Co-production and Public Space: Perspectives and Experiences from Latin American Informal Neighbourhoods

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Co-production and Public Space: Perspectives and Experiences from Latin American Informal Neighbourhoods

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UCuenca Press

ISBN: 978-9978-14-489-3

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Suggested Citation: Méndez Abad, X., Orellana, D., Chunga, F., & Schoonjans Y. (Eds.). (2022). *Co-production and Public Space: Perspectives and Experiences from Latin American Informal Neighbourhoods*. UCuenca Press. ISBN: 978-9978-14-489-3

This book was produced with financial support from the inter-university cooperation agency VLIR-UOS as part of a collaboration between KU Leuven, Universidad Católica de Santiago de Guayaquil and University of Cuenca.

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PERSPECTIVES

EXPERIENCES

Preface

The project "Upgrading Informal Settlements by the Coproduction of Inclusive Public Spaces: urban design strategies for sustainable and resilient development in informal neighbourhoods" (short name: SURLab) was initiated in 2020 as a collaboration between research groups of the Department of Architecture of the KU Leuven, the Facultad de Arquitectura of Universidad Católica de Santiago de Guayaquil and LlactaLAB Sustainable Cities research group at *Universidad de Cuenca*. The project tackles the challenge of triggering sustainable and resilient urban development through the participatory design of public spaces in low-income informal neighbourhoods. Public Spaces in '*barrios populares*' (Popular neighbourhoods) in the Ecuadorean cities of Guayaquil and Cuenca were seen as representative working cases.

SURLab proposes introducing participatory urban design to influence the modus operandi of academics and local actors. The project aims to have a simultaneous positive impact on a) the development of research capacities and b) the co-production and assimilation of new knowledge by local actors. The initiative expects that improving the capacities of local universities to conduct independent and innovative research on inclusive urban public spaces in popular neighbourhoods will motivate the incorporation and development of participatory methodologies within local academic frameworks. Also, the project expects the integration of new co-produced knowledge to support spatial interventions at the local scale. Broadly, the emphasis on co-production and participatory design methods seeks to contribute to developing alternative urban research and design practices.

In this framework, the project carried out a series of workshops, public space interventions, design studios, students' graduation thesis, academic seminars and working sessions with the communities. The results of this two-year experience were documented in three books that display the project's work using three different lenses. The first book is a collection of nine essays that reflect on the broader theoretical discourses and practices across the Latin American region. The second book describes the project´s empirical work developed on two cases in Cuenca. Finally, the third book has a methodological focus and summarises practical guidelines for participatory design, which resulted from the project's onsite work.

This book is the first publication of the collection. It emerges from a series of webinars in 2020 and 2021 amid the global pandemic COVID-19 and is linked to the project's effort to encourage knowledge exchange and local research capacity building. We considered that the participation of international and local scholars and practitioners feeds the discussion of relevant approaches and experiences emerging from different geographical contexts. Hence, the webinar series "*Co-producing Inclusive Public Spaces*" provided a platform that brought together nineteen researchers and practitioners working in informal areas of Latin American cities who discussed diverse responses to the challenge of projects across Latin America. The broad spectrum of perspectives and projects presented during the webinars brought about a dialogue from several disciplinary fields and geographical contexts. Furthermore, they opened a wide range of questions and insights about the possibilities of research and design of public spaces in informal contexts. This book features essays by some of the seminar's speakers. They connect with a broader panorama of initiatives interested in rethinking the conceptual and operational framework that guides urban transformations across Latin American cities.

Acknowledgements

The books of this collection and all the activities conducted during the project were made possible by funding from the Flemish Government VLIR UOS (Belgium) and a collaboration between KU Leuven, Universidad Católica de Santiago de Guayaquil and University of Cuenca.

Co-production of Public Spaces in Latin American Informal Neighbourhoods

Yves Schoonjans, Xavier Méndez Abad, Daniel Orellana

The challenge of informal and unplanned settlements

Many cities in Latin America have grown unprecedentedly, posing daunting challenges to urban planning and design. Eight out of ten people in the region live in cities, many of whom have seen self-developed places and neighbourhoods as the only way to have a liveable space (UN Habitat, 2012). Most spatial production still occurs outside planning frameworks and institutional regulations as impoverished families have configured informal urban peripheries with limited access to services and infrastructure, deepening urban inequity and creating spatial segregation (Orellana & Osorio, 2014). In addition, informal settlements are often associated with illegal land occupation, housing deficit, inadequate infrastructure, poverty, unsafety, pollution, and deteriorating health. The negative connotation is part of the predominant narratives about informal areas (Banks et al., 2020). However, these incremental bottom-up processes have defined territories which can hold potential for building sustainable urban environments. Although unregulated and self-produced, these neighbourhoods are a dynamic part of the city in physical, economic, social and cultural terms (McFarlane, 2019; Roy, 2005). They reflect socio-spatial processes such as auto-construction of basic urban infrastructure and services, self-organisation for neighbourhood management, collaboration and collective work for constructing and maintaining public spaces. These processes of self-production develop a sense of place and are interlinked with the overall city dynamics.

Accordingly, international organisations such as UN-Habitat, the Inter-American Development Bank, and several NGOs have recognised that upgrading self-produced places can contribute to poverty reduction, a better quality of life, and sustainable urban development. However, traditional urban planning has been unable to address the needs of the majority of the population that develop their environments according to a particular logic of informal production of urban places (Duhau & Giglia, 2008). The incapacity of conventional urban research and practice to address the persistent urban challenges in emerging and consolidated self-produced parts of cities urges us to reconsider how cities are built and designed. Inhabitants must be recognised as the protagonists of urban transformation and more inclusive, empowering approaches.

Public spaces and informality in Latin America

Public space is where people interact with each other and encounter and confront differences and diversity. It is where the social sphere expands beyond the family or work tribe to include random encounters that would not exist otherwise. It is from this set of interactions that space acquires meaning and evolves into a *place*, evoking sensations, feelings, emotions, and reactions. Then, we can understand a place as a *meaningful space*. This co-creation of place is an organic process that emerges through the interactions between people and spaces and is generated spontaneously in unplanned settings. In many cases, streets, parks and squares are planned and designed as spaces, not as places, weakening the generation of significance and appropriation. Any space can become a place, but not all public spaces are places.

The failures of deterministic and rigid top-down planning and design are significantly exposed in public spaces as it reveals the contradictions of Latin American cities. Many contemporary public spaces in the region materialise the tensions of fragmented landscapes of vast, neglected self-developed neighbourhoods and residential enclaves. The increasing spatial segregation and polarisation underscore the need to examine public space production mechanisms critically (Caldeira, 2000). Public space has proven to be a valuable tool for more sustainable and integrated urban environments. However, in most cases, poorly developed and managed public spaces worsen the issues of lack of infrastructure, accessibility, and appropriation. Public spaces that are not well kept become insecure for vulnerable groups living in informal communities, especially women, girls, and children (D'Cruz, 2014). A broader understanding of public spaces should rethink their production and role as essential daily life elements.

The vast majority of public spaces in Latin American cities have been conceived as non-productive remnants of the territory whose planning,

design, and construction (when they exist) have focused on "copying and pasting" predetermined models. However, public spaces are the fundamental infrastructure for social fabric and are essential for urban development as they make multidimensional contributions to everyday collective life, citizenship, and identity (Low, 2005; Irazábal, 2008). They foster encounters, collectivity, and social interaction necessary for social cohesion and community building. In economic terms, they are a productive asset for the livelihoods of many informal workers like street vendors, other informal economies, or micro-production of goods and services. Moreover, public spaces are an essential element that articulates collective efforts and aspirations.

In Latin America, the study of public spaces has generally been focused on three aspects: the amount of public space available to the population (provision), the possibility of reaching and accessing public spaces (accessibility), and the physical characteristics, equipment and design (quality). However, bottom-up production and place-emerging processes have been studied less (Lombard, 2015). Moreover, governmental institutions' deficient role (in both quantity and approach) in the planning and creation of public spaces has led to a generalised lack of designed places, thus perpetuating the urban inequity endemic to the region. However, this absence does not necessarily mean a lack of places for interaction. On the contrary, incremental resident-led construction processes result in streets and open spaces that configure collective places that are highly relevant for vulnerable communities.

Also, as a response to the systemic neglect from the state, neighbourhoods and communities in Latin American cities have maintained an organisational tradition of production and appropriation of their public spaces, materialised through processes of self-construction, collective work, *minga*, and self-organisation. *Informal public spaces* emerge from these processes, referred to as places for recreation, leisure, commerce, and social interaction that has been generated through organic processes of self-production without formal state intervention, with minimal infrastructure and elements, ephemeral, and changing over time (Hernández-García, 2013; Méndez Abad et al., 2021). Despite their physical characteristics, these informal spaces are brimming with meaning and appropriation, strengthening social cohesion and organisational processes. The informal production of public spaces can thus be seen as a critical element of urban life in Latin America.

Recent urban upgrading programs in consolidated informal areas of Latin American cities have made efforts to reconsider the role of public spaces as a catalyst for change (Werthmann, 2021). However, predominant and generalised approaches privilege institutional agendas over inhabitants' concerns. When not engaged with the local socio-cultural and economic dynamics, implemented spaces can face contestations or result in insecurity, exclusion, or non-appropriation. The trajectories and logics of self-production of places

have not been considered within urban planning processes. On the contrary, they have been replaced by external design interventions, usually following relatively standardised models, weakening the communities' participation and organisation in urban design. Although people living in these areas have been the main actors of socio-spatial transformation, they have limited opportunities to contribute to decision-making. The local knowledge and appropriations are not recognised within institutional procedures and are often excluded from top-down approaches to planning, design and interventions of public spaces. It is therefore essential to change the approach to planning and design of public spaces to incorporate participatory processes of co-production and thus facilitate the generation of meaningful, quality, and community-appropriated places. People-centred approaches linking communities with local authorities and the private sector are vital for long-term socio-economic transformation, improving the lives of urban residents globally. It seems clear that alternative approaches should aim to integrate the socio-spatial practices, trajectories, and knowledge of self-developed neighbourhoods.

Participatory design and co-production for urban transformations

Large portions of Latin American cities have been developed by informal practices rather than institutional urban planning and design. The challenge of intervening in informal neighbourhoods demands non-reductive approaches enabling inhabitants' integration into urban transformations. Since the 1970s, critics of the rigid and deterministic approaches of urban planning have highlighted the need to shift planning and design paradigms. Concerns over the inability of technocratic responses to tackle the needs of urban residents have derived into a wide range of approaches, underscoring the significance of bottom-up actions, citizen-led transformation, participation, co-design and co-production, among others (Romero et al., 2004). As many of these approaches argue, we understand the design and research process as a platform for collaboration that can reinforce collective capacities, encourage inclusive decision-making, and promote community empowerment and rights.

Governmental institutions have also led narratives of engagement between actors and their territory. However, those forms of participation do not always lead to the inhabitants' actual integration into decision-making and implementation processes. Participation tools – including design – can be instrumentalised to achieve political consensus and governance without precisely contributing to citizen empowerment (Boano & Kelling, 2013). Encouraging inclusive design practices based on integrating communities, academics, and diverse stakeholders can contribute to overcoming these limitations. Including citizens as crucial actors of socio-spatial transformation

requires calling into question the prevalent discourses that frame the production of informal spaces, the interaction between technical and nonformal knowledge, design' methodological frameworks and the political dimension, narratives, and imaginaries of development (Frediani, 2016). From this viewpoint, the role of participatory design is linked to critical positions with potential implications for community well-being and urban governance.

Co-production can be seen as a collective process leading to a potential material improvement, construction of knowledge, capacities, and relationships with incidence for social transformation (Mitlin & Bartlett, 2018). Incorporating communities in the research, design, implementation, and management of common goods - as public space - contributes to setting feasible processes and contextualised responses. Moreover, it attends to the linkages between multiple actors that can lead to community building and empowerment as the ultimate goal (Mitlin & Bartlett, 2018; Watson, 2014). In this sense, one significant aspect is that research and design processes highlight inhabitants' role in relation to other actors, allowing the recalibration of power imbalances embedded in design processes (Arnstein 1969). As a result, roles can be redefined, and hierarchies between professionals, researchers, and inhabitants can be subverted. In this way, co-production can promote the construction of knowledge from the perspective of neglected groups and recalibrate the prevalence of the expert position over local knowledge (Escobar, 2018). Participatory design involves mutual learning between different actors. Expert knowledge encounters local empirical knowledge, and inhabitants actively participate in research and design. This approach is guided by the premise of collective construction of knowledge and a shared understanding of the multiple ways of producing the city, promoting interactions between the community and institutional actors, and positively impacting community development.

Participatory design processes and collective actions generated among diverse actors are particularly relevant in popular neighbourhoods where inhabitants have been the main actors of transformation. These participatory trajectories of transformation have defined a robust social fabric, collective knowledge, and interaction between the state and the inhabitants for neighbourhood production and transformation. Hence, the SURLab project considers it essential to explore the challenge of integrating inhabitants' knowledge and practices into urban research and design to recognise them as protagonists of urban transformations. Hence, exchanging perspectives and experiences on co-production and participatory design constitutes a potential contribution to reforming intervention schemes in public space and developing local research frameworks. Thus, this publication offers a broader panorama of ongoing theoretical propositions and initiatives that attempt to tackle the shared urban challenges across the Latin American region.

Structure of the book

The book is organised into two parts. Part I, 'Perspectives', draws on four chapters presenting alternative conceptualisations and methods to understand the informal contexts. Part II, 'Experiences', displays four chapters, which elaborate on the potential contribution of the multi-actor process along two lines: (a) the production and management of public space by citizens, and (b) institutional-community collaboration during processes of design and interventions in public space. Overall, the contributions speak to a broad range of approaches that put forward a common interest in reflecting on co-production and public space in the informal city.

Perspectives

The essays of this section engage with conceptualisations and methodological approaches to uncover and reframe the spatial production driven by inhabitants' practices in informal contexts. Overall, they encourage the engagement of urban design with bottom-up practices and alternative participatory ways of city-making.

In Chapter 1, Ortiz and Testori focus on the local concepts of *minga* and *convite* as decolonial practices that have shaped popular neighbourhoods and examine the cases of Medellín (Colombia) and Quito (Ecuador). These concepts are presented as participatory processes that require an interplay of multiple knowledge, collective intelligence, and material resources. The essay underscores the urban designer's social role and the imperatives for considering citizens' knowledge and embedded city-making processes. The second chapter, by Antonio di Campli, expands on the decolonial perspective and highlights that decolonising the urban project for informal areas requires a decolonising theory, discourses, and concepts. He argues that adopting a decolonial perspective enables design investigations and experiments considering differences, interactions and conflicts between socio-spatial ecologies. Within this approach, design can configure spaces of coexistence and negotiations, emphasising the value of contact zones.

The need to develop perspectives to address different city-making processes is also underscored in Chapter 3 by Stella Schroeder. She argues that researchers must consider the everyday actions of citizens and how they contest reductive models of development, planning and design to understand the informal production of public space. The essay examines the way inhabitants of Piura (Peru) co-produce public space according to their needs and capacities. The author argues that the notion of participation should be linked to the particularities of each context. In the fourth chapter, the essay by Méndez Abad, Ordoñez, Leinfelder and Schoonjans expands the focus on citizen-led

transformations by identifying a set of articulations between nature and re-appropriation practices in public space. The essay focus on the symbolic and material dimensions of inhabitants' practices emerging in the waterfront and streets of the informal neighbourhood *El Cisne Dos*, Guayaquil. The authors underscore the potential of nature as a driver for re-appropriation and argue that the awareness of this relationship can feed urban design practice and have socio-ecological implications.

While the precedent chapters elaborate on conceptual approaches, the final essay of Part I, by Elisa Silva, explores drawing as a method to trigger a critical process to recognise and re-signify the *barrios*. Her analysis of the aerial views of the *barrios* is presented as an interpretation of reality and the visualisation of the possibilities of urban integration, which can contribute to inducing positive change. The author argues that drawing becomes essential to construct alternative narratives underscoring the diversity and cultural, productive, and social value of self-produced spaces.

Experiences

The four essays in Part II of this book explore the role of citizens in the production, design and management of public space. They describe and discuss the potential of co-production and collaborative design in informal contexts. The first chapter of this part by Gabriel Visconti is based on his experience in the *barrios* of Venezuela, from where he conceptualises the notion of Open Urbanism. This approach promotes potential synergies emerging from the interaction of design practices and local dynamics. Therefore, considering local knowledge, capacities and practices and exploring mechanisms of participation constitute fundamental elements for urban co-production and empowerment. The fundamental role of inhabitants in transforming public space is also highlighted in the essay by Mariana Alegre. Through exploring initiatives in Lima, Peru, the author discusses the potential of citizen-led transformation to influence public policy and practice. Alegre delineates a participatory process at the core of the notion of urbanismo ciudadano, which is framed as a significant approach that can lead to empowered citizenship.

The chapter by Moritz Ahlert and Maximilian Becker reflects on the contributions of projects based on co-production. Drawing on the experience of multi-stakeholder collaboration in the informal neighbourhood of Moravia in Medellín, Colombia, the authors present urban coding as an alternative form of planning based on the direct participation of inhabitants. It is argued that the instruments of this approach contribute to connecting bottom-up and top-down planning and foster inclusive, co-produced transformation processes. The last chapter of this section by Mónica Rivera expands the analysis of collaborative design processes in informal contexts. The essay reflects on the process and results of the Second International Urban Design Workshop in Ayacucho, Peru. It argues that

considering the multi-actor alliances and work, knowledge of the socio-spatial context and the recognition of local knowledge are essential elements of the co-design process. Finally, the author shows how these considerations led to design strategies to improve water infrastructure and public space.

Overall, the chapters constitute an attempt to showcase a diversity of perspectives and initiatives emerging from the particularities of diverse Latin American cities. The project expectation is that the insights from the diverse contexts presented in this book can leverage practices of mutual learning that can contribute to expanding discourses and practice.

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Perspe

ectives

1

Crystalising Decolonial Praxis: *Minga* and *Convite* as City Making Otherwise

Catalina Ortiz
Giulia Testori

Abstract

While decolonial debates are mushrooming in humanities and social science, the field of urban design still needs to uncover the territorial manifestations of decolonial practices to reframe its own disciplinary premises. Engaging with space co-production in Latin America urges us to learn from the long-term spatial practices of solidarity and self-management that gave rise to popular neighbourhoods. This essay offers a joint reflection on two Latin American city-making practices from a decolonial lens. Drawing on our research on the urban legacy of the Andean *minga* and the Colombian *convite* in shaping the cities of Quito and Medellín respectively, we analyse their organising principles, plural uses, potentials, and the risks of co-optation. To spatially visualise the impacts that multiple mingas had in shaping urban space, the case of Comité del Pueblo in Quito will be introduced. While for Medellín we will use the case of the trajectory of the neighbourhood of Moravia. We argue that mingas and convites have shaped cities and crystalise decolonial ways of knowing, planning and (re) producing space.

Keywords: decolonial, solidarity, self-management, Quito, Medellín

Introduction

Urban Design's history of complicity with the spatial distribution of privilege and the universalisation of the Western canon of city-making urges to be recalibrated (Ortiz, 2020). We can learn from the Latin American modernity/coloniality project that calls for de-linking from the master narrative of the West. From a cultural studies perspective, this project proposes an epistemic disobedience that rejects the hubris of the zero-point epistemology of the West (Maldonado -Torres, 2007). In a similar light, Sousa Santos (2014) suggests that the emancipatory transformation of the world may follow narratives that are not contemplated by the western tradition. That is why, Sousa Santos proposes to engage with an anti-hegemonic ecology of knowledges to embark on the unlearning of the coloniality embedded in the disciplines as we know them.

Integrating our discourse in the current discussion of humanities and social science, this contribution, through the urban design lens, sees how some territorial manifestations can be read as decolonial practices. This engagement with space co-production in Latin America urges us to learn from the long-term spatial practices of solidarity and self-management that gave rise to popular neighbourhoods. This essay offers a joint reflection on two Latin American city-making practices from a decolonial lens. Winkler (2018) proposes to focus on resistant texts to further the decolonisation of urban planning and design. She describes resistant texts as the ones that "resist dominant narratives in ways that are unfamiliar, or entirely foreign, to the untrained eye…they resemble a form of epistemic disobedience that produces an uncomfortable and oft-unacknowledged incompetence" (Winkler, 2018). When thinking how cities are produced and can be imagined otherwise, we propose to focus on a particular kind of resistant texts that are the locus of anti-hegemonic ecology of knowledges. We argue that *mingas* and *convites* have shaped cities and crystalise decolonial ways of knowing, planning and reproducing space.

Differently from other decolonial studies' contributions, where the critique relies on the Eurocentric epistemology (Makaran & Gaussens, 2020), this chapter attempts to construct mechanisms of analysis and intelligibility of different historical times. It goes beyond the production and fortification of just decolonial theory, bringing to light empiric investigations. Drawing on our research on the urban legacy of the Andean *minga* and the Colombian *convite* in shaping the cities of Quito and Medellín respectively, we analyse their organising principles, plural uses, potentials, and the risks of co-optation. To spatially visualise the impacts that multiple *mingas* had in shaping urban space, the case of Comité del Pueblo in Quito will be introduced, while for Medellín we will use the case of the trajectory of the neighbourhood of Moravia. By illustrating organisational and spatial legacies, the contribution informs about past and current city's challenges.

Case 1: *mingas* in Quito

What is a *minga:*

Minga is an Andean communal and collective form of self-management and self-construction at the base of countless rural and urban Ecuadorian space transformations. *Mingas*, in all their multiple forms, part from Testori's PhD thesis (2020)[1], have been investigated by social scientists and anthropologists only[2], and the discussions have covered its rural applications. Such contributions aim to remedy the systematic documentation gap around the role of *mingas* in the transformation of urban space. The word *minga* specifically originates from the Quechua term *minccacuni'* and literally means requesting help by promising something in return (Masmiquel, 2015; Garavaglia, 1997). It is precisely one of many systems of community work and reciprocity where people do not expect anything in return apart from collective benefit[3]. Through this complex practice of solidarity and self-help, bridges have been erected, water channeled, mountain deforested, streets paved, etc.

Mingas' characteristics and habits have changed much throughout history and according to Guevara (1957) they were practiced since the conformation of the *Ayllu*[4]. During the Inca conquest of Ecuador in the XV century, the notion of *minga* was employed for the realisation of sacrifices to the King Sun: the used

Figure 1. *Comité del pueblo de Quito*, 1973. Source: private archive of Carlos Arias.

term was *Mit'a* and consisted of a mandatory service for all married men and employed as a labour tax to the Empire. During the Spanish colonial period, the indigenous labour force was also exploited, but to build roads, churches and extract silver to finance European wars. Moving forward in time, even after the Ecuadorian independence in 1830, profit was taken from the indigenous people to work collectively in the *haciendas* (big private estates) in exchange for firewood, water and pasture. This lasted until the third Agrarian Reform in 1973, when the *haciendados* transformed their lands into capitalist enterprises and the peasants finally had the right to freely dispose of their own labour time. *Minga's* characteristics and habits have changed much along history, but the unifying point that connects its transformations from pre-colonial times can be found in its many re-interpretations and often co-optations.

A propitious *momentum* and the case of *Comité del Pueblo*

The 1970s represented for Ecuador a real social and economic turning point. It was a period of big reforms, Victor Ibarra's dictatorship ended and oil started to be exploited nationally, bringing to Quito and Guayaquil extraordinary investments in infrastructure and industry (Testori, 2016). The Ecuadorian rural population, proved by centuries of exploitation, saw in the economic boom their chance of redemption. This induced massive waves of migration from rural to urban areas. Finding a job in the spreading industries was not the real dilemma for this newly resettled population. The greatest concern for newcomers was the scarce housing market, due to the lack of social housing and urban facilities. These caused the rise of spontaneous uncontrolled human settlements predominantly in the peripheral areas of the capital.

An enigmatic case is the one of *Comité del Pueblo*, a neighbourhood of Quito that today counts almost 50.000 inhabitants and that was born in 1973. It was promoted by the Communist Marxist Leninist Party of Ecuador (PCMLE), which through a massive political campaign to recruit members and money, and a contested legal escamotage, it was able to acquire a land in the north-east of the capital. The affiliated families which complied with the requirement and in need of housing, were a total of 4,500 to a piece of the land of together 140 hectares.

The movement sought technical advice from the Faculty of Architecture and Urbanism of the Universidad Central (FAU) and they were asked to design a new neighbourhood for all the members. The study and design process were done collectively, either on site or in the architecture faculty. In the second case, the future settlers were invited to the faculty to take part to the TISDYC workshops[5]. Questionnaires hanging on walls were identifying the families' necessities and abilities to work collectively. Students and teachers were not asked to draw just some architectural details, but to participate in an enormous machine of design, citizens' involvement and physical construction of the neighbourhood. The effective work started in mid-November 1973 and the plots were delivered to the

families on the 24th. Of January of the next year; a tour de force that lasted only two months.

Mingas in the study phase were done to map the topography and measure the site. When on site, students and inhabitants were divided into twelve zones – the same ones *Comité del Pueblo* is divided by today– and through *mingas*, they physically implemented all the work, including clearing, and flattening grade and tracing roads (Fassin 1992). *Mingas* worked during weekends, day and sometimes night; they were attended by both men, but mostly women. All future Comité del Pueblo inhabitants always had to prove to the leaders of their attendance, not just to *mingas*, but also to general political meetings in the city centre (Fassin, 1992; Borja, 2011). It is also relevant to point out that being autonomous from the State, by decision or by force, required enormous personal and collective efforts, time, and resources to provide missing services that in other cases the State shared equally between all citizens. Moreover, under an economic system that requires people to devote most of their time to a job, finding this resource to meet community needs was extremely challenging for some people (Fassin, 1992).

The design of the settlement foresaw equal plots for every family, different blocks of facilities matching every zone and was reachable by walking distance. By the time the communist party left the settlement, competitive forces soon came to action and nowadays *Comité del Pueblo* is characterised by exaggerated densities, extreme narrow streets, constructions on slopes, and lack of public spaces. With the eyes of an architect or an urbanist, particularly if from a European perspective, it is very easy to criticise these places: either for their aesthetics, the often-precarious structure of the settlement, or the little coherence between the building styles. But, as Raul Zibechi wrote: "the classist categories, the blind trust in the forces of progress, the application of concepts coined for other realities, have distorted the reading of those spaces where the popular sectors oscillate between rebellion, the dependence of caudillos and the search for benefits from the State. It insists on considering the slums/borderlands/marginal areas as a kind of anomaly, almost always a problem" (Zibechi, 2007). This to say that a decolonial urban study, should not just consider the contemporary outcome of an urban evolution, but should better make a deeper effort in understanding its multi-faceted socio-spatial evolution.

Case 2: *convites* in Medellín

What is a *convite*:

> "A *convite* is an encounter to build paths with creative potential. These paths activate and rejuvenate bonds of trust that weave the community"
>
> Maria Garcia, Inhabitant Medellín

Convite in Spanish means an invitation to a gathering, to feast and celebrate. In the Colombian city of Medellín, *convite* is a social and cultural practice, as well as a technological tool, used by the urban poor to ensure, by themselves, access to a life with dignity in settings of precarity, scarce resources and in the absence of the state (Ortiz & Millan, 2019). The urbanisation of the peripheries was the result of resistance and popular organisation. In this process new socio-spatial identities were generated amidst new tensions and disputes (Perez Fonseca, 2018). Medellín became a paradigmatic model of urban renaissance in the beginning of the XXI century, after a deep crisis caused by deindustrialisation, narco-trafficking and extreme urban violence (Ortiz, 2019). In this context, *convites* became a community-based experimental practice to undertake neighbourhood upgrading, that comes into existence when community members commit their time, knowledge and skills –on a volunteering basis– to develop small or medium, achievable common goals. The *convites* become the "most significant tool of collective action and intervention of the territory by the community, allowing the exchanges that take place there, forge feelings of identity, create strong awareness of belonging and motivate a large number of individual and collective behaviours" (Rios-Castro, et al, 2011). The *convites* have been a catalyst of dreams and stories. It has been a space for dialogue, but also for tension, as is proper in the framework of social relations. These actions range from a roof repair to the building of road accesses, to the assessment and mitigation of environmental risks in the community.

Figure 2. *Convite* in Moravia in the 1980s. Source: Archive Community Cultural Centre of Moravia.

The *convite* is a praxis of solidarity in *barrios populares* based on self-management and a singular territorial organisational logic. The Klan Ghetto Popular (KGP) describes the role of the *convite* as "resistance, protection and joy" (2020). This three-layered nature is intertwined (Ortiz & Yepez, 2020): *Convite* as a strategy of resistance is enacted to foster social mobilisation for the right to stay put and collective strength to face militarised evictions or exclusionary interventions and narratives led by the state; *convite* as a mutual help practice operate in the construction and maintenance of communal infrastructures, attend disasters, and provide support for caretaking and basic livelihoods; *convite* as a space for cultural celebration brings people together to shape the living heritage of the place, showcasing different symbolic representations and talents in the public space and using collective meals as a reward. *Convites* are a vital collective action strategy to co-produce space. They have different roles depending upon the phases of neighbourhood transformation: foundation, infill and consolidation (Samper, 2014). Nonetheless, *convites* all have in common moments of collective decision about the gathering, communication, social organisation, food provision, storytelling, physical labour, material delivery of a collective good or support, and celebration.

Moravia as the byproduct of *convites*[6]

Moravia represents a site of urban learning about the multiplicity and potentials of self-construction and self-management. Moravia is "a neighbourhood of migrants" originated due to forced displacements, the violence of war and social injustices. It is a diverse territory in its cultural expressions which are reflected in the forms of its urban tissue and the close interaction experienced in its sidewalks and spaces. The self-construction of houses, aqueducts and roads, evidences the transformation of the territory was made through *convites*. The neighbourhood of Moravia is distinguished by its central location within the city of Medellín, it is one of the most densely populated neighbourhoods in the country, for its social mobility, for its process of spatial transformation and for its rich cultural diversity (Alcaldía de Medellín, 2005). It is a popular neighbourhood, with diverse forms of use and spatial appropriation.

During the early 1950s, Moravia's first settlers came to inhabit the territories on the banks of the Medellín River, on both sides of the track of the old Railroad (Ortiz & Yepez, 2020). In the foundation phase *convites* are mainly used for the land preparation and plot division as well as the self-provision of public services -electricity, water supply network in community aqueducts of non-potable water-. These services were provided through illegal or pirate connections to the general network. In this phase, the dwellings are made of precarious or not very durable materials that are recycled from clandestine dumps. Over time, the settlement was consolidated with the progressive arrival of new families, with the sector known as *El Zancudo*, Fidel Castro and Camilo Torres beginning to

take shape. The Priest Vicente Mejía in 1965 started working with the community and promoted an organised planning of the settlement envisioning future facilities. However, *convites* at this stage not only contribute to shape material infrastructures but also catalyse initial social-political organisation to fight the right to stay put and start planning the future consolidation of the site. In 1968 the Central Committee of *Tugurianos* (i.e. slum dwellers committee) was created and used *convites* to support activities of mutual help for the provision of food, care and protection against police brutality to confront evictions.

The infill stage was propelled by the canalisation of the Medellín River in 1972 that freed up land in the area to be used for new housing. In this stage, more inhabitants arrive, and a clear demarcation of blocks gets defined while the dwellings start being built with more durable materials but remain mainly one-story constructions. Through *convites El Bosque* sector was formed. In 1977 the Mayor's Office of Medellín declared some land in Moravia to be of public interest and set up the municipal landfill. The landfill (*morro de basuras*) became a source of economic income through recycling and a site for new shelters. Despite its difficult territorial conditions, the sectors of *Casco de Mula*, *La Divisa*, and *La Paralela* were self-built around and on the landfill. *Convites* were used to gain accessibility to the neighbourhood sectors by means of building tertiary network systems such as roads, stairs, driveways or paved sidewalks. In this stage inhabitants also negotiated with state and non-state actors including public universities and the catholic church for the provision of basic facilities like day care centres or schools. In 1984 the municipality declared a sanitary emergency and the dump was closed. Many families that lived off recycling became unemployed. Nonetheless, the advocacy for the defence of the territory of the Central Committee of *Tugurianos* remained not only to perform the self-management of different spheres but also the political lobby to be recognised by authorities and qualify for neighbourhood upgrading programmes. This Committee navigated the heightened violence in Moravia and in Medellín at large, that was marked by the emergence of the first criminal gangs, racketeering (*vacunas*), drug trafficking and the assassination of social leaders. In response to gang action, another armed actor appeared in the territory: the Popular Militias of the Aburrá Valley.

After years of struggle, Moravia was legally recognised as a neighbourhood of Medellín in 1993, marking a turning point for the consolidation phase. *Convites* are pivotal for the consolidation of the neighbourhood. Collective action gets intertwined with patronage tactics that oftentimes support the legalisation process of the connection to utilities networks or expansion of existing networks and initial security of tenure steps. In this stage the process of densification requires *convites* for repair activities and risk mitigation works. However, the consolidation process cannot be disentangled from the broader socio-political context as the trust and solidarity bonds are crucial to cope with conflict and

the incursion of armed actors in the neighbourhood. As a result of a negotiation process with the local and national government, the first urban demobilisation of militias in the country took place in 1994. The strong social mobilisation and organisation is the backbone of resistance in Moravia that allowed that in parallel to the demobilisation process, the Work Group for Peace and Coexistence was set up, resulting in the Plan of Development and Coexistence of Moravia. *Convites* here were also instrumental for peacebuilding.

During the 2000s, after the approval of the strategic spatial plan of the city in 1999, the local State was actively involved in the formulation of the Macro-Project for the Integral Upgrading of Moravia in 2004. This plan encompassed a significant urban transformation, resettlement, housing relocation and the construction of community facilities. During this period many families living in *El Morro* were resettled to other areas of the city. This urban transformation proposal saw the inauguration of the Moravian Cultural Development Centre (2008), which links art with community encounters. That same year, Moravia's Garden, located in *El Morro*, began to be strengthened as a strategy to recover the soil of the old landfill. In this stage, *convites* decrease in frequency[7] although remain relevant for the political negotiation with state institutions for the implementation of neighbourhood upgrading programs or disputes around gentrification and eviction threads. With the increasing number of inhabitants exacerbates the weakening and fragmentation of neighbourhood relations and as a result a gradual decline of *convite* (Triana Pulido, 2019). It also influences the interference of monetary relations in the organisational processes, supplantation of the meeting through outsourcing of the material construction and the community organisation itself; interference of politicians and external organisations such as NGOs or state organisations that generated processes of bureaucratic corruption and political propaganda that coopts *convites* (Triana Pulido, 2019).

Conclusion

This essay has argued for considering mingas and convites as spatial practices that crystalise decolonial ways of knowing, planning and city-making. These practices constitute resistant texts that allow to ground the empirical evidence of anti-hegemonic ecology of knowledges at play. We illustrated how *mingas* and *convites* require collective intelligence, multiple knowledges, material resources, labour and will to contribute to sustain collective life. They are sustained by values such as solidarity, sharing, reciprocity, mutual support and in general, collective well-being. *Mingas* and *convites* along history, without romanticising or praising them, can be defined as decolonial practices, because they are processes of participatory city-making that are culturally and context-based specific (Peattie, 1990; Lombard, 2013; Watson, 2009; Connelly, 2010). They

alike become urban legacies, not just of participation, but of co-production of services and knowledge.

The originality of the cases opens unexplored paths for the social role of the urban designer. These cases question the basic assumptions about who does design the city and whose knowledge counts for imagining the city we aspire to? This perspective resonates with relinquishing top-down impositions, involving directly citizens and learning from bottom-up practices, are principles ever more recalled in contemporary institutional contexts (Cruz, 2015) and the *longue duree* of incremental city-making. Studying places as Comité del Pueblo or Moravia align with Arturo Escobar's statement: "borderlands are the spaces par excellence where novel understandings and practices of design from ontological and autonomous perspectives might most effectively and radically take place" (Escobar 2017). With all their contradictions, these communities show us alternative ways of embedded city-making. They demonstrate how collective spaces can be co-created and collectively maintained.

Notes

1 The thesis has been awarded with a special mention at the biannual international Manuel Solá de Morales prize: https://issuu.com/dur.upc/docs/dur_msm_2021

2 A rare book is the one of Dario Guevara in 1957 titled 'Las Mingas del Ecuador. Origenes, tránsito y supervivencia'. Other contributions on the topic are Faas (2015), Klaufus & Mitzman (2012), Mayer (2002) and Ramirez (1980).

3 Geographically speaking, the word minga has an equivalent meaning in Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and Chile. In the last two countries it is known as minka and mingaco respectively, whereas in Brazil it is comparable to adjunto and mutirão (Lozano 2013; Masmiquel 2015). In other contexts, such as Colombia, the term minga is also employed by the Indigenous Movement to organize mass protests and marches for social justice or adopted to describe a collective way of empowering knowledge (Schmitt 2010; Levalle 2011; Gleghorn 2013; Quince 2016). Other practices of collective work in the word exist, such as in Rwanda, where there is the umuganda, in Haiti the kombit, in Uzbekistan the khashar. But communal work and mutual aid are not limited to the Global South, such for example in Finland the talkoot, in Ireland the meitheal, in Baque Country the auzolan, etc.

4 The Ayllu is the pre-Inca and Inca entity of territorial organization. It constituted a self-sufficient political, social, economic and religious unit that brought together several family groups related to one another. Ownership and resources were managed collectively.

5 Acronym of Taller de Investigación Social, Diseño y Comunicación (The 'Research, Design and Communication Workshop)

6 The content of this section draws from the Living Heritage Atlas of Moravia edited by Ortiz & Yepez, 2020 and Samper's (2014) phases of neighbourhood self-building in Medellín.

7 In times of crisis, like the pandemic, *convites* for mutual aid around care and food provision were reactivated.

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2

Divergence. Decolonial Perspectives on Designing in Latin American Informal Urban Areas

Antonio di Campli

Abstract

Thinking decolonially about dwelling, space and its project, particularly in informal areas, means imagining them as an archipelago of points of enunciation, a constellation of micropolitics, and laboratories of experimentation. Decolonising means thinking that space can be kaleidoscopic, shattered, ambiguous, and not representable through fixed cartographic projections. The kaleidoscope is an instrument that returns multiple images, multiple places, juxtaposed, superimposed or nested one inside the other: a pluriverse. Therefore, decolonising the urban project for informal areas means decolonising the theory, discourses and concepts through which we think about its spatial and dwelling practices and imaginaries. What is being questioned are the relations of domination, inequalities and socio-spatial conflicts triggered by the design paradigms prevalent today, to transform them. The decolonial project legitimises itself starting from the recognition of colonial power devices, their link with specific imaginaries of living and economies, making explicit the mechanisms that feed and legitimise coloniality as a model of knowledge that crosses multiple spheres of experience: knowledge, disciplinary practices, relations between society and ecologies, up to racial and gender relations. Design can be conceived as a set of practices aimed at configuring spaces where many 'worlds' can coexist, negotiating with each other. This does not mean designing tending towards totally indeterminate, imprecise configurations, but towards non-univocal landscapes, divergent and non-transparent spatial arrangements, linked to multiple and, therefore, non-oppressive narratives.

Keywords: urbanism, urban poverty, resilience, colonial difference

Introduction

It is important to analyse how certain paradigms define their subjects; how some ideas come to be seen as best practices; and how certain colonial power structures are perpetuated. Poverty is one of the main semantic devices that marks the discourse on urban informality that became hegemonic in the last decades. At a time when the Western capitalist model has been proclaimed as an example of civilisation and progress, concepts such as 'underdevelopment' or 'informality' have become functional discursive elements to maintain precise schemes of power.

Development is a double-edged sword and informal settlements are the wounds that bleed where the first world meets the third (Anzaldúa, 1987). Political narratives of the informal settlements as the theme of progress are part of a global agenda promoted by institutions such as the UN, the World Bank and the IMF, which seek to penetrate from below, from the urban poor themselves. They inoculate design strategies and discourse focused on the concept of 'resilience', that is, on the survival of the inevitable effects of development, leaving its basic premises intact. Therefore, is it possible to produce a discourse on informality and its project beyond the modernising rhetoric of development, performance, and identity?

To answer these questions, a reflection is proposed on some characters and possibilities of the decolonial project focusing in particular on the concept of colonial difference as a matrix of design thinking. The colonial difference is the space in which the coloniality of power is articulated. But it is also the place where a margin thinking emerges capable of questioning hegemonic knowledge and paradigms.

In the field of design practices, decolonisation is a process of questioning and restructuring of logic, values and design strategies. This process requires time, responsibility and above all a willingness to experience conditions of vulnerability. The reference is both to the fragility of those who think about the project starting from marginal conditions, moving on unstable soils, and to the incomplete, open character of the new socio-spatial ecologies experienced.

The main Western design and urban planning paradigms are deeply rooted in modernism and, at least in the strictly European tradition. It is a composite set of design practices which, especially in their postmodern neoliberal variants, are marked by a capitalist productivist tension that reflects on the project substantially as an exercise of increase or enhancement of places, cultures, economies, natures. The distinction between the public and private spheres in the dwelling-practices, the idea of nature as an external object (to be protected or, on the contrary, to be exploited), culture as an identitarian infrastructure, public space intended as a place of social mixity, are examples of Western ideas

that inform interpretative-planning paradigms of space and that operate, in an opaque way, as devices of colonial knowledge. Briefly, these are the main features of the composite set of design discourses that we call Western Urban Theory. Therefore, decolonising the urban project means decolonising the theory, discourses and concepts through which we think about space and living. What is being questioned are the relations of domination, inequalities and socio-spatial conflicts triggered by the design paradigms prevalent today, to transform them. The decolonial project legitimises itself starting from the recognition of colonial power devices, their link with specific imaginaries of living and economies. It makes the mechanisms that feed and legitimise coloniality explicit, as a model of knowledge that crosses multiple spheres of experience: knowledge, disciplinary practices, relations between society and the environment, up to racial and gender relations (Lugones, 2008).

Space is inherently violent, unequal, unjust. Its project is always linked to the configuration and circulation of models. However, this does not mean that design must operate as a colonial agent, but it can be conceived as a set of practices aimed at configuring spaces in which many worlds coexist, negotiating with each other, as the Zapatistas say. This does not mean that designing tends towards totally indeterminate, imprecise configurations but towards non-univocal, non-transparent spatial arrangements, linked to multiple and therefore non-oppressive narratives. The decolonial project prefigures places marked by a multiplicity of places of enunciation, passing through a process of dis-learning and re-learning capable of going both beyond mere participatory perspectives, or the protection of marginalisation. The reasoning on the project as a thought on the ecologies of the coexistence between social, ecological, and economic differences, aims to question traditional classifications and cartography as well as the clarity of the tools and concepts that we usually use in our analysis and design practices.

The decolonial project operates from the epistemic boundaries of modern thought, questioning Eurocentric or Western forms of spatial planning and design. It is therefore a border thinking, a frontier thought where subjects, collectives and social groups who live on the margins produce knowledge that can be transferred from one place to another, constituting an exteriority to modernity. The decolonial project produces new statements through a destructive attitude which, however, does not aim at building a new discourse with universal value. As Grosfoguel (2016) argues, there cannot be a single language to speak of decoloniality, but it is necessary to recognise a pluriversity of projects.

In the West as elsewhere, spatial conflicts arise from the difference in meaning and value associated with particular practices of space production. They do not arise from the cultural difference per se, but from the gap that is produced between different forms of dwelling and the related values that govern social life

in relation to space, economy, ecology, property, body and knowledge. Struggles for meaning are therefore central to the structuring of the social and physical world. Conflicts over living are therefore the reflection of underlying ontological differences, that is, of different ways of understanding space. The current crisis of habitability is generated by a modern thought that operates through distinctions, separations between culture and nature, nature and society, urban and rural, male and female, black and white, and ultimately by the dominance of the capitalist model of society hetero-patriarchal. Patriarchy, in particular, is the main reason for the erosion of relations between society, the environment and economies. Therefore, to address this crisis it is useful to reflect on the practices of living, on the interaction and conflict between multiple forms of spatial production, observing plural socio-eco-cultural configurations, questioning, as Philippe Descola (1996) states, that naturalistic ontology typical of Western thought that arises precisely from the opposition between nature and culture.

These arguments are what legitimise the launch of a reflection on the decolonial project, in particular when addressing Latin American informal urban areas. Therefore: Is it possible to produce a discourse on space and its project beyond the modernising rhetoric of development, performance, identity? Is it possible to overcome the traditional dichotomy between natural and cultural politics and economies? What categories do we have to talk about non-Western spaces and societies? How to integrate their space-time discourses and experiences with theory-building practices produced within the West itself?

Is it possible to make a critique of Eurocentric modernity without throwing away the best? How to operate if some categories, keywords of Western thought on the city and on the territory such as, for example, public, nature, domesticity, production, become unreliable tools? What to do with public space, mixity, rooted living that takes care of places? To answer these questions, a reasoning around the characters of the decolonial project is proposed below.

Friction, distortion, connivance. The ‘colonial difference’ as a matrix of design thinking

In many respects, Western Urban Theory, in its various declinations and evolutions, is articulated by a dualistic thought that tends to transform space into a controlled, readable object, devoid of shadow areas. There are no empty areas. The space of western urbanistic thought, in particular of the modernist one, is a finished construction. But often, this finitude is a fiction since the interaction between paradigms and forms of knowledge, Western and otherwise, always produces twists, misunderstandings, dross, interruptions. For this reason, the hypothesis is supported here that an operational rendering of decolonial thought in a planning key should focus on the concept of colonial difference

which Aníbal Quijano (1992) has defined as the product of conflictual cultural interchange processes, that is, of frictions between local knowledge and western paradigms. The colonial difference is the space in which the coloniality of power is articulated but it is also the place where a borderline thought emerges, capable of questioning hegemonic knowledge and paradigms[1].

Seen from the point of view of project practices, the colonial difference is intended as a device capable of redefining analytical and design categories starting from the idea of exteriority. If the concept of the interior is linked to the rhetoric of civilisation and progress, the exterior, the margin, the interface, is the place of the colonised, of the Indian. Zone of contamination, exchange and conflict: *nepantla*, a Náhuatl word that Gloria Anzaldúa uses to describe those spatial, temporal or psychic crises that occur in transition situations. Colonial difference is always a borderland.

In Latin America in particular, in planning practices, in construction processes, in the management of administrative models, knowledge is used and protocols are respected, but it is never really fulfilled. The application of a certain model, paradigm, is proclaimed, but never fully adhered to. It is obeyed, but it is not fulfilled. However, the non-compliance has only partly to do with the question of the solidity and control of applied knowledge. Unexpectedly, through it we see an ironic form of resistance to dominant powers and paradigms. And if these distortions were the most interesting element to think about? If they were the result of the friction between paradigms, of the collision between knowledge and places, the most fertile ground for research?

The design response to colonial conflicts is not to be sought at the level of the constitution of counter-identities, counter-paradigms, perhaps based on patrimonial reinterpretations, and therefore, again, of a Western matrix, of ancestral knowledge but on that of practices (planning and writing) of the margin, *nepantlere* would say, again, Gloria Anzaldúa, of the cannibal and predatory embodiments of imaginary, of knowledge. All this produces engulfment, betrayals, and practices of difference that do not have to do with the exaltation of identity but that arise from twists and conflicts. These allow us to prefigure compositions, assemblages between local spatial thoughts. This leads us to think about the project through different practices and terms, to consider, for example, spatial fragmentation, distance between social groups, opacity, not necessarily as a problem. Similarly, instability, vacillation and even destruction of soils, ecologies, settlements, can become project paradigms.

The decolonial project, understood as the assembly of worlds or the composition of the pluriverse, revolves around two key terms or concepts: divergence and intertwining. These two conceptual strands are intertwined with those of addiction and generation.

The decolonial project is the space of divergence

The referred divergence does not concern subjects, practices or cultures conceived as discrete entities that share certain constitutive properties that allow them to be compared by identifying those that are similar or different. Rather divergence is something that constitutes the same entities or practices of space production, both in their specificity and in the interactions between them. A space of divergence is defined by a disagreement that can never be nullified without each entity giving up what it considers important with respect to a conflict situation over an object or situation of common interest. Spatial knowledge, the decolonial project, in this sense, is above all a place of divergence, aware that, in a given situation in which several collectives and space production practices coexist: an object, a river, a mountain, an isolated, it is always crossed, out of proportion, by different interests, visions, desires. Critically, excess through knowledge, and therefore not knowing (as different collectives know), can be an important condition for the establishment of forms of relationship linked to forms of understanding not based on sharing the same values, on identity. Therefore, rather than cancelling the divergence they are constituted by it. What we are referring to is the intersection of understanding and divergence within processes of a partial connection between entities, collectives, socio-spatial ecologies; an encounter between knowledge practices and entities that maintain a dimension of excess, misunderstanding, diverging.

What exceeds can be something obscure to the subjects involved in the comparison, as well as to the designers; however, it is constitutive of it. Spatial concepts produce worlds and are specific to certain worlds; however, concepts different from those that subjects and collectives bring with them can also be made in the here and now of encounters, collisions, between knowledge, paradigms, preserving differences between the various subjects. In meetings between acquaintances, there is nothing that everyone shares or observes in the same way; however, it is necessary to be aware of this condition. It is therefore necessary to think about project forms capable of managing divergent epistemic practices. It is a policy in which the agreement negotiated through the comparison and conflict between different visions, concepts, paradigms and imaginaries, does not erase the differences between the collectives, but rather makes them visible.

Basically, from the design point of view, this is the Deleuzian relational separation or disjunctive synthesis, a set of heterogeneous spatial production practices assembled ecologically, negotiating their difficulty in coexisting. I am referring to the definition of spatial devices that can be conceptualised as an expression of a border thinking / border design (Anzaldúa, 1987) which alludes to the possibility of defining design and planning strategies conceived as assemblages of local spatial thoughts.

Divergence, in terms of design, becomes disconnection, *desprendimiento* or delinking, as Walter Mignolo (2007) would say, a project strategy useful for configuring the coexistence between worlds: the pluriverse. Disconnection can be a condition to be investigated in an innovative way. It is not a question of a reassessment of the logic of gated communities, but of the possible operational rendering of that critical thinking around the space of a decolonial matrix that reasons on the characters of the shattered, split, opaque space (Glissant, 1990) and on the value of the contact areas, of the thresholds, among the various urban splinters (di Campli 2019).

The decolonial project as a place of intertwining. The dark ecology

The main Western socio-spatial thinking paradigms tend to be articulated according to normative dualisms through which to conceptually organise space and its project. In this binary logic, each side of dualism is seen as exclusive (rather than inclusive) and oppositional (rather than complementary), and where a greater value is attributed to one side of the dualism rather than the other.

Some of the main dualistic pairs are: production / reproduction (nature), urban / rural, public / private,civilized / primitive (nature), subject / object, universal / particular, culture / nature, reason / nature, male / female, mind / body (nature), reason / materiality, rationality / animality (nature), reason / emotion (nature), mind / body, (nature), freedom / necessity (nature), self / other.

In this list the concept of nature appears several times. Nature is a socially authoritative word, supported by the science that circumscribes it and by a concomitant series of actions (religious, political, economic) that treat it as an otherness now to be exploited, now to be protected. There is a bad way of thinking about the concept of nature, an essentialism that denies the specific and ambiguous qualities of life forms as such. Above all, it is necessary to overcome the idea of nature as something external or detached. The idea that there is this thing called nature and that it is under concrete, in the mountains or in our DNA, but never here, where we are. Furthermore, the notions of nature and natural present themselves as normative concepts that indicate how to behave or what is natural versus what is not. We all know how violent this way of thinking can be. Nature is a sort of anthopocentrically scaled concept designed for humans. This is why it is no longer possible to think of a single notion of nature but of different systems of practices and representations of the relationship between subjects, collectives and spaces.

In this multiplication I recall the concepts of diversity of nature (Descola 2005), of multinaturalism and perspectivism (Viveiros de Castro 2010). According to Descola, the separation between nature and culture has no reason to exist,

either as a fact or as a conceptual model. It is in fact, a modern belief that has emerged since the Cartesian era, an ideological belief that Westerners have used to investigate other places and populations on the planet. Descola argues that in many cultures the distinction between what is human (and therefore superior) and what is not (and, being inferior, can be exploited) has no reason to exist. There are populations for which, for example, animals and plants have a soul like that of human beings and for this reason they are considered people with whom to entertain specific relationships. The diversity of a Descolian nature is easily combined with the concept of multi-naturalism and the closely connected concept of perspectivism defined by Viveiros de Castro to describe a conception, common to many Amazonian peoples, according to which the world is inhabited by different types of human subjects who capture reality from different points of view. Therefore, there would not be a single reality for all, nature, which different cultures see and interpret each in its own way (according to the Western multi-culturalist approach), but different realities, different natures, a plurality of worlds on which faces a single form of subjectivity, common to humans and animals.

The aesthetics of nature hinder the production of thought around the coexistence between differences between collectives, subjects, economies and practices of space production. To think in terms of design on the theme of composition and assemblage between differences, it is therefore necessary to focus not on the notion of nature but on that of ecology.

In the West we think of ecology as something planted on the ground, which revolves around the place, the context. In this case, the place must be local: it must make us feel at home. Expressions such as the local, the organic, the particular, are good for environmental policies. Ecology imagines the interconnection, the fabric. The shirt is a tangle of differences. Fabric can mean the holes in a web and the texture between them. It suggests solidity and delicacy at the same time. It suggests both density and rarefaction. Or a complex, tangled situation, a concatenation of limiting or restrictive forces or circumstances: a trap. In the fabric, everything does not exist by itself, each entity seems strange; the fabric unites many strangers, many comers, Derrida would say (2002). Ecological thinking is full of shadows, it is inherently dark and intimate at the same time. There would be no fabric if there were no strangers. Isn't this the essence of decolonial awareness? There is always something sinister, uncanny, in discovering the fabric. It is as if there was always something else, someone else. The inexplicable mixes up because the interconnection allows it. Coexistence, therefore, is not harmony. It's like language. For meaning to happen, the language must be noisy, messy, blurry, grainy, vague and slippery. Similarly, the space of coexistence between differences must be very articulated within it, presenting an abundance of blurry situations, and mediation devices.

Environmental rhetoric is too often strongly affirmative, outgoing and masculine. It simulates immediacy, is sunny, frank, holistic and healthy. The fragmentation,

the mediation, the ambiguity, where are they? Ecology reasons on uncertainty, on hesitation. Its shape resembles that of a *polar film noir* in which the detective investigates from an apparently external, neutral point of view, only to discover that he is involved in it, contaminating the scene. There is no meta-position from which to make ecological statements. A decolonial project lingers in irony and difference.[2] Ecological thinking is linked to an ethics that we could define as coexistentialism. Something characterised by a female inertia. A form of awareness linked to introversion and passivity. There is something contemplative in ecological thinking. Interconnection implies separateness and difference. Distance does not mean indifference and detachment. It is not coldness.

Ecological thinking is not about infinite resources or not, it does not think of tenderness or wildness but of inexplicable familiarity; it has to do with vulnerability and responsibility. For this reason, rather than an idea of inclusion, it pursues an idea of radical intimacy. To imagine the stranger we therefore need thresholds, blurred spaces.

The decolonial project, therefore, requires thinking about ecology, not about nature. A distinction must be made between environmentalism and ecology. The concept of nature is linked to agricultural, sedentary societies, to the idea of land ownership. Nature has unnatural qualities such as harmony, purity, hierarchy, authority, harmony, neutrality. Ecology is something that has to do with coexistence. In this sense, the concept of nature does not do a good service to a decolonial project that should pursue not respect for the environment but the configuration of ways of living together in habitable places. *Ecologizing* a project means diplomatically assembling and composing habitats, collectives and species.

What we have tried to outline is a discourse articulated around concepts such as colonial difference' *desprendimiento*, coexistence, predation, connivance, failure, radical intimacy, estrangement. From the point of view of the prefiguration of spatial strategies, the main references are those of opaque space (Edouard Glissant), of cannibal thinking (Oswaldo de Andradeand Eduardo Viveiros de Castro) of destruction and vacillation (Euclides from Cunha). In conclusion, it can be stated that in the context of design practices the adoption of the decolonial perspective allows to articulate investigations and experiment forms of design focused on the recognition of differences, on the analysis of interactions and conflicts between different socio-spatial ecologies and on the attempt to define their relationships. In the pluriverse project, the main research fields have to do with the definition of contact areas between different ecologies and forms of spatial production, with the experimentation around the possibilities of multi-situated and reticular living practices, with the development of rural production practices linked to the invention of new ecologies or the creation of connection strategies between local economies and transnational processes. It is possible to consider all these practices not only as expressions

of local spatial thoughts (Viveiros de Castro, 2010; di Campli, 2019), but more generally as reflections on the epistemologies of exteriority, margins and areas of contact between knowledge, imaginary, space production practices.

Notes

1 For Walter Mignolo (2005) the category of colonial difference indicates the process of converting differences between knowledge, powers and cultures into values, establishing hierarchies. It is useful to clarify that the concept of 'colonial difference' is not synonymous with 'cultural difference'. Cultural differences are easy to negotiate. For hegemonic cultures it is easy to accommodate cultural differences rather than colonial differences. Cultural differences can be presented as legitimate, making their subordination opaque, otherwise, the concept of colonial difference makes the conflict between powers and paradigms explicit.

2 For a more extensive reasoning on the concept of decolonial ecology, on the question of ecological imperialism and on the relationship between gender and colonial issues, I refer to Ferdinand (2019).

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3

Cities Made by Citizens: Informal Strategies of Public Space Production and Experiences from Piura, Peru

Stella Schroeder

Abstract

Unauthorised activities, sometimes called informal activities, have long been part of urban life. Such ventures routinely occupy or appropriate urban spaces and bring new meanings and unforeseen functions to those places. Informal spaces are those used by people who do not own that land. In many cities around the world, these activities comprise an integral part of everyday urban landscapes and everyday life systems.

This work focuses on a variety of processes and activities, allowing residents to become the main social actors in the development of a city. Based on experiences from Piura, Peru, this study aims to explain how residents adopt, appropriate existing open public spaces. In this sense, the work reflects how people use these spaces in different urban constellations.

Additionally, the informal production of public space is a form of fluid, resilient, flexible urbanisation that fills the gaps left by the indifference of the State or local planning strategies to emerge in different forms and types in all parts of a city. Reflecting on transformations of the public spaces of cities and considering the social assets of local populations can produce responses to address the needs, expectations, possibilities and symbolic constructions of the inhabitants.

Keywords: adaptation strategies, public space, urban informality, Peru

Introduction

Urban populations have grown rapidly over the last century. Furthermore, this growth has especially increased in South America, reaching an urban population share of more than 80% in 2020. This shift has brought challenges for city planning, and municipalities have had to respond to these concerns, such as housing and other basic needs, new infrastructures or public spaces. Sustainable or smart urban planning has come to the fore in debates, research and political agendas in recent years. However, to achieve sustainable development, it is essential to rethink the way cities are organised and built. In this context, similar to the sustainable city, the city produced by its inhabitants is becoming a dominant framework of interpretation in the discourse regarding urban development.

This work examines the daily experience of use and care in urban space. Thus, the study refers to the works of Devlin (2018) and Hou (2020), who affirmed that small-scale intervention in a material way can impact the daily lives of urban residents. In this vein, Hernández-García (2014) argues that the social construction of space involves the interaction of individuals with a space. The public space, then, is a scene of complex and conflictive confluence of actors who through their various forms of appropriation show an active citizenship, as well as the vitality of places (García-Arias and Hernández-Pilgarín, 2019).

This idea first emerged in the work of Jacobs (1967) and de Certeau (1984), who highlighted the importance of everyday life in cities. De Certeau researched how people could use practical knowledge in their everyday lives to discover how things work and then translate this information into various activities and contexts. People routinely and sometimes unexpectedly occupy or appropriate urban spaces, bringing new meanings and unforeseen functions to those places. However, there is an abundance of literature regarding unauthorised or undocumented activities long associated with urban life.

Nevertheless, since Jacobs and de Certeau, a significant number of recent contributions to this literature have focused on citizen-led modes of organisation and uses of urban public spaces, presenting them as expressions of resistance against institutional planning. Explaining how people adopt and appropriate urban spaces and the definition of synergies facilitates the interpretation of how informal production in public spaces influences that built environment. By better understanding these processes, one can see informal urbanism as both a form of ordinary, everyday action and as part of broader disputes challenging prevailing models of urban development, planning and place creation.

Drawing on empirical evidence from a case study of Piura, an intermediate city of Peru, the objective of this chapter is to present different ways of how people adopt, appropriate existing open public spaces and give use to them. Therefore,

this chapter challenges the reader to consider pertinent forms of intervention for the improvement of the quality of life in cities through the activities of these cities' inhabitants. As part of a larger study of informal morphogenesis of public space the research is based on a database of 496 produced spaces mapped in the city, located on land which is clearly not private: pavements, kerbs, streets, empty spaces parallel to the street or a natural boundary, recreation areas (e.g. park, plaza, etc.), or unbuilt blocks (empty spaces without clearly defined use).

Territorial claims

Unauthorised activities, sometimes called informal activities have long been a part of urban life. Since the International Labour Office (ILO) (1972) and Hart (1973) introduced a rather structuralist and economic understanding of informality, the term has been broadened to all kinds of unauthorised and ordinary activities. In the spatial context of a city, the term informality describes the process of informal residential development, activities that affect land use or values and physical growth within developing cities. Usually, these informal practices occur outside the framework of professional architects, planners and policymakers (Roy and AlSayyad, 2004). Simone (2018) refers to urban transformations through rhythms that mediate between the needs of residents. And Roy and AlSayyad (2004) understand urban informality as a broader concept with a specific logic of organisation and a mode of production of the space.

Thus, informal places are generated by the actions of people who do not own land. These areas are known by various names, including autonomous spaces, transgressive spaces, vague terrain and loose spaces. Frequently, such spaces are parts of a city that are abandoned or leftover from official urban planning. However, in many cities around the world, these activities are integral parts of everyday urban landscapes and systems of everyday life (Hou, 2020). An informally produced area in a city, room or space may be considered either more or less private or public depending on the area's accessibility, who adopts and transforms it, and who uses it or who takes care of it. Without a formal purpose, these spaces exist outside of official jurisdiction and their variations are innumerable.

So far, numerous studies have addressed the issue of informal transformation, highlighting the importance of this type of self-construction as an empirical problem-solving system using a housing analysis (e.g. Arecchi, 1984; García Huidobro et al., 2008). Already 60 year ago, Rudofsky (1964) referred to the concept of production and tried to break the narrow boundaries of formal construction, introducing the world of anonymous architecture. In his book *Architecture without Architects*, the author questioned whether the intervention of an architect is necessary to be able to value the final product and linked his vision to everyday city life.

With the occupation and appropriation of public spaces, the inhabitants of a neighbourhood collectively begin with the 'extension of their house' and end with the 'constitution of a home' (Margier, 2017). According to studies on space and place by Tuan (1977), Soja (1999) and Massey (1994), a place is not a ready-made product but rather the result of a process of production. The basic entity known as space becomes a place when meaning is attributed to it. One can identify a built space as being a place where the personal image one ascribes to that space begins to mean something. In this context, the physical and social production of public space validate the close relationship between people and urban space and the idea that this relationship contributes to spatial transformation. People have a socio-spatial need to appropriate their public environments (Graumann, 1976).

In the last two decades, academic literature has increased on various informal practices in common urban spaces. Such studies have included subjects such as street vending (Kamalipour and Peimani, 2019); community gardens (Eizenberg, 2012; Hou, 2014); insurgent practices (Miraftab, 2009); sustainable citizenship (Beza and Hernández-Garcia, 2018); informal planning (Finn, 2014; Lydon and Garcia, 2015); and practices of everyday urbanism (Chase et al., 2008).

The case study of Piura, Peru

Since the 1960s, many Peruvian cities have experienced exponential growth that has its origin mainly in rural-urban migration and is driven by the need for housing and the occupation of urban land through invasions or illegal land markets (Cockburn, 2019). Cities are struggling due to the pulsing demand for urban development management instruments. Yet, in 2019 only 15% of cities have elaborated and approved the Urban Development Plan (INEI, 2019).

The city of Piura is located in the northwest of Peru and is the capital of the region. With around 480,000 inhabitants (INEI, 2017), it is the fifth-largest city in the country. According to local information it is estimated that informal or spontaneous constructions occupy about 70 % of the city's urbanised land and not even half of the street system is consolidated. The Metropolitan Development Plan developed in 2020 as part of the Reconstruction with Changes project after the last *El Niño* and financed by the Ministry of Housing of Peru is still in the process of approval. Consequently, the city does not have any valid urban development plan or other tools supporting spatial development.

Another characteristic of Piura is the poor quality of public spaces. According to a study on public spaces conducted in 2018 (Schroeder and Coello-Torres, 2020), many residents take care of the few existing parks in the area with their own resources, adding elements such as benches, vegetation or appropriate abandoned and empty spaces for different uses. This analysis demonstrated the need for the community to build spaces for meeting and recreation, aspects that

historically have not been considered for the consolidation of public space. Thus, Piura should recognise that the domain of its public spaces is a Post-it City, a term coined by Giovanni La Varra (2009). Such a city is comprised of circumstantial, temporary, indefinite and interchangeable public spaces; precarious support; and diverse and endearing uses and meanings for the community and individuals.

Frequently, different ways of organising the spaces, streets, sidewalks, houses and infrastructures arise from forms of urbanisation, parcelling and building. In different combinations, these methods give rise to various forms of public spaces. However, according to the results of the research in Piura presented in this chapter, informal space production appears to adhere to a different logic. That is, a public space is subject to its own ideas and projects, with different rates of execution, different moments of origin and different scopes of scale, which can sometimes also be unitary. People appropriate and produce public space in numerous urban voids occupying unused or abandoned land, recreational areas, streets, sidewalks, or empty lots next to buildings. Additionally, as this area improves, new areas are included. The results of this study show unlimited uses of public spaces visible in all parts of the city. However, depending on the location in the city, the usage varies and is mainly associated with the consolidation of the area. Furthermore, the components of these areas often depend on the socioeconomic status of their residents.

Regarding spatial issues in these practices, the results from Piura demonstrate that there would be three primary processes of informal space production. The first is the creation of totally new spaces on unclaimed land. Second is inserting, into already existing public areas, giving new uses to it. Third is adding into the more or less consolidated urban realm, for example, the appropriation or transformation of parts of the pavement or street by giving extra uses to it. All three processes depend on the urban conditions and show different methods of adaptation. Thus, people give use to the space, that is not mutually exclusive and can be categorised as either sport and socio-recreational, environmental or economic uses, as shown in the following sections.

Sports and socio-recreation use

Recreational and athletic uses are mostly related to the creation of new spaces and can occupy larger areas of an entire block or desolated land. It is usually an open space that allows walking, meeting people, resting and playing football or volleyball. On the one hand, it can be a playground that provides games for children or small rest spaces with benches. Figure 1 shows an example of this kind of space production and its ground plan. On the other hand, the space is used as *'la cancha'*, a sport-field that provides a centre for dynamic activity by the residents of the area. Such areas are important places for communities, also providing a place for neighbourhood groups. Generally, recycled materials such as tyres or wood pallets are used in these spaces, and trees may shade these areas.

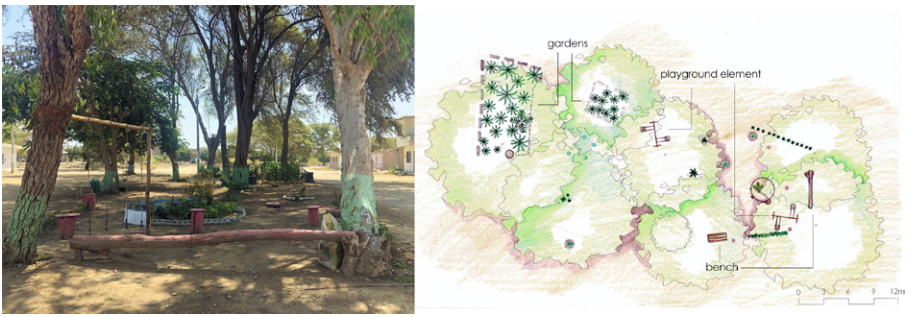

Figure 1. Socio-recreational uses: (1) Photo and (2) Ground layout (author's illustration).

Figure 2. Socio-recreational use meeting area: (1) Photo and (2) Ground layout (author's illustration).

Other socio-recreational uses in the neighbourhoods are demonstrated in Figure 2. On such occasions, the area's inhabitants reclaim space for meeting areas and are characterised by generating short stays for rest and installing either temporary or permanent seating using recycling furniture, sometimes adding shade to protect themselves from the sun or rain. The ground plan in this figure provides an example of how these spaces are organised. The space refers to the idea of adding uses into the urban realm. Regardless of the city's urban or historical origin, these spaces can be found at various levels of development in all parts of a city.

Environmental use

Environmental use can involve embellishing an urban space with decorative flowers or vegetation. Generally, such a space contributes to the urban realm and is located on the berm between the sidewalk and the street. According to the observations made during the field research, the direct neighbours are concerned with the beautification and maintenance of these spaces that are not directly part of the municipal planning strategy. Along the streets of a city, it is common to see such neighbourhood sidewalks, which are sometimes well

Figure 3. Environmental use embellishment (1) Photo and (2) Ground layout (author's illustration).

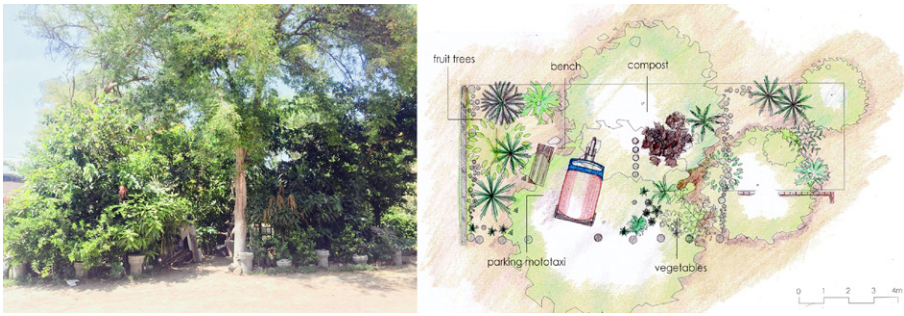

Figure 4. Environmental uses of an urban garden: (1) Photo and (2) Ground layout (author's illustration).

defined and protected with fences. Figure 3 displays a lineal space that often does not have any additional use or function.

In this same group of environmental use observed in the production of public space is, by inserting new uses, urban gardens have emerged in abandoned or exiting park areas of the city. These spaces have a rather private use, facilitated by one or several families who adopted the area and implemented the garden. Additionally, the neighbours might grow fruit and vegetable plants for their own consumption. Such gardens are located close to these people's homes, so they consider these spaces to be extensions of their homes. Most of the gardens have a direct relation to the property lot and width of the home and are delimited by a fence. Like spaces with socio-recreational uses and in contrast to the decorative embellishment as described in the previous example, the gardens present a living space with various activities that different age groups can use. Beyond this, the gardens have the clear function of creating social networks and thus a community. For instance, Figure 4 gives an example to explain the idea of urban gardens, which sometimes have additional uses, like parking, storage, hanging clothes or relaxing. In most cases, trees give shade to the area, or people construct pergolas.

Figure 5. Commercial use: (1) Photo and (2) Ground layout (author's illustration).

Commercial use

As commercial uses stand out, the appearance of small shops is observed in the distinct parts of the city. By opening small businesses, people begin occupying parts of the pavement or the street near these urban gardens. For this reason, such people add places to sit down, as may occur with kiosks (as shown in Figure 5), or they may use spaces outside their houses for selling different products, like fruits or groceries. Most of these stalls have shade and are directly connected to the vendors' house. Additionally, there may be informal ambulatory sales of fruits, vegetables, or fish. Such sellers might create mini markets in the streets, with defined hours, or street vendors might walk through the neighbourhoods, occupying these spaces in a more temporarily way.

Conclusions

Informality means the absence of formal owners, institutions or organisations. In this empirical study, the absence of a formal owner is a significant condition that influences the production of the space and facilitates to act in a relatively unprecedented way in the urban public. The action is different from that of a formal public space, where local parks and open spaces do not need any action from their users; implementation and maintenance are carried out by the government institutions.

The objective of this chapter was to show different ways that people adopt and appropriate public spaces. The results of this study could contribute to a deeper understanding of the role that informal uses of public space can have in urban planning and development strategies, facilitating interpretations of how informal production in public spaces influences built environments.

Wherever people have the opportunity to use parts of a public space for their own interests, the public nature of the space is temporarily or permanently put

into perspective through that use. The informal space offers the possibility of activities that are generally rare in the public realm such as gardening, setting up benches or furniture, and planting trees or flowers. These activities are usually restricted to private settings. However, in the informal space, all of these activities are 'allowed'.

The most outstanding and related to the purpose of this study about informal strategies in public spaces is that such spaces are created through decisions made by each neighbourhood's inhabitants, without impositions of the State. Additionally, the uses of these spaces are decided by single or collective decisions, depending on the possibilities of implementation presented by the space and the individuals involved. In this sense, the main objective of the public space is fully fulfilled by making a place of coexistence for the inhabitants, sense of belonging, freedom of action and expression. As Borja (2012) said, the public space expresses democracy in the territorial dimension as a place of collective use, an area where a system of relationships is manifested. In such places, citizens should feel free and equal.

However, within a city, the production conditions in space are not the same for all social groups, it depends on their particular context, related to cultural, socioeconomic and climatic aspects. Analysing a produced public space and properly valuing it facilitates an understanding of that space's potential uses and the motivations and importance that people give the space. By exploring different combinations of a space's multitude of uses, acceptance of these practices could increase. Consequently, raising awareness about this concept in the city and adopting the appropriate regulations would be useful in formalising planning systems. The latter could produce greater flexibility in planning and timely change that correspond to the needs, expectations, possibilities and symbolic constructions of its inhabitants. In this way, each member can contribute in their own way, identify with the space and feel personally responsible. Finally, this study adopted this starting point to showcase the idea that participation in the production of public spaces in cities is important to understand local needs which might vary from one era to another and one culture to another.

Acknowledgements

The author is a PhD candidate at the University of Bío-Bio, Chile, and is a recipient of the Chilean National PhD scholarship ANID BECAS/DOCTORADO NACIONAL 21200196.

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4

Articulating Nature and Re-appropriations in Public Space. Insights from the *Estero Salado*'s Waterfront

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Yves Schoonjans

Abstract

Academic and professional discourses on urban regeneration and environmental awareness have motivated the redevelopment of urban waterfronts around the globe. Although the official discourse emphasises the benefits of these interventions, they tend to overlook the implications for inhabitants' rights and everyday practices. At the same time, the inclusion of the Rights of Nature in the Ecuadorian Constitution materialised in an urban regeneration project exacerbated existing vulnerabilities for low-income citizens in the name of nature. This essay, grounded on qualitative research, reflects on how nature-based re-appropriation practices in public space can contribute to developing an approach foregrounding the articulation of discourses on the rights of citizens and nature.

Keywords: waterfront, informal , appropriation, urban rights, Guayaquil

Introduction

Latin America's condition, as one of the most unequal regions in the world (OXFAM International, 2015), has provided a fertile ground for discourses linking urban rights and planning. The notion of the right to the city is invoked for policies and projects responding to persistent concerns on distributional justice and active citizens' participation in urban transformations. At the same time, growing threats to biodiversity have revealed the need to expand notions of justice and granting of rights also to non-human entities. The Latin America and the Caribbean region is incredibly rich in biodiversity and is home to six out of seventeen megadiverse countries in the world (OECD, 2018).

One pioneering response was given by Ecuador, in 2008, when - inspired by the Andean cosmovision of the *Sumak Kawsay* or *Buen Vivir* (loosely translated as Good Living) - it became the first country in the world to grant constitutional rights to nature. This notion advocates for a harmonious coexistence of all living beings. In the context of self-produced urban areas, in-situ upgrading has been put forward as a suitable strategy to materialise these agendas. However, conventional urban transformation models ignore the articulations of these rights-based discourses with the everyday production and appropriation of informal space.

For decades, discourses on city competitiveness and environmental upgrading have supported the development of large public space projects around the globe. Redeveloping waterfronts has become a widespread urban strategy materialising market-driven motivations, city branding agendas (Brownill, 2013; Cuenya, 2009) and urban greening narratives. The benefits of increased contact with nature in public spaces, more green infrastructure, and reduced vulnerability to natural hazards are emphasised by local governments and planners. However, the mobility of generalised urban models tends to underestimate preexisting relationships between inhabitants and their environment. The logic of unplanned production of places in incrementally built urban areas and their specific relation with nature is not integrated into upgrading agendas.

In this context, the notion of appropriation seems promising as it suggests a relational phenomenon emerging from the interaction between people and spaces (Korozec-Serfaty, 1984) and brings about a spatial dimension of inhabitants' everyday practices. Lefebvre (1991) presented appropriation in relation to citizens' rights; so that the 'right of appropriation' is integrated as a constitutive part of the 'Right to the City' notion. Appropriation or re-appropriation can be associated with the capacity of citizens to access, occupy, and use urban space (Lefebvre, 1991). In addition, it simultaneously evokes transforming actions that give identity and meaning to a place (Pol Urrútia and Vidal Moranta, 2005).

The rights-based discourses linked to urban transformations and the inclusion of the 'Rights of Nature' in the Ecuadorian Constitution of 2008 constitute a critical basis for this essay. It attempts to unravel potential articulations between nature and re-appropriation practices in the public space of self-produced urban areas. The essay does not tackle the broad spectrum of nature-human relationship in its entirety and complexity, including economic activities (like fishing, farming, tourism, contamination) or the relation to wildlife, biodiversity loss, etc. Rather, we limit ourselves to the issue of inhabitation, looking at how inhabitants produce places in interaction with nature in public space.

Informal transformations, projects, and re-appropriations along the *Salado* Estuary

Guayaquil, Ecuador's main port and biggest city[1], is exemplary of the rapid, uneven urbanisation process that has characterised urban development in Latin American cities. It depicts an urban landscape tending toward territorial fragmentation and segregation, as found in many other cities in the region (Janoshka, 2002). Guayaquil's uneven urban development has materialised in vast self-built consolidated areas that reshaped estuarine waterfronts by decades of incremental transformation. The enormous transformation of Guayaquil's southern periphery has resulted in self-built neighbourhoods, which although mostly legalised and physically improved, still have acute socio-economic and environmental issues (Ministry of Environment, 2015). An essential component of their physical improvement has been the execution of projects part of strategies for urban upgrading such as the '*Urban Regeneration*'and the Project *Guayaquil Ecológico*.

Guayaquil's '*Urban Regeneration*', formulated in the 1990s, was the institutional response to what was considered a generalised urban decay by the local government's political and administrative model (Delgado, 2013). From its first stage, the local government strategy focused on public space a symbol of the strategy, making it a mechanism to achieve land revalorisation, increasing the city's competitiveness, and linking it to networks of global tourism and investments (Navas Perrone, 2019). Emblematic waterfront projects such as *Malecón 2000*, *Malecon del Salado* and *Puerto Santa Ana* were followed by interventions in the consolidated informally developed areas along the Salado Estuary. In addition to these projects, the national ministry-led project *Guayaquil Ecologico* -based on the *Buen Vivir* discourse- has recently played a significant role in the socio-spatial transformation of informal neighbourhoods along the *Salado* Estuary. The mega-project started in 2010 and consisted of three components: an urban park, a conservation area, and a linear park along the Salado Estuary. It explicitly targeted environmental concerns and the provision of green areas for the city.

In both cases, official discourses legitimised the implementation of the projects based on ecological upgrading and the assumed economic benefits obtained from increased tourism. Critical voices have denounced issues regarding appropriation, participation, or inclusion in the projects led by the local government (Allán, 2010). While others have focused on highlighting shortcomings in phase 5 of the *Guayaquil Ecológico* project since it does not truly address meaningful ecological restoration nor responds to broader aims of promoting the Constitutional Rights of Nature or the *Buen Vivir* objectives (Ordoñez et al., 2022).

In the last decades, the local and national governments executed several interventions to provide extra public space, including sports facilities and waterfront regeneration along the Salado Estuary in the neighborhood *El Cisne Dos*[2]. These interventions coexist with a multiplicity of re-appropriation practices that respond to inhabitants' needs and desires. Mendez et al. (2021) have identified four categories of re-appropriation occurring in different public spaces in *El Cisne Dos*. Through actions related to livelihood, recreation, socialisation, and spatial personalisation, inhabitants of this area re-appropriate spaces that have been developed within institutional conceptualisations of public space. The analysis shows how daily practices represent spatial renegotiation linked to the neighbourhood's cultural and socio-economic characteristics. Overall, these re-appropriations are enabled by the capacity for temporary, direct intervention in a spatial setting. Inhabitants' small, improvised actions transform the functionality of streets, sidewalks, and waterfronts, for socio-economic and cultural dynamics to unfold.

Building on the category '*spatial personalisation*', one component becomes especially relevant: nature. This observation holds particular significance in the linear park-phase 5 of the *Guayaquil Ecológico* project, where not only '*spatial personalisation*' occurs through the daily use of nature, but most interestingly, because the project's genesis was based on the premises of the *Buen Vivir* and Rights of Nature. The mega-project promised to simultaneously upgrade both social and ecological dimensions of Guayaquil in general and the Salado Estuary in particular. The linear park component of the mega project was made up of eleven phases, phase 5 corresponded to *El Cisne Dos* area.

Opposite to the inclusion of a plurality of visions that the Buen Vivir concept predicates, the project ended up being a top-down implementation that required the relocation and eviction of hundreds of families who lived along the estuary border in the name of nature's rights. In this sense, the project continued exacerbating the socio-economic vulnerability of the estuary's relocated population, whose economic and social networks remained in *El Cisne Dos*. Currently, the project is in a state of neglect and abandonment (Ordóñez et al., 2022). Nevertheless, interestingly, signs of nature-based re-appropriation have emerged at some spots of the linear park-phase 5 and its adjacent areas.

In this context, the following paragraphs explore the potential of nature as a driver for re-appropriation of public spaces where these nature-based practices can become articulations between discourses of rights for people and nature. We, therefore, argue that considering nature's potential as a driver for re-appropriation can foster community participation and involvement in upgrading projects and can leverage its potential socio-ecological contributions.

Nature as a driver for re-appropriation

So far, in *El Cisne Dos*, individual and collective actions can be considered non-organised claims for spaces and use, not fully incorporated into the upgrading initiatives. Temporary spatial arrangements emerge from inhabitants' daily routines and needs, often defining a diversity of places of encounter that emerge in unplanned locations including several spots along the waterfront or adjacent to natural elements. Nevertheless, the upgrading initiatives developed by the local and national governments are characterised by meagre consideration of inhabitants' practices linked to an estuarine landscape where nature is not only a resource for recreation but also for cultural identification and livelihood. Thus, there is a need to read (and re-read) urban regeneration projects and public space upgrading through the relationship between nature and re-appropriation practices. Currently, the articulation between nature and re-appropriation practices has a dual dimension: symbolic and material which are manifested simultaneously in space.

Symbolic Dimension:

The symbolic dimension of nature-based re-appropriations are representative of the unquestionable and complex link between humans and nature. In this case, they emerged from neighbourhood upgrading initiatives -adjacent to the linear park- promoted by the municipality to encourage citizen participation, neighbourhood's self-esteem and aesthetic improvement. Small-scale interventions include representations of nature in artistic work- and craft-projects on facades as a means to embellish the neighbourhood. Bare façades are not only painted, but some are turned into murals by local inhabitants depicting various kinds of flora and fauna, some more elaborate than others. Some even portray non-endemic species such as tigers. Other symbolic representations of nature include facades decorated with flowers and animal-inspired figures made from paper, cardboard, or plastic (Figure 1).

Other examples of nature-themed murals are located along phase-5. These, however, have a different origin and aim. The goal of the project was the area's socio-ecological upgrading achieved through its implementation and complemented with environmental awareness programs in the community. In

Figure 1. Nature-themed mural by local artist and neighbour. Planted tree in personalised 'pot' and plastic flowers decorating the façade. Source: Authors, 2019.

Figure 2. Painted wall phase 5. Legend reads: "Take care of the estuary...it's yours!". Source: Authors, 2018.

several spots along the intervened waterfront, painted walls (some with the logo of the Ministry of Environment, MAE) incite neighbours' cooperation to take care of the estuary -and by extension, the linear park- by trying to imbue a sense of place. Phrases such as "Take care of the estuary...it is yours!" (Figure 2) or representations of people interacting with water and estuary fauna expose environmentally friendly messages and decorate otherwise blind, grey walls. Although due to extreme water and soil contamination of the estuary, reforestation was only possible in a limited number of areas, the paintings depict children playing at the estuary border where mangroves, birds, fish, and people coexist. The natural elements in these paintings are both, reminiscent of a biodiverse past and, a vision for a desired possible future of coexistence between humans and nature.

Material Dimension:

The material dimension of Nature-based re-appropriations is more evident along the linear park and to a lesser extent in other spots of the neighbourhood. In the latter, practices include planting small trees and bushes on the sidewalk in personalised self-made concrete 'pots'. While in the former, the material articulation between nature and re-appropriation practices takes the form of larger fenced orchards and gardens, which function as extensions of residents' properties. It is worth noting, however, that these practices are not *ex post facto* actions emerging spontaneously from the linear park implementation. Instead they are a continuation of the existing and established forms of interaction with nature in pubic space and socio-cultural dynamics and needs (Figure 3). In this sense, the project has not fully taken advantage of many nature-related practices for the project's design and instead it incorporated concrete pathways, greenery and even artificial grass

Organised collective actions in some areas of the linear park emerge as responses to the new challenges brought regarding management and maintenance. While the designed pathway remains public, it also connects residents' houses and the orchards that occupy the originally conceived public green areas (Figure 4). In contrast with the abandoned overall condition of the park, these spaces are taken care of, visible because of the presence of painted fences, carefully planted fruit trees and flowers and improvised benches, which turn the space into open-air extensions of houses.

Also, nature provides the opportunity to create a bond with a given space by enabling conditions for its recurrent use. The search for shade is a case in point. As a coastal city in the equatorial line, Guayaquil's average temperature is 25 degrees; as such, the need for shade in public spaces is a determining factor for the presence of people in public spaces. In the linear park, the search for shaded areas has led to spaces under tree canopies to be used as such, eventually becoming spaces for gathering and temporary appropriation (Figure

Figure 3. Prior to the implementation of the *Guayaquil Ecológico* linear park inhabitants already used the estuary border as fenced orchards. Source: Google Earth, 2014 (circa).

Figure 4. Contrasting conditions between re-appropiated spaces and the overall state of neglect of the linear park. Source: Xavier Méndez Abad, 2019.

Figure 5. A resident's chair sits right under the tree canopy. The designated bench space from the project sits at the canopy's edge. Source: Authors, 2019.

Figure 6. Improvised harbor in phase 5. Source: Authors, 2019.

5). Nevertheless, trees not only serve to provide shadows for improvised sitting spaces. They also provide shelter for homeless residents, for informal trade, leisure and rest, and other temporary activities.

Other examples of the interaction between nature and daily practices are related to direct contact with water. Here, opposite to the elimination of existing orchards in some areas, the waterfront typology of phase-5 indeed tried to integrate nature-based cultural practices by providing designated spaces for harbours and swimming activities. After the construction of the project, inhabitants continued to adapt it. For instance, wooden railings were built on the new rocky edge of the estuary to function as an improvised harbour and as help to reach the waters (Figure 6).

Conclusion

The practices of re-appropriation of public spaces identified in *El Cisne Dos* respond to inhabitants' everyday needs, desires and cultural practices. Like other consolidated informal areas in Latin American cities, public life unfolds primarily in streets and open spaces (Hernandez García, 2010; Duhau, 2008). Here, spaces are fundamental assets reflecting socio-cultural reproduction for people living in daily interaction with nature. Particularly, in personalisation processes, as a form of spatial transformation, nature (or the idea of nature) also plays an essential role. The case of *El Cisne Dos* shows that everyday practices related to nature increase and promote inhabitants' engagement with public spaces in deprived neighbourhoods. Reading public space re-appropriation with nature as an analytical category evidence its potential as an articulator between projects discourse and practice.

There is of course a spectrum of nature-based re-appropriation yielding positive as well as negative outcomes. The opportunities and benefits of these practices do not negate potential adverse repercussions. There is still a tension between nature and humans that should be addressed by planning and design. Low-income populations logically prioritise satisfying their basic needs before focusing on the ecological benefits. Many environmental issues are not undertaken in re-appropriation practices. Gandy (2018) sums it up: "Urban nature should be considered as this diversity of potential appropriations, which also have political implications: from more inclusive or sensitive responses to urban nature, to attempts to simply use nature, or symbols of nature, as part of speculative dynamics of capitalist urbanisation" (Gandy, 2018). Contrary to the idea of nature appropriation, which can lead to gentrification (Anguelovski et al., 2018), nature as a driver *for* appropriation can enhance and promote local costumes and dynamics that point to the aspirations of the *Buen Vivir* (good living).

Understanding nature as a driver for re-appropriation can contribute to delineate inclusive design approaches where community participation can be integrated into the creation of natural urban landscapes. In this way, urban interventions can materialise collective aspiration while raising ecological awareness, becoming a link between dualist discourses derived from the Right to City and the Rights of Nature. It is essential to realise that many socio-ecological layers need to be incorporated into a design process. For instance, the role of aesthetics is an important one; as Meyer (2008) points out, "it will take more than ecologically regenerative designs for a culture to be sustainable (...) what is needed are designed landscapes that provoke those who experience them to become aware of how their actions affect their environment and to care enough to make changes" (Meyers, 2008). In this sense, small intervention as planted greenery are not purely functional but also esthetic, embellishing their environment. Small-scale bottom-up appropriations, born from daily needs and cultural practices, can add up to large-scale strategies creating new urban natures that contribute to ecosystem restoration and social empowerment. Furthermore, and not fully deviating from the anticipating and aesthetic nature of design, collectively designed projects could intentionally provide the spaces for nature-based appropriations to thrive while addressing citizens' rights.

Notes

1 Based on data from the last Ecuadorian Census in 2010, Guayaquil´s estimated population is 2.6 million people.

2 *El Cisne Dos* is a self-developed neighborhood, resulting from a long process of land occupation and incremental auto-construction, and consolidation that started in the 1970s.

Acknowledgements

Xavier Méndez Abad and Fernanda Ordóñez's contributions to this essay were made possible by the financial support of the Ecuadorian Secretariat of Higher Education, Science, Technology and Innovation (SENESCYT).

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5

Real-ize the Integration of Cities Through Drawing

Elisa Silva

Abstract

The axonometric drawings that illustrate the publication *Pure Space: expanding the public sphere through public space transformations in Latin American spontaneous settlements*, (Silva, 2020) represent squares and parks in *barrios* operating as containers of activities and movement. They suggest a desired fluidity that precludes unspoken territorial barriers. The possibility of visualizing this aspiration through drawing begins a process of imagination, familiarization and eventual naturalization of the city as hybrid, diverse, indissoluble and complete. Drawing can generate a critical process that recognizes and re-signifies *barrios* into integral parts of the cities they help form.

Bruno Latour, in his essay "Visualization and Cognition: Drawing Things Together," explores the role of engravings and inscriptions in the conquest of knowledge and the construction of reality (Latour, 1986). He argues that the production and dissemination of portable and fixed objects through drawing allows the represented subject to become knowable and real. Drawing can also be used to unite and even fuse reality with fiction. The axonometric drawings of *barrios* analyzed in this text are both an invitation to acknowledge what already exists and to yearn for a future integrated city that includes all its neighborhoods.

Keywords: drawing, representation, *barrios*, informal settlements, public space

The axonometric drawings that illustrate the publication *Pure Space: expanding the public sphere through public space transformations in Latin American spontaneous settlements*,[1] (Silva, 2020) represent squares and parks in *barrios* operating as containers of activities and movement. They suggest a desired fluidity that precludes unspoken territorial barriers. The possibility of visualizing this aspiration through drawing begins a process of imagination, familiarization and eventual naturalization of the city as hybrid, diverse, indissoluble and complete. Drawing can generate a critical process that recognizes and re-signifies *barrios* into integral parts of the cities they help form.

El Calvario in the municipality of *El Hatillo* in Caracas is a *barrio* that dates back to the 1930s . It is closely tied to the dynamics of the historical colonial town of *El Hatillo*, reflected in the lives of families who frequent workplaces, schools and businesses in both sectors. However, for people who live in the rest of the municipality or who come to visit *El Hatillo*, the *barrio* remains unknown. The aerial axonometric drawing (Figure 01) records an annual event that has taken place every December since 2015, called "*El Calvario Puertas Abiertas*." Its purpose has been to seduce people to get to know the *barrio*, by attending concerts, book and poetry readings, participating in the 'Christmas parranda' and engaging a series of curiosities and artistic interventions.[2] Each year the

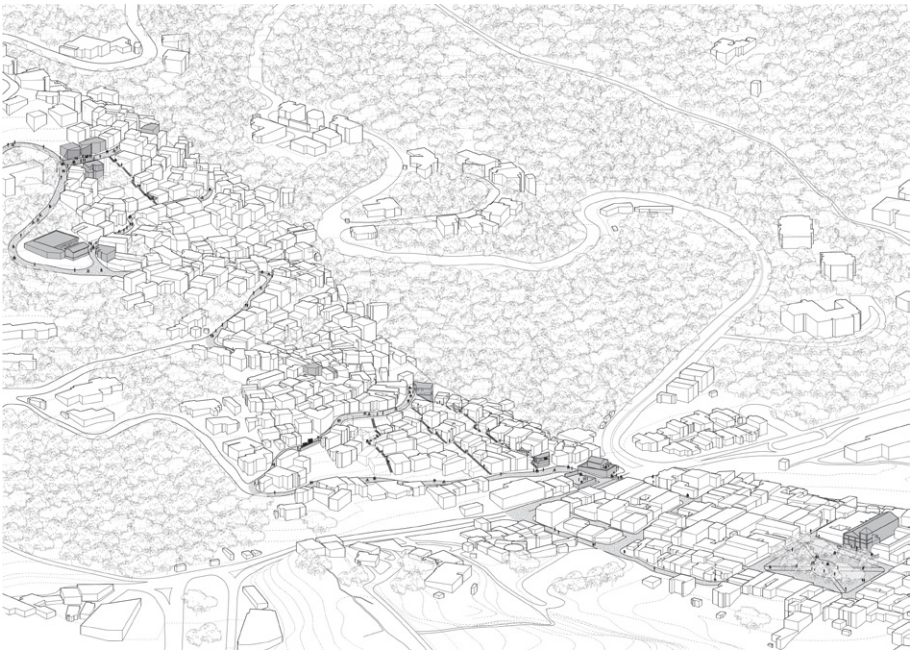

Figure 1. Axonometric drawing of the *barrio* El Calvario and the historic center of El Hatillo in Caracas, Venezuela, during the event "*El Calvario Puertas Abiertas*". Source: *Enlace Arquitectura*.

Figure 2. Axonometric drawing of the *barrio La Palomera* and the town of Baruta in Caracas, Venezuela during the celebration of the Cross of May 2019. Source: *Enlace Arquitectura*.

repertory of activities grows. The fluidity of pedestrian movement between the two territories confirms them as one, even though it is simply the manifestation of a quotidian reality for the *barrio´s* inhabitants. Shades of grey in the drawing show the public space sequence that ascends from the *Plaza Bolívar* of *El Hatillo* - right side - crosses the main avenue and winds its way to the top of the *barrio* reaching the *Plaza La Cruz* - left side. The territory's continuity is enjoyed through experience. The reward is felt upon reaching the top of the *barrio*, where deep views over the town of *El Hatillo* and the rest of the municipality can be appreciated. Furthermore, the discovery of a new place and the opportunity to expand one´s cognitive limits of the city produce a sense of satisfaction.

The relationship is similar between the *barrio La Palomera* and the historic center of Baruta, also in Caracas. Just south of Baruta´s gridded blocks and town square, *La Palomera* rises over a hill that is perceived as a vertical wall of houses, and an impenetrable territory by surrounding neighbors. And yet, La Palomera has been around for more than nine decades when its first inhabitants arrived in the 1930s. The aerial perspective (Figure 2) records the celebration of "*La Cruz de Mayo*" and the Mobile Museum that took place in May 2019. The event began in Baruta´s Plaza Bolivar with musicians and a 1:200 scale model, measuring 3 x 3.4 meters. Divided into 12 segments, the model represents the *barrio La Palomera* and the urban fabric beyond. Pieces of the model were carried in a procession from the town square, through the Salom Street entrance and up the *barrio*'s walkways and stairs. The porters and musicians sang *décimas* interspersed with the rhythms of the *cuatro* (a Venezuelan string instrument), drums and maracas, as they proceeded along the route. The model was assembled once again at the top of the *barrio* and became the instigator of conversations about the nature of the city, differences in the urban fabric and how people interpret these differences. The image highlights the space of pedestrian movement in the form of streets, squares, walkways and stairways. It also shows the proximity and spatial continuity between the town and the *barrio* and encourages the perceived borders between them to be reconsidered and dissolved.

Figure 3. Axonometric drawing of the favelas Chapeu Mangueira and Babilônia in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Source: *Enlace Arquitectura*.

Another example, this time in Carioca land, is the forest reserve above the favelas Chapeu Mangueira and Babilônia in Rio de Janeiro. The favelas skirt part of the morro north of Copacabana Bay. In the drawing (Figure 3), we see a mountain covered in dense, lush forest, but this was not always the case. In spite of a decree that gave the morro the name Carioca Municipal Park and designated it an environmental protection area in the 1980s, a decade later, the forced displacement of people from other communities resulted in the expansion and densification of the favelas, and the morro was completely deforested. In 2001, the neighbors themselves, with the support of the "Morar Carioca Verde" program, began to repopulate the hill with trees. Today, the park is frequented by people from other parts of the city and visitors who walk through the favelas to access the natural reserve. In other words, the *barrios* are understood as figurative passages that provide access to public space for the local population. Furthermore, the community is the protector of this commons, understood no longer as its backyard but as a destination at the metropolitan scale. Their role as stewards of the land, mediators and connectors transforms the city´s narrative. The drawing shows how the streets and sidewalks of Copacabana are the beginning of a route that continues along the favelas' walkways to then become dirt paths through the park. The rocky summit is reached through a clearing, frequented by the favela´s youth flying kites, and by visitors taking in the stunning views of the ocean bays and the surrounding morros.

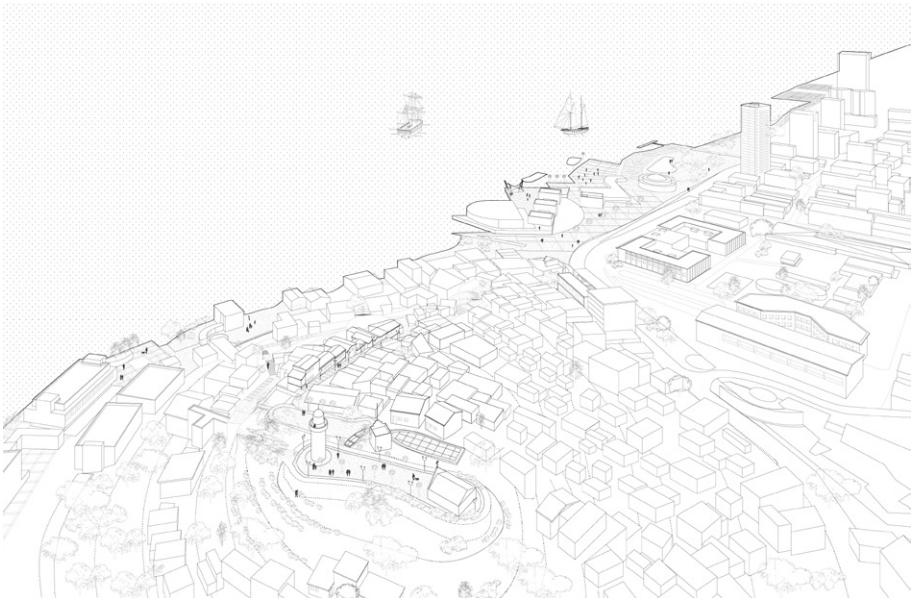

Figure 4. Axonometric drawing of Cerro Santa Ana, the *Barrio Las Peñas* and the *Malecón 2000* in Guayaquil, Ecuador. Source: *Enlace Arquitectura*.

A path that begins in one place and arrives at an urban lookout point in another, is often part of a narrative that allows territories to flow into each another. The Cerro Santa Ana and Las Peñas are *barrios* on a hill that abuts the colonial grid of Guayaquil and the Guayas River. Because of its high elevation and strategic location, this hill once served as a defense post for the city during the 16th. century. Today, the hill is populated with self-built constructions and its inhabitants belong to a socio-economic level that contrasts with that of their surroundings. After significant public and private investments to rehabilitate the riverfront – known as the *Malecón 2000* project - the Municipality of Guayaquil extended its area of influence to include the hill. The gesture was meant to address the security problems, robberies and assaults, for which the *barrio*´s residents were asumed to be responsible. The resulting urban investments made in Cerro Santa Ana and Barrio Las Peñas physically transformed their public spaces and the facades of many houses, but also promoted entrepreneurship and helped formalize the tourist businesses that emerged because of their new connection to the *Malecón 2000*. The drawing (Figure 4) shows Cerro Santa Ana in the foreground and the northern end of the *malecón* in the distance, linked by a continuous pathway that leads into the *barrio*. A long series of stairs flanked by houses, restaurants, and bars accesses an expansive oblong esplanade at the zenith, marked by a tower and chapel at each end. From here, an impressive 360-degree view over Guayaquil can be enjoyed. Thus, Las Peñas and Cerro Santa Ana have become notable tourist landmarks, fully incorporated into the experience and mental map not only of *Guayaquileños* but also of those who visit the city.

Pure Space's drawings often construct scenes conflating activities that usually occur at different times into a single instant. The streets, squares and parks are highlighted as places lived with intensity and the aerial view allows them to be understood as a continuous, legible space within the city, where people are the protagonists. The chosen frame portrays a territory sufficiently broad so as to present each *barrio* definitively inserted in and enveloped by their surroundings, underscoring and making absolutely clear their assimilation as part of the city.[3] The drawings' point of view resonates with bird's-eye perspectives of cities such as that of Rome by Antonio Tempesta in 1593. The drawing's content recalls the illustration of Nancy as presented in *La Place de la Carrier* by Jacques Callot in 1637 which records an urban procession. The engravings insist on communicating a curated reading of the city: a 16th century Rome that has recovered the physical extension and perhaps also the ego of its imperial foot print; a procession in Nancy that renders its public square into a stage set and urban life into theatre. In the case of *Pure Space*, the drawings communicate the yearning of a self-built urban territory to be universally recognized alongside the rest of the city, and the city´s request to be acknowledged as diverse.

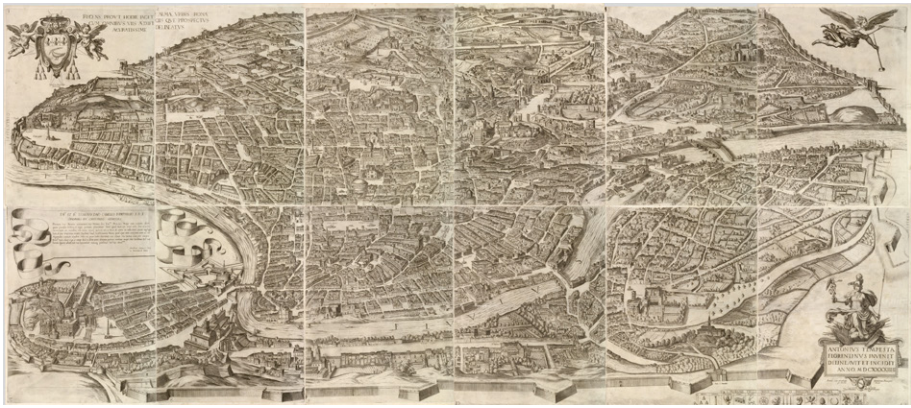

Figure 5. Aerial view of Rome. Antonio Tempesta, 1593.

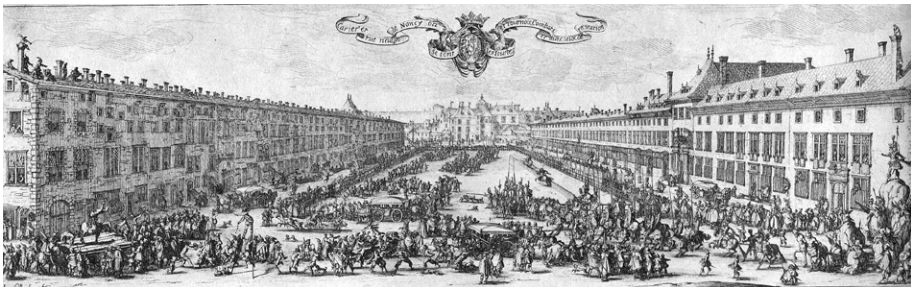

Figure 6. *La Place de la Carrier* in Nancy. Jacques Callot, 1637.

Bruno Latour, in his essay "Visualization and Cognition: Drawing Things Together", explores the role of engravings and inscriptions in the conquest of knowledge and the construction of reality. The production and dissemination of portable and fixed objects through drawing essentially allows what is represented to become knowable and real. "By working on papers alone, on fragile inscriptions which are immensely less than the things from which they are extracted, it is still possible to dominate all things, and all people. What is insignificant for all other cultures becomes the most significant, the only significant aspect of reality" (Latour, 1986).

A brief digression based on research I did in Rome between 2005 and 2006 on the 17th. century engravings of Giovanni Battista Falda, may help illustrate this concept. Many of Falda´s perspectives feature urban works commissioned by Pope Alexander VII. The Chigi Pope was a passionate urban designer, known for having a large-scale model of Rome in his bed-chamber, which he used to fantasize and project urban interventions (Krautheimer, 1987). Unfortunately, he did not get the chance to build to the extent he envisioned, since by then the

power and wealth of the papal estates were significantly diminished in contrast to the empires of France, the Iberian Peninsula and Great Britain. Alexander VII was forced to check his ambition and commission less- expensive projects that recycled already standing buildings, modified façades, and carved formal squares out of existing outdoor spaces. These interventions are recorded among the more than 80 views of Rome that Falda produced in his short life, compiled in three publications known as the *Theatri* of modern Rome (Falda 1665, 1665, 1667).

A salient aspect of Falda´s images - and what relates them to the drawings of *Pure Space* - is that they do not represent their subjects faithfully, but rather significantly exaggerate the dimensions of their squares and buildings so as to appear larger than their actual size. They also separate, angle or eliminate elements to improve the visibility and clarity of the subject. A city fitting the scale of the craved progressiveness, monumentality and power of Rome emerges in the drawings, as though they were eager to compete with the fame and wealth of other cities through imagery. The narrow medieval streets of Rome are turned into fictions of amplitude, assisted by the perspective technique which proves to be a perfect tool to both pay homage to Alexander VII's urban transformations and "correct" or bring their size closer to that of the creator´s ambition. The difference between the actual dimensions of the Roman streets and squares and those expressed in the drawings can be appreciated in the plan reconstructions of the perspective superimposed on Giambattista Nolli's plan (fig. 7).

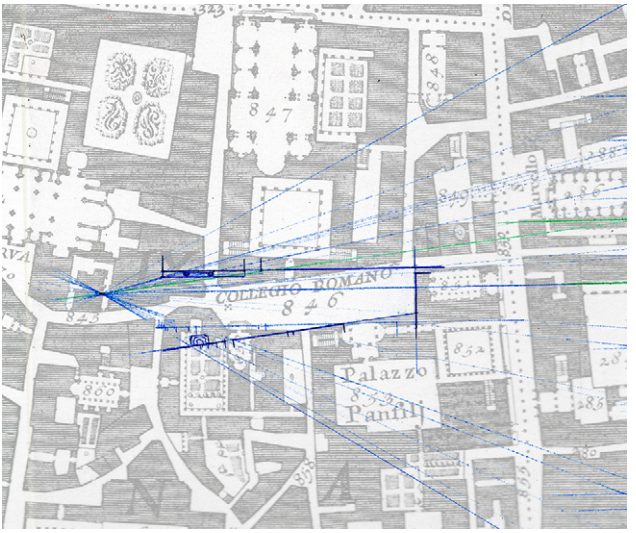

Figure 7. Reconstruction of Falda´s perspective of the Collegio Romano on top of Nolli's 1748 plan. The drawing is a reverse perspective. The plan reveals a technique frequently used by Falda, where the sides of the square are angled to facilitate greater visibility of the façades. Another common trick used by Falda is to place the point of view at a distance from the subject well-beyond what the actual space would permit, essentially eliminating part of the urban fabric.

Figure 8. Giovanni Battista Falda's perspective of Santa Maria della Pace, 1665.

Falda´s depiction of the Chiesa Santa Maria della Pace and the alleyway leading to it - designed by the architect Pietro da Cortona in 1665 - presents yet another distortion strategy. The width of the passage is narrow and slightly skewed with respect to the church´s axis (Figure 9).

Falda's engraving appears as not one but several perspectives, conflated into a continuous scene, stitching together reality and fiction (Figure 8). Scenes of Rome in the form of engravings such as these were widely circulated by pilgrims each year. They made it possible for myriads of people who had never been to Rome to known and understand it, essentially imagining and projecting a parallel vision of the city thousands of miles extra-muri. By re-dimensioning space Falda's tricked representations go beyond re-producing Rome: they also re-signify and even re-create the city.

Figure 9. Aerial view of Santa Maria della Pace in R. Krautheimer, *Roma di Alessandro*.

The correlation between the Roman prints and the views in *Pure Space* however, does not hinge on technique or quality, but rather on the power of

Figure 10. View of Santa Maria della Pace, 2006. Source: Elisa Silva.

drawing to sublimate the desire and ambition of a place. Both the Santa Maria della Pace and Cerro Santa Ana representations support an urban narrative intentionally conveyed to their audiences. The engraving of Santa Maria della Pace produces the illusion of an instantaneous scene that paradoxically can only be understood by traversing it in time. Furthermore, it communicates that the newly configured space commissioned by the Chigi Pope is large enough to accommodate a carriage, which in the 17th. century was considered crucial to a building's status. By carving away space in front of the church, Da Cortona confers the status and relevance Alexander VII sought for the tomb of his uncle, banker Agostino Chigi, whose chapel remains decorated with 15th. century frescoes by Raffaello di Sanzio. In the case of the Cerro Santa Ana drawing, the illusion of continuity is achieved by using an elevated viewpoint - a bird's-eye view - which visually merges the boardwalk along the river with the ascent to the top of the hill. The single path sustains that this is an integrated and connected urban fabric, in clear opposition to the fragmentation that once existed and probably still endures in the mental maps of many. The political and social agency of the drawing lies in how it facilitates the introduction, recognition and eventual naturalization of a once contentious space both for the people that live there, and for those who encounter it through the image.

It is also important to consider the authoritarian and manipulative weight of the drawing. Latour warns that mapping and drawing territories belonging to others is, in a certain sense, colonizing the ethnographic subject, since mapping in itself is an act that only an outsider feels the need to perform: "we map their land, but they have no maps either of their land or of ours" (Latour, 1986). Undoubtedly, in our practice, we have consciously used drawing to legitimize *barrios*. Seven years ago, we mapped the growth of all the Caracas *barrios* over a period of 48 years. *CABA: Cartografía de los Barrios de Caracas 1966-2014*, which made a part of the city visible through historic and planimetric records. It also motivated a readjustment process regarding the nature of the city, since the publication revealed that half of Caracas' residents live in *barrios* (Silva, 2015). In more recent years, and in line with Latour´s remark, we have worked on facilitating broad participation through events, conversations and shared design processes – to take advantage of and incorporate as wide a knowledge base as possible. Seeking more plural interpretations of space and the city, we have shifted away from controlling content.[4]

Latour ends his essay by redeeming drawing without reservation. He celebrates its effectiveness in uniting and even merging reality with fiction, not only as an instrument of power, but also as a strategy that allows us to constantly re-arrange and rewrite narratives. It is a skill that frees us from outdated, moralistic or exclusionary concepts and helps replace them with new interpretations and discourses. The aerial views of the *barrios* presented in this essay are both an interpretation of the real and an invitation to long for an integrated and complete city. Acknowledging *barrios* is fundamental to safeguarding the well-being and productivity of the people who live there. But it is also critical to conservating and promoting the diversity and cultural richness produced through the collective efforts of communities over time. Without *barrios*, the city is poorer. Without *barrios*, a heritage that has been cultivated and labored for generations is lost. The construction of new urban narratives and the visualization of possibilities for real integration - exemplified in the image of an anticipated city - is fundamental to inducing consensual changes in public policies, improving the quality of services and education, and developing greater economic productivity. In this way, advances towards the realization of a complete city are attained not only in rhetoric but also in practice.

Notes

1 This research was conducted as part of the Harvard University Wheelwright Fellowship awarded in 2011. The publication was funded by the Graham Foundation for Advanced Studies in the Fine Arts and CAF development bank of Latin America.

2 *El Calvario Puertas Abiertas* is organized by the community and *Ciudad Laboratorio*.

3 In order to produce the drawings, first the barrio and favela ground plans were created from satellite images in Google Earth, since they are seldom registered in formal city maps. Then, three-dimensional models are extruded from the vector plans and used to gage the most descriptive view. The view is exported as a two-dimensional drawing and complemented with more detailed information including vegetation, patterns and people.

4 The projects we are referencing are organized and led by *Enlace Fundación* and *Ciudad Laboratorio*: and include: *"Integración en Proceso Caracas"* 2018-2020, Rio Guaire 2020-2022, and the transformation of the Annex and *Casa de Todos* in *La Palomera* into a center for art and culture. (2019- present).

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Open urbanism. Spatial Co-production and Urban Forces

Gabriel Visconti

Abstract

The Latin American city shows how urban planning is overtaken by the daily development of life, from a multitude of initiatives and social practices that, with their particularities and distributed throughout different territories, escape the regulatory and orthodox logic, continuously modifying and adapting the environment. They are processes in constant formation, open, which expand the spatial support that shapes us. They give a basis for thinking: how to cross-different ways of making city and territory, where alternative forms of appropriation in urban production are recognised and promoted?

This article aims to develop perspectives that go beyond the still-dominant normative planning, generating and providing conditions and ways of acting collectively[1]. It will highlight the making the practices of direct action in space, recognisable and usable protocols to reinforce citizen leadership in urban production. This approach is not about the city, but from the city. The article is based on a set of projects developed in popular *'barrios'* of Venezuela, responding to the need to orient ourselves in the future based on our world, our time, and our experience. For this, it was necessary to take an approach that contributes to dilute the gap between the different ways of making the city, offering the basis to address the challenges of the cities of today and the cities of the future: an Open Urbanism.

Keywords: Latin America, open urbanism, *barrio*, co-production, participation

Introduction

Contemporary cities in Latin America represent complex diverse structures, with accelerated changes that run through political, cultural, and economic factors. In this sense, our cities have not only different management models, but also permanence in their forms of production, especially in the popular neighbourhood, with their conditions and mechanisms of access and use of the land by social groups to get a space in the city.

In Venezuela, popular neighbourhoods as a topic and problem is current and historical; several logics have guided its (re) production. On one side, it responds to development models, planning, and urban practices, linked and/or derived from an appliance in Europe or the United States for several centuries, supporting and/or manifesting the State and its interference through public policies strongly signifying the urban space. At the other side it responds to self-management practices, protest movements, and organisational processes at a neighbourhood and local scale. In this double condition, three dimensions become visible: the first is of a spatial-demographic order, evidenced in the high percentages of concentrated urban dwellers; the second, of an economic nature, which has a face of inequity and exclusion; and a third, founded on a multiplicity of popular practices that reorganise the space. Recognising the role of these dimensions in the social (re) production of habitat in the Venezuelan city is fundamental to understanding a present (future) and important form in the emerging construction of complete sectors of the city.

Territorial complexity

This reality requires problematising the system of operation and the – hegemonic and anachronistic- devices that regulate urban configuration and reconfiguration processes. It requires a process of critical resistance from a citizenry that admits and assumes the fact of giving quality to the spaces we inhabit. Also, it is necessary to make citizen participation an engine of the process, not only as a debate and deliberation but also as a reflection on direct action of the construction of the city and its producers and consumers. In this process, it is possible to identify with other agents[2] interested in forms of urbanism that generate or regenerate collectively built surfaces. I specifically refer to citizens who have coproduced their habitat, called *barrios*[3]. They are complex urban entities with autonomy in governance terms and organisational processes, that support a network of particularities that escapes in its origin from the normed, dominant and colonised notion of city-making. Since this notion does not meet their needs, the *barrio*, based on their possibilities, has been established through the definition of highly adapted forms of territorial occupation and empirical knowledge. Also, through the socialisation of these, open networks

Figure 1. View of a *barrio* to the south-east of the city of Caracas. Author: María Lennon. Source: Author.

of collaboration, participation for self-management, and articulated decision-making are being realised.

The *barrio* represents a form of extitutionality (in contrast to the institutionality) where a multitude of agents can eventually be assembled. Of diffuse materiality and temporality, an extitution helps us not only to understand the power relations that take shape in soft capitalism, but it can also be problematised and serve as a critical functioning system in the face of normative institutional organisations (Vivero de Iniciativas Ciudadanas, 2022). Thus, in contrast to the institutional forms of city-making, the *barrio* is an assembly of citizenship, infrastructures, and self-produced devices. They involve organisation, collaboration and co-management processes in search of claiming the territorial complexity that surrounds, defines and sustains them, which eventually lead to the design and execution of service networks and infrastructure, community equipment and other social components that address these complexities. These processes promote and adopt a perspective that is not anchored in the merely defensive, but formulates transformation, creates new spaces of the collective starting from the house but unfolding to the neighbourhood and the making of the city. This not only makes the dwelling functional but also shows the importance of the environment.

This type of urban entity allows it to participate in various projects of distributed actions for territorial management, incorporating and articulating various agents (inhabitants, institutions, professional technicians). It is there where it was possible to demonstrate the complexity that starts from the "*ways of doing*" (Cebrelli & Arancibia, 2005) that conditions the visions of understanding the territory, about *places practised*[4] by communities.

Autonomous paradigms

Doing from the *barrio*, building in it and with it, raises ways of thinking on the production of the city. It implies adjusting to a way of acting in the world, what Ontiveros & De Freitas recognize when claiming: "(... the concretion of capacities and creations [...] in the incessant search to find a place in the city [...] the *barrio* reflect the contradictions and conflicts that coexist in the urban structure [... and] the creative potential of its inhabitants..." (Ontiveros & De Freitas, 1996).

A relevant manifestation of this is self-construction, understood as a process in which individual or collective capacities are applied to identify and produce the structures that support the daily activities. Self-construction is understood as an effective tool to face and solve common problems and is developed accompanied by aspects such as the participation of different agents in the decision-making, collaboration, contribution, and voluntary work in the search for solutions. Examples of this exist from the homes themselves, each staircase and passage that communicates them. It is possible to understand each component developed as an exercise in social autonomy and cooperativity.

Self-construction, as a form of constitution of identities and territories, manages to locate itself as a topic that sets the agenda. It also defines and gives an order to the set of discussions and locates in the imaginary and practice that gives meaning and orientates projects' specifications. The formulation of those practices, carried out by the neighbours, is related to their representation of their work and contribution to each project. They are generally related to the trades of blacksmithing, masonry, and carpentry, which allows us to say that the paradigms that neighbours have about the construction of their spaces are autonomous from their constructive contribution, and at the same time, are these paradigms that make their representations visible.

Likewise, the crossing of this popular knowledge with the technical expertise that professionals in the disciplines of design and the urban have , is powerful in all projects. It has given rise to forms of communication that, as resources, can trigger and promote various forms of knowledge, convention or habit, in a shared domain without rigidity. A display of non-hierarchical and horizontal relationships that allow operating consistently and contingently simultaneously, integrating divergent training processes and generating continuity between previously segregated domains of knowledge. Knowledge is constituted in forms of collaborative learning and construction of transversal understanding through the development of education-action mechanisms and the assembly of mediations in a cycle of motivation and self-regulation of open participation: making ourselves in practices.

Figure 2. Catia 1100. Self-construction process where people with greater knowledge guide the learning of novices. Author: José Alberto Bastidas. Source: Author.

Figure 3. Community Park *La Pantalla*. Self-construction process where each participant contributes from their ability. Author: Carlos Rodríguez. Source: Author.

Architecture as support

This particular practice of autonomy has a physical correlation to buildings that not always have an appreciation for the common space. This is due to the conditions faced by *'barrio'*-residents and from the need to act in a practical way. It reveals that the spaces practised collectively have a small surface and an almost invisible equipment. However, the dynamising potential of these spaces and the shared meaning built around the projects allow us to give them a collective look and make visible the diverse spatialisation of neighbourhood dynamics. That is, to understand which practices are located with sufficient territorial appropriation, quality and collective value.

For this reason, we aim for an architecture capable of supporting the complexities and paradigms of the context where it is inserted. It is not about taking advantage of a design opportunity on any piece of land but about making proposals in territories that are under continuous construction, by people who have decided to adapt a place to their needs, desires and obligations of living in the city (Bolívar, Rodríguez, Erazo, 2015). The project, and the type of urbanism it promotes, becomes a determined mechanism to characterise, communicate, and manage multiple resources: aesthetic, tectonic, technological, organisational and spatial meanings of the community, as well as of the others involved, insofar as they are (we are) active agents of the intervention. The articulation and connection of all these factors and their management generate a new materiality. It is prototyped and manufactured based on enhancing existing socio-spatial logics, with their latencies at different levels of visibility and/or strength in the forms of the present social interaction, from established and instituted social exchange formats. This includes civil association meetings, the celebration of traditional festivals, or informal social situations that arise spontaneously and maintain diffuse temporalities, such as recreational dynamics of sports practice and everyday encounters for affection. This pays attention to identifying places of proximity and concrete coexistence, with the quality of sharing reciprocal customs derived from the neighbourhood and buildings.

Supporting the revitalisation of the existing, stimulating new daily energy, and reaching urban-architectural development that re-melds the place is a consequence of giving meaning to the actions together. It is also a consequence of social dialogue, above the achievement of building one or several projects that understand the complexity of the realities that build the relationships between the *barrios'* sectors (various) and the endowed-assisted city, aiming at the gestation of new practices and participatory planning instruments based on shared visions of city and territory.

Figure 4. Community Park *La Pantalla*. View before the intervention, the abandoned place inside the *barrio*. Author: Carlos Rodríguez. Source: Author.

Figure 5. Community Park *La Pantalla*. Intervention in a platform for cultural activities. Author: José Alberto Bastidas. Source: Author.

Figure 6. Community Park *La Pantalla*. Intervention in a park equipped with games and shade. Author: José Alberto Bastidas. Source: Author.

The instituent force

In this process of conceiving "what is ours", it is recognised that the *barrio* presents two ways of attending the urban coproduction: the instituted and the instituent.[5]. The first refers to the socio-spatial representations reproduced in crystallised ways of doing and shaping their imaginaries. As Castoriadis explains: "...norms, values, language, tools, procedures and methods of dealing with things and doing things... Without this meaning rejecting that, they were created naturally."(Castoriadis, 2005). The second, the instituent, refers to the group that dynamises social transformations; raises a critical variation of what is established, a proposal on accepted meanings, recognising shared beliefs and self-representations that make places meaningful. In this sense, territorial production exists without the instituted necessarily being in opposition to the instituent; on the contrary, the last one finds the necessary energy to build urban reconfiguration processes that find support in what has already been instituted.

The instituent force generates opportunities to enhance empowerment and emancipation, anytime that possesses transforming capacity, scope and significance of the action; for this reason Fernández explains to us "...to a set of meanings by which a group – groups, institutions, society- is instituted as such [...] at the same time that it constructs the modes of its material social relations

Figure 7. *La Plaza*. View before the intervention, a place to rest. Author: José Alberto Bastidas. Source: Author.

Figure 8. *La Plaza*. Intervention in a common patio for the households to get reunited. Author: José Alberto Bastidas. Source: Author.

Figure 9. *La Ceiba.* View before the intervention, a site protected by the community for a future public space. Author: José Alberto Bastidas. Source: Author.

Figure 10. *La Ceiba.* Intervention for the configuration of multiple terraces for everyday socialisation. Author: José Alberto Bastidas. Source: Author.

Figure 11. *La Canchita*. A space built by neighbours for community recreation (view before the intervention). Author: José Alberto Bastidas. Source: Author.

Figure 12. *La Canchita*. Intervention for a reduced new sports facility with non-standard spatial dimensions. Author: José Alberto Bastidas. Source: Author.

and delimits its contractual forms, it also institutes its universes of meanings." (Fernández, 2007).

Therefore, it is possible to understand that each of the places in which there has been an intervention had a significant load associated with the symbolic practice printed in the spaces, with different forms and forces that gave it life. These forms that give latency to each intervened place have to do with the identified agents, the associated practices, and the level of use. In these interventions, different forms and levels of re-appropriation and re-signification manifest as signifiers and different instituent processes. They account for the strength of the instituent character of places, beyond the apparent homogeneity of the territory, the quality of the architectural and the instituted forms, transcending the struggle, to, at some point, become the social universe of meanings that institute new changes.

Towards an Open Urbanism

Gouverneur argues about the future of cities "In imagining how the great cities of the developing world, where informality will play a predominant role, are to be transformed, it is useful to take into account the main influences that shaped their urban growth to lead them to their current state. This will better prepare us to anticipate [...] and to be able to better influence its evolution." (Gouverneur, 2016).

The modalities and instruments of economic, political, cultural- and social-control for territorial occupation have corresponded to the historical trajectory of our geographies. In our cities, they are contingent on the values and forms of action of a part of society, this being evident in the magnitude of self-produced urban areas. This also speaks of the disconnection between conventional-regulatory management methods in the city when it does not contribute to satisfying the aspirations and needs of its inhabitants. On the other hand, it demonstrates the human capacity to improve living conditions without underestimating the problems and serious inequities that exist in this dynamic.

Urban planning and regulation still do not take into consideration the ways of doing things or the forces that shape huge sectors of the city, which depend on the need, practicality, and determination of those who build their habitat. Accept this fact, and recognise that in the set of complexities, paradigms, supports, and forces that influence the formation of these sectors of the city, some contributions evade any attempt to face the challenge of urbanisation in the coming decades with orthodox methods and exogenous, does not represent a problem, but the opportunity to combine, cross, the spontaneous with the planned, the ordinary with the specific, to develop a more balanced and efficient urbanisation modality, a hybrid urban system. This is a good starting point.

Figure 13. Description: *La Canchita*. Intervention view, years after is done where some updates typical of the intense activity are noticed. Author: José Alberto Bastidas. Source: Author.

From this context, the projects are understood as architectures that support, together with the instituting processes, the ways of making their own spaces. These spaces are re-signified to the extent that the actions dynamise the territory, making each project a surface for the human relationship in places crossed by key situations. This allows to re-construct a "we", which accounts for the construction of a "here", a place of belonging, a space of reference, of experiences, as an approach to the call of "*reinventing planning*" (Framer et al., 2006) in an urban century.

The main contribution of this article is to assume a new approach, an open urban one, which recognises the need to learn in heterogeneous groups, cross models, and function in different orders. That is, to contribute to diluting the gap between the different ways of making cities in urbanisation processes, offering the basis to address the challenges of our cities today and to come. It is an approach between knowledge and negotiation, of a transformative and inclusive nature, which is developed by taking advantage of the conditions of the territory through the fusion - iteration of planning, design, and management with what we have described as autonomous paradigms, architecture as support and institutent forces. This is respectively:

1. Link the attributes of dynamic social networks and locally rooted knowledge, a product of experience and technique, with appropriation and capacity for action.

2. Explore mechanisms for participation, communication, and management of multiple resources; thereby creating greater adaptive functional diversity.
3. Nourish with the forces that socially build and sustain appropriation and empowerment in urban production over time.

The proposed approach is not about the city, but from the city acting permanently with its agents in the definition and practice of their territories for urban coproduction; in the need to orient the future, based on our world, our time, our experience.

Notes

1 This article organizes and develops a series of reflections that the author has exposed in other works: *Identidades y procesos instituyentes: formas colaborativas de acción sobre el territorio. El caso de Catia 1100. Venezuela.* (Bogotá, 2019); The instituent praxis: creating our model (Roma, 2019); *Hacia un urbanismo abierto* (Madrid, 2019).

2 An Agent is understood as an entity that acts and causes changes and whose achievements are judged based on its values and objectives, regardless of whether or not we also evaluate them based on some external criteria (Sen A., 2000).

3 Precarious forms of urban settlement, determined in self-production from practices that seek efficient and alternative ways of using resources in conditions of economic vulnerability and exclusion. These socio-spatial constructions have different names in the South American region, but the denominators and the gaps are common, as well as the opportunities.

4 We are interested in the concept of Manuel Delgado for whom what is opposed to space is the social brand of the soil, the device that expresses the identity of the group, what a given community believes it must defend against external and internal threats, in other words, a territory. If the territory is an occupied place, the space is above all a practiced place (Delgado M., 1999).

5 The instituent action is a process of struggle for the transformation of the instituted and the forms that the instituted society has generated; processes of action, thought, and collective self-creation with their manifestations of time and the ability to mobilize institutions based on the interests they have built.

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7

Urban Coding Strategies for the Informal Neighborhood of Moravia, Medellín

Moritz Ahlert
Maximilian Becker

Abstract

In view of rapidly progressing urbanisation worldwide, informal settlements, especially in the cities of the Global South must be a focus of our attention; because in the future, the majority of new city inhabitants will settle in these unplanned extensions of urban centres. The tools and methods of conventional urban planning have so far been unable to tackle this phenomenon. New approaches, combining top-down planning and bottom-up initiatives to create sustainable and viable living environments, are required. The international Think & Do Tank *Urban Lab Medellín | Berlin* has since 2017 experimented with the intercultural and transdisciplinary co-production of urban living environments in informal settlements. Its main focus has been the popular neighbourhood, Moravia, at the heart of the Colombian metropolis Medellín, Colombia. The aim is to foster the co-production of ideas and projects along with the local community, and public and private organisations to improve the resilience of Moravia, a neighbourhood which used to be the city's landfill in Medellín. This essay reflects the potential of the alternative planning approach *urban coding*, along with the realised and currently planned co-produced projects of the informal neighbourhood of Moravia.

Keywords: urban coding, urban transformation, informality, co-production, inclusive public spaces

Introduction – Urban Lab Medellín Berlin

Moravia is an informal neighbourhood in Medellín. It is one of the few centric informal settlements, which is why the effects of transformation and gentrification have become immensely visible here. Due to its proximity to the city centre and its strategic location in the direct neighbourhood of Medellín's innovation district Zona Norte, Moravia has become a place of many interests.[1] The neighbourhood was founded in the 60s by displaced families from all over Colombia. It has undergone an extraordinary transformation process, from a stigmatised slum, a neighbourhood which used to be the city's landfill, to a safe and productive living space. Even though it is a hopeful example of the inherent potential of informal neighbourhoods, its future is threatened by major urban renovation plans that project to relocate more than 30.000 of its 45.000 habitants.

Oasis Urbano, a collective of community leaders from Moravia and architects from Berlin has been operating the initiative *Urban Lab Medellín | Berlin* since 2017[2], to bring different stakeholders of the city together on site, in order to research, discuss, design and build together, and contribute to bridging the gap between bottom-up initiatives and top-down planning. In multidisciplinary summer schools at the intersection of academic workshops and community festivals, habitants, students, planners, artists, civil organisations and actors from the public and private sectors have co-produced interventions in the public space. The work is based on the constant exchange between a small team

Figure 1. Phoenix from the Waste: The Story of Moravia. © Dubian Monsalve.

of architects from Berlin, community members from Moravia, and a growing network of collaborators from different disciplines and backgrounds in Colombia and Germany.

This exchange has shown decision-makers informal neighbourhoods as a crucial solution rather than a source of conflict. And it has developed tools for community-driven change, enabling habitants to become agents in the transformation of their living space. The overall aim of our *Urban Lab* is to foster the co-production of ideas and projects along with the local community, public and private organisations to improve the resilience of Moravia and to show alternatives to the major urban renovation plans of the administration.

Method: Urban Coding

In 2018 a first reflection, the *Moravia Manifesto. Coding Strategies for Informal Neighborhoods* (Ahlert et al., 2018) was published. The *Moravia Manifesto* presents an alternative planning approach put forward by the international think-and-do tank *Urban Lab Medellín | Berlin*, developed alongside local participants from the Moravia informal settlement. The developed 'urban coding' planning approach demonstrates new ways in which planning, politics, economy, and administration can initiate and implement innovative and inclusive urban transformation processes together with local communities.

We understand urban coding as an alternative approach to planning consisting not of a precisely formulated set of planning regulations, but as a way to reconfigure urban transformation processes from expertdriven master planning to co-produced, inclusive, and people-centric strategic change processes. In this light, Alejandro Echeverri, architect and former director of urban projects for the mayor's office of Medellín, from 2005 to 2007 under Mayor Sergio Fajardo, states: "no project and no process can be sustainable without the direct participation of the people that will live and work in that place, that will maintain and activate it." (Ahlert et al., 2018).

New approaches, combining top-down planning and bottom-up initiatives to create sustainable and viable living environments, are required because classic planning approaches have limits, especially in informal neighbourhoods in the global south. The Berlin-based urban planner Philipp Misselwitz summarises the reasons for classical deterministic planning failures: "a) planning is often translated into static and rigidly linear approaches, which do not provide mechanisms that allow for unforeseen development and dynamic adaptations; b) planning processes tend to remain under the control of "rule setting" bureaucrats, planning experts, or privileged powerful political or market actors, while insufficiently including the broad majority of urban dwellers in decision making; c) most planning schemes follow classical zoning approaches which

generate monotonous, monofunctional urban enclaves that do not fit the "messy" yet highly effective, collectively managed spatial livework realities." (Ahlert et al., 2018).

While classical deterministic planning approaches often favour tabula rasa solutions, which tend to destroy existing social and economic networks, the developed urban coding approach calls for cities to engage with and strategically improve the informal, improvised structures and practices that already exist. Like Richard Sennet, our *urban coding* approach also thinks of the city "as an open system, which accumulates complexity, and in which those complexities have to be worked with, rather than simplified" (Greenspan, 2016). As Philipp Misselwitz puts it: "Planning should start with an acknowledgement of the urban neighbourhood as a complex physical, social, and cultural texture shaped by its inhabitants over the years, sometimes decades – a materialisation of multiple identities. This situated urban ecology should provide a starting point for any transformation process. It should build on already existing local strengths and resources, which may include the informal practices and coping strategies of its inhabitants." (Ahlert et al., 2018).

In this sense, *Urban Lab Medellín | Berlin* is inspired by the notion of *urban coding* as an umbrella term for the search for alternatives to classical deterministic planning. 'Code' or 'coding' has been used by various authors, educators, researchers, and practitioners in the planning field long before our project in Moravia started. Among various sources, one of the most inspiring was the alternative planning process for a contested urban neighbourhood in Hamburg initiated by the network Planbude (PlanBude, 2015). We transferred this concept from an architecture scale in a regulated European city to an urban scale in an informal neighbourhood in the Global South. Since the very beginning, our urban coding concept has been set up as an open-ended negotiation process based on the principle of coproduction and with the aim of securing and developing the social, spatial, economic, and ecological elements of Moravia's existing urban fabric. Following the analysis of inherent patterns and structures of the neighbourhood and the identification of key topics (decoding), the findings were combined, sorted, and translated into the Moravia Code (coding). Its formulated principles inspired design proposals for Moravia, which also serve to test the implementation potential of the code (application).

The decoding process consists of different methods and tools: collective actions, public events, collective mappings, reflection and exchange forums. The decoding as a co-produced social and spatial analysis is the basis of the co-produced urban transformation and planning process. The Code consists of claims and tools based on the decoding together with the locals in workshops and public forums. The claims as visualised in the *Moravia Manifesto* can be understood as socio-spatial demands directed to city planners, politicians and residents, to initiate and guide urban transformation. The tools are spatial,

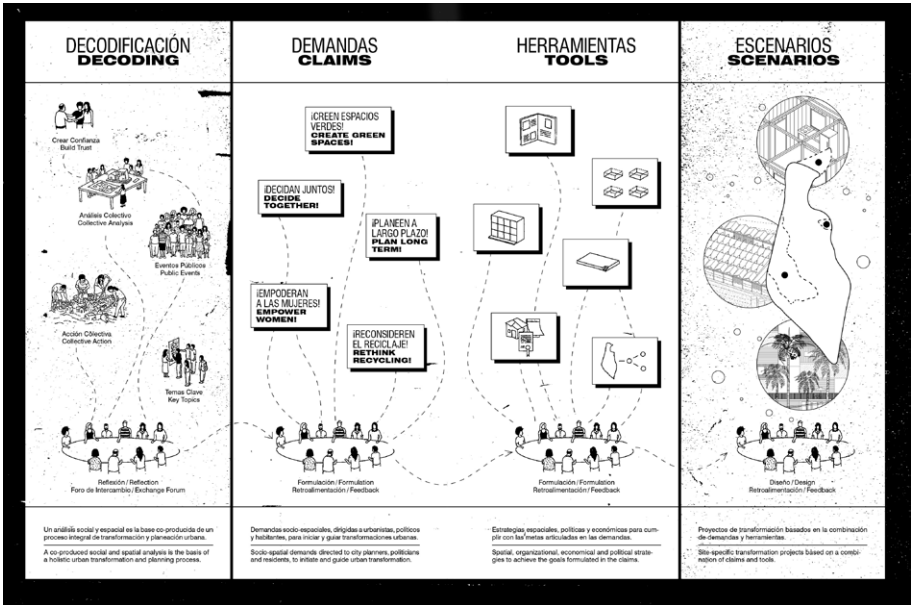

Figure 2. Urban Coding Diagram. © Dubian Monsalve and Urban Lab Medellín | Berlin.

organisational, economic and political strategies to achieve the goals formulated in the claims. Scenarios are site-specific transformation projects based on a combination of claims and tools.

Implementation: *Taller Tropical* Moravia

Since 2017, different projects based on the Moravia Code were realised in co-production with the local community. With the principle of co-production it unites inhabitants, community organisations, students and professors, artists, NGOs, private and public stakeholders on site to learn, discuss, design and build together. In these intercultural transdisciplinary summer schools, local community leaders become part of the urban discourse whilst students and professionals have the opportunity to get to know real-life challenges and learn from local habitants as wisdom keepers / real experts. "In this sense, for us *urban coding* represents a shift from "planning to implement" to "intervening to plan." ... Every intervention becomes a stepping stone toward change, which inspires if it succeeds and provides useful lessons if it fails – and therefore shapes thinking by doing."(Ahlert et al., 2018).

The *Taller Tropical Moravia* is the latest in a series of interventions which seek to promote the combination of urban practice and environmental education in

the Moravia neighbourhood of Medellín, through the collective construction of a community space for meeting and learning.

The first *Taller Tropical* consisted of an open multi-use classroom built in bamboo, a mobile kitchen and a community garden. It was developed in co-production among the local community and students/architects from Berlin. This small-scale prototype ran successfully from 2018-to 2021, hosting a multitude of events with over 10.000 visitors. During 2,5 years, users of all ages participated in its programs such as talks, concerts, cultural events, art projects, open-air cinema, community meetings, cooking classes, and many more. The construction was financed through academic exchange funding and donations from local partners in Medellín. The first *Taller Tropical* was built on top of an existing private one-story dwelling and when the rental contract expired we had to dismantle the temporary structure.

Next steps: *Taller Tropical* Moravia 2.0

The first *Taller Tropical* can be seen as a prototype and a temporary testbed. Fortunately, we could agree recently on acquiring a lot where this process can continue. The first *Taller* was already dedicated to cultural activities and environmental education. The new project will upscale the concept by combining a cooking school, a recycling FabLab, artists residencies, and a multi-use roof terrace. The new concept builds upon the learnings of the former space and emphasises on the pressing issues of nutrition and quality education. Malnutrition, as well as unhealthy alimentation habits, are major challenges in Moravia. Our cooking school will offer classes for healthy nutrition and a balanced diet for school kids of the area. In a FabLab for innovative construction and recycling solutions, habitants can learn to process waste materials in sustainable and profitable ways. Moravia's genesis is based on recycling and it can become a trailblazer for innovative approaches that develop new products and building materials out of shredded PE-plastic. Artist residencies foster cultural exchange and knowledge transfer. The roof terrace will be a multi-use open space, self-organised by the community and used for a range of activities from workshops to medical and psychological assistance, community meetings, dance classes, etc. The new *Taller Tropical Moravia* is projected as an innovative centre for experimental, hands-on education, benefiting a population of 45.000 inhabitants, of which one quarter are 14 years or younger.

The new cultural centre combines various concepts and spaces that have been defined in the Tools section of the Moravia Code, such as Community Kitchen, Open Workshop, Recycling Center, Neighborhood Consultancy and Community Garden, underlining the potential of urban coding approaches to realise integral and sustainable transformation projects in informal contexts.

Figure 3. (First) *Taller Tropical* 2018-2021 in use. © Urban Lab Medellín | Berlin.

At the moment, a project team is working on-site in Medellín to develop the design of the new building and the sustainability model of the whole project. A foundation (*Fundación Oasis Urbano*) has been set up to buy the building lot, and organise the funding and construction of the *Taller Tropical* and its operation in the long run. Even if it is planned as a self-organised cultural centre, open to the community to develop cultural and educational activities, it needs a certain level of institutionality to manage the spaces and to generate and administrate incomes to cover its costs and secure its maintenance. A mixed financial model has been set up to develop the project. Public grants from the German Academic Exchange Service DAAD facilitate on-site planning workshops in Moravia, donations from international and Medellín based organisations and foundations enable the purchase of the building lot. A public crowdfunding campaign[3], collaborations with local organisations and businesses that provide general and specific donations, such as materials, machines or tools, and partner agreements with Medellín based foundations and educational entities will allow the construction and operation of the new *Taller Tropical Moravia*. To secure the sustainability of the project, the building will function as a productive unit by offering tours and catering for visiting groups, selling merchandise and objects produced in the recycling lab, renting out spaces to external actors and offering services, workshops and events to external and partner organisations.

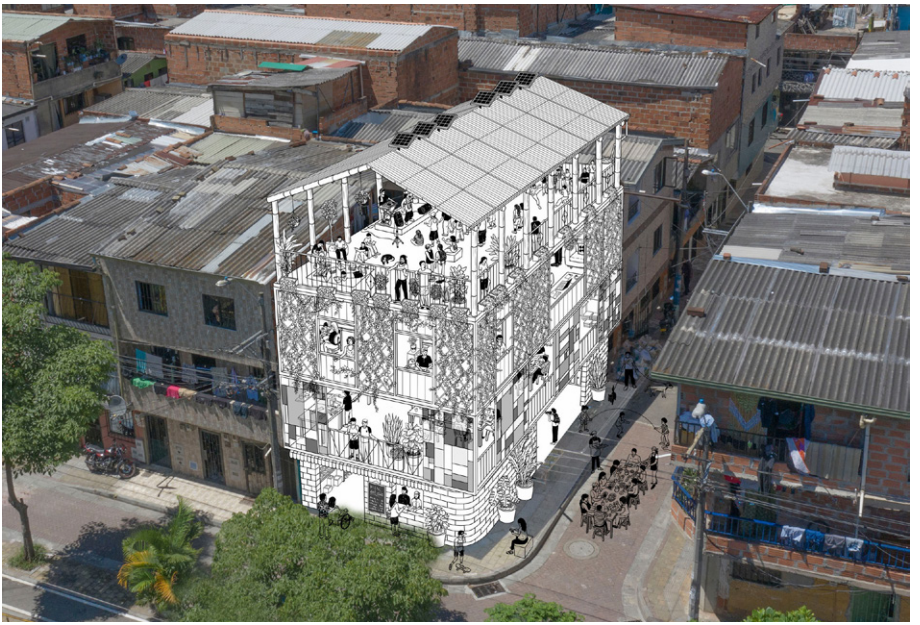

Figure 4. Imaginational drawings of the new Taller Tropical. © Dubian Monsalve and Urban Lab Medellín | Berlin, 2021-2022.

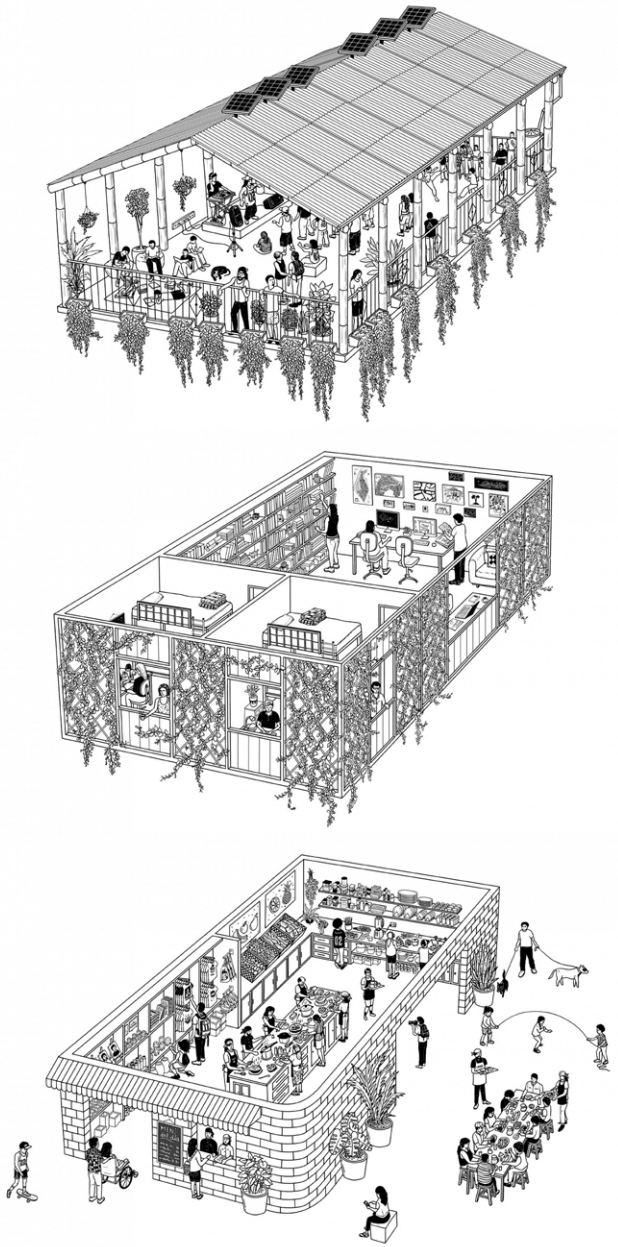

Figure 5. Imaginational drawings of the new Taller Tropical. © Dubian Monsalve and Urban Lab Medellín | Berlin, 2021-2022.

By creating jobs in the organisation, programmation and maintenance of the building, the project will generate work opportunities benefiting the community. Furthermore, the *Taller Tropical Moravia* will be designed as a sustainable prototype to test affordable, low-tech solutions in an informal context, aiming to initiate the use of alternative building techniques and supporting Moravia's path towards a sustainable community.

Conclusion

This essay reflects the potentials of the alternative planning approach urban coding, along the realised and currently planned co-produced projects of the informal neighbourhood of Moravia. Urban coding is a broad concept. Yet, in our view, its principles indicate the directions in which planning should be reconfigured, in order to guide co-produced transformation-to-sustainability processes in urban areas, especially in informal neighbourhoods. It can be thought of as a set of instruments that help to steer incremental change, to connect bottom-up-planning approaches with top-down planning. Even so, multiple challenges remain. Despite alternative planning approaches in many cities around the globe and a growing interest and enthusiasm for co-production in general, the framework conditions for such planning efforts are often missing. Local activism can jumpstart projects like the *Taller Tropical*, but securing government or state support is another matter altogether. The resistance and inertia inherent in existing institutions and administrations towards new planning approaches remain strong. In many cases, it is difficult to secure the minimum funding required to start such co-production processes like the *Urban Lab Medellín | Berlin*.

Notes

1 In 2012, Medellín received international recognition for shifting its image from the world's murder capital to the world's most innovative city. One main cause for this turnaround was the socalled *Urbanismo Social*, a progressive urban planning strategy focusing on cultural buildings such as public libraries, parks and large-scale infrastructure projects including a highly efficient metro and cable car system. These measures marked a change in the approach of state engagement in the most vulnerable areas of the city – from total absence, via confrontation, to selective interventions and finally to the implementation of successful transformation projects. They serve as tools to overcome inequality, and combat violence and poverty through the improvement of education and mobility for the inhabitants of numerous informally developed territories. Over 60 years of armed conflict in Colombia and resulting mass migration to the cities have led to an extremely rapid urbanisation process: the metropolitan area of Medellín has undergone a ten fold population growth over the last decades.

2 The initiative goes back to 2013, when a group of friends from Berlin travelled to Medellín to learn about urban informality. By chance, we ended up living in the notorious neighbourhood of Moravia. Half a year in its dense habitat and vibrant community had a profound impact on our professional perspectives as becoming architects. We got to know leaders like Cielo Holguín, who let us live with her family, and learned from her tireless commitment for the community. The genesis of Moravia and the current need for action regarding its unclear future motivated us to start a project in 2017. Since then our team has steadily grown with the challenges. Cielo is still the local anchor and good soul of the project. She has learned English and, together with Albert Kreisel, gained an Echoing Green Fellowship for social leaders. She is currently studying on a scholarship at the Eafit University for Urban and Environmental Studies, further expanding her skillset to represent her community. Albert and Maximilian Becker manage the project between Berlin and Medellín. Nina Pawlicki, Tobias Schrammek and Moritz Ahlert link the project to TU Berlin. Dubian Monsalve is an artist from the community who colors up our interventions. He also illustrated our bilingual publication Moravia Manifesto.

3 https://www.betterplace.org/de/projects/101214-taller-tropical-moravia

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8

Collaborative Design and Co-production of Public Space and Water Infrastructure in the Informal Neighbourhoods of Huamanga, Ayacucho

Mónica Rivera

Abstract

The peripheral neighbourhoods of Huamanga testify the terrorism that afflicted Peru in the 1980s. The epicentre was Ayacucho, and triggered an exodus of the rural population to the cities. In Huamanga, the largest urban centre in Ayacucho, a process of accelerated urbanisation was unleashed, and it occurred on sites with poor physical conditions: a especially difficult topography, and no drinking water supply. Forty years later, unplanned urban growth continues, accompanied by intense degradation of the landscape, i.e. deforestation, erosion and the consequent loss of the soil's water regulation capacity (Macera et al., 2021). The informal condition of these neighbourhoods, coupled with their material precariousness, is at the root of the poor quality of their common spaces. This article addresses the collaborative design process carried out before, during and after the Second International Urban Design Workshop held in Ayacucho in 2019, which focused on the informal and peripheral neighbourhoods of Huamanga. Three central ideas are addressed throughout the article:

- The design of public space is a joint effort.
- Understanding the social context is key to the design process.
- There is a need to broaden the notion of what is knowledge, and who is a knowledge bearer in the design process.

The proposed designs aim to achieve: 1) A better use of the scarce existing water resources through the incorporation of green infrastructure, 2) To jointly structure the proposals for water infrastructure, green infrastructure and public space, and 3) To increase the quality of life of the population of the informal and peripheral neighbourhoods.

Keywords: landscape urbanism, Peru, co-design, landscapes, Andes

Introduction

The Urban Andes programme looks at the mountain cities in the Andes, addressing the problem of water insecurity, a threat that accompanies the growing urbanisation of Andean cities. Emphasis is placed on the relationship between the city and the upper watersheds, which supply both water and food. Between 2018 and 2020, the Urban Andes programme conducted research in the Ayacucho region, leading to the development of undergraduate theses, two International Workshops on Urban-Landscape Design (TIDUP), and two publications. The workshops involved multidisciplinary groups of professionals related to urban planning and design, engineering (environmental, soil mechanics, chemical, civil, among others) and biologists, who worked in collaboration with local decision-makers, NGOs operating in the studied territory and representatives of the communities where the research work and design proposals were carried out. The TIDUPs aimed to bring together all these actors around a working and design table, where urban landscape strategies were formulated to strengthen the resilience of Ayacucho in the face of a climate change scenario.

In its first stage, Urban-Andes developed a research phase through five theses and a TIDUP. In this first phase, the work was oriented towards understanding the territory and its water cycles, with particular emphasis on the scale of the Cachi river basin. In the first TIDUP, which took place in the summer of 2018, approaches were developed to propose the restoration of resilience networks throughout the basin, articulating the territory of the upper basin, a water producer, the middle basin, a food producer, and the lower basin, where urban settlements such as Ayacucho are located (Image 1).

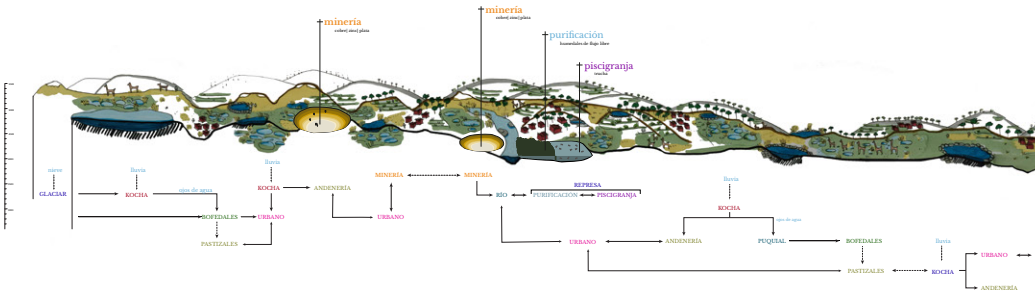


Figure 1. Water course, analyzed through the Cachi river basin. Source: TIDUP 2018.

In its second phase, Urban-Andes strengthened its alliances with local planning institutions and public entities that manage the territory of the Cachi basin. Community outreach was intensified, and events were held to disseminate information about the programme and the 2nd TIDUP, with the aim of increasing the participation of local stakeholders.

This article deals with the collaborative design process carried out before, during and after this second TIDUP in Ayacucho, which focused on the informal and peripheral neighbourhoods of Huamanga.

The design of public space is a joint effort

Spatial transformations at the scale of the territory are only possible through the joint work of the different actors in the territory. Urban-Andes grew out of the Agua-Andes research programme, an initiative led by the *Centro de Competencias de Agua* (CCA), which conducts scientific and multidisciplinary research on water resources in Peru. At the time of launching the Urban-Andes programme, Agua-Andes already had a network in the Ayacucho region, consisting of governmental institutions, local NGOs, communities, and local and international universities. Urban-Andes began its research work by anchoring itself in this existing network of actors, especially with CEDAP, a local NGO that has been collaborating directly with the communities of Ayacucho for more than 30 years, and therefore has accumulated territorial knowledge that constitutes a powerful resource for Urban-Andes. CEDAP operates holistically, generating knowledge with the villagers about their water resources and how to protect them, building small and medium scale infrastructure for water retention (‘*qochas*’), improving and technifying

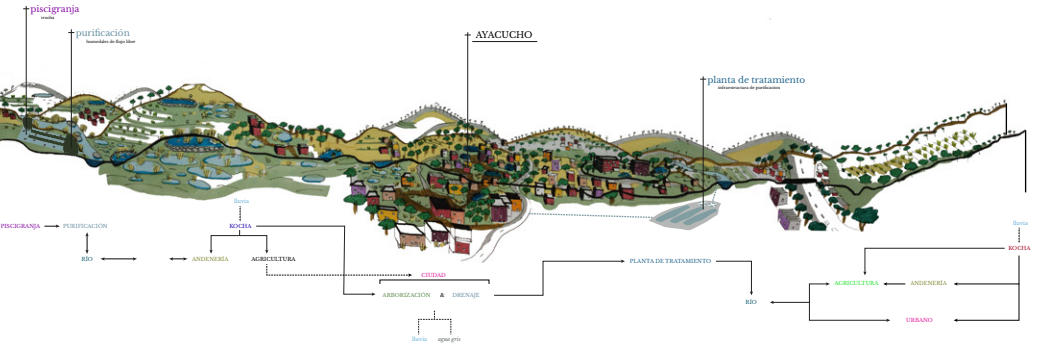


Figure 2. Presentation of the future vision in one of the communities of Ayacucho, through a 'mapa parlante' [talking map]. Source: CEDAP.

Figure 3. Informative session on the 2nd TIDUP, Huamanga, June 2019. Source: TIDUP 2018.

their agricultural production, establishing market networks for the sale of their products, etc. CEDAP's work in local capacity building is of special interest, both in leadership and in territorial planning and development. The creation of talking maps is one of the planning tools that the inhabitants learn to develop in order to visualise the spatial future they want for their communities (Figure 2).

The working networks created during the first stage of Urban Andes, the results of the first TIDUP, and those of the research carried out by students from the Catholic University of Leuven (KU Leuven) from 2018 to 2019, served as the basis for the organisation of the 2nd TIDUP in Huamanga. Three months in advance of the 2nd TIDUP and the arrival of the participants (selected through an application

process), a multidisciplinary team started to work in Huamanga, gathering information, developing reference cartography, and selecting the specific sites where the design proposals would be realised.

In addition, several working sessions were held with local authorities, with the directors of the departments of environmental management, territorial planning, and historic centre of the Municipality of Huamanga, as well as with the governmental institutions in charge of water provision and environmental sanitation. The aim was to drastically increase the participation of local actors in the process of formulating the proposals to be developed during the TIDUP (Figure 3).

To achieve the practical application of the results of the second TIDUP, it was essential to align the workshop's objectives with the projects and objectives that the local government had planned for the communities that eventually served as case studies for this second workshop. In dialogue with the local government, and according to their priorities, three locations were selected as study sites for the second TIDUP (Figure 4). These are three landscape figures that relate in a different way to the urban fabric of Huamanga: the Alameda Valley, which runs north-south through the historic centre; the Picota hillside, which flanks the city on its western side; and the Mollepata hill, to the north of the city, the site of numerous emerging neighbourhoods in Huamanga.

Understanding the socio-spatial context is key to the design process

The peripheral neighbourhoods of Huamanga are irregular settlements that emerged from the mass exodus that, due to terrorism, devastated the rural populations of the Ayacucho region in the 1980s. Although terrorist activities declined in the 1990s, rural migration to urban centres has continued. New settlements are constantly springing up on the peripheries. These emerge from organised invasions of public or privately owned land, or from the illegal subdivision and sale of plots of land, carried out by the landowners themselves, who plot and sell the land, even though they are aware that the procedure is illegal, either because of unplanned urbanisation or even because the land is in risk zones and therefore unsuitable for urbanisation.

In Huamanga, the largest urban centre in Ayacucho, these irregular urbanisation processes generally occur on sites with poor conditions: difficult topography, unstable soils, without drinking water, sewage or rubbish collection services. In this periphery, public space is far from structuring the city or functioning as a social and spatial organiser. Here, public space is what remains after the land is divided up for sale. The following remain as public spaces: areas of unstable soil, residual zones from the process of subdivision, narrow access streets, and stationary ravines, where, with their ingenuity and few resources,

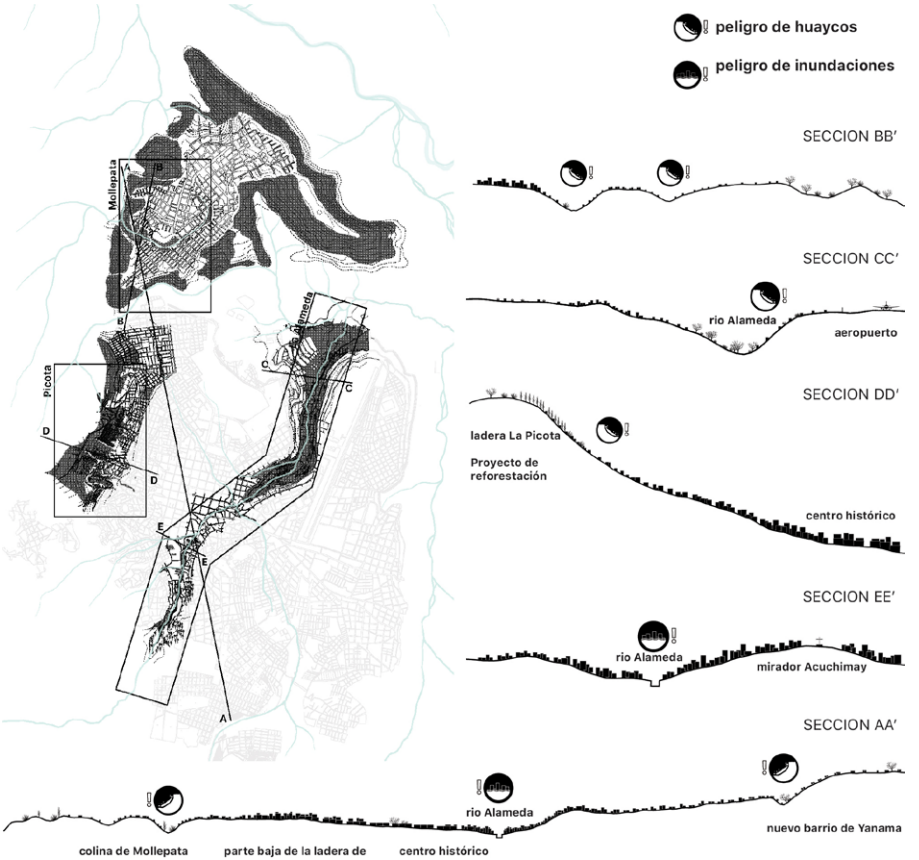


Figure 4. Three landscape figures: *La Alameda*, *La Picota* and Mollepata, were the sites for the 2nd TIDUP in Ayacucho. Source: TIDUP 2018.

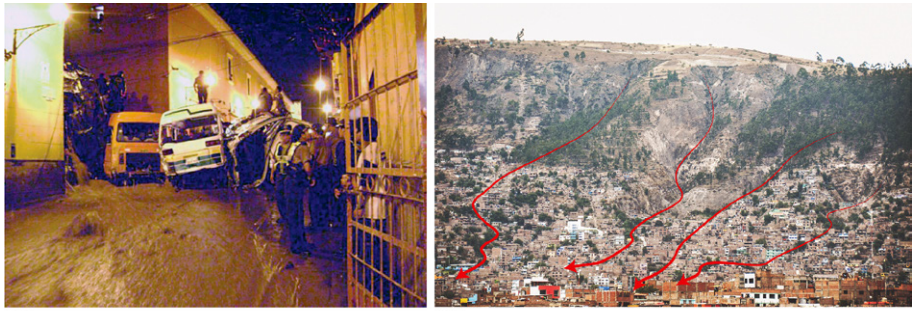
people improvise risky stairways that serve as pedestrian connectors in the neighbourhoods (Figure 5). After forty years, this unplanned urban growth has produced intense degradation of the landscape, i.e. deforestation, erosion and the consequent loss of the soil's water regulation capacity. Together with their material precariousness, the informality of these neighbourhoods is at the root of the low quality of their scarce public spaces.

In settlements such as *La Picota*, located on the slopes flanking the historic centre of Huamanga, the severe degradation of their physical conditions constitutes a substantial risk not only for the inhabitants of the settlement, but also for the inhabitants of the valley. In 2009, heavy seasonal rains resulted in a *huaico*[1] [landslide] that left 10 dead, 18 injured, and more than 1900 people affected (Figure 6). The solutions implemented by the local government to

improve the drainage system during the rainy season consisted mainly of hard infrastructure, which was built mainly in the historic centre, while the hillsides remain unprotected. Without measures to control the continuous erosion process on the slopes, the danger remains for the population of both *La Picota* and the historic centre of Huamanga.

In the peripheral urban settlements of Huamanga, where the population maintains strong connections with the rural, political, and social structures from the rural environment are also replicated to varying degrees. In the political sphere, the rural model of government by Communal Assemblies persists in the peripheral neighbourhoods of Huamanga. The Assembly is made up of one representative from each family. It chooses, through democratic elections, the members of the *Junta Directiva* [directorate] and its President or Head of the Board (Blancquaert et al., 2019). Social structures of reciprocity such as the *faena* can also be found replicated in the urban environment of informal neighbourhoods. Convened and led by the head of the *Junta Directiva*, community works are convened for the construction and maintenance of communal

Figure 5. Footpaths in in *La Picota*. Source: Author.



6.1 6.2

Figure 6. 6.1 Consequences of the landslide in Huamanga in 2009. Source: ANDINA, Agencia Peruana de Noticia. 6.2 Paths of the landslide from the upper areas of the slope of *La Picota*, through the dry creeks, and towards Huamanga. Source: Author.

infrastructure, and other issues such as solid waste management, construction of the community house, and maintenance of roads after the rainy season (Blancquaert et al., 2019). The political and social structures of rural origin are a fundamental characteristic of the socio-cultural DNA of the inhabitants of the informal settlements of Huamanga. Knowing these structures allows us to understand their ways of building and inhabiting: replicating traditional construction practices with earth for the construction of housing; persisting in economic activities such as agriculture; replicating rural practices of solidarity, such as the *faena*[2] in the urban environment; and above all, helping us to identify the existing social and political structures in which the proposals for the spatial transformation of the public space of these neighbourhoods can be anchored.

There is a need to broaden the notion of what is knowledge, and who is a knowledge bearer in the design process

The daily activities we have referred to above can be considered practices of resistance of a population strongly anchored in rural culture, which seeks to re-signify a space that is, in many ways, new to them. All of these simple aspects of daily life are moments of design (Escobar, 2018) as they are shaping our lives. Hence, the need to broaden the notion that design is not an activity restricted to specialists, but is a capacity that we exercise daily in the simplest practices with which we shape our environment. Therefore, it is also necessary to consider that the ways of inhabiting are forms of knowledge with which people construct their environment and shape the city through accumulated action. TIDUP pays attention to this accumulated knowledge of the populations of the peripheral neighbourhoods and incorporates it into the design process of the proposals it develops.

The TIDUP took place over ten days, in which a group of 24 professionals from different disciplines worked full time and intensively. In order to maximise feedback from local actors, working sessions were defined in which key actors and community members were incorporated and actively participated in the process, giving their opinions on the proposals that were being developed, as well as presenting their own expectations and visions for the future of their communities (Figure 7).

The final phase of the 2nd TIDUP consisted of the visit and presentation that the local Urban-Andes team carried out in the peripheral neighbourhoods for which the design proposals were made. In some localities, the proposals were presented in Quechua, with the aim of disseminating the results of the TIDUP in the clearest and most accessible way, thus stimulating their appropriation by the community. As tools to visualise their future, the proposals developed by the TIDUP become negotiation instruments between the community and the local authorities.

Figure 7. 7.1. Initial presentations by representatives of the local government and government institutions; 7.2. Field visits accompanied by local actors; 7.3 Work sessions with specialists and local authorities; 7.4 Intermediate presentations with people of the communities; 7.5 and 7.6 Exhibition and public presentation of the design proposals. Source: TIDUP 2018.

Figure 8. Presentation of results post-TIDUP by the Urban-Andes team in the community of Mollepata. Source: TIDUP 2018.

Co-production of public space in *La Picota* - living hillsides

The steep slope of *La Picota*, once the natural boundary of Huamanga, is, despite its difficult topography, one of the most densely populated informal neighbourhoods on the periphery of the city. The precarious conditions of habitability, and its persistent risk due to its steep slope, erosion and soil's poor water regulation capacity, pose several problems that need to be addressed:

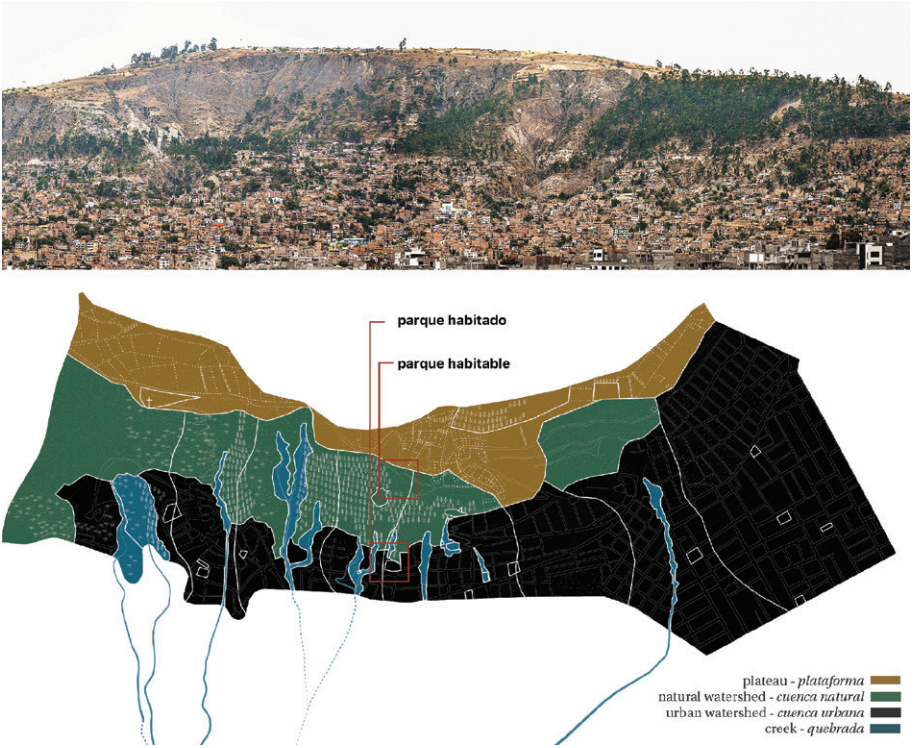


Figure 9. Summary of the proposal for *La Picota*. Source: TIDUP 2018.

- Design a drainage system appropriate to the topography of the site.
- Control of erosion on slopes.
- Generating public and green spaces in an environment where urbanisation is advancing at an accelerated pace.
- Improving connectivity and pedestrian mobility.

La Picota is currently perceived as a threat to the city due to the large volumes of water that its streams receive during the rainy season and the permanent threat of landslides. In contrast to this seasonal abundance, the daily life of its inhabitants is characterised by the scarcity of this vital resource. The proposals for *La Picota* aim to transform these slopes into a large green infrastructure for Huamanga (Image 9).

The proposed strategies present short, medium, and long-term scenarios. They address the recovery of the natural creek beds, always under threat of being occupied by new housing (10.1); rainwater harvesting for irrigation of vegetation

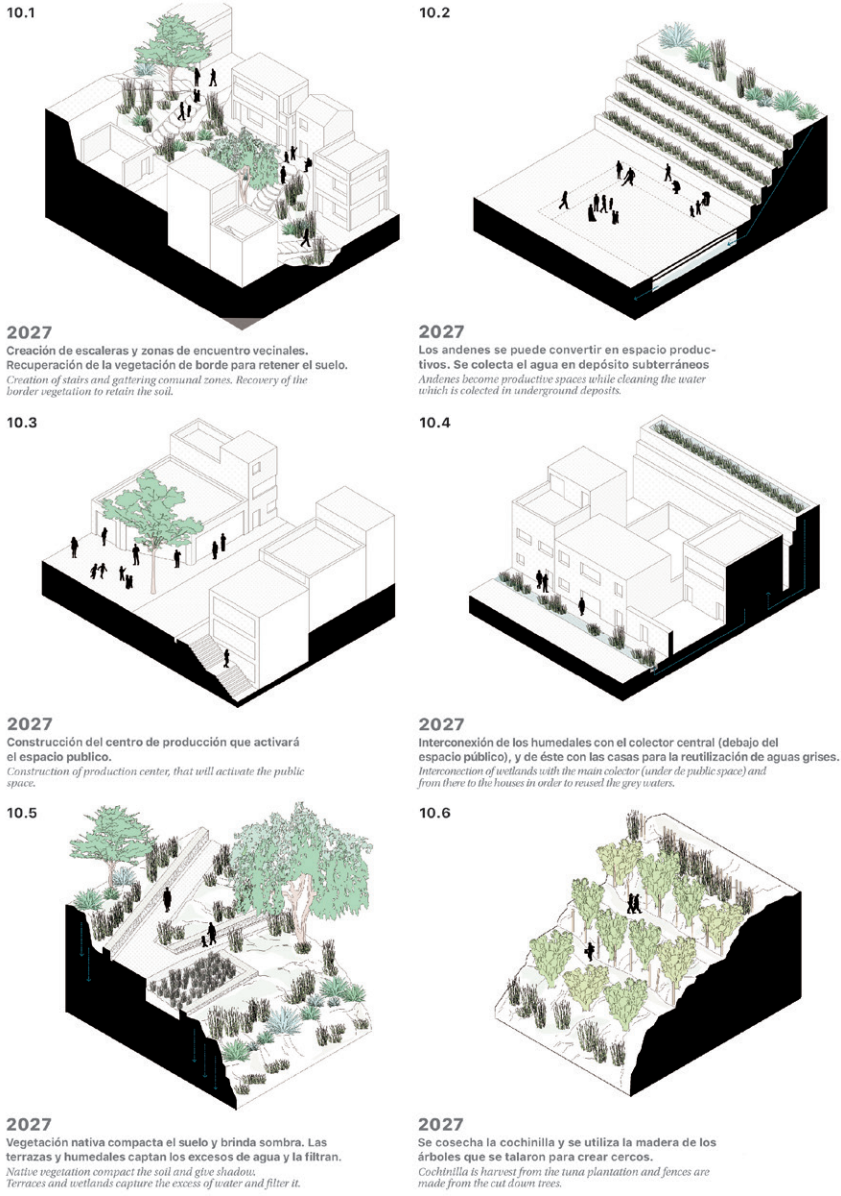


Figure 10. Landscape design strategies proposed for the slopes of *La Picota*. Source: TIDUP 2018.

in green areas (10.2); generation of platforms for the creation of public spaces (10.3); incorporation of sanitary infrastructure for the treatment of greywater (10.4); improvement of pedestrian connectivity, through the construction of retaining walls and planting of green areas (10.5); improvement of the quality of life of the inhabitants (10.6); and the creation of a new infrastructure for the treatment of wastewater (10.4); improvement of pedestrian connectivity through the construction of retaining walls and planting of vegetation (10.5); preservation of open areas through the planting of productive species such as cochineal, for the economic benefit of the community (10.6); planting of slopes with native species (10.7). (Macera et al., 2021).

Like the inhabitants of most suburban or peri-urban squatter settlements, the inhabitants of *La Picota* have been progressively developing their dwellings. From the initial constructions made of earth, the owners of the houses have been changing their materials for more durable ones such as bricks or blocks. Following this logic, the implementation of the proposed strategies has been conceived to be implemented progressively by the population, starting with small actions, the cumulative effect of which will shape common spaces. The techniques for harvesting and slowing down water runoff observed in the high Andean populations, and whose implementation has been carried out by the inhabitants themselves, serve as a basis for the proposed infrastructure in *La Picota*.

Notes

1 *Huaicos* are flows that carry large volumes of water and muddy material. They generally occur in times of heavy rainfall, activating 'dry' streams, and carrying mud from high altitudes into rivers and valleys

2 The first stage of the Urban-Andes programme allowed for an approach to the rural populations of Ayacucho, where the existence of social practices of community work was identified and documented, such as the *'faenas'*, through whose action the rural populations in the upper basin manage to open roads, build reservoirs, lay irrigation networks, among other community infrastructure works.

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9

Citizen Urbanism as a Tool to Promote Equity in Access to Public Spaces: the Peruvian Experience

Mariana Alegre

Abstract

Urban inequality expresses its signs not only in the economic aspect but also in the spatial configuration of cities and their public spaces. This phenomenon is particularly present in large Latin American cities and its impact on the daily lives of citizens is immense. This essay will examine this phenomenon through the lens of spatial injustice and focus on the availability of public space and the quality of urban design in Lima, Peru, exploring the experience of *Ocupa Tu Calle* (Occupy Your Street), an organisation that promotes citizen urbanism through the implementation of public spaces. With a comprehensive participatory process and evidence-based methodology, *Ocupa Tu Calle* encourages people to transform their neighbourhoods by providing empowerment tools and techniques to influence the city's public realm. During the pandemic, the value of public space increased substantially among citizens; hence the opportunity arose to establish public policies that encourage new uses of public spaces and help consolidate a growing demand. *Ocupa Tu Calle* is taking advantage of this by adapting its platforms and the 'Public Spaces Pact' to the new conditions of the pandemic to help consolidate - at the local level - this new approach to public space. Finally, the essay will present a conceptualisation of "urban disobedience" and a brief analysis of an emergent activist movement towards better public spaces and the Right to the City in Peru, which is being established as a 'New Urban Generation', and how this could shape the future of Peruvian cities and territories.

Keywords: public spaces, citizen urban planning, citizen participation, urban disobedience

The power of an urban intervention

A few years ago, a former mayor of Comas - a district of Lima (Peru) inhabited by just over 500,000 people - declared to the press that the Manhattan Park, located in the San Felipe urbanisation, was not productive. In doing so, he justified his intention to rent a portion of its 7,000 square metres to a supermarket company at much less than the commercial value.[1] This open manifestation of contempt for public spaces perfectly exemplifies the concept of public spaces in Peru.

Public spaces are not considered an asset or a value for cities and territories as long as they do not produce income. In fact, they are seen as burdens to local governments, which are unable to manage them, usually for lack of resources, but also for lack of interest. As a result, citizens find themselves with few alternatives for recreation. The available options are often riddled with restrictions: entrance fees; physical barriers; fences and symbolic barriers; security personnel deciding who enters and who does not, or seeking to scare away undesirables; and excessive rules of behaviour: "No walking on the grass", "No playing ball", "No skateboarding". The notion of free public spaces and their spontaneous use is increasingly alien to us.

The statement of the mayor of Comas about Manhattan Park was not gratuitous. It was his reaction to a process of citizen and media pressure promoted by the neighbours of the area, organised through their Neighbourhood Council, and with the support of collectives, politicians and citizens. *Ocupa Tu Calle*[2] also participated in this process, providing technical advice and implementing - through a participatory process - urban interventions in the park, as part of a strategy of activation and generation of a 'sense of belonging' to make the defence of this public space tangible.

In the end, Manhattan Park was neither rented, concessioned, nor sold; still, this experience served to strengthen a citizens' movement that, timidly, was becoming more and more active, and which I have called: the New Urban Generation.

The unjust city

Latin America is an unequal territory. Statistics show the gap between the wealthiest and the most disadvantaged. According to CEPAL (2017), Latin America is the most unequal continent. Wealth is concentrated in a few hands, there is a marked structural heterogeneity, and companies - although they contribute to GDP - do not generate equality. As Julio Cotler rightly points out, "the high levels of poverty in Latin America generate perverse consequences for individuals and communities, with the consequent deterioration of social cohesion" (Cotler, 2011).

Figure 1. Miraflores (left) and Chorrillos (right), districts of Lima located 7 km apart. Credits: Eugenio Gastelum.

Inequalities of income and quality of life are also manifested in the territory. Not only the quality of housing and basic services are evidence of inequality, but also the public space, through the presence - or absence - of green areas; the greater or lesser consolidation of the urban environment; dirt tracks and sidewalks that raise the dust that seeps into precarious dwellings. Thus, the spatial configuration of the environment shows us, in a tangible way, the distance that separates us.

The urban conditions of one versus the other determine the everyday experience and the opportunities available to inhabitants. According to the National Institute of Statistics and Informatics (INEI, 2020), poverty increased by 10 percentage points between 2019 and 2020. In the case of Lima, the percentage of poor people doubled from 14% to 27.5% in the same period.

Public space and its contradiction

In the case of Peru, problems in public spaces can be divided into three types: when there is an absence of public space, when public space is of poor quality, and when there are restrictions on the use of public space.

Regarding the absence of public space, it is common for public space to be scarce and non-existent. On many occasions, local governments do not have the economic capacity to take advantage of available plots within their jurisdiction and, therefore, there is a significant presence of empty plots that become places for littering and insecurity.

The idea of what public space represents is mainly limited to parks. This is demonstrated in the answers given by *Limeños* and *Chalacos* – demonyms of Lima and Callao - to the *Lima Cómo Vamos* survey between 2010 and 2013, where parks are the first reference when asked about places associated with the concept of public spaces. In the 2013 *Lima Cómo Vamos* survey, there is a difference of more than 40 percentage points between references to parks and those of streets and pavements, which are in second place (Lima Cómo Vamos, 2014).

Meanwhile, the poor quality of public space is present in almost all public spaces in the city. This is due to the fact that urban design is completely ignored and the city's technical regulations have been developed from a pro-car perspective. However, as is usual in the Latin American region, the occupation of urban space that follows the norms is minimal compared to informal occupation. A recent study identified that, in the last 20 years, Peru's cities have grown by almost 50%; of this expansion, more than 90% has been the product of informal housing (Espinoza and Fort, 2019).

Finally, when there are spaces available to citizens, most of the time, we find the imposition of restrictions on the use of public space to direct or prevent its use. The conception of the street as a place for "non-use" is very present, even though it is constantly used in various ways. We are facing a contradiction between the expectation of the use of public space and its actual use. In this sense, at local, regional and national levels, public policies are often based on restrictive and unfriendly models.

Meanwhile, the spontaneous use of the street and, of course, the country's own informality, generate different demands that are not usually addressed by the authorities. Thus, access to the *parques zonales* [zonal parks][3] is restricted by establishing an entrance fee (which creates an economic barrier for people in disadvantaged conditions). Also, fences and sentry boxes are set up to limit or impede free transit, and those who use public spaces are persecuted - under the argument of taking care of them - by establishing rigid rules of conduct.

As Pablo Vega-Centeno (2017) rightly points out, public spaces are those where inhabitants have free access, freedom of action and freedom to remain inactive. Certainly, the existent public spaces in Peru and in its capital do not fall within this definition.

In 2021, according to figures from the survey Lima Cómo Vamos, which collects information from the last twelve months, 65.9% of Limeños and Chalacos went for a walk in parks, with a higher percentage in levels A and B (87.9% and 77.5% respectively) than in levels D and E[4] (51.2% and 40.8%, respectively). The same occurs when asked about access to some natural space: there is a difference of more than 15 percentage points between Socio-Economic Level (SES) A and SES E. The same pattern is repeated with access to beaches: people from higher socioeconomic levels go to beaches more than those from lower socioeconomic

Figure 2. Implementation of the seed capital fund from the Ama Amancaes Project in Lima. Author: Arturo Díaz.

levels. These figures confirm the inequality in access to public spaces and natural spaces in the case of Lima and Callao.

Definitely, from the "formal" city and official regulations, the idea of public space does not meet the real needs of the population. Citizens use the streets not only to go from one place to another; they not only use parks to go for a walk and benches not only to sit on. Spontaneous uses of public space occur on a daily basis. Streets become spaces for street commerce; music and art take over street corners; as do food stalls. Why, then, are these uses not recognised as valid and desirable? What needs to happen for the authorities to finally understand and accept that the streets belong to the people?

Lima, like other Peruvian cities, has been consolidated through the practice of self-construction of housing. The self-production of habitat has been the response to the state's failure to provide quality housing. Moreover, the titling policy - which is still the cornerstone of the government's policy - encourages not only the self-construction of housing, but also the adaptation of the environment. Thus, the neighbours themselves create their public spaces, transform their streets, plant their gardens and manage their use. In Latin America, citizens have always created the city with their own hands.

El Urbanismo Ciudadano [Citizen Urbanism]

By '*urbanismo ciudadano*' we mean a new urban model of city transformation. It starts by recognising the citizen practice of making a city, where people are protagonists in the whole process. In this sense, intervention in public spaces is carried out on the basis of a desire to cover a common need, and defined on the basis of participatory processes in order to finally proceed to a joint implementation of the ideal proposal. In this way, citizens are fundamental. The neighbour is the promoter and beneficiary. The community is part and parcel.

This conceptualisation of *urbanismo ciudadano* is the result of the experience of *Ocupa tu Calle* and its maturation in the processes it has been implementing, together with citizens, since the end of 2014. It is a concept born from the contact and analysis of multiple interventions in public spaces in Latin America, promoted by local organisations specialising in participation and public spaces, and from the interest and energy of the inhabitants themselves.

Ocupa tu Calle began its journey in December 2014, within the structure of the Conference of the Parties of United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP20), an event held in the city of Lima. Its objective was to raise awareness in society through the experience of a sustainable city, based on a new conception of public spaces. Thus, we took the omnipresent "No stepping on the grass" signs and changed them for others that read: "Sitting allowed", seeking to combat the idea that the public spaces available are only to be looked at, and not enjoyed. Such a simple action generated interest among citizens and allowed us to question their relationship with the street and public spaces.

Figure 3. A parklet in the district of Miraflores in Lima, Peru. Source: *Ocupa tu Calle.*

After implementing more than 50 public spaces, Ocupa Tu Calle, together with its partners, was able to define an evidence-based methodology and developed various tools to encourage citizens to transform their neighbourhoods and reclaim the street.

Figure 4. Collection of urban interventions carried out by Ocupa Tu Calle in collaboration with various partners. Source: *Ocupa Tu Calle*.

The intervention in public space is not the end of the process or the final goal but rather an instrument to achieve the greatest impact: to influence public policy, private practice and citizenship. To this end, the *Ocupa Tu Calle* methodology begins with a search for and alignment of allies and relevant actors, and a clear determination of the objectives to be addressed. It is different to implement actions that seek to address specific populations such as women or early childhood or generate a positive impact on urban mobility in a specific area. Then, the ambition is to build a baseline through different instruments adapted to the needs of the particular process in order to start, later on, the participatory workshops and the validation of the design with the community. It is only after this that a public space implementation can take place. This will allow observing the results from the baseline and the findings can be compared to obtain variables and indicators that confirm or not the success of the process. Towards the final part of the process, the results will be communicated to different stakeholders through the most appropriate channels with the objective of achieving long-term impact, whether on the government and its public policies, private organisations or the citizens themselves. If this positive impact is achieved, we can confirm the success of the citizen urbanism process.

In addition, *Ocupa Tu Calle* also promotes knowledge and the dissemination of tools and good practices through courses, guides and collections of experiences[5]. It also organises every year the most important conference on public spaces in the region: the International Festival of Urban Interventions, now called Festival - FIIU, an event that includes competitions and prizes to highlight communities and public space activists in Latin America, among other activities.

Figure 5. The step by step methodology of interventions in public spaces applied by *Ocupa Tu Calle*. Source: *Ocupa Tu Calle.*

Figure 6. Residents of Pamplona take part in a workshop. Source: *Ocupa Tu Calle*.

The pandemic and public space

With the arrival of the pandemic and the restrictions on mobility, public space suddenly took centre stage. People realised that they missed it, enjoyed it and needed it.[6] There were many manifestations on social networks of longing for the park, the street and even the daily bus stop. There were even those who demanded that public space should also be considered one of the essential services, especially if they were open places where the incidence of contagion has been shown to be much lower.

The 'stay-at-home' mandate was very detrimental to an informal economy, dependent not only on providing services, but also on the use of the street as a means of subsistence. In this sense, the transition from 'stay at home' to 'stay in your neighbourhood' was not enough either, because, if we face a large percentage of precarious housing, we also face vulnerable neighbourhoods where the economy of the families cannot resist beyond self-subsistence.

The spatial injustice in the distribution of public open spaces and green areas in Lima and Callao has been mapped.[7] In 25 out of 44 districts of Lima and Callao there are barely between 0.3 and 3 square metres of recreational areas per inhabitant. The most critical aspect of this situation is that these two districts have had the most deaths due to the pandemic (Castro et al., 2021).

With the gradual reopening of cities, the value of public space also increased, and authorities were forced to accept that public space would be the new setting for collective life and even for some aspects of private life. New uses began to emerge, as well as a greater intensity in the use of streets, squares and parks. The growing demand for more and better public spaces, and more pedestrian spaces and bicycle lanes was a constant worldwide. Latin America was no exception.

It is from this growing need that sustainable mobility and public spaces designed for people are gaining more and more space. At *Ocupa Tu Calle*, we have spoken out for the national government to play a stronger and more active role in this regard, and we have held several meetings to identify the advantages of promoting a National Strategy for Public Spaces. The aim was to offer better conditions for the daily life of citizens and to encourage a process of economic reactivation from the neighbourhood and from the street.

Eventually, some Peruvian authorities started to promote actions along these lines and temporary bicycle lanes were announced in different cities of the country. Then, even in the midst of the pandemic, Peru suffered a political crisis that led to the vacancy of President Vizcarra and the appointment of a transitional government. It is with this government that the Ministry of Housing began to promote the use of public spaces as a solution to meet the needs of citizens. For this reason, it developed a series of guides and manuals to

encourage local governments to implement different actions that promote the use of the street. Additionally, the Ministry of Production also designed guidelines for using the street as an extension of markets.

At the same time, *Ocupa Tu Calle* sought to strengthen its public policy advocacy by adapting an instrument it had created shortly before the pandemic: the *Pacto por los Espacios Públicos* [Pact for Public Spaces]. This is a "strategic planning and action instrument aimed at improving people's quality of life and contributing to generating safe citizen coexistence in the context of the pandemic".[8]

This pact seeks to serve as a citizen tool to accompany local governments in adapting, expanding and improving public spaces in their jurisdictions through commitments and guidelines in five areas, which are monitored by *Ocupa Tu Calle* and *Lima Cómo Vamos*[9]: Vulnerable Communities; Environment; Sustainable Mobility; Collective Spaces and Equipment; and Neighbourhood Organisation and Culture.

By the beginning of 2022, 29 municipalities have joined the Pact for Public Spaces; and until 2021, 138 of their civil servants and officials were trained in seven trainings in which 16 invited specialists have participated. This has facilitated the development of local policies to promote and manage public space from a people-centred approach and aims to bring local governments closer to their neighbours and communities by involving them in participatory processes.

A new generation and urban disobedience

Finally, in Peru and especially in Lima, the pandemic also revealed the citizen demands for more and better public spaces. This empowered citizen movements and activists who had been raising their voices on social networks and in public opinion. Even before the pandemic, we saw the emergence and consolidation of neighbourhood associations in defence of emblematic public spaces, such as the case of the residents of Manhattan Park and others similar to it.[10] Collectives and activist groups interested in different issues also emerged and consolidated: pedestrian rights[11] and the right to the city, and the protection and preservation of natural spaces.[12]

We also witnessed the conversion of opinion leaders, journalists and political figures who began to show interest in urban issues. This demonstrated to us that we were facing what I have called the "New Urban Generation" that - although still emerging - can determine the future of Peruvian cities and territories.

As part of the transformation process that Lima and other Peruvian cities are undergoing, we face acts of urban disobedience and citizen resistance. These "situations, today more than before, activate citizen indignation and awaken what I have called urban disobedience, an insurgent action that seeks collective well-being in our cities and territories" (Alegre, 2021, XIX).

I understand urban disobedience as "the act of opposition or resistance to a structure - physical, legal, ideological, social or institutional - inserted in the city and which damages our quality of life. But - it is important to say - these acts of disobedience are usually spontaneous and go unnoticed even by their executors, except in some cases in which they recognise the transformative power they possess and take advantage of it to expose - loudly - the conditions of inequity they seek to resolve" (Alegre, 2021, XIX).

Peru is undergoing a process of transformation concerning the approach with which it interprets its cities and territories. Public space is returning to the centre of the focus and people are once again taking centre stage. There is still a long way to go to consolidate it as a definitive policy in society, but there are certainly more and more promoters of this perspective, and its advantages - and limitations - are recognised. The *urbanismo ciudadano* has played a crucial role in this process and it is important to recognise and celebrate it so that it can be sustained over time and so that the still timid attempts to convert it into public policy can be successful.

Some questions remain open: does this mean that citizens' quality of life will improve at the same time as their public spaces improve and sustainable mobility alternatives are offered? Is it possible for the government to promote citizen urbanism, or is it a concept incompatible with making a city from a more top-down perspective as has become customary? Will citizens recognise the power they have in their hands and use it to confront the violations of their urban quality of life?

We do not yet have the answers to these questions, so it is up to us to measure the impacts and thus confirm - or not - that the *urbanismo ciudadano* and cities for people have a crucial role to play in generating much-needed social welfare and economic progress.

Acknowledgements

Special thanks to Sergio Rebaza for his support in revising the text and to Lía Alarcón and Thomas Mercado for fact-checking and references.

Notes

1 The media covered the story: https://canaln.pe/actualidad/comas-parque-manhattan-no-convertido-supermercado-n279025 (Canal N, 2017, June 4).

2 A strategy that seeks to improve the quality of urban life through public space, promoting the *'urbanismo ciudadano'* as an alternative model for urban development, using tools of innovation, participation and collaboration for the planning, design and implementation of urban spaces together with communities to achieve fairer cities. See: www.ocupatucalle.com.

3 The Metropolitan Municipality of Lima, through SERPAR, manages 10 zonal parks, which it has denominated "clubs" and which require a fee to enter (*Servicio de Parques de Lima* - SERPAR , 2020).

4 NSEs in Peru are distributed from A to E, according to household, housing and ownership of goods and services. The A sector groups households with higher income and better health, while towards E these factors decrease and concentrate a younger population (IPSOS, 2022).

5 Manuals, toolboxes and other materials can be downloaded from the *Ocupa Tu Calle* website (Ocupa tu Calle, 2022).

6 In 2013, 59.7% of *Limeños* indicated that the behaviour of their fellow citizens in relation to public goods was Bad/Very Bad, and 54.6% said the same in relation to the behaviour of Limeños and the care of public spaces (Lima Cómo Vamos, 2013).

7 The working group "Space and Analysis" and *Ojo Público* developed a "Cartography of Inequality" where they present results on the quarantine and absence of public areas available to citizens: https://ojo-publico.com/especiales/cartografia-de-la-desigualdad/index.html

8 More about the Pact for Public Spaces in *Observatorio Lima Como Vamos* (2020, July 30).

9 Citizen observatory that monitors the evolution of the quality of urban life in Lima and Callao: www.limacomovamos.org.

10 Examples are the movements "*Defiende el Parque Castilla*" [Defend Castilla Park] and "*Salvemos Monteverde*" [Let's save Monteverde]. RPP (2021) documented the profile of some of the neighbourhood movements.

11 Such is the case of the organisation "*Peruanos de a Pie*".

12 Such is the case of the organisation "Centro Urbes", which works in defence of the coastal hills.

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Colophon

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Acknowledgements: This book was produced as part of the project "Upgrading Informal Settlements by the Coproduction of Inclusive Public Spaces: urban design strategies for sustainable and resilient development in informal neighbourhoods" with financial support from inter-university cooperation agency VLIR-UOS and as a collaboration between KU Leuven, Universidad Católica de Santiago de Guayaquil and University of Cuenca.

We also want to thank the following people for their generous participation and shared thoughts:

All the speakers of Seminars Co-producing inclusives 2020 - 2021: Moritz Ahlert, Mariana Alegre, María Cristina Cravino, Antonio di Campli, Gustavo Durán, Caroline Moser, Catalina Ortiz, Mónica Rivera, Carolina Rodas, Patricia Sánchez, Elisa Silva, Giulia Testori, Gabriel Visconti, Pablo Vega Centeno.

The colleagues from the research group: Urban Projects, Collective Spaces and Local identities and Hans Leinfelder (KU Leuven).

Cecilia Chiappini and Filiberto Viteri Chávez.

Design and Layout: Sebastián Egas, Xavier Méndez.

Cover: Ilustration based in 'La Canchita' (p.97). Author: José Bastidas. Source: Gabriel Visconti Stopello.

Printing: GPK Graf&Pak, Cuenca (Ecuador). 250 printed copies.

UNIVERSIDAD CATÓLICA
DE SANTIAGO DE GUAYAQUIL

UCUENCA PRESS

ISBN: 978-9978-14-489-3