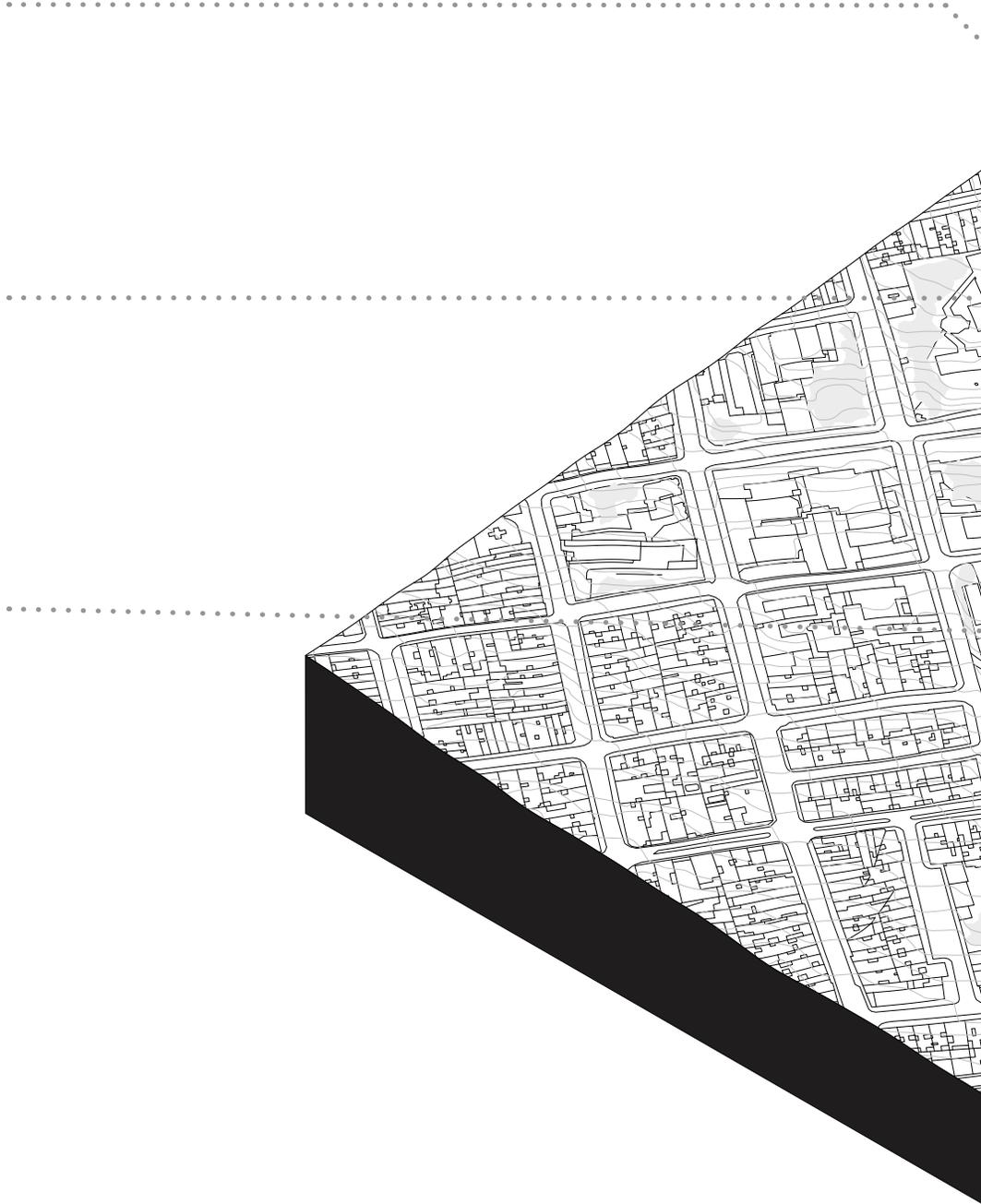
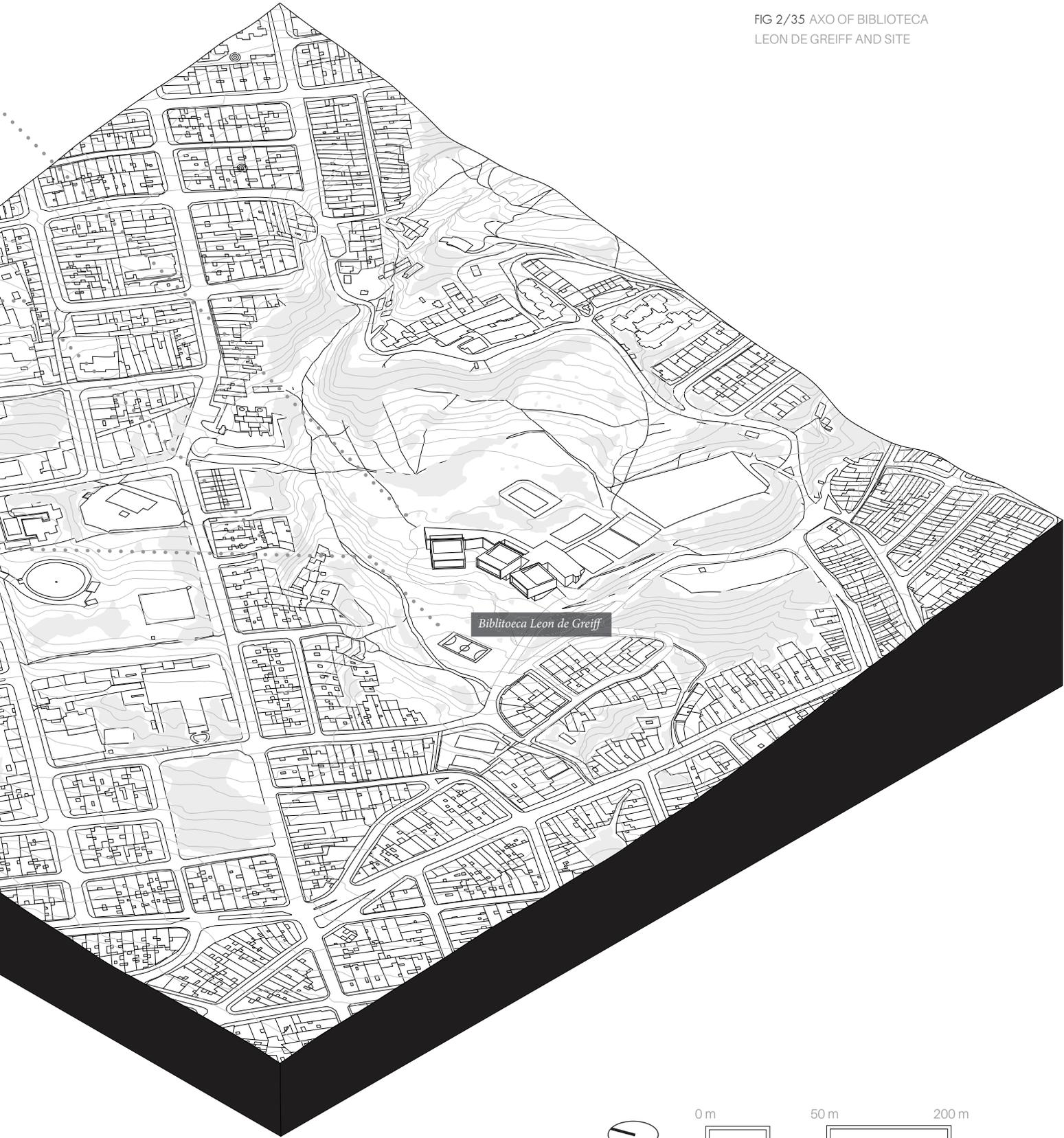


FIG 2/35 AXO OF BIBLIOTECA
LEON DE GREIFF AND SITE



BIBLIOTECA FERNANDO BOTERO

Biblioteca Fernando Botero is located in the outskirts of the city on its western side, in the area of San Cristobal. A new highway leading out of the city passes by the site of the library. The form of the project itself is essentially a long bar, with a series of open courtyards cutting through the middle, and cut outs along the southern façade.

The building is located on a plinth, and as such has a similar presence to the *Biblioteca España*. The site itself was open before the addition of the library, and thus no significant housing clearance was made. San Cristobal is not as dense as other areas, as it is located well outside of the city borders. For those not living in San Cristobal, the library can be accessed fairly easily by a bus route that follows along the new highway. There has also been generous parking integrated into the site, which is not present on other Library-Park sites within the city borders.

FIG 2/36 (OPPOSITE PAGE, TOP)
SOUTHERN FAÇADE OF FERNAN-
DO BOTERO, WITH INFORMAL
HOUSING CAPTURED IN THE
FOREGROUND

FIG 2/37 (OPPOSITE PAGE, BOT-
TOM) NORTHERN ENTRANCE TO
BUILDING



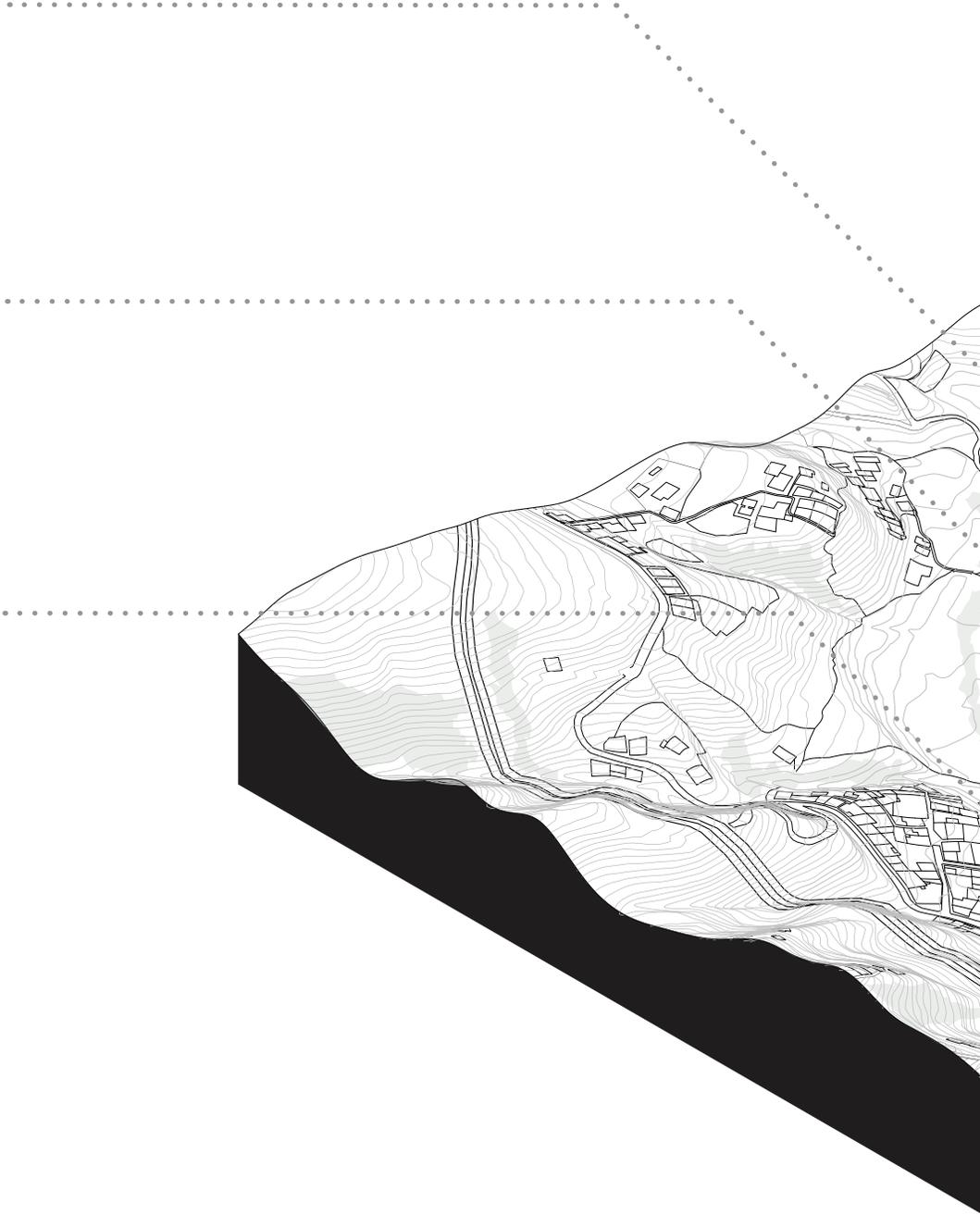


FIG 2/38 AXO OF BIBLIOTECA FERNANDO BOTERO AND SITE



BIBLIOTECA SAN JAVIER

Biblioteca San Javier is also located on a plinth in the topography, and can be accessed from the lower street by ascending zig-zag paths, or from the bridge connecting to the metro and metrocable station. Because of the hill it sits on, the library is difficult to see from street level below. It doesn't have the same autonomous and simplified object form as some of the other libraries; rather, it contains a series of extruded elements on the east and west side that are staggered down along the descending plaza. A series of five open courtyards enclosed with glass punch through the roof.

FIG 2/39 (OPPOSITE PAGE, TOP)
LOOKING OUT FROM BIBLIOTECA
SAN JAVIER PUBLIC PLAZA
FIG 2/40 (OPPOSITE PAGE,
BOTTOM) LOOKING TOWARDS
BIBLIOTECA SAN JAVIER ON
BRIDGE FROM METROCABLE

A Cedezco small business center is located at the base of the site (seen in the bottom photograph of the next page, to the left). *Colegio Benedikta zur Neiden* (one of the new High Quality schools) is located to the southeast of the library.

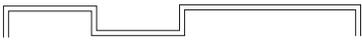




FIG 2/41 AXO OF BIBLIOTECA
SAN JAVIER AND SITE



0 m 50 m 200 m



BIBLIOTECA LA QUINTANA

La Quintana is located in the northwest of the city. It is sited along a stream, of which the area surrounding was previously unbuilt because of the difficult surrounding topography. There is a park below the library, and a public plaza above. The main entrance to the library is accessed by descending a series of steps from street level above.

It's notable the surrounding fabric includes formally-laid road networks, but primarily informal housing. The west generally benefits from this type of formal planning compared to the east, and a comparison between the site of the *Biblioteca España* and *Biblioteca La Quintana* reveals this. Much of the library is open air, with two open public platforms above and enclosed volumes below.

FIG 2/42 (OPPOSITE PAGE, TOP)
LOOKING DOWN TO BIBLIOTECA
LA QUINTANA AND THE PUBLIC
PLATFORM FROM STREET LEVEL

FIG 2/43 (OPPOSITE PAGE,
BOTTOM) LOOKING TOWARDS
OPEN PUBLIC PLATFORMS OF
STRUCTURE



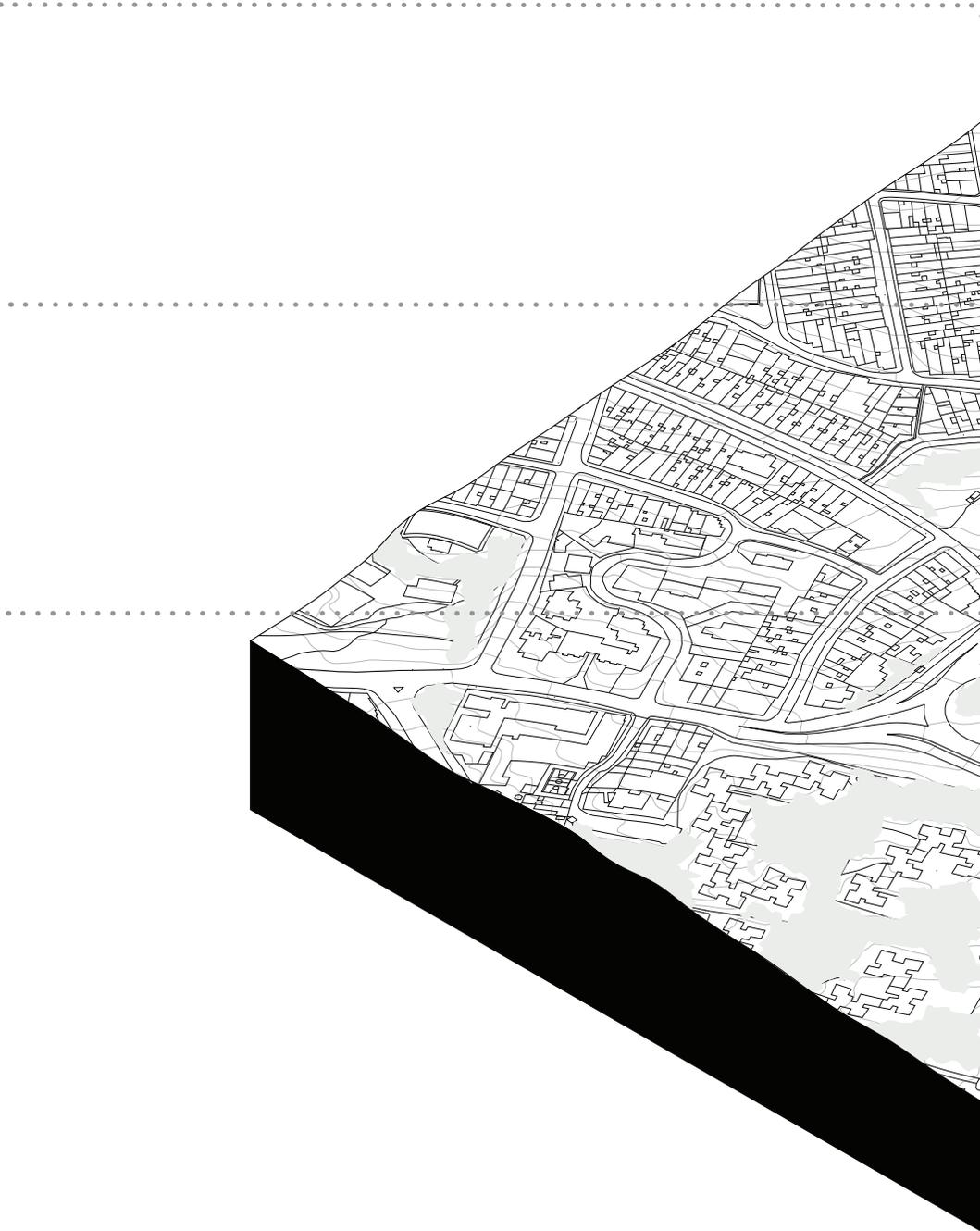
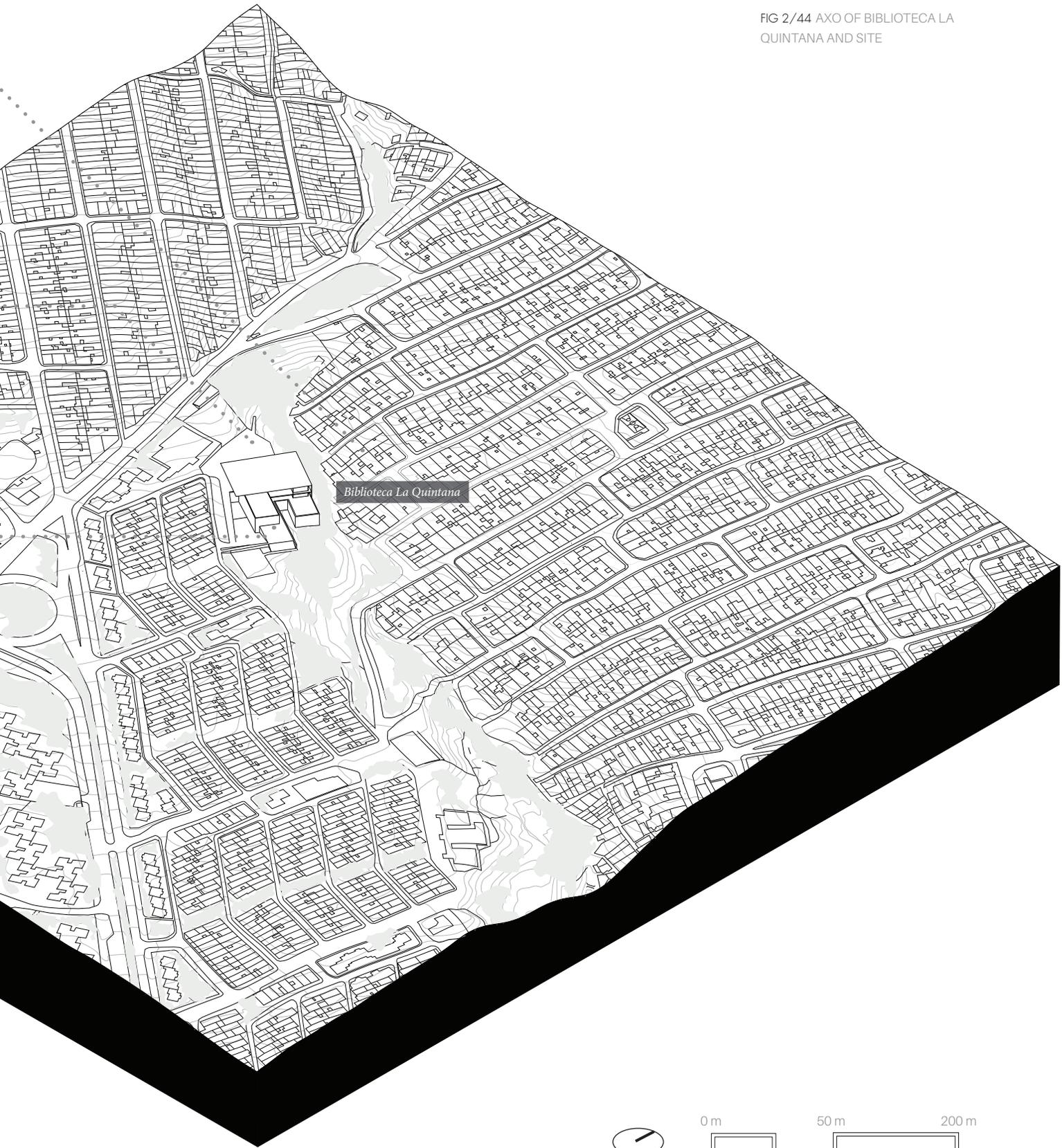


FIG 2/44 AXO OF BIBLIOTECA LA QUINTANA AND SITE



COLEGIO LAS MERCEDES

Colegio Las Mercedes is located in the central-west area of the city. The school's design includes eight classroom pods, a gym anchoring the site corner, and a strip of primarily administrative space. A large open space is inscribed in the middle. It is one of the "High" designed high quality schools that has been featured in architectural publications.

FIG 2/45 (OPPOSITE PAGE,
TOP) VIEW OVER COLEGIO LAS
MERCEDES
FIG 2/46 (OPPOSITE PAGE, BOT-
TOM) LAS MERCEDES CLASS-
ROOM PODS

The site itself is mostly flat, and the surrounding area is a mix of low and middle-incomes residences. The *Univerdidad de Medellín* campus is located just to the south.



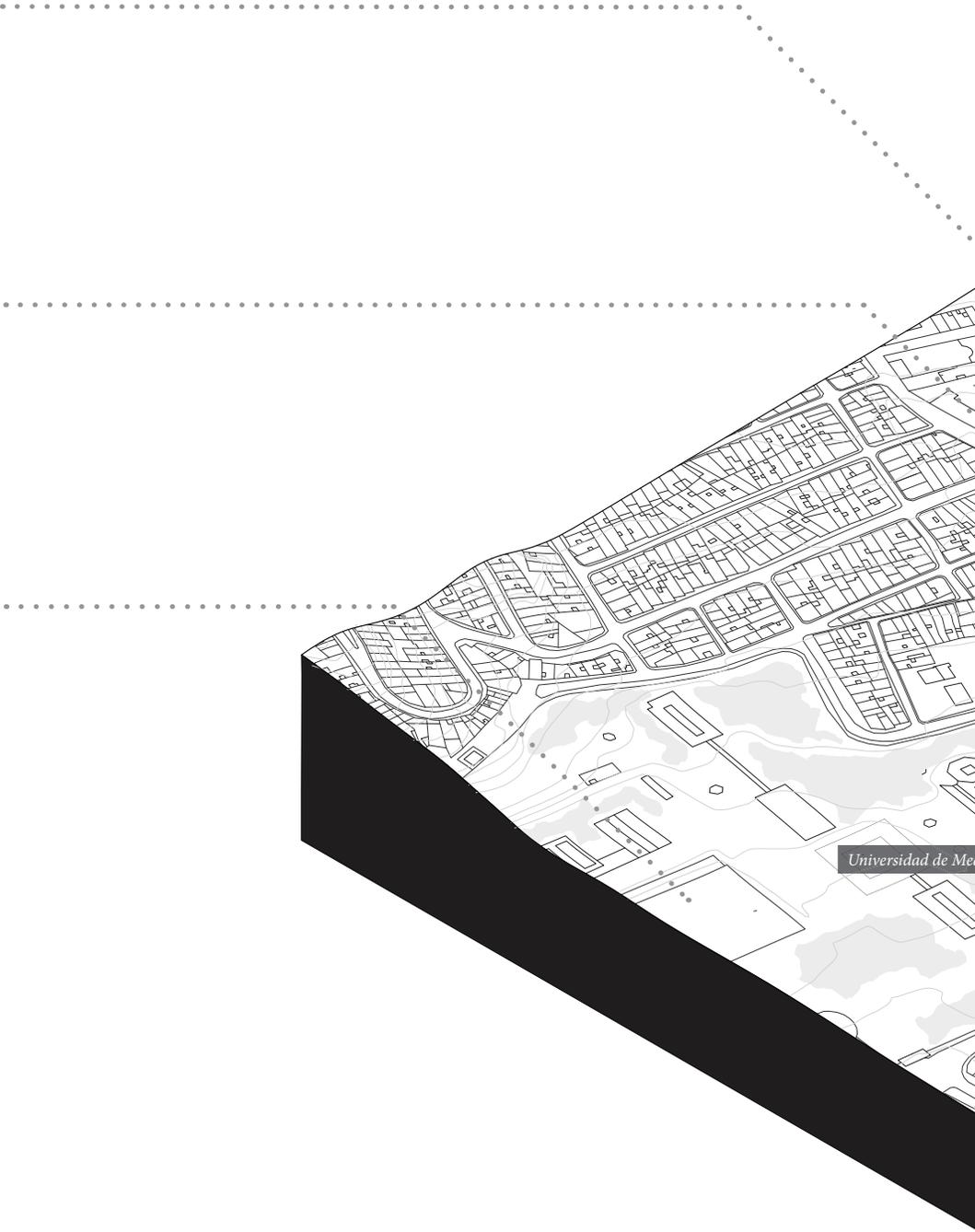
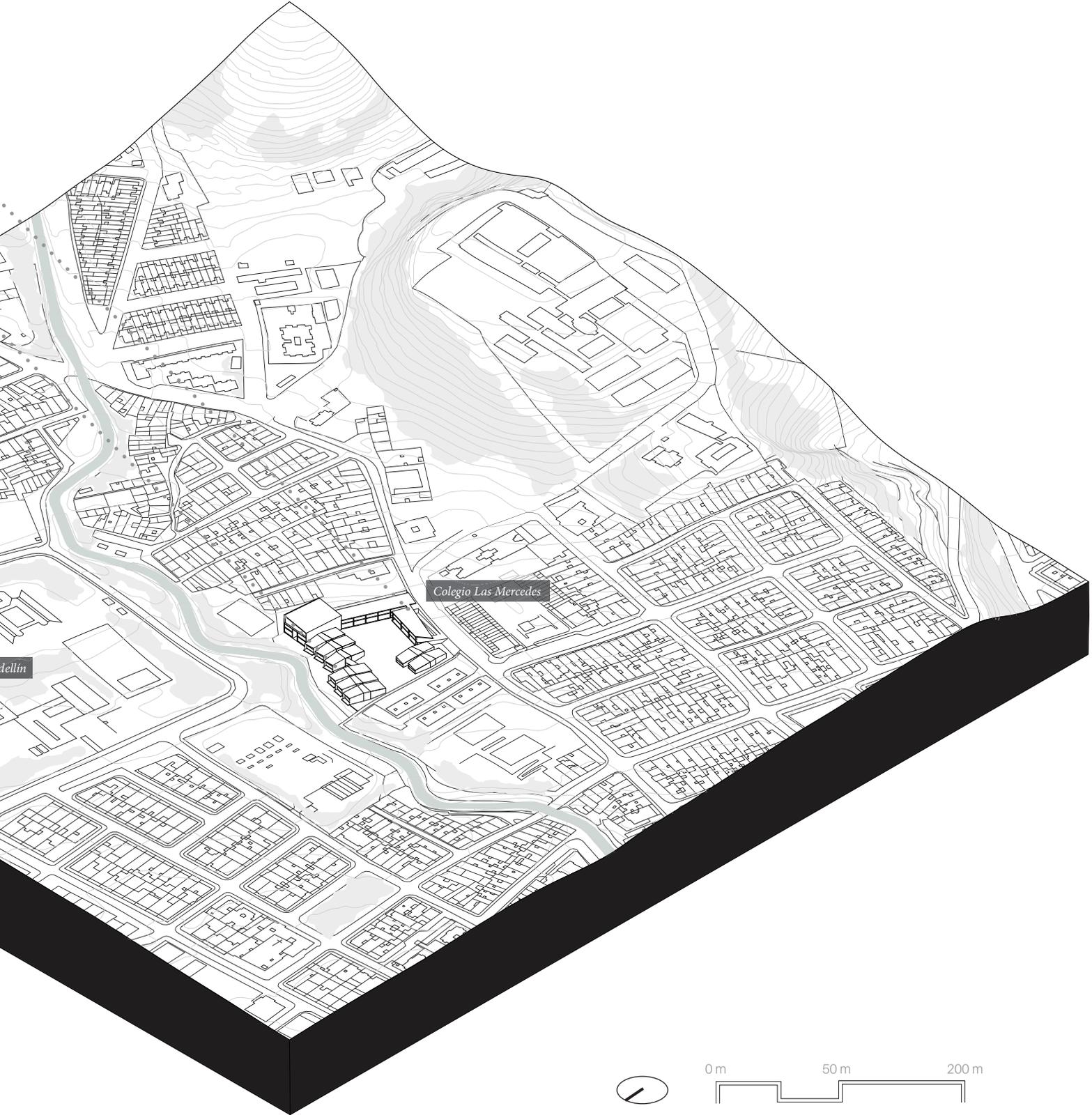


FIG 2/47 AXO OF COLEGIO LAS MERCEDES AND SITE



COLEGIO LA INDEPENDENCIA

La Independencia is a High-Quality school project in the district of San Javier. It consists of five articulated strips that peel up to varying heights, with classrooms inside. It also represents one of the few “High” aestheticized school projects. *La Independencia* is also one of the most dangerous neighbourhoods in San Javier. The city accompanied the addition of this school with a new police station to the east. A new *Jardín Infantil* (child daycare) was subsequently added to the southeast of the site during Salazar’s administration.

The space surrounding the school was an existing open green space. The immediate site is largely flat, but informal housing can be seen following up the steep slope in the background and the surrounding neighbourhood is of extremely high density.

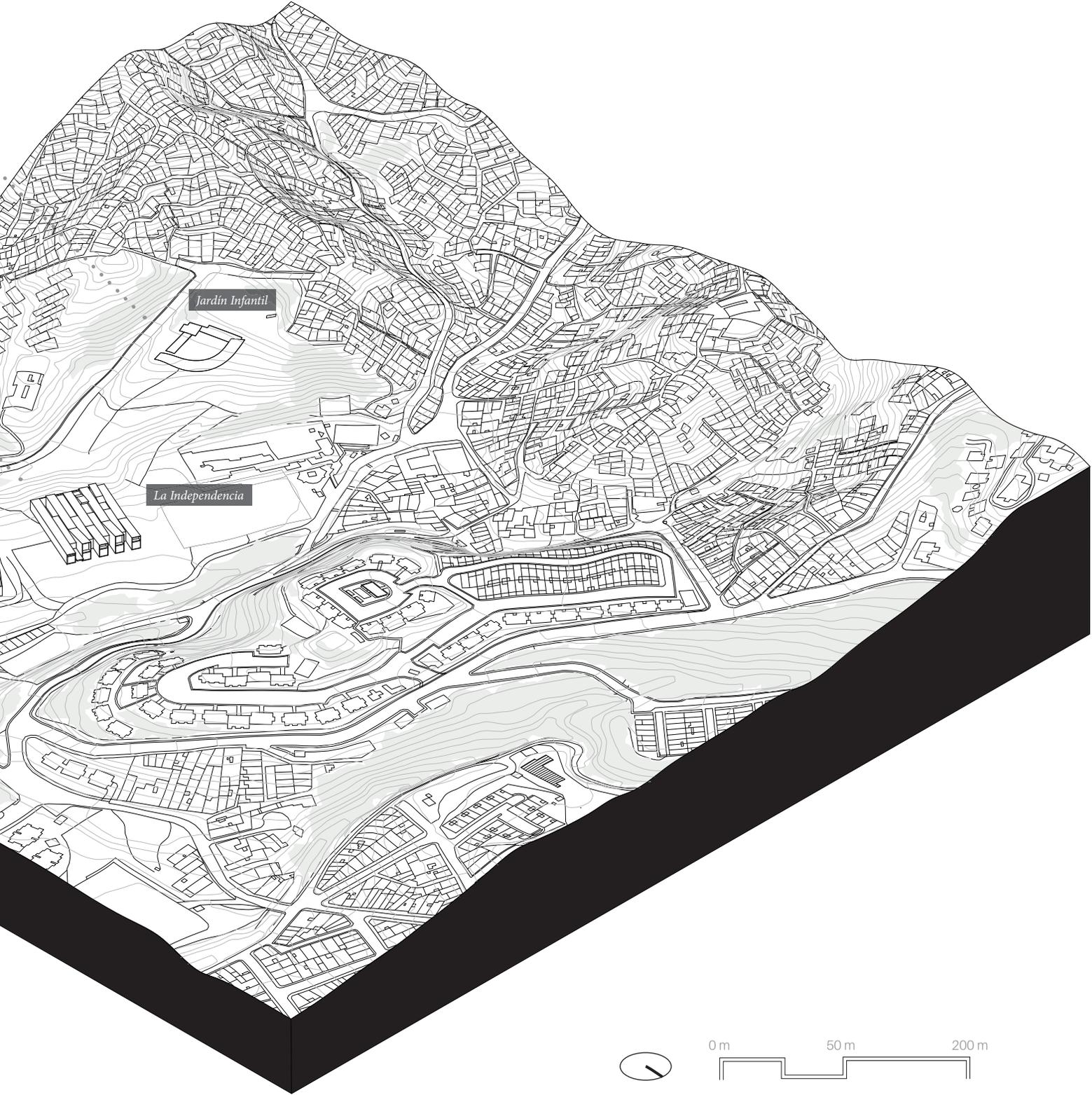
FIG 2/48 (OPPOSITE PAGE, TOP)
COLEGIO LA INDEPENDENCIA
FROM EXTERIOR

FIG 2/49 (OPPOSITE PAGE, BOT-
TOM) SAME AS ABOVE





FIG 2/50 AXO OF COLEGIO LA INDEPENDENCIA AND SITE



COLEGIO ANTONIO DERKA

Colegio Antonio Derka is a High Quality school project in the far north-east periphery of the city. The building includes a public platform on the roof of the main structure, which extends out from street level. Classrooms are stacked below, and a theater block sits above. The site represents extremely difficult topography, and represents the near edges of the urban fabric. As seen in the axonometric, much of the surrounding space is unbuildable, with the slope of the site increasing drastically as it reaches the peak of the valley.

Nearly all of the surrounding urban fabric is informal, situated in an extremely poor and relatively dense area. The surrounding site is not maximum density, though, as the topography inhibits additional informal construction. There was already an existing school on the site, which the new structure connects to.

FIG 2/51 (OPPOSITE PAGE, TOP)
COLEGIO ANTONIO DERKA
FIG 2/52 (OPPOSITE PAGE, BOT-
TOM) PUBLIC PLATFORM ABOVE
AND LOWER SCHOOL SPACE
BELOW



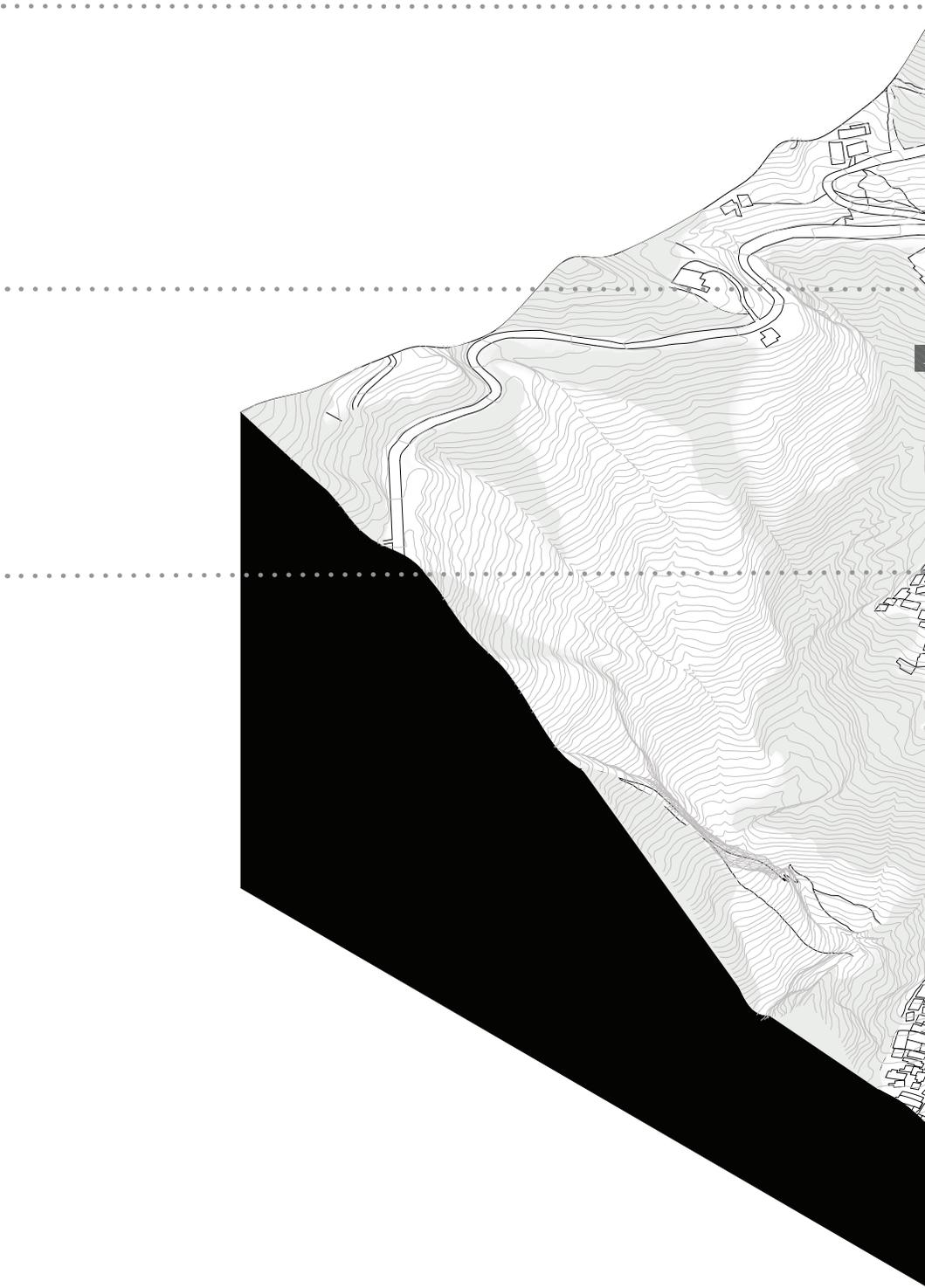
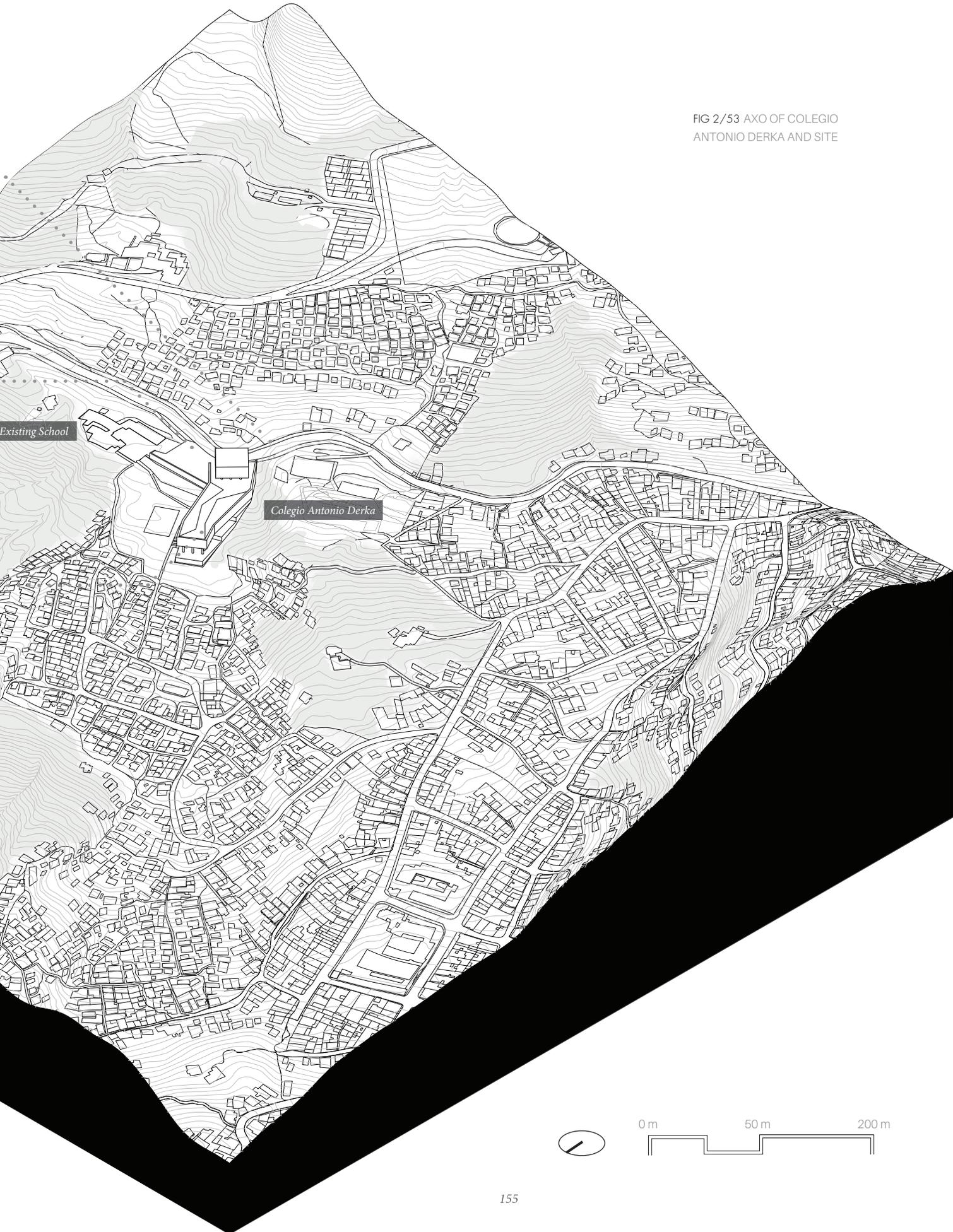


FIG 2/53 AXO OF COLEGIO ANTONIO DERKA AND SITE



JUAN BOBO REHOUSING

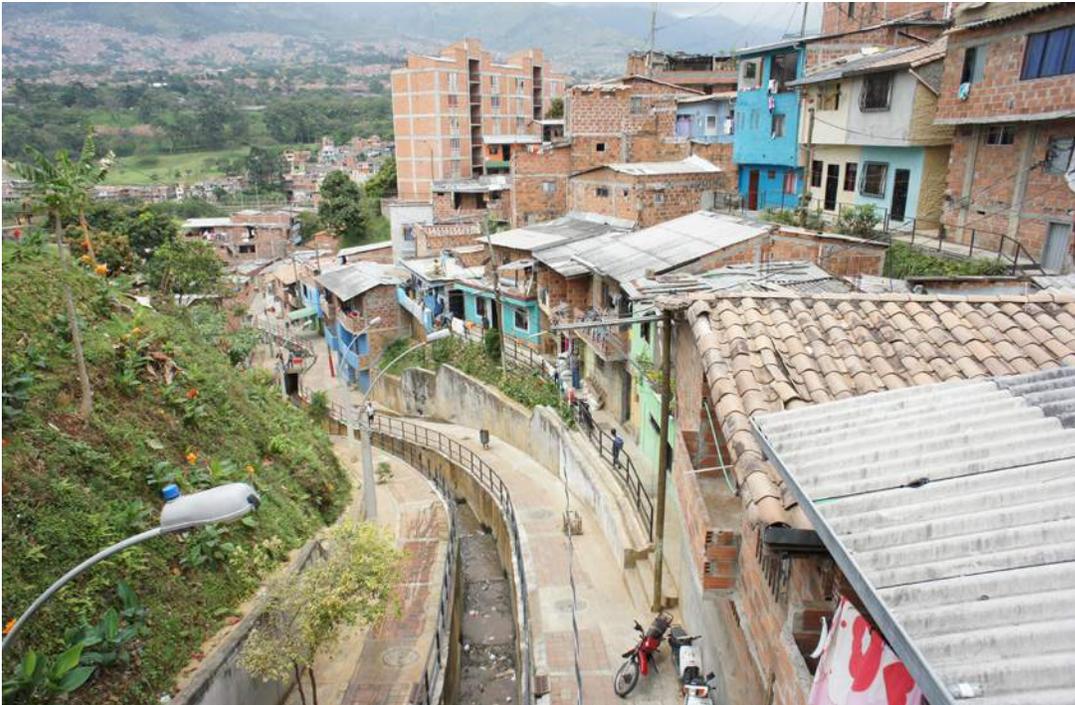
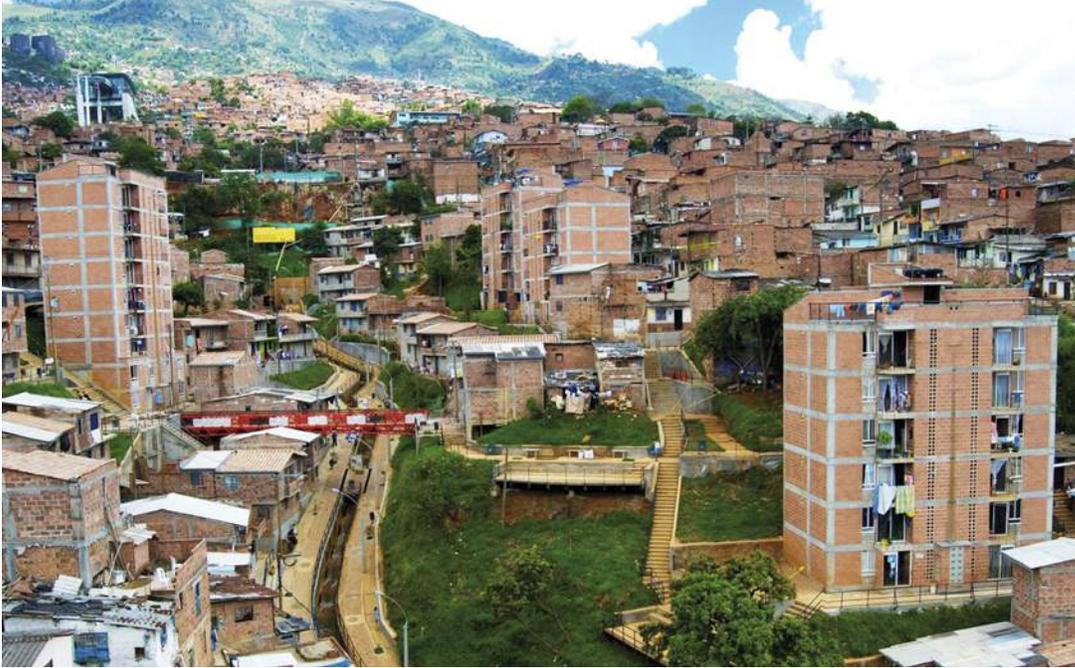
The *Juan Bobo* rehousing project was an urban upgrading initiative that sought to rehouse residents living in precarious conditions around the *Juan Bobo* stream in the northeast. The project included the construction of new mid-rise apartments on the site where residents could be rehoused without leaving the familiarity of their own neighbourhood.

The upgrading also consisted of a series of paths and stairways to make the site more accessible, construction of a bridge crossing the stream, canalization of the existing stream, and improvement to basic services in the area. It received the UN-Habitat Dubai International Award for Best Practices. It's notable integration of the new buildings was a primary concern, which meant keeping as much of the existing informal housing as possible that was deemed in relatively good condition, and use of the local vernacular brick that helps integrate new buildings in the existing aesthetic of the neighbourhood.

The project is close to the northeast metro cable, and was part of the larger urban project to upgrade services and infrastructure in the immediate region.

FIG 2/54 (OPPOSITE PAGE, TOP)
LOOKING EAST UP THE JUAN
BOBO STREAM

FIG 2/55 (OPPOSITE PAGE, BOT-
TOM) VIEW OF THE CANALIZA-
TION OF THE EXISTING STREAM



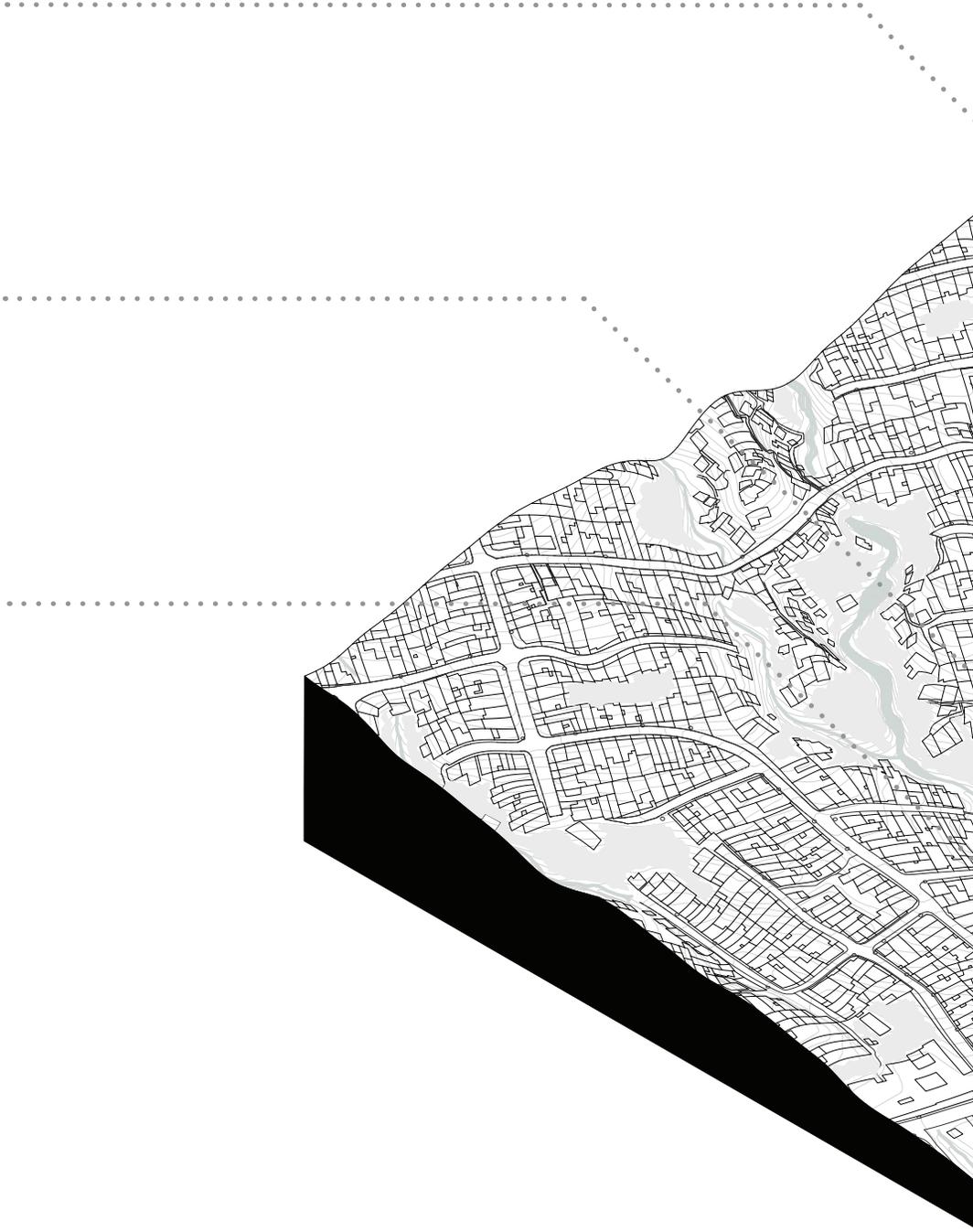


FIG 2/56 AXO OF JUAN BOBO
REHOUSING AND SITE



MORAVIA CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT CENTER

The Moravia Cultural Development Center is located in the central north, just north of the North Revitalization area in the neighbourhood of Moravia. It provides space for music, art, and other cultural activities, and its program includes an auditorium, sound proof cubicles for rehearsal, three multi-purpose rooms, and a courtyard.

The neighbourhood of Moravia has been a high priority for development since the 1990s. It is extremely poor and one of the densest areas in the city, with the vast majority of housing representing illegal tenure.

The building is surrounded by an open public plaza, and is accessible right at the center of Moravia. Like much of Salmona's other architecture, it uses intersecting geometry and the local brick vernacular. The complex form and materiality sets it apart from much of the other architecture produced during the era.

FIG 2/57 (OPPOSITE PAGE, TOP)
MAIN ENTRANCE TO THE CULTURAL CENTER

FIG 2/58 (OPPOSITE PAGE, BOTTOM)
EXTERIOR VIEW OF THE AUDITORIUM SPACE



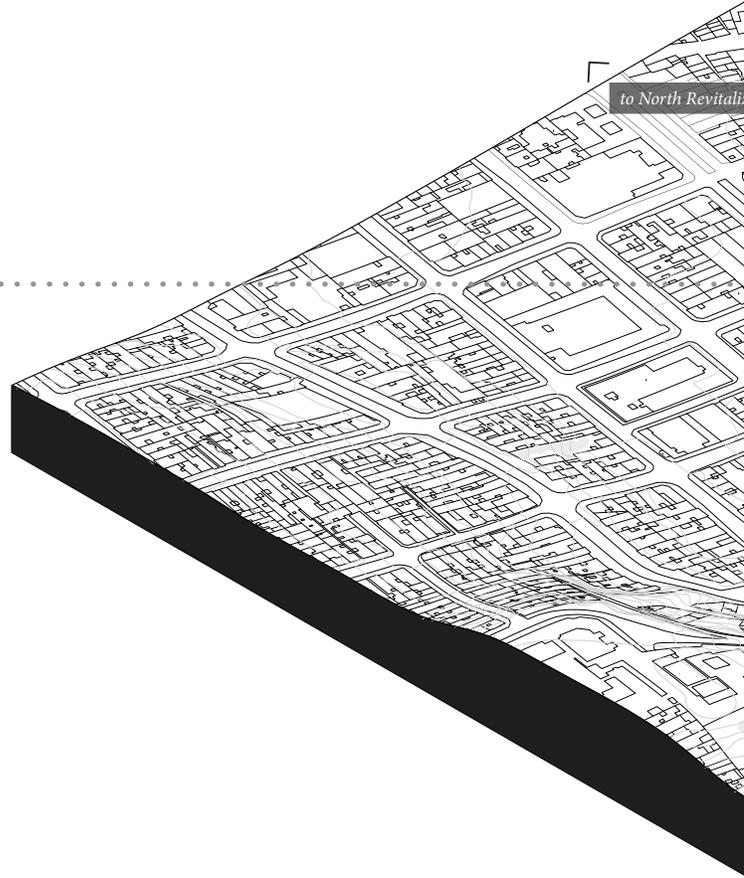
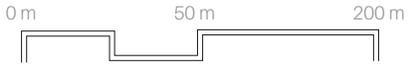


FIG 2/59 AXO OF MORAVIA CULTURAL CENTER AND SITE



zation

Moravia Cultural Center



ALPUJARRA REVITALIZATION

Alpujarra is the name of the administrative grounds of the municipality and Antioquia district. The original complex of governmental buildings was built in the 1980s, with new construction just to the east of the Alpujarra site (opposite page, left of top picture). On the plot just further to the east and adjacent to the river is an extension of the development at the center, which includes the *Parque de los Pies Descalzos* and the new *Plaza Mayor* (the main conference center). The heritage Teatro Metropolitano and the EPM Intelligent Building (built 1996) were preexisting on the site.

Just to the north of Alpujarra is the *Biblioteca EPM*, one of the first library parks and the only built at the center. It included a revitalization of the the *Plaza de las Luces*, which was previously a market but well-known as a center of crime in the downtown.

The revitalization project was meant to reinstate the administrative area of the city as an urban center.

FIG 2/60 (OPPOSITE PAGE, TOP)
VIEW OF ALPUJARRA ADMINISTRATIVE CENTER (TO THE RIGHT) AND NEW CONSTRUCTION (LEFT) INCLUDING THE FREE-DOM PLAZA

FIG 2/61 (OPPOSITE PAGE, BOTTOM) VIEW OF PLAZA MAYOR, TEATRO METROPOLITANO, PARQUE DE LOS PIES DESCALZOS, AND THE EPM INTELLIGENT BUILDING



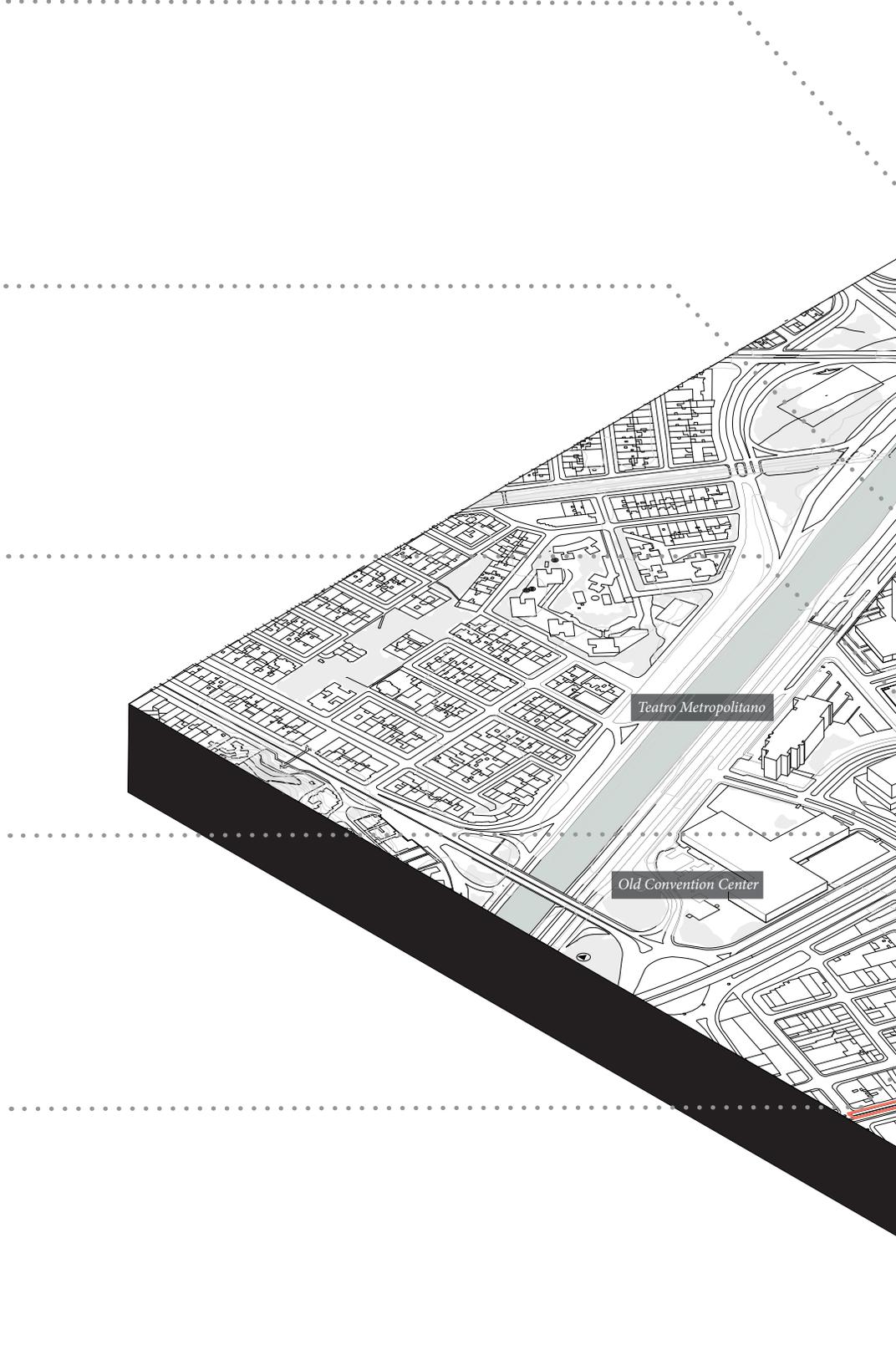


FIG 2/62 AXO OF ALPUJARRA
REVITALIZATION SITE



NORTH REVITALIZATION

The North Revitalization began with the Parque de los Deseos in 2004 (including the *Casa de Música* and the renovation of the planetarium). The *Parque Explora* and the revitalization of the Botanical Gardens followed. The *Ruta N* Center for Innovation was subsequently constructed in 2009, and set a precedent for this neighbourhood of Carabobo to become the location of a technology park currently under development (see Chapter 4).

While the projects are not located in peripheral, informal areas, the location to the north does represent a relatively low-income region. But at the center of the city and easily accessible by the Metro, the North Revitalization was intended as a new cultural node, in line with Social Urbanism's cultural recovery strategies. Most of the residential fabric was left untouched during the original project, with public buildings sited on abandoned lots and an old market square. The exterior public space surrounding *Parque de los Deseos* and the Botanical Gardens are free of charge and public, while *Parque Explora* is a paid museum, with discounts to residents within the lower socioeconomic strata.

FIG 2/63 (OPPOSITE PAGE, TOP)
PARQUE EXPLORA FROM THE
UNIVERSIDAD METRO STATION
FIG 2/64 (OPPOSITE PAGE, BOT-
TOM) PUBLIC SPACE IN FRONT
OF CASA DE MÚSICA, PARQUE
DE LOS DESEOS



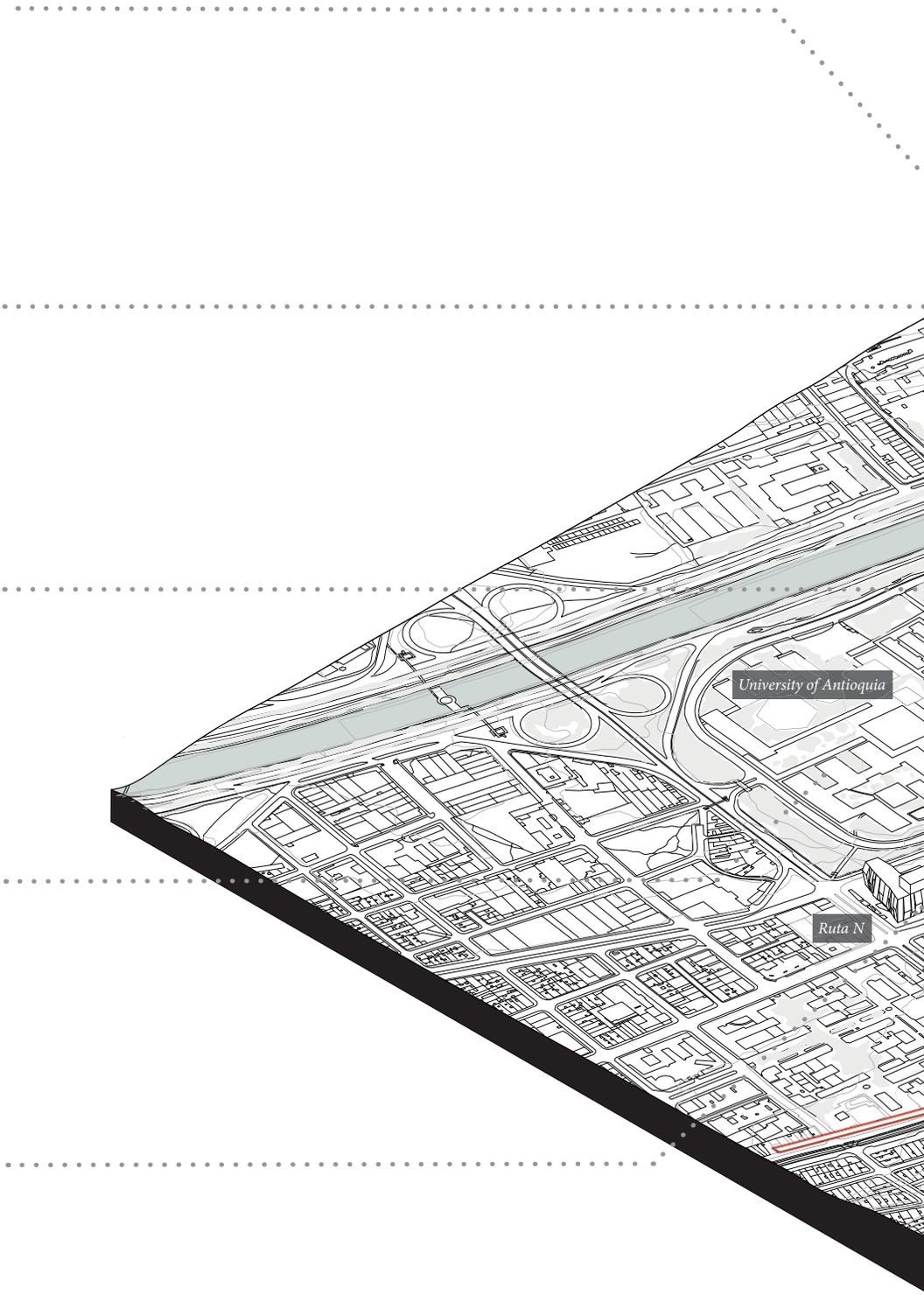
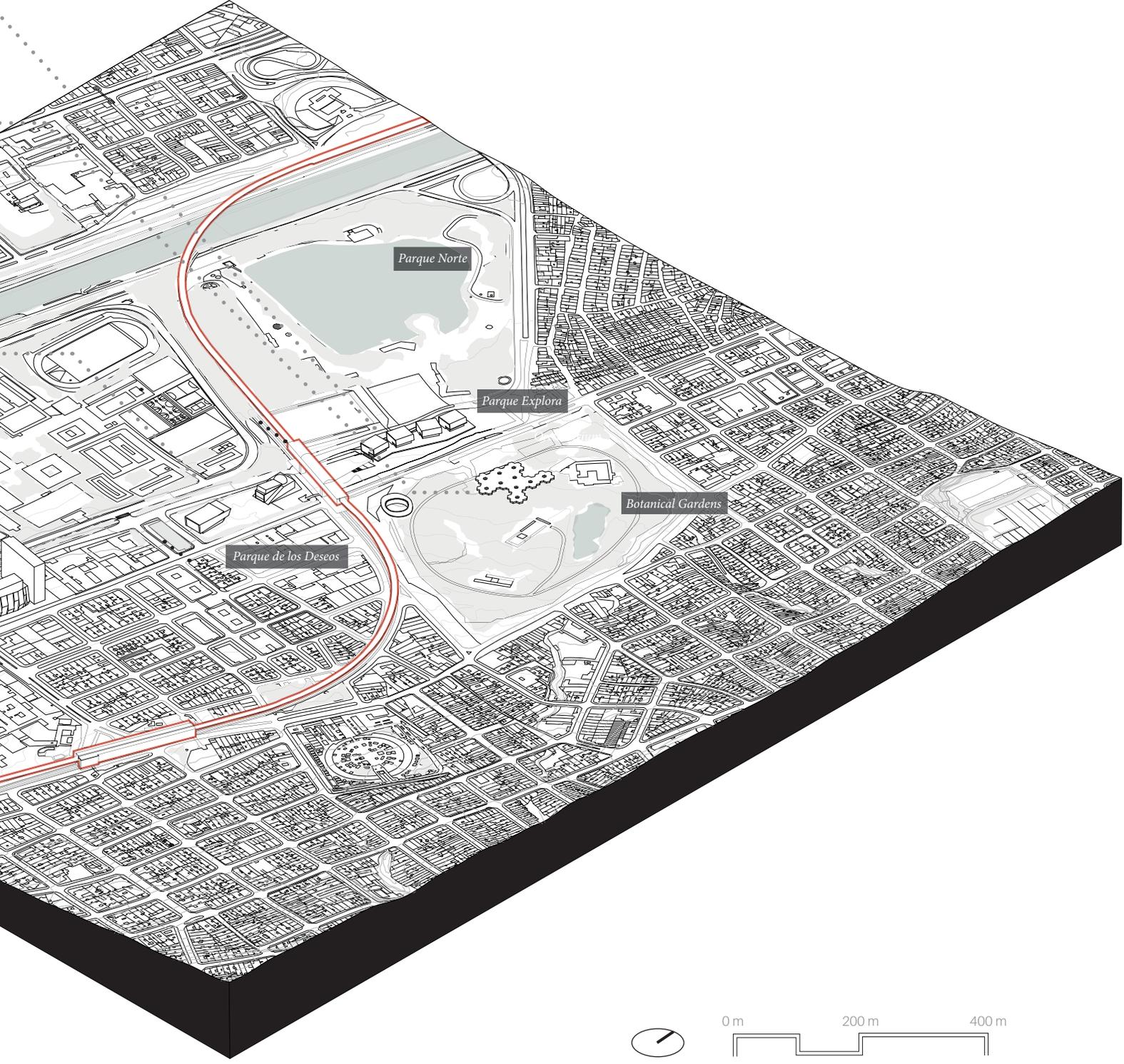


FIG 2/65 AXO OF NORTH REVITALIZATION SITE





UNEVEN DEVELOPMENT

Capital and displacement, Medellín and Antioquia

If we agree the totalizing image “implicitly denies the existence of what is not made visible” (Balibrea, 2001: 204), then it seems logical uncovering narratives of everyday life not presented in Medellín’s urban images would be another means to understanding its ideological power. But it’s likely many already expect there to be certain discrepancies between what is represented and what is lived in reality: educated spectators understand the previous scale of conflict was a result of complex sociopolitical conditions, and that violent actors do not simply disappear overnight (or over several years). Simply because one admits certain discrepancies, though, does not mean one does not subscribe to its ideology.

Louis Althusser devised his formula for ideology as: a “representation” of the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence. “While admitting they do not correspond to reality, i.e. that they constitute an illusion, we admit that they do make an allusion to reality, and that they need only be ‘interpreted’ to discover the reality of the world behind their imaginary representation of the world” (Althusser, 1971: 162). Taking Althusser’s formula of ideology, we might understand Medellín’s image as alluding to underlying structures of spatial production. Observing these spatial “moments,” it is tempting to believe that while violence, conflict, or coercion may continue to exist within the city’s borders, systemic processes of development are steadily transforming towards the better. It’s no question that many forms of violence – especially homicides – have dramatically decreased over the last two decades. But what this chapter seeks to illustrate is how in certain ways development has actually become increasingly *uneven* within the city and its larger, rural region.

This definition of unevenness derives from Neil Smith’s work on uneven development as the essential function of the movement of capital

FIG 3/1 (OPPOSITE PAGE) URBAN CONDITIONS IN SANTO DOMINGO, NEAR TERMINAL METRO STATION, 2015

(Smith, 2008 [1994]). It is, in fact, the concomitant movement of capital into Medellín's economy that has resulted in specific forms of uneven development since the early 1990s. And this new development presents contradictions to the way the city presents itself through new urban images. Medellín's project of recovery has to be situated within the broader local, national, and supranational attempt to bring Global capital to the region, and as we will see, the privileging of certain forms of violence over others has emerged from this project as well.

In Colombia, the movement of capital often occurs in tandem with the movement of people. This refers specifically to the national epidemic of forced displacement. Colombia is now second in the world in number of internally-displaced people, next only to the Sudan. Recent estimates by the UN Refugee Agency recognize 5.7 million inhabitants as having been forcibly displaced within national borders (UNHCR, 2015). The department of Antioquia and the subregion of Urabá have a particularly tumultuous history within the country relating to insurgent militias, paramilitary forces, and forced displacement; the region's value is determined by its fertile soil, vast natural resources (including gold), and its strategic positioning next to the Gulf of Urabá, adjacent to Panama – a key port for both legal and illegal trade. Nearly one million people were displaced in Antioquia alone between 1985 and 2012 (*Unidad para la atención y reparación integral a las víctimas*, 2013). And it's not at all surprising that the increased movement of people beginning in the late 1980s corresponds to the implementation of restructuring programmes that sought to make Colombia more attractive to foreign capital. In Colombia, notes Marco Alberto Velásquez-Ruiz, there is an increasingly clear "symbiotic relation between conflict and development," which discourages the protection of forced migrants and accountability for human rights violations in the name of economic interests (Velásquez-Ruiz, 2013: 173). This connection reveals two equally controversial and grave ideas: "first, that the insertion of a development model on a scenario of both conflict and vulnerability can produce forced migration; and second, that forced migration is not only a consequence of strife, but an objective in itself in order to facilitate foreign investment's activity" (ibid: 154).

In this analysis, the relationship between the rural and urban is key. In understanding the underlying structure of urban production, a

lack of attention towards rural areas is typical of urban studies in general, in which there has been an “analytical privileging, isolation, and perhaps naturalization of the city in studies of urban processes where the non-city may also be significant” (Angelo and Wachsmuth, 2014: 377). Henri Lefebvre was one of the first to theorize on the integrated nature of the city and the rural, in which he declared a total urbanization of society based on its transcendence of industrialization as the dominant mode of production (Lefebvre, 2003 [1970]: 1). Lefebvre’s concept of the “urban phenomenon” sought to look beyond the word *city*, which “appears to designate a clearly defined, definitive *object*” and rather look towards urbanization through “an emerging understanding of the overall process, as well as its term (goal and direction)” (ibid: 16). With this in mind, understanding processes of spatial production not represented in Medellín’s urban image and its effect on its surrounding rural landscape can’t be ignored as we try to move past allusions made by the urban image.

But how does this mode of production manifest itself in rural space? In Colombia and Antioquia in particular, evidence of Marx’s “so-called primitive accumulation” has increasingly reared its ugly head since the Latin American restructuring programmes of the late 1980s. “So-called primitive accumulation” was the dispossession of labourers from their land under capitalism’s project of “complete separation between the workers and the ownership of the conditions for the realization of their labour” (Marx, 1975 [1867]: 874). David Harvey’s related theory of “accumulation by dispossession” under Neoliberalist policy in the late twentieth century described how the “inability to accumulate through expanded production on a sustained basis has been paralleled by a rise in attempts to accumulate by dispossession” (Harvey, 2004: 64). This process of accumulation by dispossession is instigated by a desire to centralize and take ownership over rural land, usually for the expansion of capitalist investment. In Colombia, accumulation by dispossession has become a key instigator of the type of forced internal displacements experienced across the country since the 1980s.

Mary Roldán has already demonstrated the historical existence of a “regional hegemonic project” in the department of Antioquia through the twentieth century (Roldán, 2002), where the local, Capitalist elite have expanded their control and influence over the region, usually

from the center of Medellín. This hegemonic project continues today, articulated by the urban-rural relationship between Medellín and its surrounding region. For this reason, the urban and the rural will be investigated as part of the same process of production. In moving beyond allusions to the structural conditions of spatial production, this production must be seen as emerging from a “united political front, the theoretical anchor of which must surely be a concept of ‘production of space’ not limited to *either* the city *or* the country, but mindful of their dialectical relations in the uneven development of capitalism” (Goonewardena, 2014: 229).

And today, we see Antioquia’s hegemonic project through the region continue to be “based on the reproduction of the ‘cultural difference’ that justifies looting in areas inhabited by populations imagined by elites as incapable of carrying out capitalist activities” (Melo, 2014: 118). A deeper logic of an articulated center-periphery emerges in Antioquia and beyond that “territorializes capitalism as a mode of colonization” (Goonewardena, 2014: 222). But it is not only the center-periphery dynamic of these agglomerated urban centers of power and their expanding “operational landscapes”¹ in which a center-periphery dynamic is articulated: it is also articulated at the scale of the city itself, and as we will see increasingly results in intra-urban displacement of those living in Medellín today.

1 / ACCORDING TO NEIL BRENNER, THE ARTICULATION OF AGGLOMERATED CENTERS (CITIES) AND DEVELOPMENT OF THEIR “OPERATIONAL LANDSCAPES” (NON-CITIES) IS CAPITALISM’S NEW MODEL OF TERRITORIAL ORGANIZATION IN WORLD OF TOTAL URBANIZATION. CITY AGGLOMERATIONS RELATE DIALECTICALLY TO THEIR “OPERATIONAL LANDSCAPES, WHICH IN TURN ARE CONTINUALLY TRANSFORMED THROUGH THEIR ROLES IN SUPPORTING AGGLOMERATIONS” (BRENNER, 2015: 22)

CAPITAL AND DEVELOPMENT OF ANTIOQUIA

Neil Smith describes uneven development as an essential function of the movement of capital; it is the “systematic geographical expression of the contradictions inherent in the very constitution and structure of capital” (2008 [1994]: 4). Capital moves as a “seesaw” motion: “the mobility of capital brings about the development of areas with a high rate of profit and the underdevelopment of those areas where a low rate of profit pertains. . . . Capital strives to move from developed to underdeveloped space, then back to developed space which, because of its interim depri-

vation of capital, is now underdeveloped, and so on” (ibid: 197). This study of uneven development moves beyond an ahistorical and universal reading of uneven development, whereby it is assumed nothing can be developed evenly, and thus unevenness is an inevitability. It is the systematic movement of capital, says Smith, into and out of space in avoiding a falling rate of profit that indicates uneven development as a structural process of capitalism. This “seesaw” movement of capital is visible to varying degrees across three different scales – Global, National, and urban – depending on the nature of development.

The primary contradiction inherent to capital’s movement is its simultaneous tendency towards the equalization and differentiation of space. The production of space under capitalism is articulated at each scale through these two dynamic processes (ibid: 181). At the Global scale, Smith notes equalization emerges as the desire to universalize everything, to bring all regions of the world into the system of Capitalism. At the same time, capital seeks to differentiate different poles of the world based on a high or low value of labour power: this is what produces the “Global North” and the “Global South.” This Global scale is the least subject to seesaw movement, Smith admits, in fact showing almost no significant movement at all. On the other hand, this seesaw movement is most observable at the urban scale, a scale at which we have recently witnessed the emptying out and devaluation of urban centers during suburbanization, and their subsequent re-valuation in the form of revanchist gentrification in the late 20th century. It is here at the urban scale that the “centralization of capital finds its most accomplished geographical expression” (ibid: 184). Differentiation also becomes most pronounced because of this centralization; the equalization of urban space in the ground-rent system becomes the means to its differentiation (ibid). Finally, Smith sees the nation scale as operative to integrating all regions of the world within the Global system of capital, while noting the retention of individual national economies allows the differentiation of the world into rising and declining regions (ibid: 194). This integration of a national economy into the Global economy makes the nation state acutely subject to expansion and crisis (ibid): capital can move from one national economy to another, and it does so incessantly as it tries to avoid a falling rate of profit.

Smith also recognizes the nation scale often merges as a supranational scale, which organizes individual national economies into larger regional economies. This supranational scale is particularly evident in the case of Latin America, a region that has generally risen or fallen within the world economy as a relative whole. The return of capital to this supranational region in the 1980s is in fact integral to understanding the economic objectives of Colombia and Medellín specifically. While Latin America was once a nexus for import-substitution industrialization models in the mid-twentieth century, its economic base was significantly undercut beginning in the early 1970s resulting from low labour costs and slashed trade barriers of newly-opened Asian regions. This indicates a movement from one supranational economy to another; then, beginning in the 1980s, investment began returning to Latin America, including new foreign capital. This return also paralleled the region's imposed Neo-liberal restructuring policies – policies that both deregulated local economies and drastically decreased trade barriers.

According to Mike Davis, Latin America and Urban Africa were the hardest hit by these structural adjustment programs imposed on indebted “Third-World” countries in the 1980s, which in effect engineered an artificial depression “more severe and long lasting than the Great Depression” (Davis, 2007: 155). These programs were essential in producing the kind of urban poverty that emerged across rapidly growing urban centers through the decade. Agricultural deregulation and financial discipline enforced by the International Monetary Fund and World Bank were often presented as key to the building of a modern liberal statehood in underdeveloped nations perceived as having “fallen behind”; yet, the uneven development that emerged from these readjustment programs is significant – often leading to large-scale land enclosures that drove many rural inhabitants off their land, and towards urban nodes. What is usually overlooked by proponents of these restructuring programs, further, is the relationship violence had (and continues to have) in facilitating these new economies. This is especially true for Colombia, a nation whose economy continues to be interwoven with narco-related and paramilitary violence. Referring directly to the case of Urabá and the vast land expulsions that have occurred, Teo Ballvé points out that “narco-driven economies of violence are not somehow anathema to projects of modern liberal state-

DISPLACEMENT



FIG 3 / 2 FORCED DISPLACEMENT IN COLOMBIA 1985 - 2012 BY DISTRICT. SHOWING DISTRICTS WITH TOTAL DISPLACED POPULATION GREATER THAN 150,000. SOURCE: UNIDAD PARA LA ATENCIÓN Y REPARACIÓN INTEGRAL A LAS VÍCTIMAS, 2013.

hood – usually associated with tropes of ‘institution building’ and ‘good governance’ – but deeply tied to initiatives aimed at making spaces governable, expanding global trade, and attracting capital” (Ballvé, 2012: 603).

In the late 1980s and early 90s, Colombia underwent its own restructuring. This was relatively late compared to other nations in Latin America; however, while late to the table, restructuring here was particularly intensive. Key policy regimes included financial deregulation, privatization, and perhaps most significant, trade liberalization. In 1985, Colombia had the highest tariff barriers in Latin America at 83 percent; by the early 90s, these barriers were slashed to become the second lowest across the region, at 6.7 percent by 1992 (Urrutia, 1994: 286).

Political decentralization was also a key policy regime of the proponents of economic restructuring, a “penchant of free-market-oriented structures demanded by world financial institutions”; but in Colombia, the nation’s decentralization was also deeply articulated by its own internal political dynamics (Ballvé, 2012: 606). Decentralizing political and fiscal power was motivated by a pacification effort: to appease guerilla militia’s demands to open up the closed and centralized political system by decentralizing power from the national level. Until this period, Colombia’s mayors and governors had been appointed by the president. The 1988 subnational elections were the first to be run through popular elections, but political decentralization was officially consolidated in the Constitution of 1991, with “framers of the new constitution reason[ing] that political decentralization would simultaneously give the rebels a legal political outlet by opening up the electoral system, partly achieved by the implicit erosion of the political duopoly shared for over a century by the Liberal and Conservative parties” (ibid: 607). The procedural changes and decentralization of economic and fiscal responsibility also meant that mayors now had more autonomy and power; it was crucial in changing the political culture in both Bogotá and Medellín, and was essential to the development of the *Compromiso Ciudadano* in the mid-1990s (Maclean, 2015: 86).

However alongside other regimes of Colombia’s restructuring, this same political decentralization is also intricately woven into the intensification of armed conflict through the country. As Kent Eaton points

out, while decentralization was intended to pacify, it actually helped finance the expansion of armed groups on both the Right and the Left, in effect financing a continuation of armed struggle by making public monies more accessible (Eaton, 2006: 536). On the Left, where guerilla groups previously operated with the goal of “Marxist-Leninist and Maoist-inspired socioeconomic changes” (ibid), following decentralization these groups turned their attention away from the central government, seeking control through subnational governments that were more easily controlled. Eaton indicates this decentralization also encouraged the shift from guerilla’s Cold war-era aim of fighting for land reform, towards a much less ideological objective to fight for territorial control. On the Right, paramilitary groups have “responded to decentralization by penetrating deep into the structures of both municipal and departmental governments, often in informal and illegal alliances with military and political officials. . . . [using] their control of subnational offices to appropriate fiscal transfers and to escalate the armed struggle against the guerillas” (ibid). Whereas the formation of paramilitaries was entirely a counter-insurgency programme initiated by the government in the 1960s, paramilitaries have subsequently become a key mechanism by which regional elites have “solidif[ied] their local political dominance, enrichment, security, and position as regional power brokers vis-à-vis central government institutions and urban centers” (Ballvé, 2012: 608). Now, paramilitaries are key territorializing agents that facilitate both narco-related and/or large-scale capital investments in expanding rural territories. They are thus agents that, alongside guerilla land interests, precipitate continuing forced displacement.

It is not surprising, then, the interests of foreign nationalities with investment in Colombia often correspond with foreign military aid, most acutely demonstrated by Colombia’s relationship with the US. The US’s “Plan Colombia” military aid program (2000), for example, is demonstrative of the way by which economic involvement of Global hegemonic powers intersect with securitization efforts of land. “Plan Colombia” was classified as a counternarcotics military aid by the US government, with funding totalling more than six billion dollars by 2010 (Koopman, 2014: 116). But while classified as counternarcotics aids, Winifred Tate points out that many of the military campaigns have proven

identical to counterinsurgency (paramilitary) operations – of which the US has a history of involvement in Colombia, going back to their advisement of the original formation of paramilitaries in the 1960s as a means to deal with the insurgency of leftist militias (in line with their mission to annihilate all communist-inspired revolutionary action). Tate says this is typical of how foreign policy production tends to “obscure and misrepresent events in the region that are its policy target” (Tate, 2015: 3). It is no coincidence, then, the US-Colombia Free Trade Agreement (FTA) was put forward along with the military “Plan Colombia,” which offers special concessions and protections for US corporate investment (Koopman, 2014: 116). This is not only true for US-Colombia relations, but also for US-Canadian relations. Since the beginning of the millennium, Canada has intensified its role in Colombian resources, especially within the abundant oil and mining sectors. Canada’s corporations and its government, says Asad Ismi, now play an “important role in promoting the corporate takeover of these critical resources,” a situation in which “multinational dominance in Colombia is brutally enforced by the country’s military and its affiliated paramilitary” (see below; Ismi, 2012: 4).

Given its rural history of land dispute, it is also not surprising Colombia has now become one of the most unequal countries in terms of land distribution. Across the country, three percent of Colombians own over 70 percent of arable land, while 57 percent of the poorest farmers survive on less than three; 65 percent of all Colombians live in poverty, but 82 percent of the rural population now live below that same poverty line (Ismi, 2012: 6).

Antioquia has a particularly brutal history of land displacement driven by paramilitaries and capital investment since the 1980s. Its sub-region of Urabá was once well known as one of the nation’s most dangerous regions: with its fertile soil and strategic location for trade, it was a key area of control for those involved in the narcotics trade. It became known as a notorious guerilla stronghold. But by the 1990s, paramilitary forces arguably became the most significant actors, allegedly operating “at the behest of large land owners and agri-businesses” (Maclean, 2014: 16). This last transformation indicates a shift that took place alongside the restructuring processes of the early 1990s. But the foundation of development set during this period continues to have relevance in the continuing

expansion of regional elite territorial control, “vis-à-vis central government institutions and urban centers” (Ballvé, 2012: 608).

Antioquia aims to become the “Best Corner of America” by 2020, a slogan written into their current development plans. This ambition relates to prospects for economic growth in both rural and urban areas. It is already one of the most productive regions in Colombia, with exports growing 120 percent between 1997 and 2009 (Brunner et. al., 2012: 58). For Colombia as a whole, oil, gas, and mining comprise a significant percentage of overall foreign investment, with 67 percent of national foreign investment (a total of \$6.8 billion) going to these sectors in 2010 (Ismi, 2012: 31). Mining in particular forms a significant part of Antioquia’s economy. As gold continues to rise in value, mining has intensified in the Antioquian region.

Antioquia was originally colonized as a gold-mining region by the Spaniards in the 16th century; it has remained the center of Colombian gold mining ever since. Gold mining had a particular criminal affiliation through the 20th century, with strong ties to the FARC guerilla group. Evidence of this criminal affiliation still remain, however, as was demonstrated with the arrest of the owner of Colombian company *Goldex* last year for money laundering and financing terrorism, (with terrorism usually synonymous with guerilla insurgency; Castilla et. al., 2015). But since the early 2000s, Canadian companies have become particularly involved in the gold production business in Antioquia as well. Today, 52 percent of the nation’s foreign mining companies are Canadian (Ismi, 2012: 80). The Canadian International Development Agency has helped Colombia “re-write its mining laws, making them more friendly to foreign investors” (Ferguson, 2014). And like the integrated economic and military participation by the US, Canadian mining investments are also paralleled by military investments: Canada’s military exports to Colombia more than tripled from 2001 to 2009 (ibid: 176). These practices help keep Antioquia one of the country’s most profitable and most dangerous regions for rural inhabitants. As Velásquez-Ruiz describes:

A report produced in 2009 by Canadian NGOs Mining Watch and Inter Pares gave account that regions in which Canadian mining companies were active – rich in minerals

and oil – had been and continue to be plagued by violence, displacement, and paramilitary activities. Statistics contained by the same study show that resource-rich regions are the source of 87% of forced displacements, 82% of the violations of human rights and international humanitarian law, and 83% of murders of union leaders. That is the case of the Antioquia department, where the extractive [Canadian] multinationals Goldfields and B2Gold operate, and massive forced displacements were produced within their areas of intervention as a consequence of paramilitary action. (Velásquez-Ruiz, 2013: 162).

Gold is just one example of a resource that catalyzes investment and displacement in Antioquia. But large-scale agricultural activities also pose serious human rights concerns for inhabitants, as their expansion relies on centralization of land control and the continual integration of expanding territories within a single hegemonic mode development.

This is demonstrated by Antioquia's recent integration of lands in the surrounding district of Chocó (whose northern tip is also part of Urabá) as a strategic area of development within the department's own territorial development plan entitled "Vision Antioquia XXI." These regions still contain a strong presence of indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities, who are meant to be protected from land enclosure under Colombian law (Melo, 2014: 117). However, today Antioquia identifies the space occupied by these communities as prime for future development. As is common, these communities are and will continue to be victims of the resulting displacement. Current infrastructure megaprojects in the region of Chocó, for example, plan to dispossess indigenous communities and peasants from their lands in the expansion of oil palm plantations and livestock (Villa, 2013). Roldán's concept of the regional hegemonic power of Antioquian elite continues to exist in practice (Roldán, 2002), expanding outwards from elite urban centers. As noted by Melo, this project is "based on the reproduction of the 'cultural difference' that justifies looting in areas inhabited by populations imagined by elites as incapable of carrying out capitalist activities" (Melo, 2014: 188).

Given Medellín is the only major center in Antioquia, it's not

surprising many national and multinational corporations operating in Colombia are based here. But a specific hegemonic relationship is articulated between the centralization of these corporate and powerful headquarters, and the continual expansion of territory under elite control. Almost all Colombian gold exporters, for example, are located in Medellín. Other important companies such as *ProAntioquia*² are also based in Medellín, as are the headquarters for many of Colombia's banks, offices of the Colombian stock exchange, amongst other important business sectors. While once Medellín's insular, business elite were afraid of foreign competition, today they enthusiastically integrate foreign capital within their development, focusing on global competitiveness. This ambition to integrate into the Global economic order has resulted in the spatial expansion of a hegemonic developmental logic outwards.

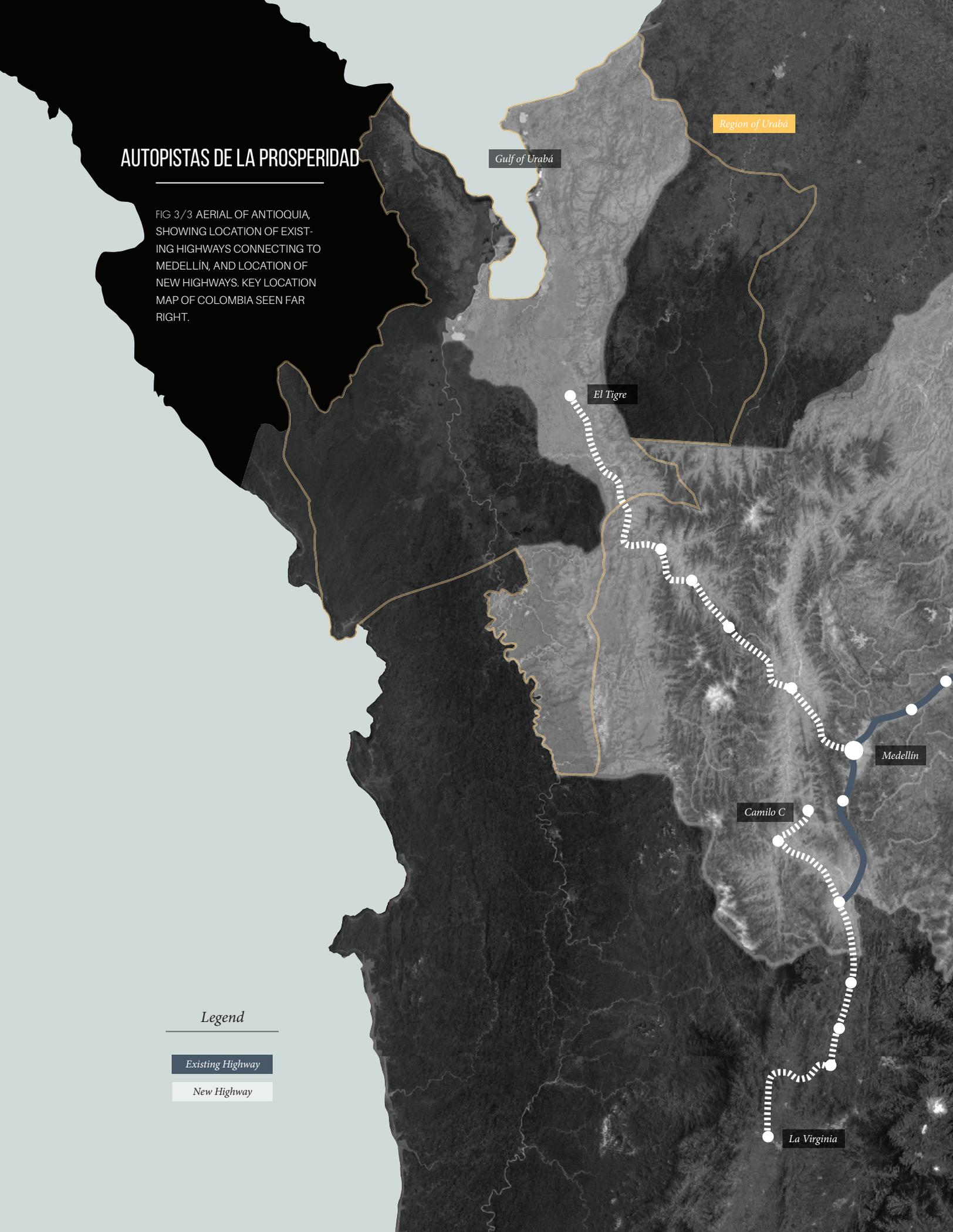
This expansionary logic is illustrated physically through such recent megaproject developments in Antioquia as the *Autopistas de la Prosperidad* (Highways of Prosperity). The *Autopistas de la Prosperidad* are currently under construction, and are expected to drastically increase the competitiveness of the Antioquian region with 900 km of new highway infrastructure costing a total of US\$8.5 billion (see FIG 3/3). For its current level of development, admittedly, Colombia has relatively underdeveloped transport infrastructure across its greater national territory. This is related in part to a long history of rural conflict, from which state power has been historically weak (and thus difficult to establish state infrastructure). *Autopistas de la Prosperidad* is a project that will finally connect Medellín and its metropolitan area to strategic locations in the district. One of the most strategic connecting arms will be between Medellín and the new *Puerto de Antioquia* – a US\$350 million investment over sixty hectares at the Gulf of Urabá, to develop the area in and around the existing port for Global trade.

On the one hand, the *Autopistas de la Prosperidad* will help Antioquia catch up on its underdeveloped infrastructure. As the name suggests, it is expected to have significant effects on greater economic growth. However, the *Autopistas de la Prosperidad* and the *Puerto Antioquia* in Urabá can also be seen as means to establishing control over regional territory. In Colombia, this type of control is usually asserted through collaboration with paramilitary forces to establish a permanent presence. "Roads

2 / PROANTIOQUIA IS A LOCAL THINK TANK, WHICH CONSULTS ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS FROM THE REGION. ESTABLISHED IN 1975, TODAY THE COMPANY IS INVOLVED ON A DIVERSE RANGE OF PROJECTS ACROSS THE DEPARTMENT, PLAYING A KEY ROLE IN THE MEDELLIN INNOVATION DISTRICT AND RUTA N CENTER FOR BUSINESS AND INNOVATION

AUTOPISTAS DE LA PROSPERIDAD

FIG 3/3 AERIAL OF ANTIOQUIA, SHOWING LOCATION OF EXISTING HIGHWAYS CONNECTING TO MEDELLÍN, AND LOCATION OF NEW HIGHWAYS. KEY LOCATION MAP OF COLOMBIA SEEN FAR RIGHT.



Region of Urabá

Gulf of Urabá

El Tigre

Medellín

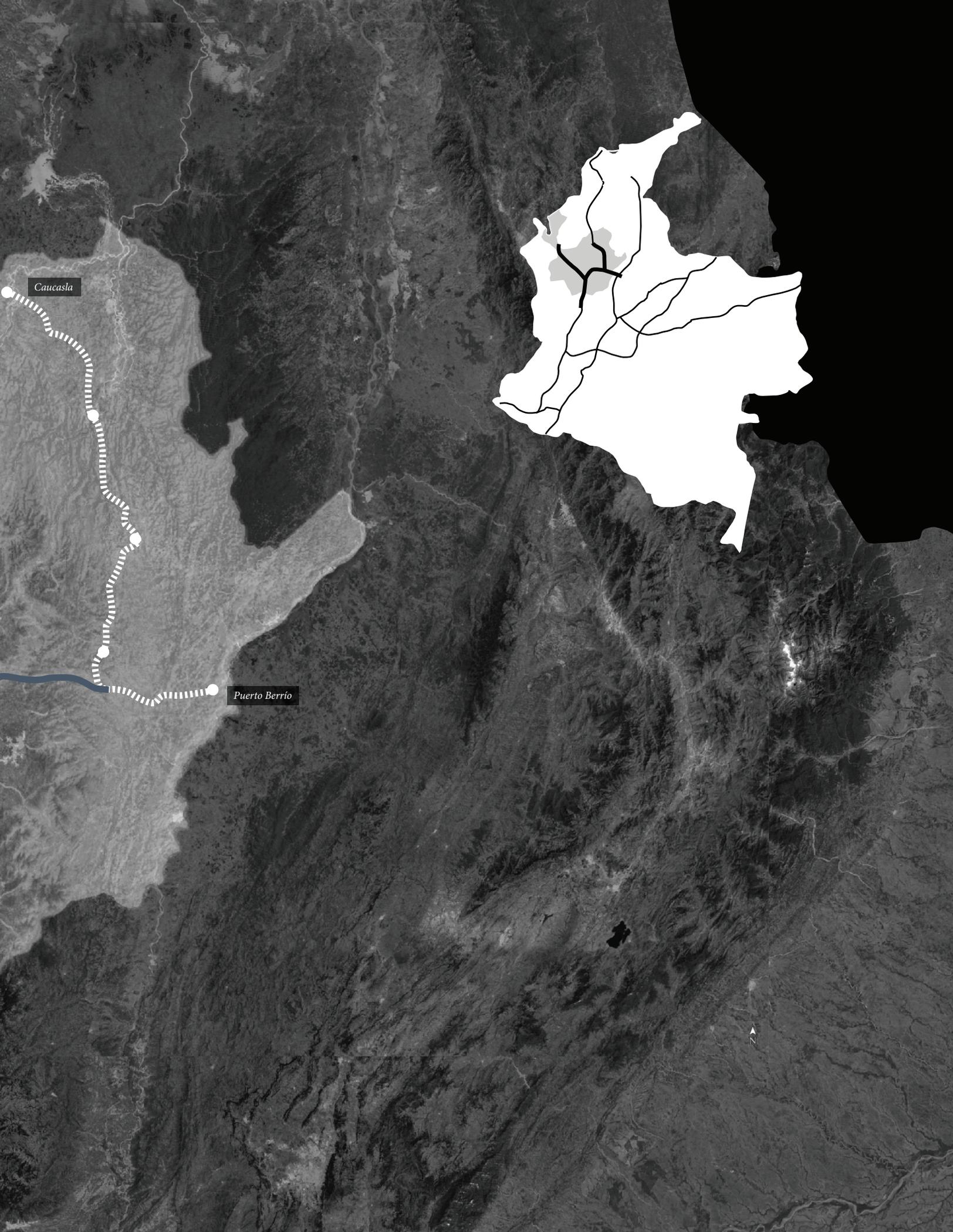
Camilo C

La Virginia

Legend

Existing Highway

New Highway



Caucasla

Puerto Berrío

FOREIGN INVESTMENT & DISPLACEMENT

FIG 3/4 TIMELINE OF FOREIGN INVESTMENT AND INTERNAL DISPLACEMENT.

FOREIGN INVESTMENT SOURCE: COLOMBIA REPORTS, 2016

DISPLACEMENT SOURCE: CODHES, 2014

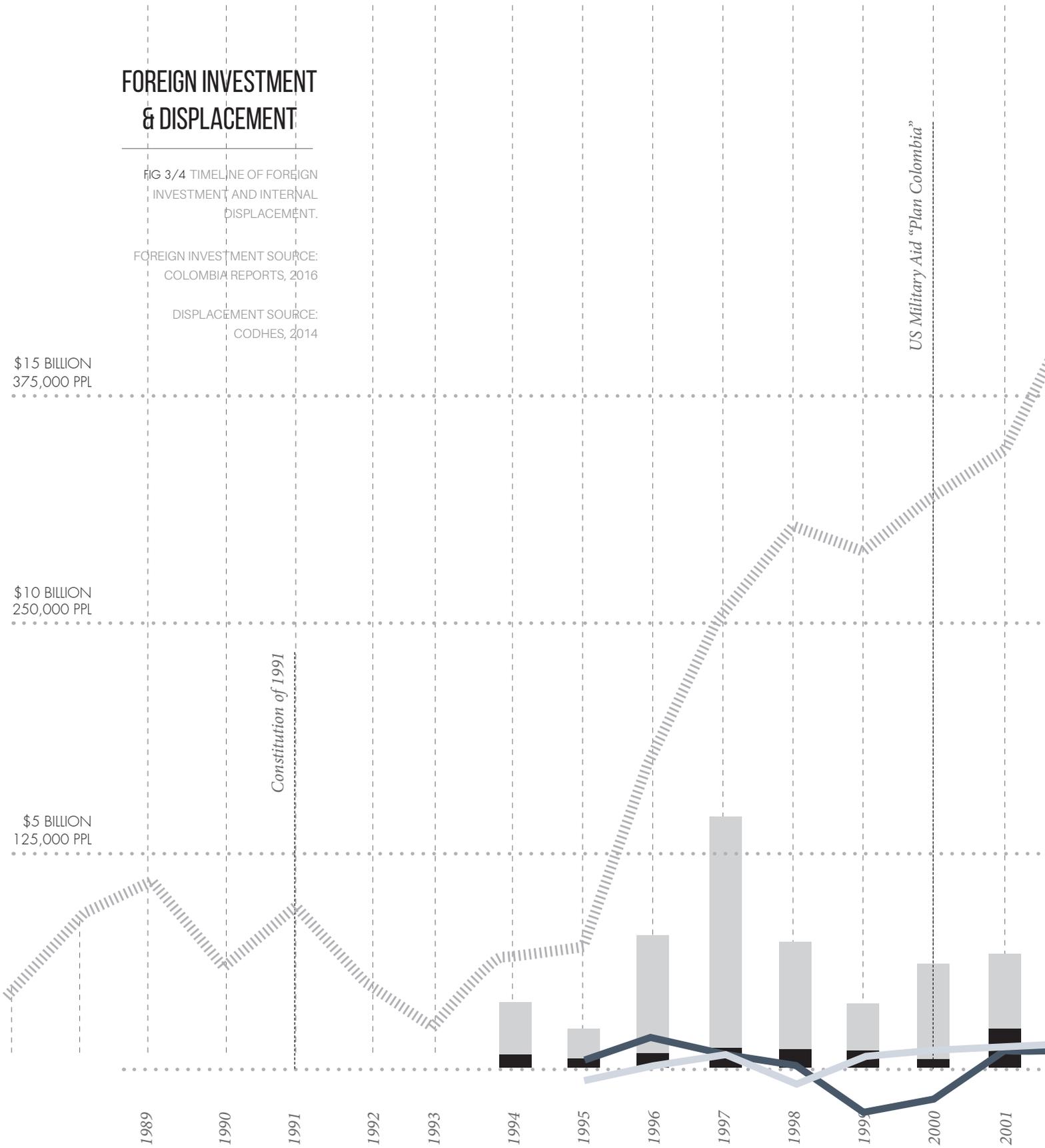
\$15 BILLION
375,000 PPL

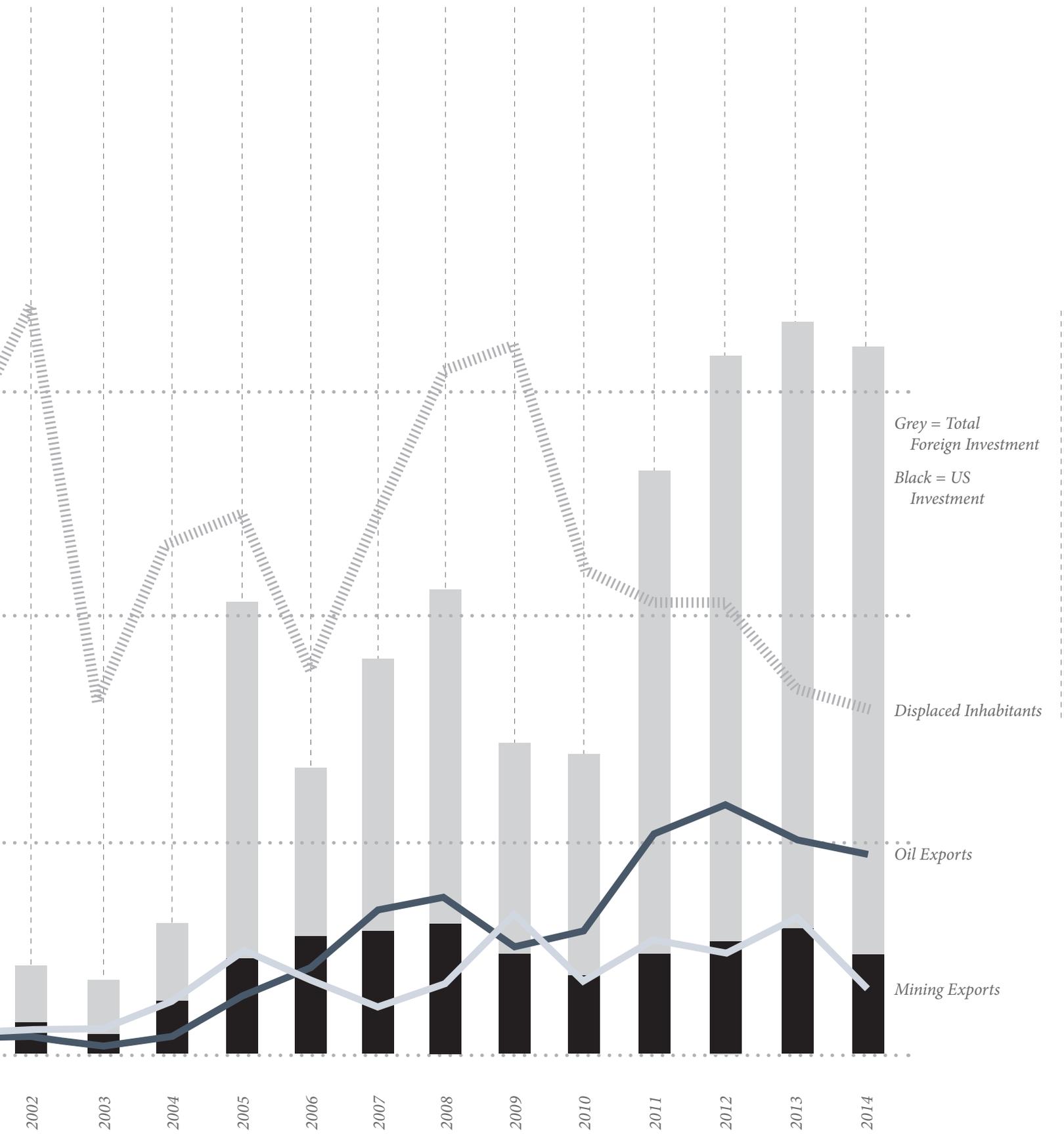
\$10 BILLION
250,000 PPL

\$5 BILLION
125,000 PPL

Constitution of 1991

US Military Aid "Plan Colombia"





and railways have a storied history in ‘frontier’ state formation and counter-insurgency,” notes Teo Ballvé (Ballvé, 2012: 612). Roads have practically become synonymous with a state presence. As demonstrated in the case of Antioquia and Urabá, he continues, beyond their “symbolic value and the security rationales of military transport and access, the territorial practices of roads are also integral to the government’s concerns with fixing spaces for capitalist development” (ibid: 613).

INVESTMENT AND DISPLACEMENT IN MEDELLÍN

The physical movement of people from rural to urban space presents an interesting articulation of the urban-rural dynamic. This is not only instigated by the center-periphery relationship between the two dialectical spaces, but is also integrated through the movement of displaced rural inhabitants to (often peripheral) urban spaces where, as we will see, the center-periphery power dynamic reproduces itself. The rural origins of much of Medellín’s population can not be ignored, as we must remember many inhabitants subject to Medellín’s current transformation at the periphery were originally victims of rural displacement. As one of the country’s largest urban centers, Medellín is also unsurprisingly one of the main destinations in the country for those displaced from rural territory (Mojica, 2013: 180).

Remember that until the mid 20th century urban centers had not experienced much growth. Though migrants were certainly displaced during *La Violencia* and the subsequent period of violence beginning in the 1960s following guerilla formation, until the start of the 1980s migrants often still moved to the city for economic purposes: to enter the urban labour force. Beginning in the late 1980s and 90s, however, we saw how many migrants were not pulled to the city for economic reasons, but more often than not pushed from rural life, paralleling the larger economic restructuring of the country and the intensification of forced internal displacement. But while often closely associated with capitalist activities and land enclosures, paramilitaries are not solely responsible for forced displacement since this period: according to the Third National

Verification Survey of Displaced Population (2010), 32% of the country's displaced population identify paramilitaries as the source of their displacement, while 25% said FARC and 14.3% stated an unidentified guerilla group (Comisión de Seguimiento, 2010; stated in Mojica, 2013). But paramilitaries' involvement in displacements has certainly intensified since the 1980s, with displacement, paramilitarism, and foreign investment remaining closely related in Colombia as a whole (Velásquez-Ruiz, 2013: 154).

Once forced from rural territory, many victims of displacement are drawn to urban centers seeking the anonymity of city life and the feeling of security that accompanies it (Mojica, 2013: 184). Forced displacement does not always follow the trajectory of rural to urban, though. Since the early 2000s, an epidemic of intra-urban displacement has been steadily emerging within the borders of Medellín. This introduces the next part of the chapter, which focuses on the key impacts of the restructuring processes and growth objectives within the local politics of Medellín. As we will see, the center-periphery dynamic emerges at this scale as well, and indicates a continuity of a singular mode of urban production in the local hegemonic project. This is closely related to the growing trend of intra-urban displacement in the city. Besides simply the national and regional outcomes of Colombia's restructuring processes, Social Urbanism also has to be positioned as a simultaneous outcome of strategies for economic growth through foreign investment.

The political and fiscal decentralization of the late 80s and early 90s was in fact essential to the rise of the *Compromiso Ciudadano* in the mid 1990s (Maclean, 2015: 86). With the first popular municipal election held in 1988, in tandem with the decentralization of economic and fiscal responsibility, mayors now had more autonomy and power, and it opened a space for local parties to break into the traditional Conservative and Liberal duopoly that had dominated Colombian politics since the mid-19th century. At this point, traditional business elites and politicians looked towards solving the city's two overwhelming issues: an epidemic of violence and a failing local economy. These two issues were not treated as mutually exclusive: rather, the stigma of violence was often seen as a serious impediment to economic growth. This realization and the eventual strategies for recovery would be heavily influenced by two documents

during the 1990s. The first was a special 1991 report written by academics from Medellín's public universities entitled *Medellín: Reencuentro con el Futuro* (Medellín: Reencounter with the Future; Presidencia de la República, 1991). It was the first crucial document in defining priorities for future development. The report diagnosed the root causes of violence in the city as related to inequality and poverty – noting joblessness, low levels of education, high levels of informality, and a lack of public space as key factors as well (Maclean, 2015: 88). Then in 1994, another important report on the city was commissioned from the Monitor Group entitled “Competitive Advantages for Medellín” (Cámara de Comercio de Medellín, 1994). It was especially influential in opening up the traditionally closed, insular economy, and the report clarified challenges facing the region that inhibited it from being positioned as an axis of productivity, and competitive in the Global scope (Cámara de Comercio de Medellín, 2006: 5; translated in Cardona and López, 2015: 29). It was essential in enabling perception by local elites that “attracting foreign direct investment to the city was essential if it was to compete globally, but also a recognition that this would be substantially impeded by the high levels of violence in the city, as well as the high-profile nature of this violence and the city's reputation for crime, narco-traffic, and corruption” (Maclean, 2015: 91).

Following the diagnosis in the 1991 report for the root causes of urban violence, participatory processes were subsequently integrated into the city's strategizing through workshops and seminars. The findings from these groups resulted in the *Plan Estratégico para Medellín 1995-1998* (Strategic Plan for Medellín). While initially rejected by city council, the plan helped design many of the policies and strategies for development that would eventually lead to Social Urbanism. It was in this particular climate that the *Compromiso Ciudadano* was officially formed in 1999. It followed a similar political organization in Bogotá under Antanas Mockus, mayor from 1995 to 1997. As we know, Sergio Fajardo led the *Compromiso Ciudadano* in Medellín, losing the first election in 2000 but winning the next one in 2003.

Decentralizing political power is usually presented as a key reform in democratizing societies, enabling greater access by citizens to the political system. As seen in the case of Medellín, decentralization was essential for a political culture to emerge from which local actors sought

developmental strategies to overcome its period of violence. At the same time, however, Colombia's decentralization process had consequences relating to the intensification of certain forms of violence. We saw on the rural stage how decentralization of power and fiscal responsibility helped bankroll armed groups on both the Right and the Left (Eaton, 2006). A similar process emerged at the scale of Medellín, and helped establish a foundation for the integration of "chronic violence" into current urban development. This might be seen as a controversial statement, given how critics celebrate the city's subsequent transformative period. It's true that since the early 1990s, homicides have dropped dramatically. However, the dramatic rise through the 2000s of such violent indicators as intra-urban displacement suggests an intensification and simultaneous obfuscation of continuing forms of violence.

Intra-urban displacement is the forced movement of city inhabitants from one neighbourhood to another. Two primary reasons usually exist for intra-urban displacement by armed groups: displacement can be used to silence those who pose a threat to the existing orders of neighbourhood control, including community leaders and activists; conversely, expelling real or potential enemies can be a process of new actors seeking to control new territories (Mojica, 2013: 190). Many are also caught in the cross-hairs of violence emerging from groups vying for territorial control. A 2008 study by the independent *Instituto de Estudios Políticos* reported that 58.6 percent of displacement in Medellín was caused by self-defense paramilitaries, 13.7 percent by emergent bands,³ 12.4 percent by guerilla groups, 7 percent by common delinquency, while 8.3 percent remain unknown (ibid: 197). Given the government officially recognizes paramilitaries as demobilized following official demobilization ceremonies in 2003, all violence, except that coming from guerilla groups, is listed in official statistics as common delinquency (ibid).

Since 2008, rates of intra-urban displacement have been steadily rising in Medellín. Between 2000 and 2006, 5,380 people were displaced in the seven-year span. But in 2009, 2,130 people were displaced in the first ten months alone. In the first ten months of 2011, that number rose to 10,434. This means "in this last period of only ten months people have been displaced from their homes almost as much as during the first nine years of the century" (ibid: 189).

3 / EMERGENT BANDS ARE THE PROLONGATION OF PARAMILITARY GROUPS IN MEDELLÍN, THAT WERE OFFICIALLY DEMOBILIZED IN 2003. MOST DERIVE FROM THE BLOQUE CACIQUE NUTIBARA (BCN) PARAMILITARY LOCAL TO MEDELLÍN

This dramatic rise in displacement is often attributed to the rise of paramilitarism in Medellín. Paramilitaries came into urban territory following the fall of the Cartel, looking to fill a power vacuum, and also allegedly inheriting much of the local narco-business. In the city's greater transformation, though, a clear relationship between strategies for securing economic development and integration of paramilitary violence into that development model also becomes clear. This generally has to do with paramilitary's role of expelling urban militias from urban territory. The famous operations of 2002, including *Operación Orión*, were allegedly done in collusion between military and paramilitary forces to "dislodge the FARC guerilla and urban militias from strategic vantage points" in Medellín (Colak and Pearce, 2015: 204). *Orión* took place in October of that year, in the community of San Javier. "The operation transformed the dynamics of violence in the city," write Lillana Bernal Franco and Claudia Navas Caputo. "Approximately 1000 men from the armed forces, entering by air and land, with the support of the paramilitary groups of the area (particularly the *Bloque Cacique Nutibara*, BCN) took over [Comuna 13] and triggered an armed confrontation against the militias" (Franco and Caputo, 2013: 7). The results were monumental, including "mass killings, displacement, and the forced disappearance of 150-300 people" (ibid). This operation helped lead to the hegemony of the BCN paramilitary under leader Don Berna within Medellín, and not surprisingly the homicide rate would experience a significant drop in 2003 – which correlated with the beginning of Fajardo's administration. These operations thus can not be separated from Social Urbanism, especially in their result of securing territory for future urban projects: though individually met with controversy and garnering significant human rights attention, *Operación Orión* in fact "paved the way for [the] bold and ambitious local development plan" (Drummond et. al., 2012: 150).

In these operations, state security forces were reportedly "often accompanied by paramilitaries or followed closely by them. . . . As the security forces secured areas, paramilitaries entered in their wake" (Amnesty International, 2005: 32). Paramilitaries subsequently told residents they were there to control the area and prevent guerillas from re-entering. This meant a shared monopoly on force was established, but with part of this monopoly assumed by non-state actors. By this point, though, the

BCN in particular had become key stakeholders in the city's economic growth. Operations such as *Orión* were allegedly undertaken by both the formal state and paramilitaries to make the city more attractive to outside investment. This was confirmed in 2003, when the BCN publicly declared their responsibility for the fall in homicides following the counter-insurgency operations of 2002, stating this ensured the "necessary climate so that investment, particularly foreign, which is fundamental if we do not want to be left behind by the engine of globalization, returns, is encouraged, and productive and long-term employment can be generated" (BCN Communiqué, quoted in Amnesty International, 2005).

The dramatic rise in forced intra-urban displacements through the following decade, however, indicates the insidious implications these types of tacit collusions between formal and informal security actors can have over a longer term. This spike is attributed to recognition by new dominant paramilitary forces that displacement is a more powerful means of territorial control than homicide. "Homicides are a typical security indicator used by governments to identify priorities and organize interventions. A spike in homicides tends to draw the attention of the public authorities and incite response, which can generate costs for armed groups" (Franco and Caputo, 2013: 16). Threats of severe physical violence or homicide, though, can effectively clear territories of potential competitors, without leaving the same type of evidence.

This highlights an important relationship about the shift in dominant forms of violence in Medellín and the marketing of the city: homicides represent a very visible form of violence. This visibility is what make homicides particularly unattractive to those looking to market the city's transformation. This is not only true in its physical evidence – literally, a body – but also in the circulation of more facile instruments of quantifying violence such as homicide statistics. One reason issues of displacement and other forms of violence do not factor so prevalently into a popular understanding of everyday violence is, on the one hand, because these forms of violence are often viewed as less destructive than that which results in death, while being simultaneously harder to quantify than the type of violence measured in statistics. But understanding the trajectory of social development in the city based on an idea of "chronic violence" is a more truthful expression of how everyday lives in the city

have been affected by recent processes of transformation.

Chronic violence is an idea that “aims to go beyond the convenience of the homicide rate as a comparative measure of violence, and emphasizes the multiple forms of violence which do not necessarily result in death but which reproduce violence through all the spaces of its socialization” (Colak and Pearce, 2015: 207). Through their participatory research into chronic violence in Medellín, Alexandra Abello Colak and Jenny Pearce have found the city’s state security as assuming a new form of “managed security.” This includes the tacit (and sometime explicit) support of homicide-reducing pacts amongst armed groups in the city.

Homicide rates spike under situations in which two or more groups are continually vying for territorial control, when no single organization has a monopoly on force. On the other hand, forms of chronic violence are more likely to emerge in situations where territorial control is neatly defined, even though homicides may decrease. This effect of territorial control on homicides was made particularly evident in Medellín following the extradition of Don Berna (leader of the BCN) in 2008, when the BCN’s monopoly on violence was threatened and the homicide rate spiked; on the other hand, the decline in homicides in July of 2012 correlates with a “gun pact” between two groups who came to agreements relating to control over certain neighbourhoods, rather than to the actions of state security forces as has often been claimed (Colak and Pearce, 2015: 209). However, the increase in displacements that steadily rose over that decade indicates a shift in violence that is not present in Medellín’s urban representation. Rather, a decrease in homicides and the marketing of that single statistic now assumes a totalizing narrative on the city’s recovery process away from violence as a whole. But participatory research, according to Colak and Pearce, can help open up taboo subjects that are often hidden beneath the marketing of the city in the competition for Global capital and tourism. For example, in Medellín participatory research can help explain the decreasing prevalence of the “murdered body,” towards the increasing prevalence of the “disappeared body”; it can help illuminate the increasing instance of extortion since 2005, which is based on a new criminal economy that has made “protection” a counterpart of extortion; it can help bring the continuing exploitation and recruitment of neighbourhood children to the surface (ibid: 207). In

other cases, it can provide an important counterpoint to official statistics, which have the appearance of easily quantifiable data, but which can also misrepresent day to day realities. For example, note Colak and Pearce, official statistics from the city have shown poverty as decreasing over the last few years, but inhabitants' perception of their own poverty levels have been increasing (ibid: 210). How inhabitants perceive transformation is oftentimes different than how others try to quantify it.

Further, it is often overlooked how chronic violence and transformation affect people differentially across the city. The overall homicide rate has decreased significantly since the 1990s, which makes for a very marketable transformation. But transformation has been experienced differentially across different comunas. For instance, while in 2013 the overall homicide rate was 38.1 people per 100,000 inhabitants, in *La Candelabra* it was 165 per 100,000, and in *San Javier* it was 80 (Colak and Pearce, 2015: 207). For those living in central areas of the city, Medellín's transformation has been extreme. This is especially true as tourism flourishes in such areas as *El Poblado* and increasingly the historic downtown, both of which represent spaces where, if violence continued to exist in the same forms it once did, conflict would still be very visible both to locals and to Global spectators.

This primacy of certain spaces over others in defining Medellín's transformation follows closely with arguments from the last chapter, in which it was explored how the totalizing image can actually hide other narratives of everyday life. This was found to be especially true for institutionalized spaces that surround new interventions in peripheral areas, such as the libraries or new transportation infrastructure, which we might now understand as also distorting general perception of how violence affects "other" communities. "One of the curious things with the cable cars," says Peter Brand, "is they have never really been touched by gangs. Which is not easy – it becomes a very easy target, especially if an enemy gang is riding up the car" (interview with Brand, 2015). In some ways, these infrastructures, like the road projects that extend through vaster areas of rural space, become a means of establishing a state authority, of reasserting control. Infrastructure becomes a means to secure territory. But as in the case of rural areas, it coexists with control over territories by supposedly illegal armed groups, and implies a type of tacit agreement

between legal and illegal entities that certain spaces of the city remain less “touched” by specific forms of violence. This discourages visible forms of violence in visible areas of the city, but conversely allows these forms of violence to continue in other areas.

This precarious foundation on which Medellín's transformation sits is fairly well recognized across the city. However, there is also a strong perception by many locals that homicides and other forms of violence have significantly decreased following new forms of managed security by the state. The human rights infringements by such operations as *Operación Orión* undertaken in the early 2000s are now regarded by many as a “necessary” measure to taking the city back from urban militias. These types of operations “paved the way” for Fajardo's subsequent urban development plan (Drummond et. al., 2012: 150). But even the guide of a popular walking tour had to admit to our tour group the controversy these operations brought at the time, as she narrated to us the spectacular transformation of the city. Yet the open question she posed to the group at the end was very similar to what you'll hear many others say about these types of tacit collaborations between legal and illegal groups: looking at the city today, recognizing how it has been transformed, can we now say it was worth it in the end?

There are two obvious flaws inherent to a question such as this. The first is that, in asking us to look at the city and see its transformation, we are being asked to evaluate the quality of everyday life for inhabitants across the city based on the image of the city presented to us. Second, such thinking asks us to frame Medellín today at the “end” of a transformation process, divorcing planning, development, and urban representation from a temporal continuity that deeply affects the future as well. These sorts of questions reproduce the type of spatial and temporal ideological distortions often assumed in analyses of the city that, at the very least, are reinforced by new images of the city.

Besides considering narratives not represented in these images, the political and economic content of Social Urbanism also needs to be situated on a timeframe that both extends back, to the late 1980/early 1990s, while at the same time development needs to be projected forward. Only by expanding this frame with which we view the programme can it be understood as part of a larger systemic development process: specif-

ically, a process that continues to rely on managed security and specific forms of chronic violence in its current economic development model.

“Medellín has pioneered a form of public-private partnership in which the private sector’s motives were, for once, not profit,” writes Justin McGuirk, who praises the contributions of private businesses, and the donated profits of the public utilities company EPM, as part of a larger civic movement that “aimed to claw back some sanity in Medellín” (McGuirk, 2014: 252). Yet, a more critical analysis reveals there were in fact clear economic motivations driving participation in the movement by many of its stakeholders. Social goals, such as decreasing extreme violence, may have been part of those objectives as well; but as was demonstrated, oftentimes overcoming the stigma and visibility of violence was given more weight than dealing with its actual foundations. While recognizing the situation bringing community activists, NGO groups, architects, and a new Left political party to the table with the city’s traditional actors of power and influence is in many ways remarkable, overlooking the specific conditions of that collaboration risks missing the inherent flaws produced from the beginning in building a democratic society.

“The re-establishment of elite power can be seen through the Medellín Miracle,” notes Maclean. That fact, though:

. . . should not detract from the achievements of the progressive movements at work in Medellín over this time, but rather emphasizes how the reinforcement of elite control was part of the political space that had to be negotiated. . . . The Medellín Miracle is in some ways based on progressive ideas of reducing inequality and promoting inclusion. In other senses, though, the politics that made Social Urbanism possible includes a desire by elites to take back their city and, in their terms, re-take the responsibility for stewardship that historically has defined them. (Maclean, 2015: 84).

If we go on to frame Social Urbanism as a stage in the city’s development rather than an “ends” in itself, the programme’s roles beyond simply social inclusion becomes increasingly clear. This is revealing to Social Urbanism’s simultaneous role as a project that aimed to re-establish power

and integrate local space into a Global economic order.

A NEW ERA OF TRANSFORMATION

When Fajardo and Salazar, both members of the *Compromiso Ciudadana*, were succeeded by Liberal party member Anibal Gaviria in 2012, urban development priorities for the city took on new shape. First, the scale of development increased significantly. While Social Urbanism assumed strategies of urban acupuncture in mediating within existing communities, plans under Gaviria have increasingly assumed the strategy of large-scale urban development projects (UDP), including a ten-kilometer river park, an extensive urban greenbelt park called the *Jardín Circunvalar*, and plans for Latin America's largest technology park at the north end of the city. These types of UDPs have become, for the contemporary Global city, "one of the most visible and ubiquitous urban revitalization strategies pursued by city elites in search of economic growth and competitiveness. . . . [T]he material expression of a developmental logic that views mega-projects and place marketing as a means for generating future growth and for waging a competitive struggle for investment capital" (Swyngedouw et. al., 2002: 546). Alongside these projects, new administrations are pushing the image of Medellín as a Green City, or Smart City, and following the legacy of Social Urbanism, an Equitable City. There are still some token projects in the periphery that bear resemblance to the urban projects of Social Urbanism, and which garner significant attention from architects in particular. This includes the *Unidades Vida Articulada* (Articulated Life Units, UVA) which quite innovatively developed space around existing water tanks – one of the few remaining unbuilt areas in the periphery as they were previously cordoned off. These are relatively few, however, with four UVAs inaugurated over the administration's four-year term (although plans for future development still identify twenty water tank sites). Other projects, such as the *EcoParques* (essentially small public parks) are also being implemented, though often their location falls suspiciously in proximity to the *Jardín Circunvalar*, with a much

decreased participatory component when compared to the early Social Urbanism projects.

A more in-depth analysis of these developments will be taken up in the next chapter. What this brief introduction highlights, though, is that urban planning has transformed. But given the economic objectives for growth and city development set in the 1990s, this latter transformation can not be entirely unexpected. Rather, there is a clear developmental continuity between the early 1990s to today, beginning with the effects that a larger national restructuring process had on local political objectives. During the period of Social Urbanism, it seemed that the effect of these restructuring processes might have a much more positive effect on the city space than it had on the rural. But as we've seen, both these spaces existed on the same developmental model that ultimately affected the city and its greater rural region in similar ways. However, we might say the effects of this developmental model within the city took a longer period to materialize. This has to do with obstacles the city faced relating to a stigma of violence, as emphasized in the Monitor Group report of 1994. In this context, the period of Social Urbanism might be seen as an essential intermediary process to today's Medellín.

Alongside recent transformation to urban planning and the continuation of violence, other significant changes have been felt in the city as well. One such change includes the implementation of prepaid meters for public services provided by the EPM. Since 2004, the city has reported a rapid growth of *deconectados* (people disconnected from water supply) in the poorest neighbourhoods, which Marcela López suggests is caused by the “accelerated process of modernization and expansion carried out by Colombia's largest public utility company – *Empresas Públicas de Medellín* – in order to increase its competitiveness in the international market” (López, 2011: 1). The recent implementation of prepaid meters in the more excluded neighbourhoods has been controversial, especially considering the widespread coverage of EPM's “donated” profits to the city budget – a funding strategy many reviews of Social Urbanism hail as a form of civic philanthropy. The common objection is that in taking money from communities with the high price of water and other utilities – basic services that should be a human right – and intervening with urban projects that have a decreased participatory component to them, the

EPM really aren't doing anybody any favours (interview with Maclean, 2015). Until the 1990s, the EPM was historically ranked highest as having the best relationship of any public company with Medellín's inhabitants; today, it has one of the worst (interview with Brand, 2015).

Resistance by locals to the city's new development and marketing is difficult to find in many of the western-centered and English language analyses of the city. However, that does not mean it has not been emerging within the city, and usually from the periphery.

One such example of the way inhabitants have tried to make resistance heard was with the addition of the words "victims of" in front of the large *Jardín* sign placed on the hillside that was meant to announce the new greenbelt project (Colak and Pearce, 2015: 218). Local residents did this on April 9, 2015: the day of remembrance to victims of violence in Colombia. Associated displacements relating to the *Jardín Circunvalar* project around the *Pan de Azúcar* hill in the east, and its nearby *Ecoparques* and new metrocabes, has caused significant anxiety in Communa 8 in general. Projects in this area are associated with demolitions of around 1600 houses for the megaproject. "In a workshop to discuss risks, threats, and vulnerabilities," write Colak and Pearce, "residents were clear that the megaprojects were as much a threat to them as the armed actors in the territory" (ibid).

An alternative forum held by the group *Foro Social Popular de Medellín* (People's Social Forum) during the World Urban Forum 7 (WUF7) represents another way by which locals have tried to make their own narratives and experiences of new development and security models heard. This "counter-hegemonic" forum was held over three days, and was conducted as a series of talks about the principal problems of the city, summoning experts and the general public to discuss their felt needs, utilities, values, education and housing as an alternative to WUF7. Seminars were established partly in protest to the marketing of the city during the world event, which scrubbed many of the persistent day-to-day insecurities of Medellín from the surface. One of the tour stops for the forum, for example, was one of the two new UVA projects in Communa 8 that were both completed just before the start of the event. There was a "washing of Medellín's face before the forum," writes Campo Elías Galindo, in a special issue of local political journal *Kavilando* following WUF7:



FIG 3/5 JARDIN CIRCUNVALAR SIGN IN THE HILLS OF COMMUNA 8

. . . to legitimate the conclusive packet that was presented in the Great Metropolitan Theater by the mayor of the host city, without a single mention of the housing that, six months before, had been demolished precisely because of the immoral public-private partnerships that are constructing this city and making decisions on its legislation. It was too much to ask the mayor that the [WUF7 Charter] include the violent evictions, job insecurity, intra-urban displacement, the abuse of the homeless, and the hard social and territorial separation. (translated by author; Galindo, 2014a: 120)

The event, Galindo continues, was an occasion for fictions about the city to emerge – the mobilization of “ideological projects that dominate the scene, which seek to make invisible other perspectives of the world and the city, other alternative projects. A social fiction, a developmentalist fiction, a political fiction: they work as a general ideological framework the host city adopted to interact with the Forum and to reaffirm the basic conception that feeds its dominant project” (translated by author; Galindo, 2014b: 24). In this way, these sorts of events and honours perpetuate a singular ideological image of the city. This was also demonstrated with Medellín’s notable winning of the “Most Innovative City of the Year,” an award sponsored by Citibank and the Wall Street Journal. However, the city’s administration was forced not long after to concede on Medellín’s persisting inequalities and insecurities following their celebration of the award, when *El Colombiano* published an article about the city’s continuing human rights issues, alongside a press release from the archbishop of the city:

Recently there has been a lot of publicity about Medellín being the most educated and inclusive city, about it being a model of urban innovation. All this must be true, it has been repeated so often. We are pleased with the good things that the city has achieved. But equally, we know and are witness everyday to our region being the most violent in the country, the years go by and we have not learned how to live

*together peacefully, we are killing each other in the barrios. .
. Our problems are complex and deeply entrenched in our so-
cial structure; simplistic, partial solutions are not sufficient
(El Colombiano, 2013; translated in Brand, 2013a)*

Structural forms of violence still sit within Medellín's larger societal model. That does not mean real attempts have not been undertaken to demobilize violent actors since the 1990s, but rather the city has never been able to challenge its foundations. Medellín has had a history of failed peace initiatives with armed groups since the 1990s, each slightly different, and usually directed towards whichever actors are perceived as contributing most to violence at the time peace talks take place.

The growth of militias in the late 1980s and early 1990s led to preliminary peace talks as early as 1991, with an official agreement presented in May of 1994; this agreement mainly focused on the creation of a security cooperative in which former militias were expected to participate, a strategy which quickly failed and raised criticism from those who said armed groups can not provide security in a true democracy (Rozema, 2008: 434). Peace talks with gangs came in the second half of the 1990s, which ended in informal agreements focusing on territorial disputes rather than demobilization, and whose positive results, unsurprisingly, only lasted a few months. Then in 2003 – a year after such operations as *Operación Orión*, in which the state was accused of collaboration with paramilitary groups – the city underwent an official demobilization process of paramilitary forces.

For several years, many considered this the most successful of the city's peace initiatives. There was recognition, certainly, that remnants of paramilitary criminal networks continued to exist in the city. However, visibility of violence decreased dramatically. But critics recognized informal security agencies of "former" paramilitaries were established during this period, and "although such vigilantes do not wear a paramilitary uniform, residents know they are dealing with former paramilitaries and that they better obey them" (ibid: 449). Disappearances of residents become much more common under paramilitary rule than guerrilla rule, with the latter's operations much more out in the open. But it is thus easy to see why, in periods of lower homicide rates and a concealed system of

violence and coercion, insecurity is usually buried under the surface. Following 2008, when the city's homicide rate spiked, this period of relative "peace" was more widely attributed to the hegemony of BCN leader Don Berna following his extradition to the United States (Franco and Caputo, 2012: 8). What this says about the legitimacy of the demobilization process is significant.

A 2005 report by Amnesty International, preceding the extradition of Don Berna, on Medellín's paramilitary demobilization was one of the first to pillory the process undertaken by the State as one that has helped "legalize" paramilitary organizations in the city:

Paramilitarism has not been dismantled, it has simply been "re-engineered." Since many areas of Colombia have now been wrested from guerrilla control, and paramilitary control established in many of these, there is no longer a need to have large numbers of heavily-armed uniformed paramilitaries. Instead, the paramilitaries are beginning to contribute to the security forces' counter-insurgency strategy as "civilians." The increasing participation of paramilitaries in private security firms – both regulated and illegal – to failure to legislate against the participation of armed demobilized paramilitaries in licensed private security firms, as well as the recent idea mooted by the government to create a "civic guard" made up of demobilized combatants, without effectively ensuring that none of them are implicated in human rights violations, and the government's network of civilian informants and Degree 2767, will only serve to ensure that paramilitaries will be "recycled" and "legalized" into structures which may prove more palatable to domestic and international public opinion. (Amnesty International, 2005: 49).

In the climate of the Social Urbanism era, it is understandable many critics of the city's transformation might deem managed security by the state as warranted. Promoting and enabling these forms of territorial control by illegal groups can save lives, even if it does perpetuate forms of chronic

violence that are increasingly hidden. But these tactics also prevent the city from building a true democratic foundation.

The implications of this are emerging today, as we see threats to inhabitants of the city not only coming from these illegal groups, but also from the city's new development plans. During the former period there was a legitimating point made that, while insecurity persisted through the presence of permanent illegal groups, policies and interventions by the state at least worked to make life better. However, in promoting these social development strategies through the 2000s while circumventing the process of democracy-building and not addressing the continued presence of illegal groups, in its outcome, this social project has been increasingly reduced to image campaign. Now threats on inhabitants come from both sides: corruption and coercion from illegal groups, and insecurity from new forms of development, both of which threaten displacement. It's odd to think this Global City image, one that promotes a Green City or Innovative City with plans for the largest technology park in Latin America, can rest on this type of social foundation. And while its conditions were established early on, as the model has succeeded new forms of revanchist development increasingly threatens the development of space here in the city.

New images of Medellín's urban space present themselves as a break from the narratives of violence and inequality that plague its history; the model of development that engenders vast human rights infringements in rural territory also appears to be dissociated from the transformation taking place at the city center. In other words, the image of the city establishes a dissociation of rural development from urban development. But what this chapter aimed to illustrate was how the two actually sit on a similar developmental model. The Antioquian hegemonic project of development rests on the center-periphery dynamic by which local elites centralize power from the urban center, and not only exact development for foreign capital across expansive rural space, but also articulate similar developmental practices at the scale of the city. This latter dynamic isn't so much based on the "looting" of land from peasants, but the legitimation that taking control over these spaces and instigating capital development is part of the greater good and vitality of the city as a whole. Both, however, seem to be rationalized on the premise of 'cultural

difference,' even in the city whereby peripheral inhabitants – almost all once rural inhabitants – are deemed incapable of themselves participating in development that enables integration into the Global economic order. As we've seen, the integration of violence and displacement is often part of this project at both scales. The city-scale dynamic, however, has become increasingly transparent following the conclusion of the official Social Urbanism era. Despite the continuation of the "social inclusion" rhetoric within the municipality, new development practices reveal both shifting strategies of recovery and a logical transformation of planning following the Global successes of Social Urbanism. The following chapter, then, investigates new urban planning as part of this reclaimed elite stewardship, and how it now rationalizes revitalization of the city on a massive – and often destructive – scale.



A PROJECT OF LIFE

Medellin's new urban development regime

The next chapter takes somewhat of a departure from the discourse around the city established in chapters 2 and 3. Until now, criticism has been primarily directed towards the urban images produced under Social Urbanism, and the underlying structures of production that present contradictions between the image of everyday life and its reality. But in arguing the city was prevented from achieving its goals of transformation based on structural conditions established long before 2003, it is implied that – unless drastic changes have been made to the city's political, social, and economic foundations – development today would continue to reveal this revanchist trajectory. Through the thesis I have both alluded to and at times explicitly stated not only that Medellín's current urban development now embodies much more conventional, 21st century Global ideologies of city development, but that this current development is a logical outcome of the success of Social Urbanism in marketing a new era of the city. The purpose of this chapter, then, is to deconstruct the planning initiatives in the city under the subsequent Aníbal Gaviria Correa administration to understand both how it marks a departure from Social Urbanism, and how it can be seen as its logical outcome.

However, the nature of this comparison means the urban development of Social Urbanism will inevitably be cast in a more positive light than it has so far been afforded. The central criticism of Social Urbanism was that, since its foundations did not really challenge power hierarchy or looked to distribute agency over the production of space more evenly, the project itself was eventually reduced to image campaign. That does not mean the design interventions of the administration were not in many ways informed or sometimes (although not always) well executed. The successes of the model as an autonomous design project were in fact relatively clear near the beginning of Social Urbanism, although

FIG 4/1 (OPPOSITE PAGE)
RENDERING OF THE WINNING
ENTRY TO MEDELLÍN'S *PARQUES
DEL RÍO* COMPETITION, LATITUD,
2013.

we saw how those planning practices were also gradually reduced to the likes of a trademark over the course of the period. However, the basic design approach emerged from a relatively nuanced position on how urban development might affect the everyday lives of its citizens. And it is this distinction – where the previous administration saw the potential of development, and where the Gaviria administration located it – that will be discussed in assessing their divergent planning strategies.

Under the political administration of the *Compromiso Ciudadana*, the official slogan for the city was “Medellín: From fear to hope.” The slogan reveals a lot about the administration’s views on the potential of their programmes, policies, and interventions. Situating the two moments as fear and hope did not assume a total reversal of everyday conditions; rather, it was a championing of the futility often associated with fear. This was done through the strategies of culture, education, and a recovery of public space. It demonstrates what I’ve now identified as a relatively nuanced position held by many political members and other actors (including architects) about the type of agency aesthetic, public spaces might have on the population. As we know, the meaning of these spaces was often distorted to suggest a total transformation of the political and social landscape. Often this distortion came from the way an audience interpreted (or misinterpreted) urban images. We also saw there were certain stakeholders that likely had this production of meaning as an ultimate objective, though. Given the structural conditions from which Social Urbanism emerged, we can say these spaces were precluded from having the long-term transformative effects many of its designers hoped for.

But when Gaviria and the Liberal administration took office in 2012, a new periodization occurred in the city’s development: everything became about *life*. “*Life* is the supreme value,” Gaviria wrote in the new 2012–2015 *Plan Desarrollo* (Development Plan) entitled *Medellín: A Home for Life*. “All our efforts should be directed to protect, honour, and value it; nothing can violate it without us mobilizing to defend it” (author’s translation; Alcaldía de Medellín, 2012: 17). The use of this word as developmental slogan helped to reconstruct the city’s transformation. Suddenly, it was not a transition from fear to hope that became pivotal; it was the new period of *life* – and the implicit departure from death – that

was significant, with the intermediate decade of hope becoming a means to the city's triumphant ends.

Concomitant with this new dedication to *life* came a shift in urban development strategies. The scale of intervention is the most obvious departure from the former period, with new developments more akin to the large-scale urban development project (UDP) than acupunctural insertions. The city's 2014 Land Use Plan (*Plan de Ordenamiento Territorial*, POT; Alcaldía de Medellín, 2014) outlines the city's plans for restructuring over the next ten years. In this document three strategic areas of intervention have been defined: the river corridor (*MEDRío*, MED for Medellín), the urban border (*MEDBorde Urbano Rural*), and the under-articulated, transversal axis cutting across the urbanized valley (*MEDTransversalidades*). The area encapsulated by these strategic areas of development cover vast areas of urban space, with many of their subprojects resembling the nature and scale of contemporary UDPs.

This chapter picks up from the end of Social Urbanism under the *Compromiso Ciudadana*, and investigates the longer transformation in Medellín as a biopolitical project, which has recently manifested itself quite literally in the city's developmental rhetoric. Michel Foucault's biopolitics described a new technology of power of the modern state, which was not only a disciplinary mechanism over the individual human body, but relates as well to new state biopower – a means to control the population as a “global mass” (Foucault, 2003 [1976]). This technology also related to the state's new power to make *life* amongst a population. While the use of Global capitalism as an overarching theoretical framework (particularly in understanding the uneven development of Medellín and its region) might suggest these concepts of power and specific state objectives are precluded from entering into a structural analysis, Henri Lefebvre and the concept of power over space were introduced in the beginning as a means for these discourses on state power and Global capitalism to merge coherently through the course of this analysis on Medellín's development. Lefebvre admits that power is exercised at the Global level in the period of total urbanization, but also says the state continues to act as its “will and representation” (Lefebvre, 2003 [1970]: 78).

As will, the power of the state and the people who hold this

power are associated with a political strategy or strategies. As representation, politicians have an ideologically justified political conception of space. . . . Political power makes use of instruments (ideological and scientific). It has the capacity for action and is capable of modifying the distribution of resources, income, and the “value” created by productive labour (surplus value). (ibid)

In continuing this idea of state power as an operative form of Global power, this chapter explores the nature of the recent administration's developmental regime as one that is given the appearance of absolute truth and rationality through the government's association to the project of making *life*.

The making of *life* in Medellín has become synonymous with a redevelopment of existing space. By extension, death not only defines the former period of the city, but the existing space of the city. This normalizes development, whereby any project that engenders *life* can only be embraced, while any space preventing its realization is justifiably cleared. Only a true misanthrope, after all, would reject *life*. The ecological focus of many proposed developments helps further reinforce this narrative: the water quality of the river is to be restored alongside the massive river park development, while lush greenery will flood the surrounding landscape; up on the hillsides the periphery will soon be made more accessible to central city inhabitants, while turning the urban edge into a recreational, linear park that simultaneously cuts off urban sprawl of informal growth. This is not to minimize the ecological destruction that has taken place over Medellín's rapid development – but the real environmental benefits of these developments are questionable, while the scale of restructuring is significant.

As argued, this new development should not necessarily be seen as a break from the trajectory of Social Urbanism. It is certainly a break in terms of developmental strategies. But the objectives set by many stakeholders early on suggested the transformation to a city more easily integrated into the Global, economic order was an intended outcome. The current spatial restructuring is seen as imperative to that larger project. And given the history's dense history of conflict and death, the ultimate use of *life* to legitimate new development is only logical.

BIOPOLITICS AND BIOPOWER: DEVELOPMENT IN MEDELLÍN

Foucault identifies biopolitics as the mode of governance emerging from the transition from sovereignty to state in the late 18th century. This centered on the state's new right to "make" *life*. Before, the sovereign had the power to "take life or let live" – to kill was an acceptable right if something threatened his position as ruler. Life was thus taken in his name, whether that be an individual punishment or war. When the state emerged, this right to "take life or let live" became the right to "make life and let die" (Foucault, 2003 [1976]: 241). This right was no longer for the cause of an individual ruler, but for the cause of the collective.

Alongside this new cause of the collective came a new technology of power: the regulatory mechanism. While the disciplinary mechanism of power centered on the body of the individual, the regulatory mechanism focused on the man-as-species:

The discipline tries to rule a multiplicity of men to the extent that their multiplicity can and must be dissolved into individual bodies that can be kept under surveillance, trained, used, and if need be, punished. . . . [T]he new [regulatory] technology that is being established is addressed to a multiplicity of men, not to the extent that they are nothing more than their individual bodies, but to the extent that they form, on the contrary, a global mass affected by overall processes characteristic of birth, death, production, illness, and so on. (ibid: 242–243)

This new technology of power was part of what Foucault called biopower – the operative form of biopolitics in controlling the masses. Regulatory mechanisms such as statistics suddenly became important in a desire to establish equilibrium on the birth rate, the death rate, and longevity of life; the interrelated series of related economic and political problems to these measures became biopolitics' "first object of knowledge and the target it seeks to control" (ibid: 243). Both these disciplinary and regulatory mechanisms existed to centralize power and normalize knowledge within the project of *life*, but these mechanisms were not always mutually exclusive.

Foucault points out, for example, how the production of suburban enclaves in the twentieth century lent a new visibility and normalizing behaviour to the body through the spatial layout of new neighbourhoods, which was accompanied with the regulatory mechanisms of the working-class estate. This encapsulated such institutions as mortgage lending and pensions, to child care, education, and the regulation of procreation in general. (ibid: 251).

Writing in the 1970s, Foucault saw biopolitics as a mode of governance that had pervaded since the rise of modernity. The attention towards modernizing the city in particular – which often focused on sanitation, hygiene, and rationalization – intricately entwined with the regulatory mechanisms that made *life* in the city. Until Medellín's period of violence in the 1980s, the city's modernizing period and its paternalist order of governance were especially emblematic of Foucault's traditional biopower. As we saw in chapter 1, *life* was interlaced with the industrial model, and all aspects of working class living – housing, education, social services – were wrapped into this paternalist, Catholic, Capitalist model. *Life* was rationalized spatially and socially, with the production of knowledge intimately related to institutions under the control of the political and industrial elite. This model became the means by which Medellín insulated itself from the bloody conflict that terrorized other parts of the country; it also helped develop an inseparable link between the making of *life* and Capitalism. As we know, the collapse of the local economy was shortly followed by a period often symbolized by death. And it is this fact – that death becomes a very visible part of daily life – that indicates a moment of exception in the city's modern statehood.

In the larger transition towards state biopolitical power, Foucault identifies a couple interesting things that happen to death. First, the individual's death becomes something to be hidden. Where once the sovereign's power was exacted through the process of taking *life*, death now sits outside the power relationship, and “power has a grip on it only in general, overall, statistical terms” (ibid: 248). This reveals why, paradoxically, biopolitics become outwardly concerned with the problem of morbidity in general. This is not a concern towards epidemics necessarily (as in the Middle Ages), but more often the endemic causes of death. Illness as a phenomenon is now seen as affecting a population

in a new state of permanence. In an epidemic, “death swooped down on life”; now, death was something “permanent, something that slips into life, perpetually gnaws at it, diminishes it, and weakens it” (ibid: 244).

During Medellín’s crisis period, death became something visible. It moved back into the power relationship, only it was not the governing state with the exclusive power to make it visible, but often other armed actors who exacted a self-appointed right to take life or let live. The traditional power of the sovereign was thus reincarnated and multiplied through the self-appointed rights of illegal groups such as the Cartel, gangs, militias, paramilitaries, even military forces. In this process, death became an epidemic of man-made causes. The reassertion and centralization of power that followed thus appears logical to deliver Medellín from this period of death. Biopolitics re-entered alongside attempts to “normalize” the city. By this time, the general logic of integrating the space of cities into the Global, economic order was also widely recognized as key for city economies to thrive through Latin America. In the case of Medellín, this was stated in such documents as the Monitor Group Report (1994), in which politicians and elites were advised to work to overcome the stigma that defined the city, in order to open up the local economy and integrate it into the Global one.

Looking at the period of hope from the perspective of power alone renders this era as a recentralization of control. Foucault clearly associated urban planning with the disciplinary mechanism of biopower, such as in the example above of working-class, suburban enclaves. It would be unfair, of course, to ignore that this period was also for many political and social actors a sincere attempt to overcome a pervasive climate of fear. In certain ways, Social Urbanism evades a biopower critique, with its intent to work with existing physical communities – focusing on upgrading rather than redeveloping. In other ways, though, the disciplinary mechanism does emerge: the introduction of new infrastructures opened spaces for formal power to move in, bringing new visibility to these areas that, while positive from the perspective of inclusion, also lead to such processes as securitization. Regulatory technologies now play a dominant role as well. The statistical mechanism in particular – most notably the homicide rate – becomes a key tool in measuring and evaluating *life* in the city. Despite its innocuous appearance, the statistic has become a key

mechanism in establishing power.

The period leading up to and including Social Urbanism was thus one related to biopolitics and biopower as well. But the next era turns this biopolitical project into something new.

First, urban development assumes a different agency as disciplinary mechanism. The rationalization of urban space in general since the modernist period has obviously been transformed, but this does not only relate to specific spatial strategies. For example, where once national states were the only actor involved in the financing and design of this spatial restructuring, today Neoliberal logic of urban development ties intimately with the financialization of space by private and municipal actors. Redeveloping space is seen as one means to integrate cities within a Global economic order. Like many cities today, Medellín has adopted the particular developmental regime of the large-scale urban development project (UDP), which as Erik Swyngedouw et. al. have pointed out, has become “one of the most visible and ubiquitous urban revitalization strategies pursued by city elites in search of economic growth and competitiveness. . . . [A] developmental logic that views mega-projects and place-marketing as a means for generating future growth and for waging a competitive struggle for investment capital” (Swyngedouw, et. al., 2002: 546). Such developmental ideologies as the Green City simultaneously emerge as a new order of rationalization in the project of making life.

Regulatory technologies such as the homicide rate continue to be used as well. However, we also see in the rhetoric of development a specific knowledge production and normalization emanating from the recurrent use of the word *life* – or *vida*, in Spanish – to describe development. Language becomes operative in the state’s biopower. Through this new developmental rhetoric, current space of the city is made hostile to *life*, and its destruction is thus normalized.

This process of deciding what can be destroyed through the production of knowledge is typical of Foucault’s “normalizing” society. In the case above, this becomes an extension of the second half of a state’s right: to let die. Society is normalized, says Foucault, when the societal knowledge tells a population what is conducive to the larger project of *life* – including such norms as the working day, family unit, and

sexual behaviours – and what is hostile to it. “Killing or the imperative to kill is acceptable not if it results in a victory over political adversaries, but in the elimination for the biological threat to and the improvement of the species or race” (Foucault, 2003 [1976]: 256). The Nazi regime represented the crux of that logic. However, the precondition that allows certain people in society to be killed and other to not does not necessarily materialize as direct murder, but more often materializes indirectly, such as “exposing someone to death, increasing risk of death for some people or, quite simply, political death, expulsion, rejection, and so on” (ibid). This of course has direct relevance to the case of Medellín: as we saw in chapter 3, certain modes of violence affecting only certain citizens are allowed to persist through managed security models, usually based on a belief it allows the larger project of *life* in Medellín to grow. These forms of chronic violence obviously affect inhabitants differentially.

But applied somewhat indirectly to the concept of space itself, I want to demonstrate how the new urban development rhetoric centered on *life* normalizes its development by situating the existing space of the city as somehow anti-*life* (ie. death). Recognizing that development identifies larger and larger areas of space as requiring revitalization, this dichotomy between new spaces of *life* and existing spaces of what is, by extension, death, become an essential part of its rationalization.

The following section goes on to introduce the concept of the large-scale UDP as one intimately tied to the financialization of space, and seeks to demonstrate how development proposed in Medellín’s recent Land Use Plan (POT) is typical of this particular regime. It will then analyze how this larger project of making *life* manifests itself in the physical form of the city, ending with a discussion on how its normalization might produce hostility towards existing space.

DEVELOPMENTAL REGIME OF THE UDP

The large-scale UDP is a capital-intensive redevelopment of urban space, ranging from the integrated project (complex objects such as stadiums or retails complexes) to the urban project (neighbourhood-scale

developments) (Guironnet and Halbert, 2014: 6). Creatively packaged as a consumable resource, the UDP can appear as an end product in itself; but it still operates as an active component of the Capitalist urban process. UDPs are the “material expression of a developmental logic. . . . [C]atalysts of urban and political change, fueling processes that are felt not only locally, but regionally, nationally, and internationally as well (Swyngedouw et. al., 2002: 546).

UDPs produce clear iconicity for cities today – similar to how the architecture of Social Urbanism produced iconicity, but even more transparent in its production of a totalizing image. These projects help to develop a cultural differentiation for the city’s urban identity, whereby the larger “lifestyle” implied by the urban-scale neighbourhood and the new, aesthetic images it produces develop specific meaning for the city as a whole, making it both a unique and consumable space. As David Harvey has pointed out, cultural differentiation in general is key to attracting investment capital, and this “differentiated world of consumer power and consumption preferences enter in as a major determinant of uneven development” (Harvey, 2006: 108). Projects are often initiated by individuals acting as “city makers” – whether they be public or private actors – who pursue this goal of defining cultural meaning.

While the modernist restructuring projects of the 1950s and 70s were in some ways a first wave of the contemporary UDP, there are several key differences that set this period apart. In contrast to the projects of today, for one, the central state was usually the only actor involved. Plans were based on the disassembling and reforming of the order on which the built environment acted upon intra-city relations, often in the larger project of national modernization. These projects were “built around strictly identified land uses that involved the re-ordering of the spatial relationship between dwelling, work, recreation, and transport infrastructure” (Davis, 2014: 377).

Today development has a much more intimate relationship to the financialization of space. A decrease in national state financing has played a significant part in this, as municipal states have been led to finance urban redevelopment projects increasingly through the securitization of future fiscal income (Guironnet and Halbert, 2014: 7). Finance capital investors have also turned to the restructuring of property markets as a

means to diversify portfolios and have thus increasingly turned the built environment into a “quasi-financial” asset (*ibid*). While there is consensus that these large-scale projects usually generate an appreciation in land value, the redistribution of this is unclear in the private-public conundrum, whereby the “redistribution formula often leads to the appropriation of public resources by the private sector” (Lungo and Smolka, 2005: 5).

Whereas the restructuring projects of the modernist period were also often criticized for their rigidity in defining an integrated order of life, the flexibility and diversity promised in the UDP model of today – in their mixed-uses, built forms, and financing – suppress similar critiques about large-scale contemporary restructuring as overdeterminate urban models (Lehrer and Laidley, 2008: 798). While both typologies carry narratives of democratizing space, in contrast to the “modernist project of ‘progress,’ where the public benefit was celebrated as an expression of democratic objectives, it has moved toward a much more competitive environment where public benefits are provided in order to attract those who are most desired” (*ibid*: 799). At the same time, the addition of ostensibly “public” space is marketed as being part of a greater shared interest. And while UDPs are usually conceived, in some form, as instruments for achieving strategic urban goals for the public good, there is a notable lack of attention (particularly in Latin America) directed towards whether these goals are actually reached. Generally, this has less to do with a technical inability and more with the “need to hide the role of public management in facilitating the private sector’s capture of the land increment in general, if not its capture of public resources used to develop the construction project itself” (Lungo and Smolka, 2005: 5).

It is common today for UDPs to assume the “renaturalization” of urban space as one part of that greater public benefit. The typology of the urban park and the integration of park spaces in large development plans has a long history of course, with the green, open space representing a key component of many modernist neighbourhood schemes. However, in the last few decades there has been a shift in both the design and perception of the role of these ecological spaces: they are increasingly perceived as agents of bringing nature back into urban life itself. We might say, on the one hand, this is only a revival of earlier 18th century landscape design, such as the work of Frederick Law Olmsted,



FIG 4/2 (TOP) FREDERICK LAW OLMSTED'S CENTRAL PARK, 1858. PHOTO FROM 2007. NATURAL SPACES WITHIN THE CITY WERE NOT IMAGINED AS TAKING OVER THE URBAN SPACE, BUT CREATING A BALANCE BETWEEN THE "MODERN" AND THE "NATURAL" MAN BY ALLOWING THEIR COEXISTENCE.

FIG 4/3 (BOTTOM) THE HIGH LINE IN NEW YORK, DESIGNED BY JAMES CORNER. PHOTO BY IWAN BAAN, 2011. NEW YORK'S HIGH LINE REPRESENTS THE CRUX OF NEW DEVELOPMENTAL RHETORIC AROUND "NATURALIZING" OLD URBAN INFRASTRUCTURE AND SPACES

where the “natural” park space was developed as a reprieve from the industrialized, urbanized surrounding. However, it remains different in several ways. For example, in recent projects such as the High Line or the increasingly ubiquitous waterfront and old port developments, nature is literally viewed as reclaiming the city’s old, industrialized spaces and infrastructure, rather than existing alongside it. The discourse around this new naturalization follows a rise of a wider green governmentality in the late 20th century, which is based around the “political, economic, and technical incitement to talk about ecology, environments, or nature” (Luke, 1999: 123). This first emerged around the 1960s, but became far more prominent beginning in the 1990s (ibid). “Taking ‘ecology’ into account creates discourses on ‘the environment’ that derive not only from morality, but from rationality as well. . . . [E]nvironments became more than something to be judged morally; they became things the state must administer” (ibid: 124). The municipality has become one of the most willing state levels to engage with environmental issues, and this has manifested itself in the integration of many typical large-scale UDP projects with naturalizing elements, alongside accompanying discourses of sustainability.

This green governmentality has become a new regulatory and disciplinary technology of biopolitics, whereby natural ecology is integrated generally into the survival and well-being of a population, with government being the necessary administrators of the environment. “In green governmentality,” says Timothy W. Luke, “the disciplinary articulations of sustainability and development centre on establishing and enforcing ‘the right disposition of things’ between humans and their environments” (ibid: 146). The ecological ties closely to Foucault’s biopolitics, and has always “manifested in specific regulatory controls aimed at the population” (Rutherford, 1999: 45). New “naturalization” of the urban spaces through the large-scale UDP, though, emerges out of this new climate where green governmentality meets the cultural logic of iconic urban projects. Cities are thus a logical scale at which these environmental issues are engaged. It is at this intersection where many of Medellín’s new projects sit.

With this we can now go on to analyze Medellín’s new development plans outlined in the 2014 POT. In unpacking these

proposals, it is notable that making *life* manifests itself in two dominant ways. First, through the language of *life* – the word itself – that makes indirect reference to a period of death and the current space of the city as somehow embodying that period; and second, through discourses around ecology and sustainability, which are often enforced aesthetically through the image of new green urban spaces, and by rationalizing state intervention on ecological risks.

The actual POT itself is a 500-page book of mostly of text, including an expansive list of 622 articles (many with their own list of sub-articles), and an addenda of twenty urban-scale plans. It is a hyper-rationalized document of urban development parcelled into a long list of articles and sub-articles – which doesn't necessarily make it different from other cities' land use plans. However, the amount of space imagined to be redeveloped does set it apart, with intensive restructuring projects parcelled under various layers of umbrella development strategies. At the farthest scale, Medellín's large-scale UDPs currently planned for the city are based around a new model of occupation emerging from a study released in 2011 by the group URBAM (from the city's Universidad EAFIT). This 2011 study was one of the first to coherently identify the greatest issues facing the Aburrá region over the next twenty years, including uncontrolled urban migration, a lack of necessary housing, need for new sources of employment, and social and physical separation of space across the region's territory. The resulting book was called *BIO2030* (Alcaldía de Medellín, 2011). As a master plan for the *Valle de Aburrá*, it recognized three overarching goals for the city's future development: sustainability, equitability, and competitiveness.

This model of occupation at the regional scale became the base for the city's master plan in the 2014 POT. Today, Medellín's planned UDPs are organized around the municipality's own model of occupation (see FIG 4/4) that has organized the city into five areas: the river corridor, urban-rural border, heterogeneous urban zone, transversal axis, and protected rural region. Strategies of the heterogeneous urban zone and rural region are mostly to leave them untouched. Which leaves three areas as the official *Áreas de Intervención Estratégica* (Areas of Strategic Intervention, AIE): the river corridor (*MEDRío*, MED for Medellín), the urban-rural border (*MEDBorde Urbano Rural*) and the transversal

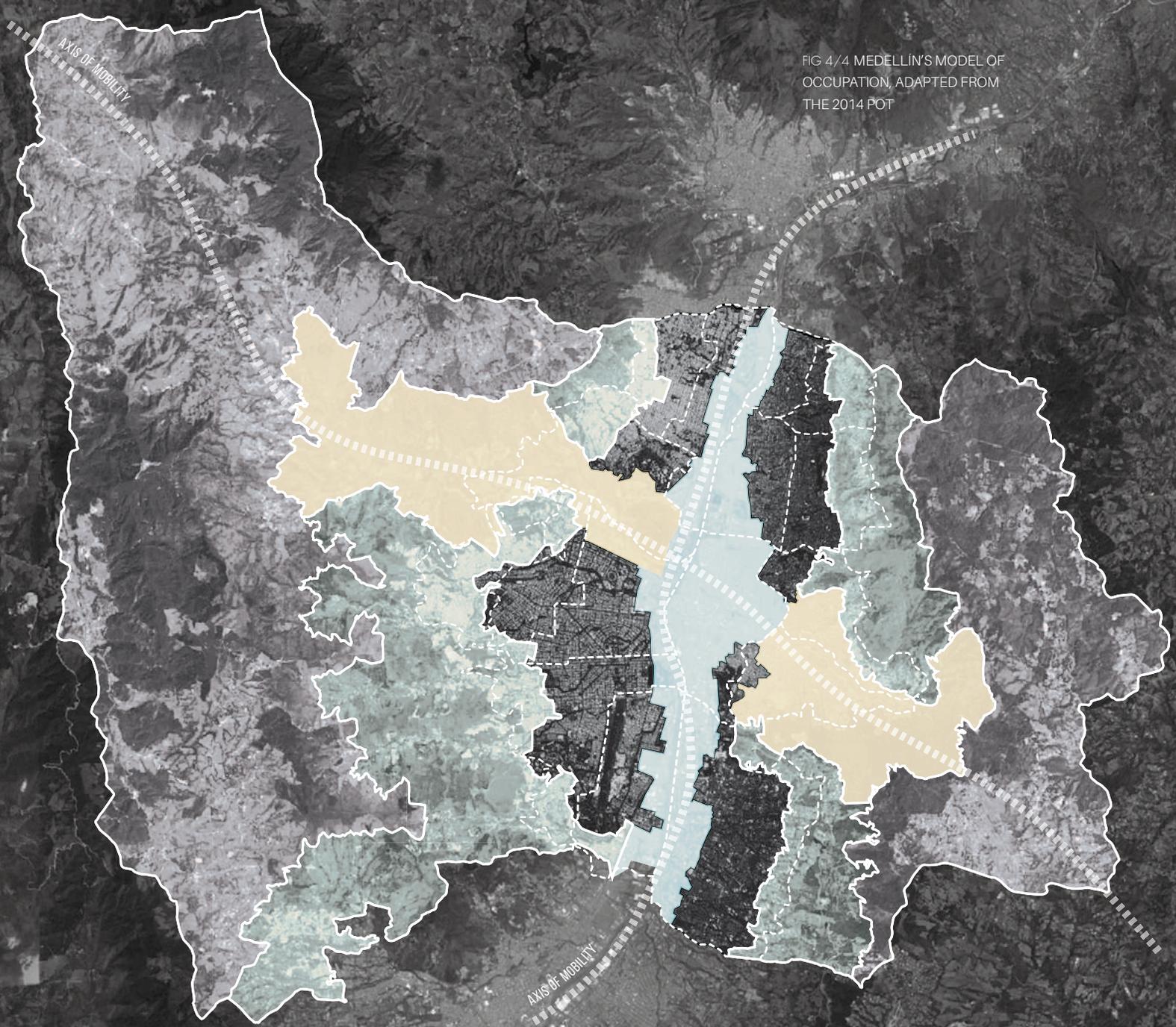
axis (*MEDTransversalidades*). According to the POT, these AIE represent portions of the municipality that present the greatest opportunities for the necessary territorial transformation (Alcaldía de Medellín, 2014: 34).

Within these AIE exist various subareas of intervention. These subareas for *MEDBorde* and *MEDTransversalidades* are organized geographically: for *MEDTransversalidades*, it is the west axis (La Iguaaná) and the east axis (Santa Elena; see FIG 4/5); for *MEDBorde* the northwest, northeast, southwest, southeast, and the areas of San Antonio de Prado are each considered strategic developmental areas (see FIG 4/6). *MEDRío* is somewhat different: while the subareas of the city are also organized geographically (*RíoNorte*, *RíoCentro*, *RíoSur*), the central core of the city (*RíoCentro*) is even further divided into three redevelopment areas, each of which represent their own unique UDP: the river park, the technology district, and the revitalization of the historic downtown (see FIG 4/7). An in-depth analysis of *MEDRío* (and *RíoCentro* in particular) will thus be taken up further below. The introduction to the POT with *MEDTransversalidades* and *MEDBorde*, however, illustrates the way by which local development has assumed a new regime spanning across vast areas of the city, many of which relate closely to the developmental ideals of UDP spatial restructuring.

MEDTRANSVERSALIDADES

Of the three AIES, *MEDTransversalidades* remains the least holistic in its development of space, which is to say that it doesn't necessarily incorporate the type of UDP strategies of *MEDBorde* and *MEDRío*. The plans for developing this space follow the *Proyectos Urbanos Integrales* model (Integral Urban Projects, PUI) that was first used in Fajardo's administration, and which supposedly focus on series of small interventions and urban upgrades in existing communities. The POT itself doesn't elaborate

FIG 4 / 4 MEDELLIN'S MODEL OF OCCUPATION, ADAPTED FROM THE 2014 POT



Legend

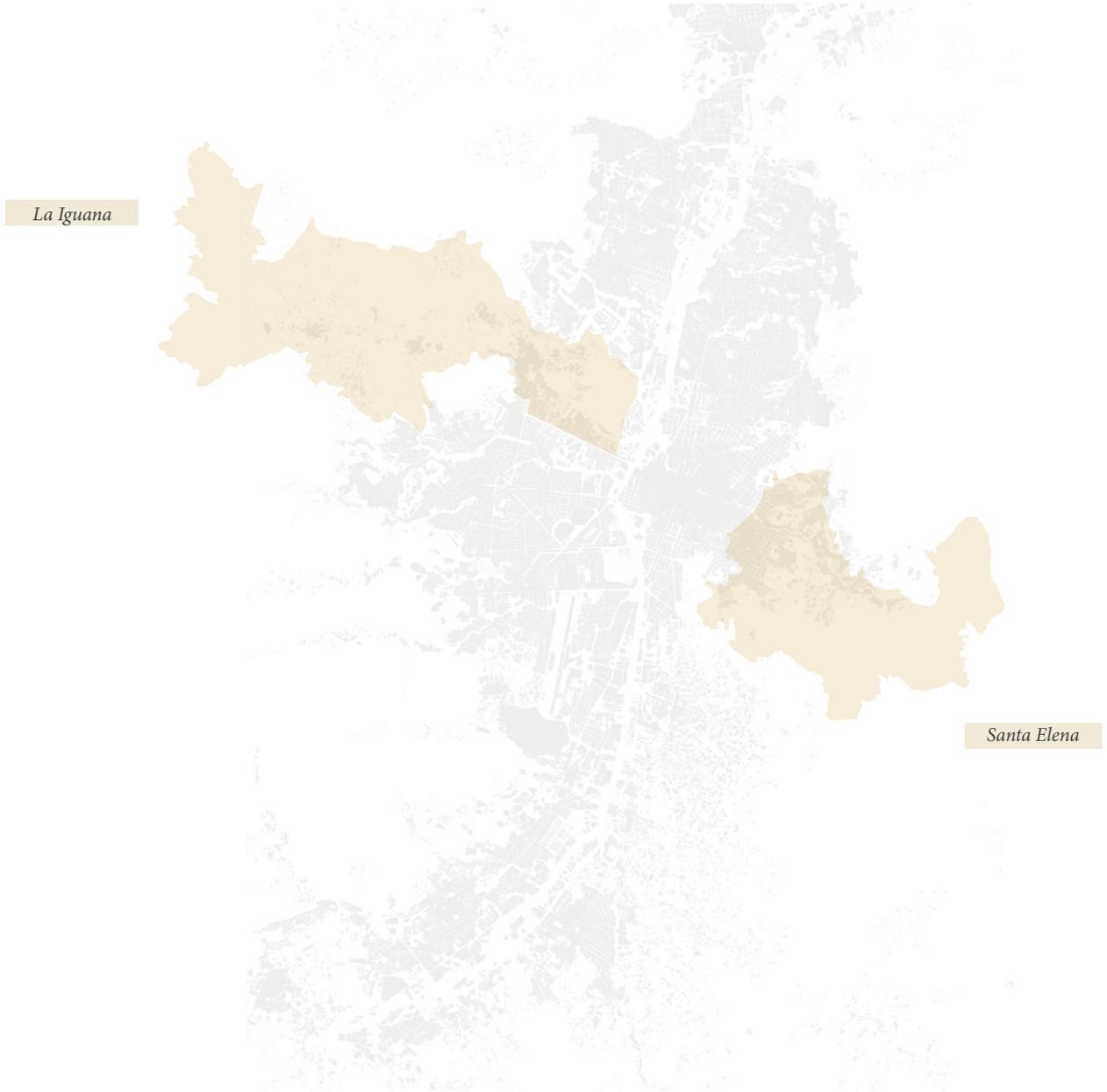
- River Corridor*
- Urban-Rural Border*
- Transversal Axis*
- Heterogeneous Areas*
- Regional Rural Territory*

AIE: MED-TRANSVERSALIDADES

The area is located between the river edge and the mountains at the center-west and center-east of Medellín, and corresponds to the fringes formed by the course and margins of the streams La Iguana and Santa Elena (also the name of the adjacent neighbourhoods). These areas will be consolidated as bands for environmental and functional connectivity between the rural areas, the rural edge, the hillside, and the river corridor

The intervention will facilitate the reorganization and improvement of rural planning, promote overall improvement of neighbourhoods, enhance rural productivity, enhance education, innovation and development, and will insert a new road system connecting the urban and regional levels, in order to reduce environmental imbalance and promote ecological and regional integration. (author's translation; Alcaldía de Medellín, 2014)

FIG 4/5 (OPPOSITE PAGE) AREA
OF MED-TRANSVERSALIDADES



AIE: MED-BORDE

The area corresponds to the urban border and rural border, to plan improvements with the goal of improving public systems, improving quality of neighbourhoods, promoting the reorganization and improvement of rural planning units, to recover areas of high risk, preserve the land by protecting and enhancing the soil for rural production. It thus seeks to guide urban growth into the appropriate areas, decrease the pressure on areas of environmental protection and/or risk, enhance productivity of rural soil and promote overall improvement of neighbourhoods. (author's translation; Alcaldía de Medellín, 2014)

FIG 4/6 (OPPOSITE PAGE) AREA
OF MED-BORDE



AIE: MED-RÍO

Corresponds to the area of the Medellín river and its surrounding region. Recognizing existing regions of shared urban form and socioeconomic characteristics, it is divided into three zones: RíoNorte, RíoCentro, and RíoSur. Within this area, all land is concentrated on renewal with the recovery of the river as an environmental and public space in the region and as the city axis, which makes this AIE site a space of densification to achieve a compact city that favours urban proximity and takes advantage of existing infrastructure. (author's translation; Alcaldía de Medellín, 2014)

FIG 4/7 (OPPOSITE PAGE) AREA
OF MED-RÍO

RíoNorte

FOCUSES ON THE INTERVENTION OF INCOMPLETE AND FRAGMENTED DEVELOPMENT IN URBAN AND ENVIRONMENTAL TERMS, AS A MEANS TO BALANCE THE TERRITORY OF THE NORTHEAST AND NORWESTERN HILLSIDES ALONG THE RIVER CORRIDOR, WHICH WILL CONCENTRATE THE PUBLIC SPACE, MOBILITY, AND SERVICES OF THE AREA

RíoCentro

AIMS TO ORGANIZE THE CENTRAL ZONE OF THE CITY TO OVERCOME FUNCTIONAL DISEQUILIBRIUM AT THE LOCAL, METROPOLITAN, AND REGIONAL SCALE, THROUGH THE STRATEGIC REUSE, RECOVERY, AND TRANSFORMATION OF THE EXISTING TISSUE, IN ORDER TO REVERSE ITS DETERIORATION, AND CONFIGURE A COMPETITIVE METROPOLITAN CENTRALITY IN THE 21ST CENTURY LINKED BACK TO THE MEDELLÍN RIVER



RíoSur

THE AREA IS CHARACTERIZED BY ITS INDUSTRIAL VOCATION AND TRADITIONAL RESIDENTIAL NEIGHBOURHOODS. IT ORIENTS ITSELF TOWARDS THE USE OF ITS INDUSTRIAL LAND, TO BOOST THE CITY'S COMPETITIVENESS IN GLOBAL ECONOMIC NETWORKS. THIS INCLUDES THE COEXISTENCE OF RESIDENTIAL USES WITH STATE-OF-THE-ART, SUSTAINABLE INDUSTRY, AS WELL AS OTHER COMPLEMENTARY USES

much on the specifics of these PUIs. It is notable, however, that the PUI to the east closely integrates with the UDP development of *MEDBorde* around the *Pan de Azucar* (one of Medellín's seven hills), and will thus be elaborated in the *MEDBorde* analysis.

What stands out as essential for *MEDTransversalidades*, however, is its new axis of mobility. This includes the addition of a new tram on the east side as part of a Metro expansion. It also includes the improvement and upgrading of an east and west roadway linking the center of the city to the new *Autopistas de la Prosperidad*¹ on the west side, and to new real estate developments to the east.

1 / THE AUTOPISTAS DE LA PROSPERIDAD WERE INTRODUCED IN CHAPTER 3. THE WEST TUNNEL PROVIDES A STRATEGIC LINK BETWEEN THE CITY CENTER AND THE CONNECTION TO THE AUTOPISTAS DE LA PROSPERIDAD ON THE WEST SIDE.

Both the integration on the east and the west include the construction of tunnels cutting through the valley mountains. The tunnel to the west was recently completed and is currently functional, with a total length of 4.6 kilometers. The 8.2 kilometer tunnel to the east is under construction now, and has notably been met with significant resistance, especially from environmental groups. While the project has received significant environmental concern, however, this criticism is popularly offset by the perception new development for commuters will be located within adjacent, natural landscapes – in line with the broader “green governmentality” ideology.

This is indicative of how developmental benefits and risks affect people differentially: in the case of the east tunnel, risks are mostly assumed by existing Santa Elena agricultural communities, while benefits are to those who can participate in the new developments in Rionegro. The tunnel's Environment Impact Assessment recognized it will intersect with fault lines of permeable fractured rock, that could empty the aquifers and dry out the network of streams in Santa Elena by draining water through the faults. “[W]ith water no longer freely available for irrigation it would become impossible to cultivate crops and raise livestock – the economic lifeblood of the region” (Bargent, 2012). Nevertheless, the strategic link it will make to the International airport, high-end suburban developments of Rionegro, and the Rionegro Free Trade Zone make it an economically appealing project for many in the city. The tunnel will save approximately 11-26 minutes of the current 40-60 minute trip to the airport, but will charge a fee equal to half a day's wage at the national minimum rate. This mobility infrastructure isn't a large-scale UDP in



FIG 4/8 (LEFT) PROTESTORS AGAINST THE EAST TUNNEL, 2011. SIGN READS "WE ARE OUTRAGED WITH THE TUNNEL" PROTESTORS WERE CHANTING: "FOR WATER, FOR LIFE, NO TO THE EAST TUNNEL"

itself, but is certainly a megaproject that will be invaluable in servicing these development projects just outside the city, and help develop the region into an area of higher land speculation.

MEDBORDE

In the case of *MEDBorde*, the *Jardín Circunvalar* is the overarching UDP, and a widely-marketed project for the city. The project extends across nearly all of the *MEDBorde* subregions. The *Jardín Circunvalar* is technically the urban portion of the regional greenbelt planned for the greater Aburrá valley: it plans for a linear, recreational park, with pedestrian paths covering a total distance of 21 kilometers extending along both the east and west side of the valley. Original plans to build a monorail alongside the pedestrian park (partly as means to cut off sprawl) have been mostly abandoned following resistance from local communities and criticism from many planners that recognize transportation corridors as generally ineffective means to stop sprawl, while potentially fragmenting future neighbourhoods that would continue to grow.

Efforts toward containing sprawl are also related to serious



Pan de Azucar

M

N

T

New Road (4.5km)

Legend

Tranvia (2015) T

Metrocable (2016) M

Metrocable (2016) N

MED-TRANSVERSALIDADES SANTA ELENA, MOBILITY TO RIONEGRO

FIG 4/9 SANTA ELENA SUBAREA
OF INTERVENTION, NEW PUBLIC
TRANSPORT, AND EAST TUNNEL
TO RIONEGRO

Oriente Tunnel (8.2km)

José María Córdova Airport

Rionegro Free Trade Zone

City of Rionegro



concerns about the overpopulation of the city and the region, which is generally viewed as having reached a point of disequilibrium for its ecological capacity. However, trying to control sprawl while avoiding over densification of the city is a difficult double-edged sword. Plans to build new sustainable neighbourhoods (*Barrios Sostenible*) at these edges of the city are one way the municipality tries to account for the conundrum. It's notable, though, the city's plans for many of these neighbourhoods are that they will house inhabitants removed from their existing housing, either because the city deems their housing as locations of immitigable risk or because a new project has been planned for the area on which their housing sits. It's not uncommon for these two reasons overlap.

Only a single piece of the *Jardín Circunvalar* in Communa 8, though, has so far experienced significant development. This is the area of the east PUI around the *Pan de Azucar*, and the intersection of the PUI and the *Jardín Circunvalar* development illustrates the way in which old models of the city's development are both in continuation while being fundamentally changed to exist within the new developmental regime. For example, there are two metrocabes that anchor the north and south end of the *Pan de Azucar*; while certainly servicing the dense neighbourhoods below, they also strategically link into the *Jardín Circunvalar* at the top of the hillside. While this these two projects imply an inclusive effect on *Communa 8* residents whose mobility to the center will be greatly increased, on the other hand, cables also allow central city residents to leapfrog over communities to enjoy the benefits of a natural park in the periphery.

It's notable within this PUI there are also architectural projects that bear strong similarities to the acupunctural projects of Social Urbanism, such as the *Unidades de Vida Articuladas* (UVA) – projects that develop previously-cordoned, empty space around municipal water tanks into community centers. As autonomous projects, they also share in a lot of the design and programme successes as those of Social Urbanism, focusing on community facilities and cultural and educational spaces. However, viewed within the context of the city's larger development, they are also integrated into the new branding regime of the city towards *life* (*vida* is literally in the UVA name). The first two UVAs were completed just prior to the World Urban Forum 7 and became an important stop on the official city tour during the event. Three of the city's first *Ecoparques*

(small community parks) are also located around this area, some linking in with the path of the *Jardín Circunvalar*. This area of *Communa 8* was the area in which Alexandra Abella Colak and Jenny Pearce noted residents were becoming as anxious about the new megaproject developments as a source of displacement as they were armed groups (see Chapter 3). There is an estimated demolition of 1600 houses in the areas of the *Ecoparques* and cable cars (Colak and Pearce, 2015: 218).

Current plans for the *Pan de Azucar* region include multiple *Barrios Sostenibles*, although all are still in initial planning phases. The development and planning of these *barrios* have been notoriously slow, especially compared to the rapidity with which the *Jardín Circunvalar*, *Ecoparques*, and cable cars have been built. The *Empresa de Desarrollo Urbano* (Medellín's public Urban Development Company, EDU) is responsible for both the *Jardín Circunvalar* and the *Barrios Sostenible*. For a long time, plans to rehouse displaced residents were notoriously evasive, requiring two official writs by residents for the protection of constitutional rights that EDU finally sent officials to discuss plans for the *Barrios Sostenible* in the early summer of 2015 (ibid). Renderings and preliminary plans have since been released. It remains clear in their imagery that design remains largely conceptual at this point, with relatively little indication of how the vast number of housing units supposedly required will be realized by the public company.

The capacities of the public company also have to be considered at the scale of the larger space of the city as well. The area around *Pan de Azucar* is actually quite a small portion of the number of communities facing similar ecological risks – risks that are being used to rationalize intensive development. Yet most of the city's interventions have been concentrated in this region, which raises questions as to why it is deemed more strategic to exact intensive development over a small area, as opposed to working in smaller stages across the larger area of the city. I think one of the missing links to that question has to do with this area being treated more akin to a UDP project, where the construction of innovative mobility, multiple community centers and parks, and ambitious (and controversial) community rehousing projects give a certain iconic meaning to this space towards the larger project of the city in making *life*. Sustainability, inclusiveness, ecology all become part of this project,

FIG 4/10 (NEXT SPREAD, LEFT) POSTER FOR JARDÍN CIRCUNVALAR, JUNE 2015. SHOWS ORIGINAL MONORAIL PROPOSED FOR THE PROJECT. ALSO SHOWS FIRST NORTHEAST METROCABLE (FAR LEFT). THE TWO RECENTLY-COMPLETED METROCABLES ARE SEEN IN THE MIDDLE AND TO THE RIGHT.

CIUDAD SOSTENIBLE

NUESTRA NUEVA MEDELLÍN

El alcalde de Medellín, Aníbal Gaviria Correa

La gerente de la Empresa de Desarrollo Urbano, EDU, Margarita María Ángel Bernal

Invitan

A la presentación del

“Plan integral de conectividad del Jardín Circunvar de Medellín”

Una realidad incluyente. Avances y retos

Jueves 16 de julio de 2015

2:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Auditorio Comfama San Ignacio (calle 48 Nro. 43 - 87 piso 4)

Eres protagonista de la metamorfosis de Medellín,
por eso tu presencia es muy importante



Formamos **ciudadanos** que conocen, construyen y **transforman su ciudad**



| | | | | |
|--|---|--|---|---|
|  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 CAMINO DE LA VIDA PAN DE AZÚCAR 2 RUTA DE CAMPESINES PAN DE AZÚCAR 3 BARRIOS SOSTENIBLES PINARES DE ORIENTE - 13 DE NOVIEMBRE 4 ECOPARQUE 13 DE NOVIEMBRE |  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 5 METRO CABLE 13 DE NOVIEMBRE 6 PASO URBANO TRES ESQUINAS 7 BARRIOS SOSTENIBLES PINARES DE ORIENTE - VILLATINA LA PIEDRA 8 PASO VÍA DE BORDE SISEE |  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 9 UNA SOL DE ORIENTE 10 UNA TANQUE SANTA ELENA 11 PASO URBANO UNA SOL DE ORIENTE 12 ECOPARQUE CAMPO SANTO VILLATINA |  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 13 PASO URBANO CAMPO SANTO VILLATINA 14 BARRIOS SOSTENIBLES SAN ANTONIO - LA TORRE 15 ECOPARQUE LAS TINAJAS 16 BARRIOS SOSTENIBLES ESFUERZOS DE PAZ - UNIÓN DE CRISTO |  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 17 PASO URBANO LAS TORRES VILLATINA 18 METRO CABLE LAS TORRES 19 ECOPARQUE DE QUEBRADA LA CASTRO 20 RED AMBIENTAL ABIERTA SOL DE ORIENTE |
|--|---|--|---|---|




Liderado por

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Jardín

Circunvalar de Medellín



FIG 4/11 (ABOVE) POSTER FOR THE JARDÍN CIRCUNVALAR AROUND PAN DE AZÚCAR IN COMMUNA 8. PROJECTS INCLUDE NEW UVAS (9,10), ECOPARQUES (4, 12, 15, 19), METROCARABLES (5,18) AND BARRIOS SOSTENIBLES (3, 7, 14, 16).







FIG 4/14 (PREVIOUS SPREAD) BEFORE AND AFTER VISUALIZATION DURING PRELIMINARY STAGES OF THE JARDÍN CIRCUNVALAR PROJECT, 2012.

FIG 4/12 (ABOVE) VISITORS LOOKING OVER THE CITY FROM THE NEW "CAMINO DE LA VIDA" (PATH OF LIFE) AROUND THE PAN DE AZUCAR IN COMMUNA 8, 2015

FIG 4/13 (RIGHT) RENDERING OF NEW ECOPARQUE NEAR PAN DE AZUCAR, 2015





FIG 4/15 (ABOVE) VIEW OVER
ECOPARQUE 13 DE NOVIEMBRE
IN COMMUNA 8, 2015



FIG 4/16 (LEFT) VIEW OVER UVA
SANTA ELENA IN COMMUNA 8,
2015

however the realities of how certain developments actually affect urban citizens is oftentimes different from how the project presents itself.

MEDRÍO

Moving from the periphery to the central spine of the river, one finds the crux of Medellín's large-scale UDP logic in *MEDRío*. Despite the name, the AIE isn't strictly circumscribed by the immediate space around the river: rather, it represents the linear core of urban space, and extends outwards at the center to include such areas as the historic downtown. The name *MEDRío*, though, alludes to the larger intention of the project to link the city back to its river. "The city has lost its relationship to the river," writes Gaviria, "however it is still in our hearts and collective memory, and there remains a desire to find it again" (Gaviria, 2014: 4).

Like *MEDBorde* and *MEDTransversalidades*, *MEDRío* is subdivided geographically into *RíoNorte*, *RíoSur*, and *RíoCentro*. This indicates an attempt to treat these spaces of the city differentially, which is important given the vast differences in the physical and socioeconomic character of the three different regions. The north, as we know, represents the pole of the city that is generally poorer and denser compared to the south.

The general strategy for the north is to reduce the stress on the hillsides by developing the center with residential units and public space. The plan identifies vacant lots where residential units can be built, and others that could be converted to new public spaces. In total, the plan identifies a possibility to construct 30,000 new units here. But it's notable these plans so far only identify land with potential to be used, and don't necessarily outline strategies for development. Given the socioeconomic character of the area, to avoid displacement new residences would either have to be public or subsidized in some way.

The south end of the river, by contrast, is the industrial hub of the city. The two physical strategies for *RíoSur* are to improve mobility by connecting fragmented road networks, and add a system of green public spaces for pedestrian use in conjunction with new vehicle mobility. The POT says it wants to maintain the area's legacy as the industrial



FIG 4/17 (EXISTING RIVER ADJACENT TO ALPUJARRA, 2005)

center: new development will “boost the competitiveness of the city in global economic networks, and will mix residential neighbourhoods with sustainable and state-of-the-art industry” (author’s translation; Alcaldía de Medellín, 2014: 35). But concerns quickly emerged the POT encourages the displacement of traditional industries that have developed – either because they cause pollution (an enemy in the project of a “sustainable” city) or because plans for the city limit mass transportation of goods by vehicle, again because of pollution but also because of the resulting congestion (Jiménez, 2014). “Sustainable” industry would supposedly solve these problems; but it’s unclear in this move towards sustainability if the city’s plan is to replace current industries with others (and if so, what?) or if it intends to upgrade existing industries without causing their displacement (and if so, how?). The effect this could have on low-level manufacturing jobs is worrisome, as this industry still forms a significant part of the current economy (Brunner et. al., 2012: 32).

It is in *RíoCentro*, though, we find the most extensive and concrete plans for major urban development. *RíoCentro* is divided further into three large-scale UDP projects: *Parques del Río* (river park), *Medellinnovation* (technology district), and the revitalization of the historic downtown. Given the relatively low residential density at the city center and the mounting issue of urban expansion, “reinhabiting” the downtown and the city’s central spine is considered one way to take pressure off of sprawling growth. While the valley itself represents finite land for expansion, there is simultaneously a “waste of land at the center with potential for transformation” (author’s translation; Alcaldía de Medellín, 2011: 34). Densification enters in as a central component for the downtown and the technology district – both of which position themselves as mixed-use neighbourhood developments.

Producing adequate housing – both in quantity and quality – is currently one of the city’s greatest challenges. The new POT claims to put in place provisions that will lead to 426,106 additional housing units for the city over the next ten years (Alcaldía de Medellín, 2014a: 28). The original report on the Valle de Aburrá by URBAM found the need for housing in the greater metropolitan region to be at 390,416 units by 2030: that includes 214,118 units in Medellín and 176,298 in the metropolitan region, plus an additional 46,660 for those inhabitants rehoused from

areas of immitigable, ecological risk (Alcaldía de Medellín, 2011: 24). These numbers are staggering, especially considering the population of the entire metropolitan region is only about 3.7 million. This problem of housing represents a fairly overwhelming obstacle the city will face in its future development, one that, admittedly, Social Urbanism strategies barely addressed. But the limited abilities of EDU in developing public or subsidized housing puts into question how new residential units will relate to the lower socioeconomic groups, which constitute a majority of rural migrants still flowing into the city. Much of the housing will be left up to private developers, for which low-income units are often not developed, or developed in relatively low quantities. However, the ability for the city to produce affordable units will greatly determine the “publicness” of spaces it is planning to build at the center – if the center becomes a new middle to high-income cluster, with the periphery remaining a generally low-income region, then the intensive development taking place at the center only targets a specific portion of the population (at least in so far as these new spaces integrate into citizens’ everyday lives).

Much of the new housing built at the center today so far have been profit-generating units. The vast majority are also severely limited in their design. “If you look at the typologies of housing around the city,” says Jorge Mario Isaza, former Director of the architecture school at Medellín’s Universidad Nacional, “they are like stamps. . . . They can change facades but we are not doing any research on housing, types of housing, the way people live. We just know that housing is needed so we produce housing and sell it” (Interview with Jorse Mario Isaza, 2015). Illustrative of this is the pilot project for densified communities currently underway in Naranjal. The neighbourhood is near the heart of Medellín, just to the west of the river. Though undertaken by the EDU, they are conceived as a profit-generating projects – a result of EDU being run as a part public, part private enterprise. While an early marketing video in 2012 visualized an exciting mixed-use development with a fairly diverse range of building types and forms, and a lively and accessible streetscape at ground level (EDU, 2012), the current design under construction is by comparison quite bland. The development is essentially rows of double-corridor slabs, identical one to the other, placed atop box podiums that replace all existing – albeit, dilapidated – urban fabric.

The existing fabric was mostly small stores and mechanical shops, with little residential units. This is illustrative of the segregation that developed between residential, commercial, and industrial neighbourhoods. It also highlights the sound basis on which developing more mixed-use communities rests. It is in the top-down nature of current development, though, involving mass clearances and reconstruction where questions regarding the future of such neighbourhoods emerge. The EDU's acquisition of land was done through negotiations with owners, either with monetary compensation or by reserving space in the new complex. However, there are still fears about the type of relocation that will occur through various phases of development (Gill, 2014). It's also worth considering where such small-service businesses – such as the mechanic shops that previously proliferated – will find areas to locate in the future if similar development is imagined across the central spine of the city. While these land acquisitions were done, according to the city, through fair processes with land owners, what this means for the right of local inhabitants to occupy these areas of city space as small-holder rights are gradually taken away remains of question.

REVITALIZATION OF TRADITIONAL CENTER

Questions of housing also continue to be important in the historic downtown. This area experienced a particularly harsh rate of vacancy over the last few decades of the 20th century. While once the center of the city, and still the location of Medellín's richest architectural heritage, this traditional center was left mostly to itself following the flight of the city's wealthier inhabitants to the south. The area now assumes a noticeably dilapidated character, although its rich heritage does not go unnoticed.

This does not mean the downtown is no longer a lively space today. In fact, many of its squares and public plazas are the liveliest across the city. While *El Poblado* now represents the high-commerce and business center of the city, the historic downtown is filled with city-owned and informal market carts selling both legal and illicit goods. The city's old National Palace – built in 1925 and once the location of offices and



FIG 4/18 NATIONAL PALACE TODAY, WITH SHOPS AROUND ATRIUM, AND CAFÉ, 2015

headquarters for major Antioquian institutions – has since become a shopping mall, filled to the brim with, again, both legal and illicit goods in over 400 small shops. Illegality has come to define much of this area in general, in fact. *Parque Berrío* is now a center for gambling; the alley behind the *Basilica de la Candelaria* sells fake accessories, bootlegged films and pornography; *Iglesia de la Veracruz*, another heritage Catholic church in the city, is today a well-known location for soliciting prostitution.

For all its rich architectural heritage, its central location, and its “unsavoury” character, the revitalization of the historic downtown is now identified as a critical area of intervention. Development here will “contribute to improving security conditions, mobility, legality, and citizen coexistence” (Alcaldía de Medellín, 2014: 35). The POT outlines six separate goals in achieving this: re-inhabit the center by building new residential buildings or renovating existing buildings; improve the quality of existing public spaces; bring back an institutional presence; revitalize its cultural heritage; develop new public and private partnerships, to design a new system of land ownership incentives and management; and finally, improve environmental conditions by prioritizing pedestrian interventions and public transport.

The continued presence of illegal groups in the area, and the complications this has on the municipality’s power in redeveloping space, is cited as a possible reason why development here has been both a priority in previous administrations and a difficult project to initiate. It is surely also difficult, however, to embark on ambitious restructuring of an area as dense and crowded as this one. There is no doubt that *life* still exists here. Of course, that’s not to forget many of the existing illegal practices can have grave effects on certain inhabitants, especially relating to the extortion of small shop owners (a common practice of “chronic violence”) and violence against women through prevalent prostitution circles.

Visualizations for the regeneration of the area are still very vague, and mostly focus on the addition of green spaces through the center (in line with the city’s larger vision of greening the *RíoCentro* area). How illegal networks and vulnerable citizens in the downtown will be addressed is also still vague. While often regarded as a successful urban project, the revitalization of the adjacent *Plaza Cisneros*² in the early

2000s was criticized for its expulsion of its homeless population, without adequate provisions to deal with their movement or the actual causes of homelessness in the city. Much of the homeless population continues to live in and around the area of the river and in some parts of the downtown, or else in the city's few shelters (Bedoya, 2014). Ideally, the administrations would learn from past mistakes before redevelopment of these adjacent downtown areas.

So far, the revitalization project seems mostly to have materialized through the greening and upgrading of select streets. The larger ambition for the center still remains, though, with the city recognizing the center "plays an essential role for the image it projects: its competitiveness" (author's translation; Fernández, 2014: 23). Evidence of entrepreneurialist governance materializes clearly within the municipality's developmental plans. "The current international economic trend," writes Ángel Luis Fernández, architect and former advisor to Gaviria on the downtown revitalization plan, "in which the city has substituted the state as an engine of the economy, has not changed, and there remains a system of competition played between cities in which each is either in momentum or decline" (author's translation; Fernández, 2014: 23).

2 / PLAZA CISNEROS WAS RENAMED PARQUE DE LAS LUCES, AND IS THE PLAZA SURROUNDING THE BIBLIOTECA EPM NEXT TO ALPUJARRA. DURING THE DAY, IT IS MONITORED WITH A RELATIVELY HIGH POLICE PRESENCE AND IS CONSIDERED "SAFE" FOR TOURISTS. DURING THE NIGHT, IT IS STILL CONSIDERED A NO-GO ZONE BY MANY TOURIST GUIDES. SEE: WWW.COLOMBIAREPORTS.COM/GO-AREAS-MEDELLIN

MEDELLINNOVATION

The new technology district also follows closely on this logic of city competitiveness. Called *Medellinnovation*, the district builds a clear link between Smart technology and the Green city. Its plans call for the development of a mixed-use neighbourhood, built around the industry of innovation in technology. Like the historic downtown, however, the rebuilding of this neighbourhood of Carabobo poses questions about its potential use and appropriation by existing citizens.

The project plans to redevelop 168 hectares of public space at the northern pole of *RíoCentro*, with integration into the *Parques del Río* (discussed below) and the University of Antioquia on the opposite side of the river. The traditional fabric of the neighbourhood is primarily low-middle income residential, with small holder community stores. However,

the North Revitalization project of the early 2000s brought with it the addition of the *Parque de los Deseos*, *Parque Explora*, the revitalization of the botanical gardens and, most recently, the \$50 million (US) *Ruta N* innovation facility. Hewlett Packard also opened their Latin American center of services here in 2012, part of a larger pact to help grow the district as a place of innovation. HP recently pulled out of that commitment, which has raised doubts about the probability of success for the larger *Medellinnovation* plans (see Nearshore Amercias, 2015).

Nevertheless, Smart City narratives emerge here with exceptional force. With ambitions to develop Latin America's centre of technological innovation, the project has been heralded by some as an attempt to build South America's Silicon Valley (Alexander, 2014). The official marketing video projects a new community "surrounded by the presence of corporate research facilities and public amenities, in a green and digital environment"; situated next to the new *Parques del Río*, it will become a "playground for the neighbourhood's diverse and inclusive social milieu, connecting the district back to the Medellín river and back to nature"; pedestrian mobility through the district will focus on the "needs of a new, human-scale lifestyle"; public spaces will be "enhanced by digital technologies" (Medellinnovation, 2013a).

Medellinnovation ensures the city's leadership in the innovation economy, says another state-released document on POT, both as an "engine for employment and for the development of products and services oriented towards the new Global and Latin American markets. . . . A key resource for this development will be the people who live and work in the [*Distrito Medellinnovation*], and those who come to inhabit this area of the city, including young people who help Medellín innovate their way to a new economy" (author's translation; Rowe, 2014: 33). The district has four official goals: anchor a creative ecosystem in the areas of health, energy and ICT in the area; attract companies with a high added value; promote a new generation of digital-based entrepreneurs; and finally, build a diverse and open urban environment where people can live, work, and play (DistritoMedellinnovation, 2013b). The Agency for Cooperation and Investment of Medellín and the Metropolitan Area (ACI) has developed a travelling presentation of the district aimed to attract foreign investors, entitled "Why Medellín?" Information sessions on investing in the *Distrito*

Medellinnovation have travelled to such cities as Madrid, Barcelona, Buenos Aires, Santiago, San Francisco, amongst others, each of which represent localities with a presence in the innovation economy. ACI presents the advantages of foreign companies investing and locating here: access to smart capital, connection to business networking, building of innovative businesses, tailor-made talent, benefits between 75 and 100 percent of the property tax, or exemption from industry and commerce tax. It will be a “glam environment,” says the ACI, “a digital environment enabling the development of new products, business models, even lifestyles” (ACI, 2014).

Plans for redevelopment are founded on the economic renewal of the district, adding new *life* with the vitality of a high-tech economy. At the same time, like images through the rest of *RíoCentro*, visualizations of the space parallel this economic vitality with the image of rich biodiversity. The flourishing of trees, flowers, and shrubbery through the new district are inspired by the city’s own botanical gardens, says the administration (Distrito Medellinnovation, 2013b), which represents one of the most loved public spaces in Medellín. Integrated with the revitalized river landscape, the space supposedly connects back to its history by making reference to the river. Simultaneously, the addition of digital technologies (although no specifics are given) will “enhance” these public spaces. Somewhere in this process of appropriating these fairly generic ideologies of urbanity, the district also integrates the social narratives typical to Medellín’s recent urban redevelopment that continue to position the city as “radical”: this district will become an inclusive space, they say, a home for the city’s “diverse social milieu” (Distrito Medellinnovation, 2013b).

But why is a neighbourhood built on the economy of high-tech innovation an appropriate choice for the context of Medellín, or the neighbourhood of Carabobo in particular? Exact plans for its redevelopment include improving mobility through the district, by upgrading and re-engineering traffic logistics through the neighbourhood while improving pedestrian accessibility. Building on the presence of existing public buildings and the adjacent university, it will enhance the local, innovative character by developing new public buildings “integrated” within its high tech industry. New housing will be developed through the district to realize the its live-work lifestyle goals. The above





NARANJAL

FIG 4/19 (OPPOSITE PAGE, TOP) VIEW FROM SURAMERICA METRO STATION TO NARANJAL NEIGHBORHOOD, EXISTING, 2015

FIG 4/20 (OPPOSITE PAGE, BOTTOM) VISUALIZATION OF NARANJAL DEVELOPMENT (BACK LEFT OF IMAGE) WITH POTENTIAL FOR ARRABAL EXTENSION IN FRONT. VISUALIZED NEXT TO COMPETITION PROPOSAL FOR PARQUES DEL RÍO, EDU 2012

FIG 4/21 (ABOVE) VISUALIZATION OF NARANJAL DEVELOPMENT FROM STREET LEVEL, EDU 2012

FIG 4/22 (LEFT, TOP) SAME AS FIG 4/16

FIG 4/23 (LEFT, BOTTOM) SAME AS FIG 4/16

TRADITIONAL CENTER

FIG 4/24 (RIGHT) VIEW THROUGH HISTORIC DOWNTOWN STREET, WITH STREET VENDERS SELLING BOTH LEGAL AND ILLEGAL GOODS, FROM CITY-OWNED CARTS, 2015

FIG 4/25 (BELOW) PARQUE BERRÍO, 2015



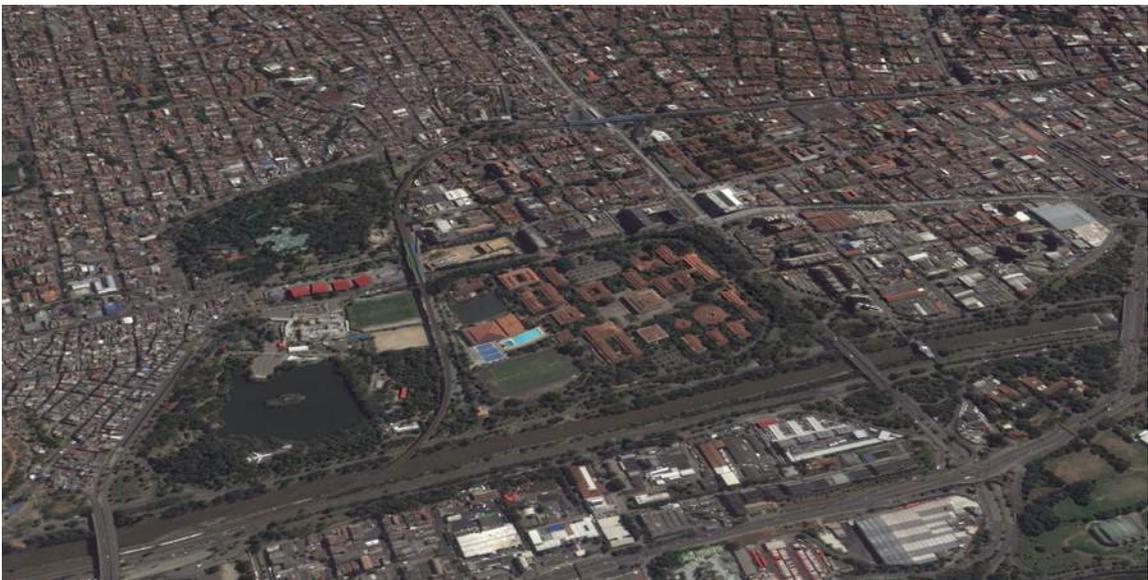


FIG 4/26 (ABOVE) VISUALIZATION OF CARRERA BOLÍVAR, THE FIRST STREET TO UNDERGO TRANSFORMATION UNDER TRADITIONAL CENTER REVITALIZATION PLAN, CARLOS PUERTA, 2014

FIG 4/27 (MIDDLE) VISUALIZATION OF PARQUE BERRÍO FROM CARLOS PUERTA, WINNER OF MUNICIPAL-HELD COMPETITION FOR DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION, CARLOS PUERTA, 2014

FIG 4/28 (BOTTOM, LEFT) AERIAL OF EXISTING FABRIC AROUND PARQUE BOLÍVAR IN TRADITIONAL CENTER, 2014

FIG 4/29 (BOTTOM, RIGHT) IMAGINATION OF THE DISTRICT AFTER CITY'S TRANSFORMATION, ALCALDÍA DE MEDELLÍN, 2013





MELLINNOVATION

FIG 4/30 (OPPOSITE PAGE, TOP) VISUALIZATION OF NEW INNOVATION DISTRICT, 2013

FIG 4/31 (OPPOSITE PAGE, BOTTOM) GOOGLE AERIAL OF CURRENT CARABOBO NEIGHBOURHOOD, 2015

FIG 4/32 (LEFT, TOP) VISUALIZATION OF NEW INNOVATION DISTRICT FROM STREET LEVEL, CARLO RATTI ASSOCIATI, 2014

FIG 4/33 (LEFT, BOTTOM) SAME AS FIG 4/28

FIG 4/34 (BELOW) CONNECTION OVER RIVER AND WITH UNIVERSITY OF ANTIOQUIA, CARLO RATTI ASSOCIATI, 2014

actually culminates, however, in a fairly massive clearance of existing neighbourhood fabric (see FIG 4/36). Premised on the larger needs of densification, new mid and high-rise developments will theoretically help the city to achieve these densifying goals. And yet the visualizations of the development suggest part of this renewal also has to do with cultivating an urban aesthetic more in line with the “innovative” brand of the district.

Nevertheless, the city still claims that social inclusion is one of the underlying objectives. This progressive dimension is not unusual amongst other developing cities, who have also appropriated smart communities and smart growth with social and environmental responsibility. However, within these progressive models there are obvious “inherent hidden assumptions and ideological contradictions,” says Robert G. Hollands (Hollands, 2008: 306). “For instance, the notion of IT transforming life and work within the region found within the smart communities literature . . . not only begs the question ‘how, and in what way is it being transformed?’ but it also automatically assumes that there is some kind of community ‘consensus’ and involvement in the transition, and that such a change is inherently positive” (ibid). The use of such smart city models are also illustrative of the more general shift in municipal governance from management to entrepreneurial forms (Harvey, 1989), Hollands points out, whereby the adoption of smart technologies and industry is automatically perceived as a city being pro-business. While these smart technology and pro-business models often interplay with social and environmental sustainability objectives, their ‘bottom-line’ dynamic points to an overarching goal of attracting capital. Further, these dynamics often end with a more polarized city, between the “knowledge and creative workers, and the unskilled and IT illiterate sections of the local poorer population” (Hollands, 2008: 312). The normalizing effect of the smart city labelling, however, often develops a consensus amongst many that the required development and restructuring needed to achieve a “smart” economy are inherently good.

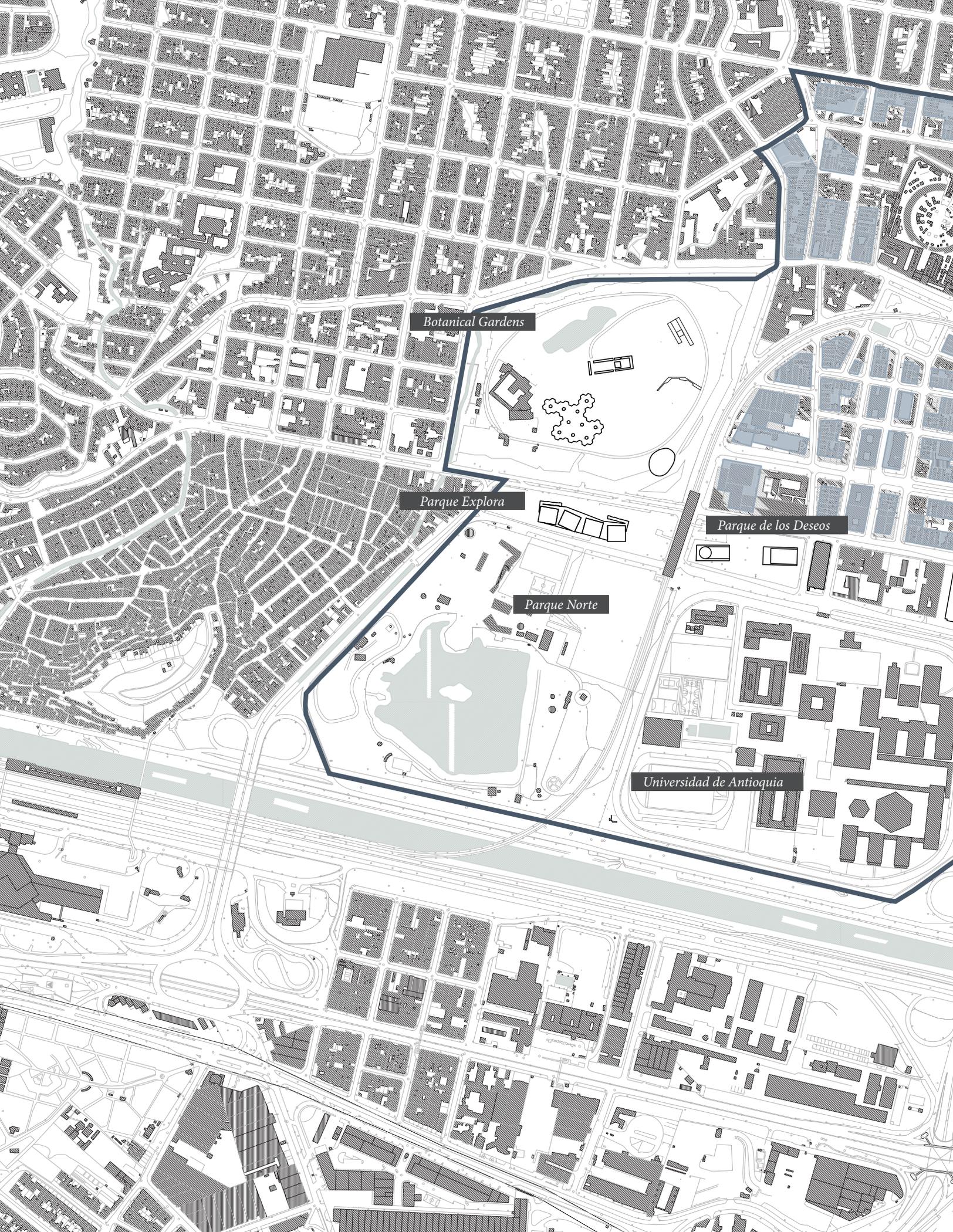
While the pro-business logics of developing a center of innovation are clear, the actual viability of an economy based around innovative and sustainable technology is unclear in the context of Medellín. For such an economy, there needs to exist a base from which to draw human capital. For Medellín, there are doubts as to how the higher education system can



FIG 4/35 VISUALIZATION OF NEW PUBLIC SPACES IN MEDELLINNOVATION “ENHANCED” BY DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES, 2013

feed into this economy. “Medellín is leading cluster-based initiatives to transform itself into a center of high technology, creative industries, and tourism,” reports the OECD, “but coordination with the Department of Antioquia and tertiary education institutions remains a challenge” (Brunner et. al., 2012: 30). “The kind of innovation most needed in Antioquia is not the high-tech, research-based knowledge produced in sophisticated research centres and laboratories, but incremental improvements in the way products are made and commercialized in low and middle-tech firms that are still the bulk of the economy” (Brunner et. al., 2012: 31–32). The introduction of a district based on the innovation economy now runs in tandem with threats to expel industrial areas representing much of the current economy.

The new district is about injecting the neighbourhood of Carabobo with vitality – economic, ecological, social. The district presents innovation and high-tech industry as a self-evident strategy that will bring *life* back to the center. The inconsistencies between what it promises as a theoretical future and what it actually presents to the current population is quite different, though, and the inherent normalization of the project often makes itself clear. For example, while a glowing article in *The Telegraph* gathered interviews from young designers exclaiming pride in how they now have the opportunity to work on video games or apps in their home country, it couldn’t ignore the type of resistance that was simultaneously emerging. “As *The Telegraph* was driving up to the shining glass and steel Ruta N complex,” writes Harriet Alexander, “the road was blocked by protestors – with one man hoisting himself onto a cross



Botanical Gardens

Parque Explora

Parque Norte

Parque de los Deseos

Universidad de Antioquia



FIG. 24 / 36 PROPOSAL FOR THE
DELLINKNOVANDON DISTRICT
BASED ON PRELIMINARY PLANS
DISTRICT BOUNDARIES SHOWN
IN DARK BLUE. PROPOSED BUILD-
INGS SHOWN AS LIGHT BLUE
OVERLAY.

Ruta N

0m 200m

‘crucifying’ himself while wearing a sign around his neck reading ‘I’m dying for a house’. . . . And up in the *communas* – the hillside shanty towns – amid the rough red brick dwellings was a string of graffitied slogans: ‘Medellín Innovation: Misery and fear’ (Alexander, 2014).

PARQUES DEL RÍO

The last of the three UDP projects in *RíoCentro* has perhaps become the most famous: *Parques del Río*. It’s also one whose development sits outside existing urban fabric, located on the river landscape that has generally been abandoned and made inaccessible by the highways that straddle it on either side. The river is considered both a central ecological feature of the city, and one of its most divisive barriers, essentially cutting Medellín in half. Not surprisingly, plans to improve its integration into the city have been in discussion for decades, although what that integration entails has varied.

The particular vision of the Gaviria administration for the river was introduced to the world through an international design competition for a river master plan. The competition called for a renaturalization of the river, which had been reduced to a constructed canal during the city’s intense industrialization and urbanization process through the 20th century. The winning entry was ultimately local firm LATITUD. Nevertheless, held in the second year of the Gaviria administration, it was the first significant global exposure of the new character of development that has since defined local urban planning. The competition spec advertised the project as a \$1 billion (US) revitalization project, with an overarching solution that would extend across ten kilometers of its length.

LATITUD’s winning design was called *Parque Botánico* – again a reference to the botanical gardens that is loved amongst the city, and an indication of the type of biodiversity the project imagines. LATITUD’s design extended a linear greenscape following the entire urban length of the river, with moments of expansion and also integration into existing green spaces at strategic nodes along its length. At the time of its design, plans for *Medellinnovation* had not yet become what they are today, and



later iterations have made clear on the strong connection that will be made with the technology district. The center of the design is still at Alpujarra, though: the administrative center and center of the Medellín river, and thus provides a logical point of connection between the east and west sides of the city. The original competition panels outlined how educational and cultural programming of the new park would intersect with new biodiversity in a list of project goals:

The park's program seeks to develop environmental awareness, preserve the region's native species, connect to the biotic network of the valley and protect it from rapid growth, create cultural settings along the axis of the river to enhance the quality of public space and infrastructure, provide spaces for learning through use of multiple landscapes and vegetation, and offer sports venues to achieve a recreational and educational park for inhabitants of the valley (author's translation; LATITUD, 2013).

“Life will return to the river, and the river to the city and its inhabitants,” says Gaviria (author's translation; Gaviria Correa, 2014: 4). It's also



FIG 4/37 (TOP) VISUALIZATION OF PARQUES DEL RÍO, ALCALDÍA DE MEDELLÍN, 2015

FIG 4/38 (MIDDLE) SAME AS FIG 4/38

FIG 4/39 (BOTTOM) SAME AS FIG 4/38

FIG 4/40 (THIS PAGE, TOP) VIEW OF RIVER NEAR ALPUJARRA, 2013



FIG 4/41 (THIS PAGE, MIDDLE) VISUALIZATION OF PHASE 1 AND 2 RIVER PARKS PROJECT AT ALPUJARRA, LATITUD, 2013

FIG 4/42 (THIS PAGE, BOTTOM) VISUALIZATION RIVER PARKS PROJECT, LATITUD, 2013

FIG 4/43 (OPPOSITE PAGE, TOP) VISUALIZATION OF PHASE 2 RIVER PARKS PROJECT ON EAST SIDE OF RIVER, ALPUJARRA, 2015

FIG 4/44 (OPPOSITE PAGE, BOTTOM LEFT) RIVER ADJACENT TO ALPUJARRA, EXISTING, 2005

FIG 4/45 (OPPOSITE PAGE, BOTTOM RIGHT) VISUALIZATION OF RIVER PARKS PROJECT ADJACENT TO ALPUJARRA, LATITUD, 2013





FIG 4/46 VISUALIZATION OF
RIVER PARKS PROJECT LOOKING
NORTH, LATITUD, 2013





here in *Parques del Río* that the strongest rhetoric around naturalizing the urban emerges. Untrammelled urbanization has no doubt negatively and significantly affected the once-rich biodiversity of the Aburrá valley. That ecological destruction relates to wider urbanization across the expansive space of the city, however. Even before urbanization, the river represented a fairly weak aquatic ecosystem. Ecological benefits would come more from a revitalization of the complex system of streams that feed into the river from the top of the valley, whose quality has been severely compromised by the over-construction of housing on and around them. Focusing on bringing the river back to its natural state, by surrounding it by greenery and returning the constructed canal to its meandering form, has less to do with the river's ecological restoration than the project suggests.

There are still obviously environmental benefits to the *Parques del Río*, not least of which has to do with a vast increase in diverse greenery the project would bring back to the center of the city. It also has the potential to develop key public spaces connecting the west side of the city to the east. Criticism of the project emerges, though, in the scale of transformation it imagines. If this scale of the original proposal is to be realized, staged development would have to take place over fifteen years at minimum. The current pilot project in Alpujarra also includes the burying of the highway to open space above for the park; the construction involved has been called “open-heart surgery” from some residents (Ortega, 2015). Redressing highly fragmented pedestrian mobility is how intensive construction here was rationalized – burying the highway simultaneously solves the most divisive barrier in the city while returning the river to citizens. However, in addition to closing the highway for eleven months (now to be extended by six more) this single part of the project entailed an original (and supposedly exceeded) budget of US\$60 million (Ortega, 2015). For a city struggling with such intensive social and spatial inequalities, it has made just this one piece of the river an extremely expensive project.

By burying the highway, though, the space is now visualized as a place of nature. Ironically, burying the highway involved the cutting down of existing trees lining the river; but images of the new reinvigorated space give no such indication. The former area of the highway is now flooded



FIG 4/47 PLAN OF THE RIVER PARKS PROPOSAL BY LATITUD, 2013. ADAPTED FROM COMPETITION PROPOSAL PANELS.



FIG 4/48 AXONOMETRIC SECTION OF PARQUES DEL RÍO AT THE CITY CENTER, WHERE THE HIGHWAY WILL BE BURIED UNDER THE PEDESTRIAN PARK, ALCALDÍA DE MEDELLÍN, 2015

with lush greenery, and the strict linearity of the river's artificial edge has been broken. In the imagery, children run through water features spurting from the ground; oversized tree canopies provide shaded areas of respite from the sun that beats down heavily so close to the equator; not a car is in sight – an appealing thought for a city plagued with traffic congestion and pollution, with paths filled instead by pedestrians and cycling. But it's notable this imagery doesn't really present the city: urban life is either carefully hidden from view with rows of trees, or else renderings ignore the city context in which the river sits. Its idyllic, perhaps, to think this space of nature can sit within a dense and congested city such as Medellín – at its center no less. Yet this has to do in part with the fact the existing city remains unacknowledged within the dreamscape.

Rationalizing the US\$1 billion original cost of the entire *Parques del Río* – by far the city's most ambitious public space project – also includes the hope it will attract dense residential developments to the center in the future. Today, though, residential density around the river,

and especially around the city center, is very low. Thus despite physically being the literal spine of the city, the *Parques del Río* sits very much outside of urban everyday life. This could change if the project proves successful and densification follows. However, given that much of this residential development will depend on market-driven housing, how will the river sit within the everyday lives of citizens who may not afford a space in the newly-developed center? Right now, there is also little integration planned with the public transportation system. Public benefits of the project thus have to be thought of critically. The simultaneous disinvestment in infrastructure and urban projects in poor and peripheral communities (compared to the previous ten years under Social Urbanism) also needs to be factored into the cost-benefit equation.

Promises around the public space benefits of such projects as the *Parques del Río* is quite typical to many urban waterfront and riverfront developments today. As Ute Lehrer and Jennifer Laidley point out, these projects usually employ a range of rationalizing logics from “global imagineering,” integrating the space of the city into the global economy, to ideas of socioeconomic and environmental benefits, and of course promises of public space. These diffuse discourses “allow the new mega-projects to be more readily embraced by a wide variety of communities,” but in fact often obfuscate their “major beneficiaries and ideologies – most often the development industries rather than the local populace, and the quest for urban status rather than the pursuit of urban inclusion” (Lehrer and Laidley, 2009: 800). While the purported benefits may appear real in certain cases, they can also lead to an “unreflective acceptance of the apparent necessity for these mega-projects” (Lehrer and Laidley, 2009: 800).

This unreflective acceptance is integral to the normalizing effect of proposals across the city. For the case of Medellín in particular, by associating these developments with the concept of *life* – often bolstered with ecological narratives – it converseley implies existing space is not only inferior to planned developments, but that they actively stand in the way of the “living” city. Large-scale redevelopment thus becomes a necessary strategy in the city’s larger recovery – only by replacing the city with another can Medellín finally be delivered from its past.

LIFE, BUT FOR WHAT CITY?

The social recovery of the city, as we saw in chapter 3, is still very much a struggling one. One of the central criticisms made in this thesis about the Social Urbanism programme was that it developed a totalizing image of the city that hid any alternative narratives of everyday life in which this struggle might be seen. In its scale and isolated vision for the city, the large-scale UDP takes that totalizing project even further. Yet, it's the interrelationship between the different UDP projects that help perpetuate a progressive narrative to development while implying an "arrival" of the city as a true Global competitor.

Out in the east, around the area of the *Pan de Azucar* and the *Jardín Circunvalar*, for example, projects such as the UVAs and *EcoParques* continue the iconic juxtaposition between formal and informal typologies. In a 2015 issue of *The Architectural Review*, these recent UVAs were described by correspondent Manon Mallard as a programme that established continuity between Social Urbanism and today. "If Medellín was still called the *city of death* a few years ago, Colombia's second biggest city has since undergone a drastic transformation driven by the belief that architecture can be a tool for profound urban regeneration. The UVA programme follows the same core principles of this metamorphosis" (Mollard, 2015). Images of these projects look remarkably similar to those of Social Urbanism, if not more "sleek." But they also help perpetuate a narrative that social development strategies of Social Urbanism are proving sustainable. Clustering projects around the *Jardín Circunvalar* as an integrated project only reinforces that idea.³ It's not surprising this area was a key stop on the 2014 World Urban Forum 7 official tour.

On the other hand, there are developments such as the *Jardín Circunvalar* and the UDP projects of the center that help establish a break in the city that "was" and the city that "is" today. And today, the city is *life*. But these urban images also adopt highly conventional, Neoliberal ideologies of social, economic, and spatial development. If all UDPs are realized to their full plans, Medellín will soon be defined by an image of the city based on political and often market-led preconceptions

3/ IT'S NOTABLE THAT SINCE THE FIRST TWO UVAS, TWO SUBSEQUENT PROJECTS WERE BUILT TO THE ON THE EAST SIDE, FURTHER TO THE NORTH. CURRENTLY THEY HAVE LESS INTEGRATION INTO OTHER EXISTING PROJECTS ASSOCIATED WITH THE JARDÍN CIRCUNVALAR, ALTHOUGH FUTURE PLANS ARE TO EXPAND THE JARDÍN CIRCUNVALAR TO THE NORTH AS WELL



FIG 4/49 UVA LA ESPERANZA
SEEN AT NIGHT, 2015

about what 21st century urban *life* looks like. This new image also sits on a questionable and often unstable democracy, one that continues to privilege certain forms of chronic violence. “There’s a whole city project built on some very precarious foundations,” says Peter Brand, speaking of the new projects such as *Parques del Río* and *Medellinnovation*. “But nobody seems too worried about that. Not the United Nations, universities, they mostly turn a blind eye to these realities” (interview with Peter Brand, 2015). Under this image of *life* – and its related rhetoric, such as public space, social inclusion, urban competitiveness, innovation, sustainability – we find a city still dealing with serious issues relating to the construction of a fair and democratic society.

The razing of existing space has a certain symbolism in this project of social recovery when that space is identified as being developed from, and is still a part of, a violent era. It’s worth questioning how this type and scale of development would be perceived, however, if it was the

immediate solution taken in the 1990s and early 2000s, when politicians and local elite were concerned about how the city could escape its past and also revive the economy by entering the Global economic order. This was also the moment the city's two primary challenges in Globalizing the economy were acknowledged: first, a lack of centralized power, and second, a debilitating stigma. Which is why, in this process of making *life*, the period of hope can not be thought of as external. In fact, the period of hope was a necessary process in overcoming both obstacles, despite the genuine intentions from many actors involved.

It was never intended as a secret that Social Urbanism's objectives were both social and economic. Going back to Fajardo's 2004 Development Plan, entitled "Commitment to All Citizens," such economic objectives were clearly outlined front and center (Alcaldía de Medellín, 2004). In the process of making these totalizing images of the city, however, it's easy for genuine efforts in producing transformative public spaces to become marketable objects that sit outside of actively produced social space. This, in turn, only helps undermine their original, progressive intentions. Now that the city is seen as achieving its miracle, the city's crisis period is not ignored. Rather, it is presented as something in the past and long gone. "Since matters of public security have gained priority on the political agenda, tranquility and peace has become a fundamental component of the competitiveness that attracts investment capital, even when it comes to a city so stigmatized by their statistics of violence as Medellín. Consequently, the city is presented as a living miracle . . . leaving behind violence and swiftly transitioning into prosperity" (author's translation; Galindo, 2014: 26).

This trajectory of the "miracle" was established with Social Urbanism. But the programme also imagined the "miracle" within the existing context of the city: this was the foundation of their acupunctural approach, which considered interventions as catalysts for existing communities. The UDP projects of today suggest that context is no longer a concern. By tying development to discourses of economic and social vitality, environmental sustainability, and the all-encompassing rhetoric of *life* itself, destruction is normalized based on its association to creation. Perhaps new development does promise revitalization and a renewal of *life* for some, but whether *life* is for everybody remains less convincing.



X

CONCLUSION

At the start of 2016, a new municipal administration under mayor Federico Gutiérrez took office; since the thesis sought to establish developmental continuity between administrations, it would be remiss to altogether leave out this next chapter of Medellín's story. But as of now, it remains unclear what development will continue to look like. Gutiérrez's administration is currently working on the 2018-2019 *Plan Desarrollo* (Development Plan), which will be the first clear indication. Given the thesis identified structural conditions of production as informing future developmental practices, it seems logical to suggest a new administration would not alone affect the nature of development. But this argument is flawed in that it oversimplifies a complex equation: between structural determinants and administrative visions. Social Urbanism was surely affected by the specific administrative rhetoric of *Compromiso Ciudadana*, just as Gaviria's focus on *life* was also part of an administrative motive to differentiate themselves from previous offices. However, the choice of *life* to rationalize and increase the scale of development was also viewed as a logical transition when considering the longer transformation from the period of the 1990s to today.

One indication of a potential break with the previous administration, though, comes from Gutiérrez's recent postponement of the second phase of *Parques del Río*. The first stage across from Alpujarra is now behind schedule (expected mid-April), and is accused of running over budget. It is not yet clear what the future holds for the *Parques del Río* and other projects like it. Stage two is officially set to commence August 29, while in the meantime the current office conducts a formal review.

Following this postponement, some citizens have voiced their concerns development of the river might be abandoned altogether. "*Parques del Río* was more than a project of Aníbal Gaviria's administra-

FIG X/1 (OPPOSITE PAGE) CITY OF MEDELLÍN SEEN FROM THE SOUTH, 2014

tion,” writes Óscar Marín Garcés, “it is payment to a historic debt owed to recognize the Medellín river as the main natural structuring system of the Aburrá valley” (author’s translation; Garcés, 2016). It’s true this idea of “returning” the river to the city and connecting the divided east and west through strategic intervention has existed within the city’s discourse for decades now. However, the *Parques del Río* as we know it today is still very much affected by a particular administration’s vision. While it remains vital the potential of the river not be lost (especially as a point of connection between the city’s divided halves) the scale of intervention needs to be considered critically – and not just as a stand alone project either, but as a project sitting within the context of a city possessing deep social, economic, and spatial inequalities.

In tracing the transformation of urban intervention in Medellín through the thesis, urban planning and architecture were often seen through a single disciplinary lens. The idea that the planning regime has itself transformed from “acupunctural” insertions to holistic planning implies that, from the beginning, architecture as a spatial tool was subsumed within the city’s political urban planning. Critical of the urban planning profession in general, Henri Lefebvre saw the intellectual strain of “urbanism” as a discipline that seeks to make an ordered object out of the chaos that is the city: “to succeed it must tighten any existing constraints by imposing homogeneity, a *politics of space*, a form of rigorous planning that suppresses symbols, information, and play” (Lefebvre, 2003 [1970]: 97-98). But he does not only see this as an objective of urbanists alone; rather, architects are often subject to the same cruel desire to make order out of everything:

[B]oth of them, whether together or in opposition, receive orders and obey a single uniform social order. Moreover, they soon abandon the small grain of utopia, the slight touch of madness that might still distinguish their work and render them suspect of ill will, disobedience, or nonconformity. The politics of space implies a strategy that aligns levels and dimensions. Order cloaks itself in morality and scientificity. (ibid: 98).

Conclusion

This “ordering” of the city rings especially true for the latter period of development under Gaviria’s administration. Rationalizing development on the premise of a right “order of things”—to engender a new era of *life* in the city—was tied intricately to the treatment of urban planning as a moral and scientific operation. Applying a biopolitical lens to new development not only revealed this project of *life* as one based on normalizing destruction and rationalizing development, but also rendered their relationships to the centralization of power more transparent. This centralization of power entailed a spatial and economic centralization as well: “as long as certain relationships of production remain unchanged, centrality will be subjected to those who use these relationships and benefit from them. At best it will be ‘elitist,’ at worst controlled by the military or police” (ibid: 97). Centralization is pivotal to the regional hegemonic project of Antioquia. Violence and displacement are active components of that project, as is the construction of new spaces and infrastructures through the city and its region.

But part of Social Urbanism’s appeal was how it appeared to overcome the inherent ordering and centralization of urban planning: architecture was seen as possessing relative autonomy, using its own principles for social recovery. It resisted the totality. New urban spaces were tied to the administration insofar as the *Compromiso Ciudadana* was operative in bringing the new culture to the city and supported its funding, but architects themselves were seen as overcoming architecture’s “demiurgic role [as] part of urban mythology and ideology” (ibid). Whereas the ideology of traditional urban planning supports the “will” of the state and the “myth” of its power, Social Urbanism’s architecture was seen as actively resisting that spatial hegemony.

Viewed in isolation, its architecture still might present real potential. Lefebvre, too, saw a potential in architecture to resist the homogenizing force of traditional urbanism, a practice in which differences are made to disappear and replaced by marketable particularities.

It is the new approach to life that will enable the work of the architect, who will continue to serve as a ‘social condenser,’ no longer for capitalist social relationships and the orders that ‘reflect’ them, but for shifting and newly constituted

relationships. The architect may even be able to function as 'social accelerator,' but the economic context that would make this possible must be examined. (ibid: 99-100)

Lefebvre identifies a crucial point of inquiry in this last sentence: the economic order enabling architecture's production. This was a central subject of investigation through the thesis. And by the end, it was demonstrated how the economic context of Medellín's transformation inhibited it from actually becoming the utopic miracle that has since defined its identity.

The word utopia should not itself be vilified (as has often been the case since the period of High modernism). Lefebvre himself believed in the possibility of utopia; but he also openly criticized the urbanist's utopia for its reduction of the concept to physical form – the eventual privileging of its image. If we see Medellín's project as based on the ideology of its utopic image, we can assume Lefebvre's criticism would continue hold true. But Lefebvre's utopia (and its implied social transformation) emerged not out of the the physical ordering of space, but out of a change in its mode of production. This is what was implied by his "right to the city": the right for citizens to take part in an open process of production. Yet as we saw, within the broader historical context of power, Social Urbanism's success in fact made that urban process *more* closed.

In the 1990s, a new space emerged whereby architecture was able to intervene toward's the city's social recovery. Many spectators of Medellín's project saw a potential in the Social Urbanism model of development during this period, similar to how Lefebvre saw architecture's potential as "social accelerator" outside of capital's stronghold. But in studying the longer trajectory of the city, we also saw how the economic conditions from which it emerged precluded architecture from realizing its transformative potential. In fact, the use of consensus-inducing images (and their aesthetic ideologies) actually helped to recentralize power within the city, which was followed by a centralization articulated through the redevelopment of the city's physical space. In an ironic (though not entirely unexpected) twist, Social Urbanism actually helped create the necessary climate for conventional urban planning models of ordering and rationalization to re-emerge.

Conclusion

For a city so afraid of its past, it's only logical the concept of *life* would become such powerful rhetoric to accompany this subsequent stage of development. While the word itself became important for the Gaviria administration in developing their own identity, there was obviously a strong, collective desire amongst the population (and spectators) to bring the city alive after such a dark and brutal period. But this emerging narrative of *life* also became a new way to hide other narratives of everyday life following the totalizing image of Social Urbanism. It's relatively easy to criticize this second stage of planning as a technocratic and ideological project, not least because of the similarities between this image of utopia and our past modernist utopias – their scales, their implicit destruction and total reconstruction. The period of Social Urbanism is a much harder utopian project to critique, though, because its image presents something quite different, and carries with it a strong, aesthetic signification towards the programme's own inclusive rhetoric. For architects, these images no doubt induce a base emotional response from our professional desires to “do good.” But in overcoming this primal reaction to its ideology, we must continue to remember: utopia isn't an image, it's a process.

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