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The Recuperation of Public Space

A Closer Look at Bogotá, Colombia

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BOGOTÁ

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Preface

Since 1999, the city of Bogotá, capital of Colombia, has won nearly a dozen international awards for innovative urban planning, including the prestigious San Marco Golden Lion award, given at the 10th Venice Biennale. For a city once plagued by social disorder and crime, this represents a remarkable comeback. But how have Bogotá's urban interventions performed for residents? The research presented here draws on qualitative methods developed at the Centre for Research on Sonic Space and Urban Environment (CRESSON) at the Graduate School of Architecture in Grenoble. These methods encompass both the large and small scales of urban experience

in an effort to experience and describe both the broad sociopolitical picture of Bogotá's urban renewal and three paradigmatic projects: a prizewinning park, a public library, and a central avenue. Using tools ranging from traditional historical analysis and architectural drafting through recorded in-situ interviews and multimedia urban transects, we seek to understand these phenomena from an international perspective and from the perspective of the people who use them daily. The results provide not only a critique of what has been done but also insights for future planners and architects tasked with reshaping the world's growing cities.



Researcher Camilo Cifuentes interviews a vendor in front of Biblioteca El Tintal, April 2, 2009.

Introduction

At the 2006 Venice Biennale, the jury gave the Golden Lion Award in the category of Best City to Bogotá, the capital city of Colombia. The city of Bogotá was competing with sixteen other international cities—including Barcelona, Berlin, Caracas, Istanbul, Johannesburg, Shanghai, and New York, for the award—which honors communities for their efforts to improve residents' quality of life. All of these cities presented various solutions to the growing challenges facing their communities. Bogotá was honored with the award based on its successful recovery of public space, its network of cultural facilities, and its advanced public transportation system. The jury wrote compellingly that the Colombian capital might serve as a model for other communities and as an example of ideal consistency between urban space and society. According to Richard Burdett, director of the Biennale, the prize was given to "the most intelligent city, a city which thoughtfully considers its future in a developing country affected by poverty and criminality and, thanks to a few inspired politicians, manages to look forward."

In addition to the developments in public infrastructure, Bogotá has shown important progress in areas such as poverty reduction, security, education, service provision, and social inclusion. Although the city still faces serious challenges, these changes had a significant impact on the city's social dynamic. Recently the most visible projects developed in the city have gained substantial media attention, and due to these transformations the Colombian capital has become an international model in circles of urban planning and an example of good governance and development.

It is therefore essential to examine the ongoing processes taking place in this South American metropolis. Bogotá today is a perfect illustration of changes in the urban environment that reflect deep and complex political, social, and cultural processes—processes rooted in transformations that began in the

early 1990s when important sociopolitical changes took place and engaged administrations decided to take responsibility for urban problems that had been neglected for years.

Such a transformative process of urban development raises many questions about the origins of the entire process, the discourses that have directed the development plans, the policies proposed by the city authorities, the scope of these policies, and their consequences. Finally, do the results achieved, and their impacts on the everyday life of citizens, confirm the theories and predictions of the experts?

This research is based on investigative methods and ideas developed by the CRESSON Laboratory (Centre for Research on Sonic Space and Urban Environment), part of the French National Scientific Research Institute (CNRS) located at the Graduate School of Architecture in Grenoble. At CRESSON, we focus on interdisciplinary studies of perceptible environment and architectural and urban "atmospheres." Our research embodies a qualitative approach capable of supporting and influencing design strategies and processes. These notions directly concern our study of Bogotá, whose main goal has been to describe the complex articulations among urban, political, and experiential projects. Our approach implies a sensible and sensual relation to the physical world, and it places the inhabitant at the center of the urban configuration.

In order to observe the transformation of Bogotá, we carried out interdisciplinary research that aimed to understand the complexity of the city's development and its implications for urban phenomena at different scales. We focused on two main aspects: first, the large-scale (or global) factors that made the changes possible, and second, the impact of paradigmatic projects on particular parts of the city. Concerning the large-scale, we analyzed the most important sociopolitical issues behind the transformation process. Turning to the local, we observed

the impact of urban interventions in three particular zones of the city that were the subject of important physical transformations.

The Large Scale: A Global Approach

The first goal of the global approach was to build from the general context a cognitive tool that would allow us to examine the problematic of the city before and after interventions at the metropolitan scale. The work consisted of research and analysis of a selected bibliography including geography, history, economy, politics, and town planning as they bear on the socio-political dimensions of the process as experienced in Bogotá. This tool has proved useful in understanding the objective causes of the changes of Bogotá, identifying the discourses, hypotheses, and principles that have directed the city's development, recognizing the development strategies (political, economic, urbanistic) carried out by successive administrations, and analyzing both the city's planning strategies and the discourses applied to them by urban experts.

To comprehend Bogotá's situation today, it was indispensable to take account of two aspects that have shaped the city. On the one hand are the concrete causes of transformation. On the other are the experts' discourses that, along with the media's representations, present the city as an outstanding example of urban development. In this work we juxtapose the two, subjecting both to critical analysis.

The Small Scale: Local Approaches

Three zones of study were selected to test our research methods at the meeting point between human and social science, between architecture and engineering science. These paradigmatic examples of urban intervention include the Avenida Jiménez de Quesada (Jiménez Avenue), a comprehensive urban project including construction of a new public transportation line on a strategic downtown axis, its integration into a context of historical heritage, and the recovery of public spaces; the Parque Tercer Milenio (Tercer Milenio Park), a controversial project in which a large district of the historical center was demolished to make way for a new metropolitan park; and the renovation of the Tintal zone, a conjunction of emerging urban and architectural projects that are generating a new urban configuration in a peripheral sector of the city that formerly lacked public services and cultural facilities. (An adjacent area is studied by De Pirro et al. in Section 2 of this volume.) Each intervention has had significant consequences for mobility and the physical connections between distant parts of the city, the transformation and revaluation of social and built heritage, the restoration of public spaces and the emergence of new conceptions of the urban sphere, gentrification and displacement, and even the inhabitants' mental representations of urban change.

To understand how these three sites are experienced following profound urban transformations, we have used not only classic cartographical and typo-morphological analysis but also a set of methods designed to get as close as possible to the urban "ambiances" as experienced by the inhabitants, including direct observation, field notes, recordings (sound, photographic, and videographic), interviews, and commented walks with inhabitants. The entire work is synthesized through an original form of multimedia presentation that we call *urban transects*: these take the reader through the city as well as through our research. Thus the total research work comprises not only this report but also the transcripts of our commented walks and interviews, recordings of fifty sound sequences and fifty-five videographic sequences, and the multimedia transects. The sound and videographic sequences are provided with this report.

Chapter 1

Urban Transformations

A Large-Scale Analysis

Objective Causes of Change Versus Mystification of the Discourse

Today, cities are a like metaphor of the theater; they present new ways of living that are renewed and reinvented everyday. They both concentrate and create tension. Though each metropolis develops uniquely, common patterns can be identified. The changes generated by industrialization, demographic explosion, globalization, and new technologies have fashioned unique transformations of urban space. The city has been replaced by the metropolis. The network replaces the *locus*. Meanwhile, the *tabula rasa* or Haussmanian approach, typical of modernist thought, is no longer valid. While young cities like Los Angeles managed to test the expansion principles of network cities, they remain exceptions among the world's large cities. Rather than anticipating future growth, most metropolises today face uncontrolled development.

Bogotá, like many metropolises that have seen a demographic explosion since 1950, did not anticipate its development and thus presents complex questions. Traffic congestion, violence, and pollution became critical issues in the Colombian capital, in addition to poor governance, poverty, and economic inequality. Yet the city was recently praised as a "model of conviviality and urban renewal." (Montgomery 2007). Obviously the city has experienced a significant transformation.

Bogotá's urban project has sparked considerable study as well as political debate. Just a few years ago, studies of the city presented it as representative of the contemporary urban problematic (Torres 2000). It was described as the setting for "the expression of the most acute conflicts in the economic, social, political, and spatial order, and even of the ideological and cultural order" (Torres 2000). What makes the case of Bogotá remarkable is that, in a rather short period of time, the city managed to find solutions for some of its most challenging problems—even

as other critical issues, such as the provision of shelter and the reduction of poverty and inequality, remain unsolved.

Recent advances in security, public transportation, mobility, education, service provision, and public infrastructure have had a tremendous impact on the city's dynamics. Among the projects that have gained considerable media attention are the civic culture campaigns, the bus rapid transit system, and the network of bicycle paths. The library system, the renovation of public spaces, the construction of educational infrastructure, and more recent social programs also have been an essential part of the city's development. All in all, when we talk about Bogotá today, we no longer describe a city in crisis but, instead, an example of good governance and development.

In order to understand the complexity of the city today, it is essential to examine two aspects that have shaped Bogotá's image in recent years. On the one hand, there are objective causes that have determined these changes; on the other, the political discourses concerning the city, along with the media's representations, both of which present the capital as a model. In this report, we juxtapose the most important facts of Bogotá's transformation, based on documentary sources and interviews, with the image of the city created by the mystified discourses of the media, political speeches, and the professional community of urban planners.

The Facts of Change

Most publications and exhibitions that describe Bogotá's urban transformation focus on the most visible results of the city's policies and projects. Certainly there are some original and successful initiatives that merit debate and media coverage, but generally, Bogotá's urban planning policies and projects—although frequently of high quality—are not particularly innovative. The city's urban planning is highly influenced by the Barcelona model,

the discourses about the city emanating from urban sociology, and in a general way the universal objectives of the urbanized world, as represented in documents such as the Istanbul Declaration on Human Settlements. Thus what is really remarkable is the fact that Bogotá is one of the few middle-income cities that has shown exceptional advances in governance and, consequently, in development. Governance has notably improved, and the city has clearly shifted to better political practices, including increased transparency, accountability, and responsiveness. However, when analyzing the influence of good governance on the city's transformation, one must tread carefully. Neoliberal discourse assumes that good governance is a necessary product of democratization and decentralization. However, in Latin America, where democracy has emerged as the most common political system in recent years and governments have stimulated decentralization, very few cities have experienced improvements in governance. In Bogotá we observe advances that cannot be explained simply by democratization or neoliberal reforms; rather, the city's case represents a more complex panorama.

In order to get beyond the political discourse, it is necessary to recognize that there was not a single turning point in the city's transformation. Contrary to our first hypothesis, that a change in the urbanistic culture (and the formulation of a new urban plan) triggered the process of development, we observe that the creation of the plan was indeed the product of many other political and cultural transformations. Further, Bogotá's urban change cannot be explained as a mere consequence of the city's urban plan. The changes that made Bogotá an admired example were the result of a series of political and social changes, including deep transformations in the city's urban planning policies and a series of engaged local administrations. None of these factors independently could have sparked the conditions for critical change. The case of Bogotá's transformation must be understood as an ongoing historical process that began in the late 1980s and was not merely the product of a few inspired politicians, a singular vision of the city, or the recommendations of multilateral credit organizations.

Alan Gilbert (2008a) proposes five concrete causes of Bogotá's transformation: good mayors, the end of clientelism, the advent of technocracy, programmatic continuity, and increased economic resources. Based on his reading of the city, Gilbert argues that the quality of a city's administration can be improved rapidly, but that the recommendations of development banks can be promising only if they go hand in hand with a number of other policies, and that the changes imply both increased taxes

and increased spending. He also writes that a certain level of technocratic management is essential, and that it is important to have mayors prepared to take unpopular measures. His conclusions correspond, in a broader sense, to four factors that are identified as the most significant for the city's change: the 1991 constitutional reform; the combination of democratization, decentralization, and privatization; the new regional plan; and successive city administrations themselves.

The New Constitution of 1991 and Other Reforms

The 1980s are remembered as the darkest period in Colombia's recent history. The country was overwhelmed by violence, the product of an ongoing war against drug trafficking and lingering sociopolitical conflicts, financed heavily by illegal drug profits and involving both right-wing militias and leftist guerrillas. While the conflict in Colombia has been concentrated mainly in rural areas, cities were not spared but, instead, saw violence increase dramatically during this decade. Although Bogotá did not experience the extreme violence seen in Medellín and Cali, by the early 1990s it was considered one of the most violent capitals in Latin America. By the mid-1990s, Colombia presented a "rupture of the legal order, caused with varying intensity by the violence of [government] institutions that only protect the establishment and also, with even greater impact, by those who are excluded from the establishment and fight to enter it or defeat it illegally (Díaz Arenas 1993).

Faced with this critical situation, a leading national civic association called for a movement toward reconciliation. Well received by the establishment and the media, this led to a national referendum. The group proposed broad constitutional reforms, and in 1991 a new national constitution was adopted, promoting the leading principles of a democratic and participatory state. Two main principles define the new constitution. One is neoliberalism. For example, the constitution refers to the internationalization of the economy and the institutionalization of the national bank as a decentralized entity. The second is populism. One of the remarkable shifts in Colombian politics during the period of constitutional reform was the emergence of the armed insurgent group M-19 as a third political force and a major influence on constitutional reform. The crisis of traditional political parties in Colombia allowed for the rise of leaders who did not have political backgrounds within the establishment. Such leaders, says Tafur Galvis (1993), "create the illusion of having the answer to urgent problems or of vindicating accumulated frustrations." In practice, the result of the new constitution is "a dichotomy between social speech and the classist fact. A reluctant ideological definition and an adaptation to the neoliberal model

with *social sense*." (Tafur Galvis 1993). Accordingly, the author defines the framing of the new constitution as *neoliberal populism*.

The new constitution represented a radical change in the administration of urban development. On the one hand, as will be discussed later in this report, the neoliberal ideology implied critical changes in municipal administration, especially in the public services sector. On the other hand, the constitution propelled a transformation of the policies and operations of the state with regard to urban development. A key change was the move toward decentralization, in which the state declared municipalities the principal political and administrative entities and gave each municipality the responsibility to plan its own development and urban policy. Even before the constitutional reform, another important political transformation was the democratic election of mayors, instituted in 1988. These changes accorded well with the international climate, as multilateral credit organizations like the World Bank and International Monetary Fund were advocating decentralization. At the same time, local political elites throughout Colombia hoped for increased funding from the national budget, and the central government, faced with its own incapacity to provide public services, preferred to reassign these responsibilities to the municipalities. It is in this context that local autonomy was promoted. Three consequences in particular influenced Bogotá's transformation: the search for fiscal sovereignty and resulting budget transfers; the passage of regional legislation; and changes in the role of the city council.

Fiscal Sovereignty and Budget Transfers

The approval in 1993 of the new Organic Law for Bogotá (*Estatuto organico de Bogotá*) laid the foundation for the success of subsequent municipal administrations. Designed by Mayor Jaime Castro (1992 and 1994), the law determined the functioning of the city according to the new constitution's plan of decentralization. The administration thus could begin a significant reorganization of public finances. The municipality was allowed to increase the income received from local taxes, improve the procedures used to determine property values, and apply an additional tax on gasoline. Further reforms, some promoted by Antanas Mockus, permitted the city to close corrupt and ineffective institutions, install an efficient tax collection system, and increase the city's income by successfully encouraging citizens to pay their taxes.

In 1992 the city was practically bankrupt, yet by 2004 "the income of the city had increased from less than the 2 percent of the GDP to more than 4 percent." (Gilbert 2008a). Public spending grew from 3.8 billion Colombian pesos in 1990 to 15.9 billion in 1999 (Gilbert 2008a). Most of this total went toward public

investments. Thus, achieving autonomy and efficiency in fiscal management contributed directly to the city's physical transformation.

The city has also benefited from financial transfers due to a constitutional decree that requires the central government to distribute part of the national budget to municipalities. However, the impact of these transfers on the city's finances is relatively small, because a significant proportion of national tax revenue is collected in Bogotá.

Regional Legislation

A second key aspect of constitutional reform for municipal administration was to make every local government responsible for administering its own territory. In the context of Colombia in the mid-1990s, urban planning was finally recognized as a legal requirement and as a condition for development. The previous experiences of urban planning in Bogotá were, with some exceptions, rather calamitous. Urban researchers Juan Carlos Del Castillo and Jose Salazar (2003) explain how the 1960–2000 period represented a crisis of the development model, as the public sector demonstrated its incapacity to formulate serious policies regarding regional management, the use of land, and urban development. Simultaneously the private sector enjoyed conditions of great economic liberalism. The urban planning strategies of this period were characterized by speculative patterns in the management of urban land use, a lack of a deliberate regional policy, a lack of clarity in the role of urban planning entities, and resistance to the formation of strategies that would lead urban planning toward defined objectives. The government institutions responsible for urban policies promoted an approach based on residential development that neglected important aspects of urban planning including transportation, land use, public services and facilities, economic activity, and regional organization.

In this context, by the mid-1990s the fragility of Colombian urban planning was recognized, as were the lack of cooperation between academic institutions and government in urban research and the inadequacy of the public culture to support meaningful urbanistic actions. Therefore, it was seen as necessary to radically transform the urban planning exercise in Colombia and to give to local administrations the appropriate tools to direct urban development. (Del Castillo and Salazar 2003)

Since then, urban planning throughout Colombia has seen progress. By constitutional mandate, every municipality is responsible for producing and implementing an urban plan, or Plan de Ordenamiento Territorial (POT). Law 388 of 1997 describes the principles that control regional and urban development

and establishes “the mechanisms that allow the municipalities to promote autonomously the management of the territory, the equal and rational use of land, the defense of the ecological and cultural patrimony located in its territory, the prevention of disasters in high-risk settlements, and the execution of efficient urbanistic actions.”

In Bogotá, the production of the mandated new urban plan coincided with the administration of Mayor Enrique Peñalosa, who hired a group of experts who shared his perspective and many of whom had worked together for years as consultants and researchers.

Even though municipal autonomy allowed the city to plan its own development, it also represented an obstacle to the advancement of regional planning. The Peñalosa administration (which considered the consolidation of a regional area a precondition for the city’s development and competitiveness) made great efforts to create a metropolitan area that would include all the municipalities neighboring Bogotá. Yet their efforts were largely in vain. Since the constitution favors municipal autonomy, the conception of a metropolitan area remains difficult to achieve. While the poorest of the contiguous municipalities would appreciate the benefits of annexation by Bogotá, the wealthier ones fear losing power and worry that Bogotá will export its poverty. Despite these obstacles, there have been important advances in the political definition of a metropolitan area.

New Roles for the City Council

In the past, one of the biggest challenges facing the city government was the relationship between the mayor and the city council. Mayors were often compelled to co-administer with the council. Therefore essential decisions for the city had to be negotiated with a group that historically was known for corruption and clientelism. The Organic Law changed that, giving the mayor greater autonomy in decision making and diminishing the council’s influence.

Former Mayor Paul Bromberg, who succeeded Antanas Mockus in 1995, argues that “Bogotá changed because it has been governed by technocratic elites” (Gilbert 2008a). He and many others contend that one of the fundamental reasons for the city’s change was the efficient management of the city irrespective of political or ideological considerations. This position is debatable, as it is hard to separate the recent political transformations from neoliberal ideology. However, it is accurate to say that in recent years the city has been managed largely without clientelist political maneuverings and that transparency seems to have increased. One important aspect of that change is precisely linked to the new functions

of the city council. Formerly, the council had great influence in the management of public enterprises, and city council members were allowed to allocate a part of the budget to individuals, organizations, or enterprises. They no longer enjoy these powers: as a result, the public sector companies (whose directors are appointed by the mayor) are more independent of their influence. Recent directors have in fact been chosen on the basis of technical criteria (Gilbert 2008a), and the companies’ performance has reflected that. There remain concerns about the roles and division of power among the mayor, the local mayors of the city’s twenty districts, and the council, but at least in this sense it can be said that technocratic management has benefited the city.

Democratization, Decentralization, Privatization, and Civic Participation

Globalization is ideological. In wealthy countries, elites generally aim to replace the welfare state, while in the developing world the possibility of genuine development is thwarted by new forms of dependency and capital accumulation (Brand and Prada 2003). In Colombia, political reforms, and more generally the modernization of the state, have taken place in the context of a very liberal management of the economy, marked by free trade, increased flexibility of markets, and the deregulation of production, cash flow, financial information, capital, and labor relations. (Brand and Prada 2003) More generally, as already noted, political reforms such as democratization and decentralization have reflected the recommendations of multilateral credit organizations and neoliberal ideology. Decentralization in turn has promoted another hallmark of neoliberalism, public-private partnerships and privatization of public services. As Brand and Prada (2003) remark, “The progressive sense of modernization has been adopted by an ideological movement that sees the State as a heavy and inefficient apparatus that restrains the social dynamics and represents an obstacle for development.” They suggest that local planning in Colombia should be analyzed in this context.

Neoliberal thought promotes the improvement of governance as a precondition for achieving development, on the theory that increased democracy, decentralization, and privatization imply good governance, and that a natural consequence of good governance is a decrease in poverty. In a general way the Latin American experience refutes these claims, yet Bogotá is a special and complicated case, because the city has indeed markedly improved its governance and reduced poverty. Still, it is essential to understand Bogotá’s transformation independent of the ideological pronouncements of neoliberalism, because the facts are more complex: while Bogotá has certainly succeeded in some areas, its democracy continues

to present serious challenges; privatization remains highly controversial; and the reduction of poverty may not be as dramatic as official indicators suggest.

There have been two fundamental consequences of democratization in Bogotá's political structure: the popular election of the city's mayor and the creation of an important number of participatory mechanisms. Bogotá has been fortunate in electing effective mayors in the last two decades. During the last four administrations, Antanas Mockus (who served twice), Enrique Peñalosa, and Luis Eduardo Garzón have all promoted ambitious development plans whose accomplishment was made possible, at least in part, by improvements in governance and by growing interest in public affairs. If the popular election of mayors is a consequence of democratization, it must also be said that the mayors themselves have contributed greatly to democratization. Even though the last three mayors belonged to diverse, even antagonistic, political sectors and held very different views on urban phenomena, they shared a common concern for strengthening the public sphere and making the city more democratic. They also recognized the importance of continuing successful policies, even as each administration emphasized its own priorities and objectives. The first Mockus administration aimed to reinforce civic participation, promoting a project of "civil culture" that successfully transformed interactions between the city's inhabitants and local authorities. The Peñalosa administration focused on investing in urban infrastructure, with an emphasis on creating safe public spaces. Most of the city's emblematic projects were completed or contracted under Peñalosa. Finally, the Garzón administration presented a development plan that gave special emphasis to social issues like health care and education that would benefit the poorest sectors. Overall, nearly all of Bogotá's citizens have benefited from these different policies; despite their differing visions and particular political interests, all four administrations stressed issues essential to the city as a whole, although admittedly the poorest and most vulnerable received the fewest benefits, as their most urgent needs remained unmet.

The second major consequence of democratization has been the creation of mechanisms for civic participation. Civic participation and accountability—especially efforts that allow the poorest sectors to interact with government and take part in decisions that affect them—are seen by multilateral organizations as crucial factors for improved urban governance. In Latin America, participation has traditionally been weak and limited to an advisory role. By contrast, Bogotá has seen important developments in this sphere, and the public discussion of local development plans has had a significant impact on them—even though, in reality,

participation remains quite limited, especially among the city's poorest sectors.

The quality of participation, and hence of urbanism in Bogotá, has been shaped by the oscillation between administrative styles. The Mockus and Garzón administrations supported something like a bottom-up strategy, while the Peñalosa administration preferred a top-down urbanistic approach. Thus important advances in the consolidation of a participatory society that started during the first Mockus administration were slowed down under Peñalosa and resumed under the second Mockus administration and the Garzón administration.

During the first Mockus administration, very few visible urban projects were undertaken. Most initiatives focused on transforming aspects of social, rather than physical, space. Though some critics give little credit to the administration's "civic culture" programs because they failed to achieve Mockus's vision of dramatic transformation, researcher María Teresa Garcés points out that they helped make Bogotá "the city of Colombia where civic participation is most developed" (Garcés 2008). Garcés also argues that "civic culture" might have had a positive influence on governance, the identification of inhabitants with the city, and a growing interest in public affairs. They were ultimately even more successful in promoting respect for the law: in that sense, as urban researcher Fernando Viviescas (2001) suggests, civic culture may even have some negative effects, in that it forms obedient, unquestioning citizens rather than critically engaged actors.

Despite the improvements in participatory mechanisms, levels of participation remain low. Why? Garcés (2008) suggests that distrust is an important factor. There seems to be a general skepticism about the potential for real change, as well as deep distrust of institutions and politicians and a feeling that "many public decisions are made using clientelist criteria or due to economic globalization, with conditions imposed by international organizations, and not always in consultation with the specificity of the community and its interests." Other factors noted by Garcés include the lack of remuneration for participation in civic associations, the persistent clientelism that discourages formation of an active citizenship, and—paradoxically—increasing public satisfaction, which makes participation seem less urgent.

Nurturing civic participation depends on political will, a flexible political culture, and rising education levels. The work is far from complete. Yet Bogotá has already achieved important advances in electoral independence, growing public interest in urban affairs, and the creation of key participatory mechanisms

that include local planning councils and citizen's assemblies, civic advisory committees, neighborhood coalitions and watch groups, local youth and cultural councils, children's rights watchdog groups, a women's advisory council, and of course, public accountability of the mayor, the city government, and private contractors.

While decentralization has produced political changes such as those discussed above, it has also promoted the privatization of public services and the formation of a growing number of public-private partnerships. These trends have tended to diminish the state's presence in Bogotá's public affairs, though the public service sector still has strategic influence on both social and urban policies (Coing 2005). In fact, the impacts of service sector privatization both corroborate and contradict the arguments made on both sides of the debate: on the positive side, that privatization would limit corruption and mismanagement, and on the negative, that it would lead to the exclusion of some social sectors and produce new forms of segregation.

The reorganization of public services was determined by the constitution of 1991 and by Law 142 of 1994. Both emphasized the state's responsibility to supply public services while introducing four changes: eliminating monopolies, opening public services to the private sector, reforming economic management, and creating regulatory mechanisms. (Coing 2005). All the public service enterprises, with the exception of water management, which remains controlled by the public sector despite efforts to privatize it, were subject to different forms of privatization. In telecommunications, the public sector continues to compete with private companies in the provision of Internet and telephone services. Forty-nine percent of the state's electric services were sold to three different enterprises, while others also entered to compete in this area. Waste management has been completely contracted to private enterprises, including Venezuelan, French, and Argentinean companies, and is now 100 percent financially independent. Of the two national companies that previously controlled gasoline, Ecopetrol was sold to a Spanish company, while 62 percent of EEB was privatized. Finally, the public transportation system has historically been in the hands of the private sector. The Transmilenio, the successful new bus rapid transit system, is a public-private initiative in which (according to former mayor Jaime Castro; see Escovar et al. 2007) the public sector finances 85 percent of the system's costs while receiving only 4 percent of its revenue.

These reforms were expected to reduce inequality in the provision of services, and consequently both social and spatial segregation, as it was generally

anticipated that market mechanisms would assure the universal coverage of public services. Yet in fact, while the reforms guaranteed the enterprises' financial stability, the cost in terms of social equality was high. While the principle of competition theoretically assures universal coverage of public services, in practice the question becomes: how can total coverage be achieved given that the poorest sectors are the least profitable and that private enterprises prefer to keep their most profitable clients? According to the law, the city must directly provide a public service if after a bidding process there is no offer from any other enterprise to do so, or if it is proved that the costs would be lower if the services were provided by the city. So far this has never happened in Bogotá. What has ensured the expansion of public service networks and made them accessible to the poor are government subsidies and contributions from the richest users. In Colombia, public services for the poor historically have been financed in large part by the state, along with supplementary payments from the wealthiest customers. The system has certain weaknesses. First, subsidies are distributed based on a socioeconomic classification of the city's districts from 1 (poorest) to 6 (richest), a practice that reinforces spatial segregation. In addition, because individual families do not necessarily match their district's socioeconomic profile, some families do not receive the subsidies they need, while others receive them unnecessarily (Coing 2005).

Another problem is that the recent reforms, which promote competition and the financial autonomy of public services, put the system itself in danger. On the one hand, competition diminishes the price paid

Bogotá's bus rapid transit system, called Transmilenio, quickly attracted riders and has provided a model for other cities.



by the largest consumers and therefore their contributions. On the other, the policies that promote the financial autonomy of these enterprises have also imposed a limit on the amount of supplementary contributions paid by the wealthiest users (Coing 2005). The reduction of subsidies has had an important social impact; since the reforms were enacted, the spending on public services has increased dramatically for the poorest sectors. While the poorest families spend 11 percent of their monthly budget on public services, the richest sectors only pay approximately 5 percent (CID 2005). Reforms have been useful to ensure the financial stability of these enterprises, but today the inequality of public service provision is alarming. Although the indicators show that the city's coverage of public services is very good, these indicators do not say anything about the quality, the price, the continuity of the services, and the political implications of service provision. The quality and continuity of the services do seem to be rather homogeneous for all users independent of social factors. This is not the case regarding cost of services, which is indeed inseparable from politics. Social geographer Vincent Gouëset (2005) says (regarding the water management service, though his statements may apply to public services in general) that service provision implies social and political challenges, and that the problem is no longer just a political problem but a political-economic problem, in that the notion of governance is connected to economic liberalism.

A 2005 study of the Centro de Investigaciones para el Desarrollo (Center for Research in Development) finds that, "In the design of any pricing system it is inevitable that there is a tension between efficiency and equality. And there is not any technical process that provides for the calculation of a better alternative. The definition of the price is, therefore, a political decision" (CID 2005). In the same study the Center argues, in accordance with the thesis of George, Hotelling, and Vickrey, that "equality demands an engagement that must represent a redistribution of the wealth of the city" (CID 2005). Therefore, equality in the financial support of public services should not be a product of subsidies but a product of the prosperity of the city.

We mentioned earlier that certain critics of decentralization theory argue that the public service reforms reinforce exclusion and new forms of social segregation. These reforms also represent the rupture of an image of the state as representative of collective interests. Despite the improvements in terms of coverage, new forms of exclusion and segregation have indeed appeared. It is harder, however, to support the thesis that asserts that the process represents an end to the social obligations of the state. Beyond the debate about the convenience or inconvenience of privatiza-

tion, and the inconvenient fact that the adverse effects of privatization have fallen more severely on the poor, it is clear that public services in Colombia are still highly regulated by the national government. Despite decentralization and economic liberalism, the system still works in a very centralist fashion (Gouëset 2005). The experience of Bogotá shows that public services have an important social impact, which generate social stress and, therefore, continue to represent a political issue that demands a political response.

Regional Planning: Plan de Ordenamiento Territorial (POT)

Bogotá's recent regional planning, represented by the Plan de Ordenamiento Territorial (POT), is the result of a process that began with the passage of Law 388 of 1997. This law forced Colombian municipalities to consider their development for the next ten years and to create a document outlining the reforms that would order and organize regional planning—the POT. The initiative required cities to assume responsibility for their development in light of their newly gained political autonomy, established in the 1991 constitutional reform, and aimed to reduce inconsistent and inefficient regional growth. The law established new relations between the private and public sectors and provided new management tools that allowed municipalities to increase and improve services for citizens. The law is also part of a larger process of democratization in Colombia that reflected the political and social aspirations of the 1990s.

The Contents of the POT

Law 388 of 1997 represented a necessity as well as an opportunity for Bogotá. It was a necessary measure to address the prolonged absence of planning in the city and the consequent damage in terms of regional imbalance. It also provided a means to anticipate the upcoming urban development. Compared to other international capital cities, Bogotá had to make up for its extended neglect of the challenges of contemporary urban development. The POT presented an opportunity to adopt a new city model inspired by contemporary concerns. It was an occasion to examine recent cultural and technological transformations in society and to conceive of an urban plan that would engage with these changes. The urban models proposed for Bogotá are based on the experience and the regional management of other international metropolises in the late twentieth century. Although the values and challenges that shape urban planning at the metropolitan level are often shared, local administrations must design and implement planning within the context of its own inherited regional, social, and political legacy. The POT proposals were needed in order to address the needs of an already constructed city of 6 million inhabitants; a comprehensive government report on the city thus had to be made. Uni-

versities, chambers of commerce, independent and public institutions and research centers had already established regional reports based on years of studies, conferences, and diagnostic evaluations and had already developed tools for global understanding of the city. Inspired by these studies, the POT document proposed the application of a new regional model defined by three elements: nature, society, and human activity (Del Castillo 2000). This model was conceived as a dynamic system that would spark economic and social growth, allow the formation of different paths for development, be flexible, and consider both short- and long-term interests. The commitment of several economic, social, and political actors to the conception of the POT also provided the foundation for collaborative urban planning. One of the POT's central aims was that the writing of the plan be a collective process and that the final document represent a social contract. According to Law 388, public consultation and involvement were required in the POT writing process; shared concerns had to be addressed, and democratic participation promoted. This process aimed to translate citizens' reflections and ideas into a more technical evaluation, and to produce a diagnostic report. The ultimate objective was to create an effective participatory framework that would allow citizens to see their concerns reflected in the final POT document. This emphasis on citizen participation as an essential aspect of urban planning came from the reemerging ideas of participatory democracy in the 1990s. Politicians largely adopted the discourse of democratization during the 1990s when several administrations focused on civic engagement in political campaigns and urban management.

A city such as Bogotá faces intensified demographic growth, as the capital must contend with standard population growth along with the influx of residents due in part to economic and political instability and the specific case of displaced people in Colombia. The highest population growth in the capital took place during the 1950s and 1960s, when a 6 percent average growth rate per year occurred (Martin and Ceballos 2004). The population of Bogotá continues to grow, but at a much slower pace; according to the National Department of Statistics (Martin and Ceballos 2004) growth in 2000 reached 2.2 percent, and the city is still in need of more areas for future urban development. From this perspective the POT conceptualized Bogotá both as a capital city and as a city-region, promoting urban development at the local and regional scale. Therefore the plan divided the region into zones and identified the structural components of the urban forms to be consolidated (including the metropolitan center and zonal centers), while addressing the lack of public establishments and infrastructure. The aim was to develop a large-scale network of transportation, public infrastructure,

and social housing projects. The creation of a coherent urban plan was also seen as a way to consolidate economic development and attract new investments. According to the POT, economic activities should be well positioned according to the specific conditions of the particular environment. The idea was to use the potential of each area, developing, for example, well-connected industrial areas, mostly on the west side of the city, that were outside of the traditional center. Following the model of other international capitals, Bogotá's historical center was to become the commercial face of the city by attracting and concentrating national and international business headquarters, as well as administrative activities and services in a high-density scheme. At the same time each district would represent a secondary center with public spaces, road networks, and basic infrastructure that would consolidate the identity of the area and provide services for local residents. The ultimate aim of the plan was that citizens might enjoy what former Mayor Enrique Peñalosa termed a "balanced, efficient, and fair territory" (Martin and Ceballos 2004).

An evaluation of the city's political, social, economic, and territorial state was a necessary step to start the planning process. By the end of the 1990s Bogotá was the most dynamic district at the national level. This reflected the capital's growth, which lifted the population of the region from slightly less than 10 percent of the national population at the beginning of the 1990s to 15 percent by the end of the decade. Bogotá today is not only the country's largest urban center but also the most significant concentration of the national gross domestic product (GDP), foreign investments, political institutions, and media groups. The POT found that Bogotá was not making use of these advantages: to do so, it called for improving management at the regional level and strengthening the emerging public services sector as a precondition for growth.

An important focus of the POT was the environmental impact of urban development in Bogotá and the surroundings. Noting increasing rates of air, water, and soil pollution, it found that urban development threatened the ecosystems of the fertile Sabana de Bogotá (Bogotá Valley), which surrounds the city on three sides. For example, by 2000 the region's wetlands had shrunk to one sixth of their extent in 1960. Inside the city, widespread traffic congestion, an aging automobile fleet, and increasing industrial production had produced worrisome rates of air and noise pollution. The significant lack of green space in the city (particularly in the poor and populous southern sector) and the low quality of public parks were other indicators of environmental degradation. The lack of water treatment and the proximity of landfills and industry to the Bogotá River spread pollution

as far as the Magdalena River and the Caribbean coast. To address these challenges, the POT recommended immediate development of an extensive public transportation system that would reduce noise and air pollution as well as traffic congestion. It is also proposed the maintenance of green and public spaces in order to restore a sense of collective good among citizens and to reinforce the presence of nature in everyday urban life. Strict controls on industrial activities were proposed, including improvements in waste management as well as rezonings as first steps toward cleaning up the Bogotá River. Industrial production was pushed out of the city center and out of environmentally fragile areas, including wetlands and riparian zones.

Another significant environmental problem was the proliferation of informal settlements—essentially illegal developments built and populated largely by poor migrants—which continued to enlarge the city's periphery, cause severe environmental damage, and put their inhabitants at risk of floods, mudslides, earthquakes, and industrial toxins. Residential development simply was prohibited in environmentally high-risk areas, and the POT proposed that the citizens living in them should be evacuated. However, the inadequacy of the supply of affordable housing compromised the effectiveness of this recommendation.

When the POT was written, there were critical shortages of electricity and water supplies in the urban periphery. These shortages were especially acute in the areas of informal development, which made up 50 percent of Bogotá's districts in 2000. The POT made clear that providing basic infrastructure and social services to neighborhoods in high-risk areas would be more costly and complicated than planning for growth in advance. It therefore promoted increased residential construction and, taking advantage of newly created public-private partnerships, launched the Metrovivienda program to create social housing that could compete more effectively with illegal urbanization.

Years of unmanaged urban development and expansion had led to deep spatial cleavages within the city. The city's wealthiest inhabitants clustered in the desirable northern region, while there was a critical absence of infrastructure and public space in the southern and western parts of the city, where most of its population—and its poverty—were concentrated. Meanwhile, the greatest concentration of cultural and economic activities remained in the city center, which lay at the base of the mountains at the city's eastern margin. The region was unbalanced due to poor roads and the absence of an extensive public transit system, and the city faced problems of fragmentation and a lack of connectivity between the

local and metropolitan road networks. Nevertheless, this network was one of the only urban elements that gave some coherence to the region. To control expansion and create a denser and more compact urban network, the POT recommended the clear definition of city limits and the creation of sub-centers within the urban network to generate clusters of health centers, schools, and other social services while promoting and equitably distributing economic development. In addition, a new collective transportation system would allow easier access to the diverse parts of the city. In identifying the potential of peripheral areas, the plan underscored the importance of the Bogotá River, which represents one of the region's most significant structural elements and had the potential to become an axis of future green spaces.

Another major problem in Bogotá in the 1990s was mobility. Traveling in Bogotá was extremely difficult due to poor roads and sidewalks, daily traffic jams, and the absence of well-planned public transportation. According to the POT, by the end of the 1990s only 30 percent of households owned cars, yet the city faced permanent congestion, air pollution, lack of parking spaces, systematic infringement of traffic rules, and a shortage of space for pedestrians and alternative transportation systems. The poor maintenance and lack of sidewalks were noticeable in many districts: pedestrian areas were regularly overtaken and converted into parking zones. Elsewhere, road networks were interrupted by military camps, prisons, or cemeteries. The concentration of activities in the city center and the lack of infrastructure in the peripheries forced many people to migrate to the center, further reducing mobility. The POT proposed construction of a bus rapid transit (BRT) system, to be called the Transmilenio. The city of Medellín (with three million inhabitants in 2000) had constructed a subway system during the 1980s. Meanwhile Bogotá also planned extensive subway projects, yet these were not realized due to high costs. The POT would remedy this defect with a system that would be efficient, relatively inexpensive, easier to construct than a subway, and quick to implement, since it would rely on existing highways for rights-of-way. In addition to the BRT system, a network of cycling paths was developed in the city and its peripheries.

For many years the interests of local officials had dominated planning and city administration in Bogotá. The POT put an end to this tradition, proposing instead a form of collectively conceived town planning that would allow private investments linked to common social interests. According to the POT, public goods should effectively inspire and strengthen feelings of citizenship: those public goods included not only infrastructure and public spaces but also the city's cultural heritage. Through the construction and

rehabilitation of public space, successive administrations attempted to create a new image of Bogotá as a contemporary city, inspired by the development of cities like Barcelona and Boston. The Enterprise for Urban Renovation (ERU), a semi-public institution, was formed in 1999 by the Peñalosa administration in order to coordinate different urban projects proposed by the POT concerning public space. Their work has focused on the identification, recuperation, and renovation of spaces of public interest.

Background of the POT

The POT was written by a multidisciplinary team with experience in different aspects of urban planning. Most of its members were authors of previous studies on Bogotá and its region and had been working together since the late 1980s as part of the Center of Economic Development Studies (CEDE, or Centro de Estudios sobre Desarrollo Económico) of the Universidad de los Andes. Among them were the economist Carolina Barco and town planners José Salazar and Rodrigo Cortés. Many researchers on the planning team had completed their post-graduate studies in Europe and the United States, and their vision of the city was influenced by their experiences abroad. International trends had long influenced Bogotá's town planning. Among the foreign experts who had worked for the city were German town planner Karl Brunner in the 1930s, Le Corbusier in the late 1940s, and Town Planning Associates, formed by Paul Lester Wiener, Paul Schulz, and Josep Lluís Sert in the 1950s. Their modernist ideas shaped the city's expansion. While Le Corbusier's plans were only partially developed, Brunner, who stayed in Colombia for an extended period, contributed notably to the culture of town planning in Colombia, with projects that included Caracas and Chile Avenues, the campus of the National University (Universidad Nacional de Colombia), and neighborhoods including Bosque Izquierdo, Palermo, Barrios Unidos, Gaitán, Centenario, and El Campin.

During the 1960s, the administrations of Jorge Gaitán Cortés (1961–66) and Virgilio Barco (1966–69) emphasized the importance of city planning. Barco focused on restoring the city through public spaces, housing, and better management. Civic participation was reinforced through the creation of local committees. Influenced by European and American trends, Barco emerged as a champion of the public interest and an advocate for the garden city, who worked hard to rationalize Bogotá's chaos. Much later, the Peñalosa administration would recognize both Barco and Gaitán through the publication of studies on their legacy.

At the end of 1970s, young architects and students in Bogotá took part in the international debate about

the city, a debate that sparked new theories and reflections on the identity, meanings, and possibilities of the city beyond modernist thought. Important international theorists include the Situationist International, Jane Jacobs, and Aldo Rossi, along with others who studied the city from the perspectives of the arts, anthropology, history, and sociology. The emerging visions of the 1970s helped to build a collective awareness of important issues in Bogotá and created the foundation for recent urban transformations (Martin and Ceballos 2004). Certainly the Barcelona model has been a source of inspiration for Bogotá's contemporary planning, as urbanists tried to reconstruct a notion of the public sphere that had nearly disappeared from the planning culture in Bogotá. The work of Oriol Bohigas, Manuel Solà-Morales, and Joan Busquets, planners of post-Franco Barcelona, also inspired much of the planning done in the Colombian capital. These designers emphasized the consolidation of public space in order to reconstruct the city's identity through the valorization of cultural heritage, collective memory, and citizen awareness.

Criticism of the POT

Like most new initiatives, the POT generated significant criticism. The main critique was that it lacked a regional vision. The autonomy given to municipalities by Law 288 of 1997 hindered the efforts of city administration to plan regional development. Consequently, despite the idea of creating a city-region, the POT makes only few references to the region and, because it is limited to the planning of the city itself, does not provide the necessary tools for local administrations to plan for its future as a contemporary metropolis (Noriega 2000). Critics cite Paris, Madrid, Portland (Oregon), and New York as cities that consider local urban planning as part of larger region. In general terms, the model of regional planning emphasizes a broad view of urban development and focuses on the formation of diverse partnerships. And indeed, cities like New York and London have created partnerships with surrounding municipalities to strengthen their regional development. In Bogotá, many unresolved points of regional planning have been transferred to the Department of Municipal Urban Planning (Departamento Administrativo de Planeación Distrital, DAPD), but this entity has been unable to address the significant challenges of regional planning. Thus the POT failed to propose a solution to one of the most important urban issues to emerge at the end of the twentieth century, the regional impact of technological development and the new interdependences formed between the local and global scale (Giraldo Isaza 2004).

The lack of a global vision also prevented the POT from adequately addressing social questions of housing and displacement. The egalitarian, democratic, and

balanced region promoted in the POT requires greater political will, especially regarding informal settlements and the lack of housing solutions for immigrants. The Metrovivienda social housing project did not effectively compete with informal housing, as the POT had hoped. It reached the middle class instead of the poorest communities. Though an important initiative, it proved insufficient (Acevedo Bohorquez 2000). Without the counterweight it was intended to provide, the informal and unplanned city will continue to grow, reproducing many of the existing problems.

Environmentalists were also disappointed by the POT. The Regional Autonomous Corporation (Corporación Autónoma Regional de Cundinamarca, CAR), an independent entity that works to protect the environment, vetoed the proposed northern urban expansion, which represented a clear conflict between the interests of real estate promoters and the environmental protection of the zone of wetlands at the city's northern limits. Although environmental protection and the challenges of sustainable development are addressed in the POT, Luisa Fernanda Vargas Hernandez of the Corporación Autónoma Regional de Cundinamarca (CAR) argues (Ardila 2003) that these pronouncements have been largely meaningless.

Civic participation is another concept that is emphasized in the POT discourse but has failed to meaningfully shape urban planning. According to some critics, the only consultation that took place was with citizens who did not have any legal ability to approve or veto local planning. Moreover, the planning process did not allow citizens to meaningfully share their concerns. Many citizens did not understand the technical language used in the POT, and the Department of Municipal Urban Planning, the government entity that organized the meetings, was not well prepared to manage the debate. The reports of citizen meetings did not appear in the POT, a reflection of their lack of importance. All in all, the impact of civic participation on the final document was quite limited.

The privatization of public services and the growing number of public-private partnerships also undermined the stated importance of the public interest in the POT. On the one hand, Mayor Peñalosa rejected the World Bank's demands to privatize water service, arguing that financial considerations would prevent a private company from extending service to the informal settlements along the periphery, home to many of the city's most vulnerable residents. Yet the financially unbalanced public-private partnership responsible for the Transmilenio system has already been mentioned: in a way, because public investment receives so little return, public finance serves the private sector. The recovery of the city center, including development of Tercer Milenio Park, also reinforced a

planning model that beautified the city center at the cost of displacing many of its poorest citizens.

Defenders of the first version of the POT argued that it represented an advance because it led to construction of foundations essential to the city. Also, they pointed to its decisive rupture with previous urban planning, which tried at most to regulate particular interests while avoiding the broader challenges of city planning (Del Castillo and Salazar 2003). Despite its flaws and contradictions, in short, the POT managed to bring attention to the public interest in the construction of the city, laying the foundation for a collective reflection on Bogotá's urban planning process. One can only hope that future editions of the POT will maintain and indeed expand on its idealistic ambitions while more effectively confronting the complex challenges of achieving them within Bogotá's particular social and political context.

The Contributions of Mayoral Administrations, from Castro to Garzón

During the 1980s and early '90s, Bogotá's administration was marked by corruption scandals, public service crises, and bankruptcy, in addition to serious threats to public security. Since 1993, a series of competent administrations has improved many aspects of municipal management, restructuring public finances, decreasing urban violence, improving public and social services, and building infrastructure. These improvements were the consequence of five successful mayoral administrations. Jaime Castro's administration (1992–94) was responsible for salvaging the city's finances, an important milestone in its history. Yet we consider the first election of Antanas Mockus in 1994 as the beginning of a new era in local politics.

Although Mockus and his successors represented diverse political tendencies, they shared enough to provide the city with continuity. First, they all sought to strengthen the public sphere and make the city more democratic. They also recognized the importance of continuing successful policies of their predecessors. In addition, they responded similarly to the political and economic agenda of global urban competition promoted by corporate media, chambers of commerce, and real estate developers, which emphasizes competitiveness and productivity, insertion of the city into the global market, weakening of land regulations, and pursuit of real estate operations linked to major urban interventions. Political scientist María Mercedes Maldonado (2003) describes this response as "avoidance of ideological definition and an adaptation to the neoliberal model with a social conscience."

Despite these similarities, the last four administrations stressed different issues and proposed varied responses to the problems they identified. The follow-

ing analysis examines the most relevant as well as the most controversial development plans, initiatives, and political visions of each. From the two Mockus administrations we analyze the attempt to reinforce civic participation and institute a “civil culture”; from the Peñalosa administration, the construction and renovation of infrastructure, together with the discourse on public space; and from the Garzón administration, social programs intended to improve life for the poorest and most vulnerable.

The first election of Antanas Mockus as Bogotá’s mayor in 1995 marked a turning point in the city’s political tradition. This unusual politician, a former academic and educator, is recognized in particular for his independence from the traditional political class of Colombia, often associated with corruption scandals and ineffectiveness. From the beginning, Mockus’s management of the city testified to his capacity to innovate, a clear break from mayorships of the past. While his predecessor, Jaime Castro, also represented a change from previous administrations, Mockus is recognized as the first mayor to represent a genuine political alternative (Alcaldía Mayor de Bogotá 2003). His training in mathematics and philosophy, as well as his experience as a professor and dean at the Universidad Nacional de Colombia clearly shaped his distinct approach to politics.

Continuing Castro’s efforts to legitimize public institutions, Mockus aimed to reshape the public’s conception of the law through projects focused on civic culture. Free from bureaucratic commitments, he put together a diverse administration that included academics and young professionals, a critical decision that allowed the administration to appoint competent public servants. Fifteen years later, his management is still seen positively by most citizens.

The development plan of the first Mockus administration aimed “to collectively build an integrated and fair city, a city that is kind to children and elderly people where it is possible to live peacefully, each one with his conscience, and with the law” (as cited in Martin and Ceballos 2004).

When Mockus became mayor in 1995, he planned to revitalize a city characterized by violence, illegal behavior, and corruption. During the 1980s, a wave of violence had overtaken Bogotá, including attacks on citizens, kidnappings, riots, and crime. This created a climate of fear and a culture of disregard for the law. Even before running for office, Mockus observed a “divorce” among the spheres of culture, law, and morals that direct human behavior, and he developed this argument in research that he directed as a professor in the philosophy department of the Universidad Nacional de Colombia (Carrillo 1991). Ac-

ording to Mockus, laws may exist and even be fair, yet they may nevertheless be disrespected because legal requirements are neither recognized as moral obligations nor accepted culturally. Mockus’s civic culture project aimed to reestablish legality by modifying attitudes. In his development plan, Mockus defined civic culture as the “ensemble of customs, actions and minimum shared rules that generate a sense of belonging, make possible urban coexistence and lead to the respect of common heritage and to the recognition of civil rights and obligations” (Alcaldía Mayor de Bogotá 1995). The civic culture project aimed to regulate interpersonal behaviors in order to pacify social space and lay the foundation for coexistence in public space. Fundamentally based on individual self-regulation, civic culture used communication and comprehension of laws as strategies to facilitate moral and cultural acceptance by demonstrating the sharing of common values, including respect for life.

The main objective of the civic culture plan was to promote basic rules for coexistence according to the three levels of moral, cultural, and legal regulation that guarantee respect for life. The administration also hoped to build an organized community that would permit dialogue, cooperation, and the search for peaceful solutions to interpersonal conflicts, with the ultimate goal of identifying alternatives to violence and strengthening confidence in local government. The final objective was to improve the capacity of citizens to express these proposals. Through art, cultural activities, recreation, and sports, citizens were invited to promote tolerance and to embrace cultural and moral pluralism. Civic participation was also encouraged through practices of local planning that included the elaboration of public infrastructure and urban renovations. Citizens were called upon to exercise control and participate in decision-making and political processes in order to promote accountability and guarantee transparency. To monitor and improve on these efforts, the Mockus administration relied on evaluation tools, establishment of new watchdog groups, and creation of public databases on transportation, education, public space and other issues, which were consolidated into an educational resource on urban life in Bogotá. In 1995 the Unified Information System on Violence and Crime (Sistema Unificado de Información de Violencia y Delincuencia en Bogotá, SUIVD) was also created, a tool used to measure the impact of civil culture on urban violence.

The civic culture project assumed many forms. At first, Mockus focused on continuing the Castro administration’s fight against corruption and clientelism by making public management both transparent and competent. Thus he surrounded himself with urban experts, gave the most important positions to qualified civil servants, dismantled the corrupt traffic

police, and restructured the police department to emphasize its educational role. Radical measures were taken to protect the health and well-being of citizens. Restrictions on nighttime sales of alcohol quickly reduced the high number of accidents and fatalities due to drunk driving. A ban on fireworks reduced the number of children burned or killed during Christmas celebrations to zero, while affirming that the integrity and well-being of children prevailed over cultural customs. Still, it was not harsh enforcement so much as education, awareness campaigns, and communication that made these measures successful. The teaching of respect between pedestrians and drivers, for example, was accomplished with more visible signs and by stationing mimes at intersections. This peaceful regulation of civic relationships and interactions aimed to ease the cultural acceptance of norms.

Civic culture went beyond shoring up the law and protecting public safety. On the premise that public finances are sacred, Mockus invited citizens to take part in discussions on the investment of public funds. Cultural events such as concerts in the parks promoted the self-regulation of public behavior. A day of symbolic vaccination against violence and a plan for voluntary disarmament were set in motion. A day of reconciliation and peaceful conflict resolution was introduced as a way to fight against individual injustice; mediation and negotiation were promoted as ways to solve conflicts.

Civic culture also confronted behaviors that promoted social exclusion. Aid was directed to the most fragile populations, including children and single-parent families. Improvements in education and health care helped demarginalize the most vulnerable sectors, recognizing them as part of society. Mockus's development plan also proposed the improvement of public spaces as tools to promote civic behavior (Alcaldía de Bogotá 1995), arguing that physical space represented social space, the space of citizens. The revalorization of parks, avenues, and public spaces, harmonization of infrastructure, and construction of green spaces provided new opportunities for education and recreation, while highlighting the importance of a common patrimony, shared by all citizens.

In 1998, Enrique Peñalosa was elected mayor. It was his third attempt. Peñalosa started his political career in the liberal party, which he represented in his two earlier mayoral campaigns. In 1998 he ran successfully as an independent candidate, but in 2006 he rejoined the liberal party in hopes of receiving the presidential nomination. After this failed attempt he joined President Alvaro Uribe's reelection campaign. Thus in 2007, when Peñalosa unsuccessfully sought reelection as mayor, he enjoyed the support of the

national government and of its conservative president. Today he is part of a political coalition called the "Partido Verde" (Green Party), which unites three former mayors of Bogotá.

All in all, it can be seen that Peñalosa's reputation as an independent crusader is somewhat exaggerated. Yet despite his avoidance of ideological definition and his changes of political affiliation, which some consider opportunistic, Peñalosa has a coherent and clear vision of the city: his impact as mayor, from 1998 through 2001, was substantial. Indeed it was his administration that was responsible for some of the capital's most impressive and celebrated urban projects. In contrast to Mockus's emphasis on cultural and civic transformation, Peñalosa proposed a "top-down" approach. His vision of Bogotá, outlined in the POT, was of a city in which the public interest remained central, represented through public spaces, public and alternative transportation systems, and a program of social inclusion based on spatial integration.

The aim of Peñalosa's administration was to make significant physical transformations that would both promote social change and make the city more competitive. According to the development plan, the objective was "to generate a profound change in the way of life of citizens, giving them back confidence in their capacity to build a better future and to dynamize social and economic progress." To achieve this, the plan explained, it was "necessary to substantially improve the physical and administrative structure of the city. The idea is to project and to make Bogotá visible in order to address the challenges facing the city and to take advantage of the possibilities imposed by a new era, and to work with the aim of substantially improving the quality of life for all inhabitants" (Alcaldía Mayor de Bogotá 1998). The development plan accordingly outlined a comprehensive series of priorities, including:

- *Demarginalization of neighborhoods* through physical improvements (water management, paving, parks) and social services (health, education, and welfare)
- *Social interaction* through enhanced social services provision and human development programs (engaged citizenship)
- *A human-scale city* through recuperation and expansion of public space
- *Mobility* through restructuring of public transport (greater comfort, reduced travel times and environmental impacts) and discouragement of automobile use

- *Better urban planning and services* through the organization of urban dynamics (balance between densification and growth, regulation of peripheral expansion), neighborhood renovation and repurposing, and substitution of planned for informal housing
- *Security and coexistence* through crime prevention (law enforcement balanced with improved civic behavior)
- *Institutional efficiency* through improvement of governance, reduction of operating expenses, and better budgetary control.

Peñalosa's development priorities can be summarized in five core initiatives: restructuring of public transport, construction of bicycle paths, construction of cultural facilities including libraries and schools, recuperation of public space and demarginalization of neighborhoods, and creation of a land bank to help address the need for low-income housing. Some initiatives did not have their expected impact. Neither the land bank nor the Metrovivienda housing program was adequate to provide housing for the poorest sectors. Consequently, the goal of controlling illegal growth also failed. Yet the administration had many successes. Peñalosa consolidated the culture of urban management based on technical expertise initiated under Mockus as well as the downturn in urban violence. Just as these efforts were rooted in the Mockus administration, the objective of constructing public space as a tool for the creation of consensus also originated before Peñalosa. Mockus's projects for civic culture focused as well on the collective creation of an image of the city, fostering a sense of collective belonging and emphasizing construction of spaces for social interaction. The principal difference is that Mockus's initiatives addressed modifying cultural and political behaviors, while Peñalosa's aimed to transform the physical public space. Even here, the difference was one of degree, for Peñalosa, too, emphasized modification of social behavior as a way to achieve happiness and create a new way of life, and this view directly informed his physical planning priorities. Thus in his inaugural speech, Peñalosa stated, "The essence of a civilized city is not highways or subways, but the quantity and quality of its pedestrian public space," continuing, "We are going to make a crusade to recuperate a city for pedestrians, a city that shows respect for them and that dignifies the human condition" (Alcaldía Mayor de Bogotá 1998).

According to Gerard Martin (2007), Bogotá successfully advanced social inclusion "by binding a broad sociological interpretation to the concept of mobility." The author's claim, drawing on Lewis Mumford's vision of the city, suggests that Bogotá's urban policies are based on a view of the city not merely as a physi-

cal artifact but as a social institution. Such a definition lies at the heart of the Peñalosa administration's urban policies, which saw public space as a pacified space for pedestrians, a space for consensus and conviviality, the realization of citizenship, coexistence, and advancement of diversity. In sum, public space represents the essence for all manifestations of the human spirit (Alcaldía Mayor de Bogotá 1998).

This discourse on public space has found important echoes in the media and has been adopted by a variety of social sectors. It corresponds to the established view of public space as the "civic representation of public good" (Joseph 1999). Yet it is at odds with the more complex understandings found in the social sciences. Research in urban sociology and anthropology shows that public space in urban societies sets the stage for forms of sociability that are entirely different from those of pre-urban societies. Therefore public space is not considered a place of intersubjectivity but rather a device for representing the tension between distance and proximity. In an essay analyzing the work of Georg Simmel, Erving Goffman, and Gabriel Tarde, urban anthropologist Issac Joseph calls public space the place of "tension between agreement and incomprehension as the basic condition of politics," producing only "related and culturally fragmented identities." In that sense, multiculturalism "is not the cohabitation of identities in a territory but communal accessibility," and public space is an interrelational space that has nothing to do with communal fraternities but is "defined more by the work of a society itself than the result of legislation or an administration" (Joseph 1999). Public space is not only a space marked by civility, circulation, communication, and participation but also one marked by neglect, indifference, reserve, resistance, revolt, protest, riot, and turbulence (Joseph 1999). Joseph concludes that the notion of the public good in contemporary democracies requires redefinition. This statement is specifically true in regard to the Peñalosa administration. Peñalosa's entire development plan involved a reflection on the meaning of the public good, centered on public space, yet failed to recognize that public space is a product of collective efforts. Jürgen Habermas once defined public space as the "domain of democratic controversy and the dynamic of a procedural ethic of communicational behavior" (cited in Joseph 1999), its objective being to create a social contract based on the free and public use of reason. Peñalosa's simpler, top-down approach to public space, though justified by a discourse of democracy and drawn from the writing of Jane Jacobs, Henri Lefebvre, Richard Sennett, and others (Martin 2007), has served very different and contradictory purposes. On the one hand, it justified progressive social policies like the demarginalization of poor neighborhoods and the construction of educational centers, libraries, and recreational centers in the city's poorest

peripheral districts. Yet on the other, it appropriated parts of the city for the more fortunate classes (as at Tercer Milenio Park, analyzed later on in this report) and promoted practices of social exclusion, such as the harassment of itinerant vendors.

In 2001, Antanas Mockus was elected mayor for the second time. During his second administration, Mockus continued to focus on civic culture as a guiding principle. But his ideas evolved, and his second term, inspired by Peñalosa's development plan, emphasized the problem of competitiveness while continuing to promote many of Peñalosa's important public space interventions, such as the Transmilenio system and Tercer Milenio Park. The new development plan was thus a synthesis of the first plan and of the Peñalosa administration. Though the two mayors differed in many respects, this continuity helped build public trust in local government and renew citizens' belief in democracy.

The 2004 election of Luis Eduardo Garzón was a remarkable moment. Bogotá's mayoralty is considered the second most important official position after the presidency, and Garzón, a former union leader, was the first member of the political left to occupy it. This fact is especially notable in light of Colombia's recent preference for very conservative national governments, in contrast to the leftward turn seen in many Latin American countries: Garzón was elected only two years after the 2002 election of Alvaro Uribe Velez, the conservative and very popular president.

There were two noteworthy political consequences of Garzón's administration. First, he showed that the left could responsibly govern the city. Second, he maintained popular support—indeed the highest approval ratings of any of the city's last few mayors—throughout his administration. In addition, the left kept control of the mayorship in the 2007 elections.

Garzón's administration faced early criticism from the city's elites as well as the media; many feared that the left would put an end to the achievements of former administrations. While Garzón's focus on social stratification threatened the elites, his own party feared that his development plan would be hindered by the nation's neoliberal economy. In the end, Garzón's achievements were significant. He set in motion a great many important social programs, yet without making significant changes in the city's economic policies. This gave political and economic elites confidence, allowing Garzón to negotiate ideological differences with them.

Garzón detached himself from the revolutionary and populist left, connecting his government more to the social democratic tradition. According to Alan Gilbert

(2008c), democracy, globalization and neoliberalism transformed politics in Latin America, replacing the goal of revolution espoused by some leftist movements with a "gradual and consensual search for changes in the fight against poverty and social inequality" (Gilbert 2008c). Thus the Garzón administration defined a development plan that focused on the fight against inequality and exclusion, without proposing radical changes in terms of taxation and redistribution of wealth.

The administration's development plan proposed three core strategies to "build a modern and human Bogotá," based on expanded democracy and a decrease in social polarization and wealth disparities. Its main objectives were peace, the satisfaction of basic needs, and the realization of every citizen's political, social, economic, and cultural rights. Other goals included a healthy environment, an efficient administration, and regional development. These were to be achieved through solidarity, autonomy, diversity, equality, participation, and integrity (Alcaldía Mayor de Bogotá 2004a).

The plan expressed a vision of the city based on protection of human rights and complemented by a process of strengthening communities and institutions. This vision aimed to rapidly establish the conditions necessary for an effective and sustainable exercise of human rights. Therefore, the Garzón administration was close to what political scientist Benjamin Goldfrank defines as "the basic formula for what is known as the 'petista' model of government, which includes three main elements: popular participation, divestment of priorities, and transparency" (as cited in Gilbert 2008c). As in other previously cited cases, the development plan made subtle references to the economic aspects of managing the city, as for example to competition as a necessary condition for development. At the same time, it included a rather populist statement referring to collective production and appropriation of wealth. In fact, the macroeconomic management of the city during this period was very similar to that of previous administrations.

In practical terms, Garzón's development plan contained three components, each associated with particular objectives that were to be translated into policies, strategies, and programs (Alcaldía Mayor de Bogotá 2004a).

- *The social component* aimed to create sustainable conditions for the effective exercise of political, social, and economic rights, reduce poverty and inequality, and promote social inclusion. Garzón's leading social program was Bogotá Sin Hambre (Bogotá Without Hunger). It fed 670,000 people, including poor children, disabled persons, and the

elderly. More than 280 outlets served meals every-day in the poorest sectors of the city, and thousands of students received healthy meals at school. In addition, a network of food distribution, including donations from large chains, reduced the cost of food for the poorest sectors and created a source of revenue for small producers who sold their goods without middlemen. Other programs focused on improving education and health, creating employment, promoting the rights of women, reducing domestic abuse, and providing recreation and sports.

- *The urban-regional component* aimed to promote collective rights, equality, and social inclusion through the consolidation of the city. Programs included improvement of environmental conditions at the regional level and creation of urban sub-centers.
- *The reconciliation component* aimed to reduce violence and enhance social cohesion. Public institutions and civic organizations were to work together to create the conditions for a culture of solidarity, social inclusion, participation, respect for human rights and justice, and public accountability. Programs focused on peaceful conflict resolution, protection of human rights, improvement of the justice system, and participation in public decision making.

In many ways, Garzón's administration was politically moderate, yet his management of the city expressed the values of the political left in important ways. He refused to privatize public enterprises and education, spent significant sums on health care, and launched ambitious programs to combat inequality and exclusion. During his administration, the municipality assumed the management of national public hospitals, which the national government could no longer afford. Furthermore, on issues like street vendors, his posture was more tolerant than that of his predecessors.

Education and health were the sectors in which Garzón's administration made the greatest impact. In education, the city significantly increased the student capacity of public schools, lowered the dropout rate, and expanded financial aid to attend school. In health, the city built three new municipal hospitals, increased the number of citizens eligible for subsidized health care, and made a huge impact on poverty and malnutrition through Bogotá Sin Hambre.

There were other successes. The coverage of public services improved and water rates were reduced. Violence continued to decline (although at a slower pace), while spending on security increased. Finances were well managed, and improved efficiency in tax collection allowed the city to increase its income without raising taxes.

There were also disappointments, including social housing and regional integration, problems that had also bedeviled earlier administrations. Mobility was clearly the area most overlooked by the Garzón administration. Although the Transmilenio system continued to expand, there were no new transportation initiatives and advances in the creation of a unified transportation system were delayed.

Overall, it is clear that the Garzón administration's priorities, as well as its biggest successes, lay in the social area. Sixty percent of the budget was allocated for the social components of the city's development plan. The Garzón administration was recognized simultaneously for efficiency and integrity and for having improved the quality of life in the poorest sectors. Some of his decisions, although criticized by more radical sectors of the political left, allowed him to have friendly relations with the conservative national government and city elites. The combination of ambitious social programs and pragmatic fiscal management allowed Garzón to govern successfully, advance the creation of a more equal society, and engage diverse social sectors in the objectives of the government plan.

Urbanism and the Urban in Bogotá

Nothing is more usual in the history of a public space than the "work of revision or of reinvention," writes Isaac Joseph (1999). That is to say, the city is a space of sustained political action, or, as proposed by urban researcher Carlos Mario Yori, a "stage of power... the space where power is not only established, but where it is put into play, transforming and at the same time defining its own reality." Therefore, Yori continues, "governing and designing, in the case of cities, is to know how to structure the space of cities; it is to know how to structure the space of possibility and accomplishment of every subject" (Yori 2000).

If the city is the stage of power, it is consequently the space of tension between the discourses of urbanism and the urban. Urbanism, as proposed by the Catalan anthropologist Manuel Delgado, is a tool of the *polis*, the city administration, that aims to determine or at least control space, to architecturalize it on the premise that it can be a conflict-free channel for a clear discourse. The urban, on the other hand, is understood as the work of a society itself, work that takes place precisely in the public space. Henri Lefebvre describes the urban as "a radical form of social space, the setting and product of the collective creating itself, a deterritorialized territory where there are not objects but diagrammatic relations between objects, loops, ties defined by a constant state of excitement" (as cited in Delgado Ruiz 2004).

Accepting Lefebvre's distinction, one of our central research hypotheses was that the constant tension

between the city as projected by experts (town planners and politicians) and as experienced by inhabitants would be observable in our case study sites. We expected to find a tension between a vision of the city materialized in a pacified public space and the multiple visions of the urban: a space in motion that is made and unmade constantly, a place of ephemeral and unpredicted appropriations. An unexpected finding in our fieldwork was that the inhabitants of Bogotá's urban space—that is, its social spaces—seem to have accepted and even appropriated the discourses of urbanism widely spread by the media and official propaganda. We do not suggest here that Bogotá's urban space has in fact become the conflict-free space politicians dream of. Yet it is surprising to observe the extent to which political speech has permeated the discourse of the quotidian. The explanation seems to lie in the government's successful use of marketing techniques, a finding that forces one to question the role of communication and urban marketing in the local and international construction of the image of Bogotá, a city that has become the center of considerable debate.

A Mystified Discourse: Urban Marketing and Reality in Bogotá

One of the positive aspects of Bogotá's process of transformation is that the city has become the focus of study for many Colombian and international researchers. It is a radical change that has brought academics into the debates about the planning of the city. Unfortunately, most of the findings of this research remain unknown to the public. Although they contribute to the political debate and can have influence in urban planning circles, they do not help to create critical and collective discourses on the city. Thus the production of these discourses remains controlled by politicians and experts who can count on the support of the media.

Our research has attempted to describe the complexities that have defined the city's development in the last twenty years. We have seen, for example, that even the POT, intended to summarize the city model the authorities imagine, has been the subject of numerous controversies and debates and has been revised twice in less than ten years. Therefore the apparent coherence of Bogotá's transformation process seems to be more the result of hindsight than of planning. The attempts of certain sectors to present Bogotá as a model are thus questionable. Though Bogotá's transformation has generally produced positive results, and there are certainly lessons to draw from the city's experience, it is also evident that that transformation has been shaped by a series of isolated political actions and marked by conflict. Though political discourses and communication strategies aim to give coherence to the city's complex development,

Bogotá's transformation is not the product of a coherent model designed for the city but the result of a variety of causes and effects. To understand Bogotá's transformation, therefore, one must also understand the discourses that have sought to explain it, not in fact as explanations but as expressions of ideological positions or interests. This section looks at the discourses projected by local and international marketing, the international media, global planning circles, and multilateral organizations.

Georges Benko (2000) writes that the geopolitical classification of cities is a logical consequence of the need to compete in a globalized world. At the same time, decentralization policies have made development a local responsibility. In the effort to make itself competitive, a city's capacity to attract investors, tourists, and new residents is determined by different factors, including those that are physical (infrastructure and public services), economic (local taxes, labor conditions, land prices), and demographic (qualified work force). Yet in addition to these aspects, Benko argues that "the image, the identity or the representations of the urban space play a determinant role," and that "in that sense, local cultural, urbanistic or social policies can participate in the economic development of the city or the region" (Benko 2000). Consequently, regional communication campaigns become ubiquitous as cities become products for consumption that can be advertised, and "the fact that a region or a commune creates an image for the public, and that they use instruments of communication such as slogans or logos is no longer strange" (Benko 2000).

Beyond the political and demagogic discourses, then, Bogotá's recent transformations must be understood as part of a strategy, including a marketing campaign, to improve local competitiveness and productivity. In fact, Bogotá appears to exemplify the claim made by U.S. anthropologists Ida Susser and Janet Schneider that "in cities torn apart by violence and war, globalized processes, far from being the principal or obvious source of devastation, may actually present themselves as a part of the solution, a path to the restoration of urban health" (Susser and Schneider 2003). In Colombia, an inarguable truth has been accepted in national planning circles: foreign investment and economic opening are important instruments in promoting social and economic development. Marketing both Bogotá and Colombia as worthwhile places to invest in has accordingly become a priority in both the local and national economic agenda.

Since Bogotá might until very recently have been considered what Susser and Schneider (2003) call a "wounded city"; the problem of image holds particular interest. "Wounded cities" are those marked by high levels of crime, civil war, or natural disaster.

Susser and Schneider explain that “[i]n order to attract tourists and new investments, these cities have to recreate themselves like merchandise, investing particularly in the representation of their image” (as cited in Vincent 2005). Changing the perceptions of Bogotá as a violent and chaotic city, even among local residents, has been particularly challenging. In a 2002 article, Colombian social researcher Armando Silva (2002) cites a survey done by the Chilean business magazine *América Economía* that ranked Bogotá thirteenth among the thirty-four most competitive cities in Latin America as a place to do business. The survey compiled data on the cost of living, infrastructure, commerce, and violence. It also interviewed 500 Latin American executives. Although Bogotá was highly ranked in all the indicators, the interviewed executives said unanimously that they would not live in Bogotá.

Under these circumstances, urban marketing has become a useful tool for local authorities to improve the international image and competitiveness of the city. Administrations have also found political value in these communication strategies. The exercise of politics in the city has been mediated by communication practices that tend to combine regional with other forms of marketing, including political, economic, and social. Bogotá is hardly unique in this. Benko (2000) remarks that regional marketing, which is meant to promote a local entity, instead often “valorizes and justifies the actions and projects of the different candidates” and is usually connected by journalists and politicians to other forms of political marketing. This amalgamation is a product of the fact that political actors use regional marketing as a political tool.

Bogotá’s success story has received a significant amount of media and professional attention. Clearly much of the publicity comes from those who benefit, including municipal government, local business groups, public-private partnerships, and multilateral credit organizations and development banks eager to promote the neoliberal model. Thus a large part of the information reproduced about Bogotá is ideological in nature: not surprisingly, it oversimplifies both the city’s complex reality and the findings of research scholars.

The city’s marketing has relied on three urban marketing practices defined by Marc Dumont and Laurent Devisme (2006) as economic (the attraction of investors and tourists), political (urban actions replace or are tied to the political agenda), and social (the construction of a collective imaginary).

Simplification has become characteristic of these political exercises. Mexican publicist Eulalio Ferrer writes that “we have passed from the class struggle to a phrase struggle, that is, from the doctrine to

the slogan, from the program to the advertisement, from the semantic to the esthetic” (Ferrer, as cited in Beccassino 2003). As Argentinean advertising executive Angel Beccassino (2003) reminds us, the word “slogan” comes from ancient Scotland, where “sluagh-ghairm” signified the war cry of a clan, “the cry where the argument is substituted for the affirmation.” Indeed, each of the last administrations has been identified with what urban researcher Paul Bromberg (2008) calls a brand: Mockus (civil culture), Peñalosa (public space), and Garzón (social inclusion). So pervasive did this branding become that, as Bromberg notes, the media was puzzled by the more recent arrival of a mayor, Samuel Moreno, who lacked such a clear slogan.

The pressure to reduce government’s communication with the public to slogans, logos, and other oversimplified messages is problematic because government accountability depends on the administration’s commitment to communicate its actions and projects, yet this information must be complete, relevant, and comprehensible. By reducing political activity to a problem of communication (conceived as advertisement), this sort of “branding” of politics also reduces enormously the quality of public debate and civic participation. Slogans may be useful in attracting voters and improving the government’s ratings in the polls; they can even be valuable in transmitting pedagogic messages, as seen in the civic culture projects of Antanas Mockus. However, in terms of reinforcing the public sphere and promoting political participation, the communication strategies of the recent administrations have failed. According to María Teresa Garcés (2008) polls conducted by *Bogotá Como Vamos* in 2007 found that a high percentage of people claimed not to have heard of the various participatory spaces or social associations in the city (Garcés 2008).

A few years ago, leading Colombian urban researcher Fernando Viviescas warned that Bogotá represented “the enlightened reinstallation of the old regime,” that is, “the reestablishment of (messianic, educated, and omnipotent) administrators who resolve people’s problems while the citizens are expected to simply obey” (Viviescas 2001). Admittedly, the author refers to the period when the emerging changes in urban planning policies were just beginning to show results during the Peñalosa administration. He considers the inclusion of the greatest number of citizens in this process essential to protect the transformation process from traditional dominant interests. Yet regrettably, the empowerment of social sectors has had a lesser impact than that of private actors. While many urban projects and public services have undergone some degree of privatization, participation levels in social and civic movements remains low. Meanwhile, local

elites, including media owners, have found in their association with city authorities a sure path toward new business opportunities. Therefore private sector participation in the urban discourse on the city directs urban development toward particular interests, justifying profitable real estate operations, public-private partnerships, and privatizations by appeals to the general welfare. The announced decentralization of municipal government is represented by a public agenda seemingly driven by a partnership between local government, the chamber of commerce, and corporate media. For example, one of Bogotá's best-known tools of accountability is the periodic public survey known as *Bogotá Como Vamos*, an initiative of *El Tiempo* (Colombia's most important newspaper), the Bogotá Chamber of Commerce, and the Corona Foundation. Though the project provides useful public information on many important issues, the survey results that receive the most media coverage are those that directly interest the survey's promoters, who have recently begun to use the survey as a tool for pressuring political leaders.

Bogotá has made significant advances in the creation of a more just and democratic society. One of the city's greatest challenges today is promoting the political engagement of all social sectors. The quality of communication between city authorities and the public is tremendously important in this endeavor.

Internationally, Bogotá's image is shaped by discourses that describe the city as the stage for a "radical transformation process," the product of "innovative urban development policies,... spectacular physical interventions,...an excellent public administration," and "creative programs of civil culture." The city's urbanistic culture is defined as a set of practices that "transcend the traditional discourses of town planning" and have redefined "the process of building the city," not only as a physical space but also in "social and mental terms" (Escovar et al. 2007). The most important marketing agency, Invest in Bogotá, is a public-private partnership between the city and the Bogotá Chamber of Commerce that aims to encourage tourism and attract foreign investment through international promotion based on urban competitiveness. This international marketing strategy has been effective: according to *América Economía*, the same survey that ranked Bogotá thirteenth among the top Latin American cities a few years ago, the city is today considered the sixth-best city in Latin America to do business.

Invest in Bogotá perfectly illustrates how the city's urban development has been planned in terms of entering the global economy. The city's marketing strategy, based on competitiveness, is the same discourse on international planning that is oriented toward international trade and the liberalization of markets led by

the private sector. Competitiveness is usually framed to the voting public as a concern for general welfare, that is, as a way to boost job creation, generate new productive activities, and improve the quality of life. However, according to some Latin American researchers, this model has produced rather negative results (Brand 2009, De Mattos 2009, Betancur 2009, Pradilla, 2009), including increased unemployment, tertiarization of the economy, relaxation of labor regulations, and the emergence of new forms of social exclusion.

Bogotá seems to be an exception in some ways. Yet Bogotá's marketing reveals that the real interests behind the narrative of competitiveness are investor profits. According to Invest in Bogotá, foreign investors can benefit from some of the most flexible labor regulations in Latin America as well as competitive salaries, tax deductions, investor protection, and a rising economy with favorable rates of unemployment and underemployment (Invest in Bogotá 2009).

There are other reasons to invest in Bogotá:

Bogotá's economy is larger than that of many countries.... Bogotá's strategic location and the numerous daily direct flights to major cities in the hemisphere make Bogotá an excellent location to serve the Americas... Bogotá has an abundant supply of offices and land at competitive costs.... Bogotá is not only one of the safest metropolises in Latin America, but is rated as one of the best places for doing business.... More than 800 multinational companies are located here.... Beyond business, in Bogotá you will find cultural and gastronomical diversity... The city has more than 4000 public parks, and the largest bicycle route network in Latin America.... In Bogotá you will be able to incorporate your business in two days.... There are attractive investment incentives such as permanent and company-specific free trade zones, legal stability contracts, income tax deductions, exemptions from VAT and ICA for the exports of goods and services, and free training programs, among others (Invest in Bogotá 2009).

Beyond these factual arguments, Invest in Bogotá assures potential investors that "satisfied investors and journalists from all over the world eloquently refer to Bogotá as a choice place to live and invest."

As Bogotá has gained the attention of the international media, another set of themes has emerged: Bogotá as a model for urban development, an inspiration for other cities facing similar challenges, and a paradigm for vibrant civic engagement and sustainable design. Both Mockus and Peñalosa have emerged as distinct personalities in the narrative of transformation,

sometimes overshadowing the complicated nature of their efforts. Setting Bogotá's achievements against the backdrop of Colombia's recent history of conflict, these accounts typically cast the city as an exceptional site of progress and peace. Finally, the international media generally focuses on the positive stories of citizens impacted by the city's development, creating a somewhat romanticized narrative.

One of the areas on which the international media has focused is Bogotá's transportation planning, seen as a replicable model for combating global climate change and improving urban quality of life. Thus a *New York Times* article lauds Bogotá for providing a "model of how international programs to combat climate change can help expanding cities pay for transit systems that would otherwise be unaffordable" (Rosenthal 2009). Bogotá's Transmilenio has drawn particular attention, as in a *Los Angeles Times* article citing a study that showed a 32 percent reduction in commute times and a 40 percent decrease in air pollution by 2005 (Woo and Peralta 2006). The *Toronto Globe and Mail* reported that versions of the system had been built in developing cities around the world, including Mexico City, Jakarta, and Beijing, with more planned for Delhi, Seoul, and Johannesburg (Montgomery 2009).

Bogotá is promoted as a model not only for the developing but also for the developed world. According to the *Globe and Mail*, it is "being championed by planners and politicians in North America, where Mr. Peñalosa has reinvigorated the debate about public space once championed by Jane Jacobs" (Montgomery 2007). In a *Guardian* editorial urging the United States to take the lead in green urban planning, former World Bank president James Wolfensohn (2007) warns, "If the U.S. does not act soon, American cities will lag behind not only European capitals, but also cities in developing countries such as Bogotá and Curitiba (Brazil), which are already implementing innovative environmentally friendly solutions."

In the summer of 2008, Mayor Michael Bloomberg of New York City introduced the Summer Streets Project, an initiative closely modeled on Bogotá's Ciclovía, which closes the capital's main streets to traffic on Sundays and holidays all year round. The "Summer Streets Project" began as an experiment, closing seven miles of Manhattan's streets to car traffic for six hours on three consecutive Saturdays. According to the BBC (2008), the results were impressive: like the avenues of Bogotá on a Sunday morning, the streets were filled with pedestrians and cyclists, jugglers and musicians. *The New York Times* (2008) soon published an editorial describing the wonders of a car-free Manhattan: "Without honking horns and speeding taxis, the streets became serene parks, open to throngs

of cyclists, in-line skaters and strollers." Noting the success of Bogotá's Ciclovía, the newspaper's editors called on New Yorkers to "vote with their feet—in favor of more chances to displace the cars, trucks, and taxis for a day, and go for a stroll."

Similarly, the previously cited article in the *Los Angeles Times*, criticizing the city's efforts to expand the subway system at the expense of bus transit, called on city officials to "look at how Bogotá, Colombia—a metropolis of nearly 7 million residents—tackled its traffic problems," citing the city's 300-mile system of bus lanes, bicycle paths, and pedestrian streets. The authors conclude, "The success in Bogotá has shown that bus rapid transit is a proven solution for moving people efficiently" (Woo and Peralta 2006).

According to Martin Wiseman (2009), a medical adviser at the World Cancer Research Fund, the benefits of good transportation planning go beyond a more pleasant environment. In a *BBC News* editorial, "Make London like Bogotá," he contends that public health and urban design are closely linked, a critical concern in the face of increasing rates of cancer and other diseases. Where pedestrians, cyclists, and public spaces are a priority, he writes, residents are more likely to stay physically fit and healthy. "This is why," he concludes, "when it comes to our attitude to public space, we in the UK need to become a bit more like Bogotá."

Perhaps the most striking aspect of the media's fixation on Bogotá is the way the city's achievements are nearly always painted against the backdrop of Colombia's national conflict. The changing landscape of the capital is rarely described without first recounting the bombs that once tore apart the city, the violence of guerrillas and paramilitary groups, and the abandoned farms of the countryside. Bogotá is understood essentially for its exceptionalism, persistently described in the media as a "miracle" (Wilson 2002), a beacon of hope amid the terror of war.

Many articles refer to Bogotá's own violent history as a measure of how far the capital has come. In a *New York Times* article titled "Conflict Rages, but Capital Basks in Good Times," Juan Forero (2001) writes that there was little hope in the city's future for many years: "In the early 1990s, Bogotá was a basket case. Traffic made short trips grueling. Crime was increasing out of control. Refugees were streaming in. Development was hamstrung by corruption." In a similar vein, Mauricio Rodríguez, editor of the Colombian newspaper *Portfolio*, reflects, "Ten or twelve years ago, Bogotá was a disaster. There was a lack of infrastructure and there were security and safety problems. There was no optimism in relation to the future" (Bogotá 2007). A *Washington Post*

article called Bogotá “An Island in a Land at War” and reported, “Bogotá has emerged from a period of almost daily bomb attacks during the early 1990s, as an island of relative peace” (Wilson 2002). The *Globe and Mail* lauds Mockus and Peñalosa for helping to “transform a city once infamous for narco-terrorism, pollution and chaos into a globally lauded model of livability and urban renewal” (Montgomery 2007).

Bogotá is contrasted both with the city’s past and with the violence that continues to plague much of Colombia. Articles often contrast the impoverished and neglected countryside with the modern, innovative, and progressive Bogotá. Thus the *New York Times* reports: “Thirty-seven years of conflict have left Colombia with two million displaced villagers. In some cities, urban warfare rages between rebels and right wing militia members. Farms lie fallow. The economy suffers. But not in Bogotá, the fog shrouded capital 8,000 feet atop the Andes. In this city of seven million, many Bogotanos agree, things have never been better” (Forero 2001).

Despite such images of urban felicity, the visible presence of displaced villagers is a frequent reminder that the city is not in fact isolated from the national conflict. In “Outside Colombia’s Peaceful Cities, A Country at War,” another *New York Times* reporter writes that in 2008, three hundred refugees from the countryside attempted to occupy Parque de la 93, “a verdant, tranquil island of sidewalk cafés where Bogotanos listen to jazz, sample microbrewed beer or dine on Cantabrian prawns.” These protesting refugees serve as a reminder that if “Colombia’s capital city is looking to a bright future, much of the countryside surrounding it is not. There in the hamlets and jungles, Colombia remains at war, as it has been for generations” (Romero 2008).

In the midst of upbeat reporting, the discourse of the city’s residents that has emerged in the foreign press is remarkably one-dimensional. Nearly all of those interviewed describe the positive impacts or urban transformation. Again, the Transmilenio is a common focus. Leather worker Jorge Engarrita tells the *New York Times* that riding the Transmilenio “changed his life,” reducing his two- to three-hour commute to a mere forty minutes. Security guard Herberto Acero expresses his gratitude for electricity, telephone service, and drinkable water. Designer Edgar Saenz remarks, “Incredible, but now this city has possibilities. We can walk downtown without fear, in a pleasant urban landscape. I think the capital is an example for the whole country” (Rosenthal 2009, Forero 2001). Those who have not gained, or have even lost, are rarely heard from. The unemployed, displaced, or otherwise marginalized communities remain hidden in favor of a romanticized vision of urban transformation.

The Discourses of Urban Planning and of Multilateral Organizations

Like the international media and the city’s own publicists, international urban planning circles and multilateral organizations present Bogotá as a model city, through for slightly different reasons. Urban planning circles generally echo the values of human and social development proclaimed in international agreements like the Istanbul Declaration on Human Settlements and the United Nations’ Habitat II. Multilateral organizations commonly insist on the importance of good governance. Thus urban planning circles present the city as a model of urban development and sustainable design; multilateral organizations as an exemplar of “governance” and “good practices.” Yet while multilateral organizations praise the benefits of democratization and decentralization, it is clear that they see these mainly as aids to a strategy of development through urban competition. A study by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP 2004) calls Bogotá “one of the best examples of local governance and urban development,” remarking that “achieving development depends on policies that incentivize democratic governance and efficient local governance from the part of developing countries.” The same formula emerges from the World Bank’s reports on “good governance” and decentralization (see, e.g., Campbell and Fuhr 2004).

This focus is particularly noteworthy because the empirical evidence for the benefits of decentralization in Latin America remains at best ambiguous. Although the impacts of neoliberalism on cities in North America and Europe has been much studied, research on Latin America is limited and quite recent. Much of it is distressing, suggesting that some cities in emerging economies may have failed to become nuclei of economic growth and prosperity but instead have become places overcrowded by a surplus of residents employed in precarious work. Although Bogotá is in many ways a positive example of urban development, it is difficult to argue that its transformation is just the consequence of the recommendations of development banks. Moreover, although Bogotá is presented as an example of the positive impacts of democratization and decentralization on governance, democracy in Bogotá still faces critical challenges, not least the low levels of public participation. Meanwhile, decentralization has had ambiguous consequences in terms of the social impacts of privatization. Despite some of Bogotá’s advances, the city still displays many of the same problems as other South American cities.

Gilbert warns that “even though much has been written about the benefits of democracy, decentralization and privatization, a lot of those texts are ideological in nature” (2008a), and therefore must be read with discretion. An example is the habit, not fully support-

ed by evidence, of describing the public sector as a source of inefficiency, while lauding the private sector (Betancur 2009). Other authors argue that the idea of governance itself is a product of the neoliberal narrative, as a decrease in state intervention gives way to political concepts like “governance” and “strategic planning,” which lead in turn to reevaluation of the market as a mechanism for economic regulation and social participation (De Mattos 2009). Thus the praise for Bogotá’s governance accorded by credit organizations and development banks reflects their approval of neoliberal economic management.

Praise from urban planning circles may also reflect an emphasis on creating favorable conditions for investment. Though the formative influence of the competitive city model on urban planning has received little critical attention within urban planning circles, urban researchers Peter Charles Brand and Fernando Prada (2003) contend that the narrative of competitiveness has directed the discourses of urban planning for the past two decades. To comprehend the complexity of Bogotá’s transformation, the way the city’s urban planning corresponds to the development model of competitive cities must be understood.

Bogotá as a Competitive City: Exception or Rule?

Urban planning around the world has been enormously influenced by changes in the global economic landscape of the last two decades, including economic liberalization, deregulated public management, and new information technologies. In this context, local governments have become the administrators of economic development, and direct global competition among cities has emerged (De Mattos 2009).

In Colombia, municipal governments have recently started to consider the question of competitiveness in urban planning. Local development plans now address economic globalization, economic opening, the competitiveness of cities in the world economy, and the varied perspectives of socioeconomic development (Brand 2009). These supralocal elements of national planning, which represent the efforts of the private sector to insert the country into international markets, must be included by legal mandate in local municipal policies and development plans, which shape the competitive strategies of Colombian cities.

Brand and Prada (2003) argue that urban planning circles use the competitive cities narrative to justify a neoliberal economic paradigm. Its premise is that increased competition should generate new productive activities, create employment and income, and improve quality of life. The generation of wealth is seen as the principal way to ensure general welfare and reduce unemployment, inequality, and social

injustice. The authors argue that this narrative, uncritically accepted by local governments, has become the heart of urban planning in Colombia. Indeed one of the main objectives of recent urban plans has been to support policies of economic development. Presented as necessities in the current geopolitical context, competitiveness and internationalization become the priorities of urban development.

The narrative of competitiveness presents globalization as a new era, which in order to enter, governments must leave behind old practices, including centralism, protectionism, and regulation, in favor of international trade, economic opening, foreign investment, and competitive labor markets. Once declared the main priority, competitiveness becomes the focus of municipal policy, the private sector increasingly influences social dynamics, city governments launch urban marketing campaigns, and the strengthening of business activity, increased research and innovation, and improved infrastructure and public services emerge as main concerns (Brand and Prada 2003). In terms of urbanistic actions, the strategy implies industrial reconversion and the promotion of a modern sector of public services and technology, including industrial parks, free trade zones, and international business centers. Recreational and health-care infrastructure, public transportation, and telecommunications infrastructure are also considered.

Despite the professed benefits of the neoliberal competitive model for developing cities, many studies argue that the consequences have generally fallen short of the predictions and in some cases have been negative. In Latin America, negative employment trends are observed, while most new jobs are in areas of low productivity in the tertiary sector. In addition, the insufficient creation of employment has a considerable impact on the informalization of the economy (Betancur 2009, Brand 2009, De Mattos 2009, Pradilla 2009). The urbanization of poverty is generalized: according to UN-HABITAT, 31.9 percent of Latin America’s urban habitations are in informal districts that concentrate 128 million inhabitants (as cited in Brand 2009). Dematteis and Governa explain how cities become networks of settlements organized around a large number of specialized hubs in vast multicentric regions (as cited in De Mattos 2009). In many Latin American cities, according to Betancur (2009), the decline of manufacturing, informalization of the economy, destabilization of labor, and privatization of public services actually amount to a reversal of development.

Bogotá’s development over the last three decades has resembled that of other Latin American cities, and it remains characterized by high levels of poverty and inequality. Yet it would not be fair to say that the

city's recent projects have only aimed to mask the ruptures in the social space produced by the competitive city development model or to create the illusion of social cohesion. In contrast to other Latin American cities, many of them have helped significantly to democratize the city, promote equality, and reduce social segregation despite a prevailing economic agenda that in many ways undermines these objectives. Compared to the recent urban development of other metropolises in the region, Bogotá's transformation is promising.

What needs to be noted, however, is that in many cases these positive results have been produced by policies that depart from Latin American (or neoliberal) norms. For example, the majority of new urban projects in Bogotá have been made in very poor peripheral districts, and their impact improved the quality of life for many people. In addition, the Garzón administration proved that investing in social programs is both possible and sustainable (Gilbert 2008c), though there is some controversy over whether the substantial reductions in poverty reported by both Colombia's Department of National Planning and the UNDP are as great as claimed, whether they should be attributed to specific urban programs or to general national improvements, and whether they point to significant equalization in the distribution of wealth (see e.g., Gilbert 2008a). Finally, Law 388 of 1997 has had positive consequences for urban management. In addition to mandating urban plans, the law supported the notion that property has a social function, subverting the idea that individual interests should be privileged over collective interests. It also promoted equilibrium between the costs and benefits of urbanization and between landowners and the community, and created mechanisms for public intervention in the land market, including administrative expropriation of property for public purposes. For these reasons the law represents a useful tool for social development, and various Latin American countries are considering similar mechanisms (Jaramillo 2009).

Conclusion

In an article discussing the construction of urban sensibility through the arts and the media, social researcher Armando Silva (2000) suggests that the structures of classical literature, particularly of the fairy tale, are reflected in contemporary media accounts of urban development. In fact, many texts describing Bogotá's recent transformations resemble fairy tales in the way they recount the city's victory over its many challenges, disregarding ambiguities, complexities, and contradictions. As we have seen, these oversimplified narratives serve particular interests. The real story is more complex. Although Bogotá has not resolved the profound social contradictions of contemporary Latin American metropolises, it has

made important advances in the construction of a more just society. While the experience of Bogotá does not empirically represent the benefits promised by the neoliberalism and discourses of good governance, it cannot be argued that in recent years the urban crisis of Bogotá has worsened under these systems. Indeed, recent administrations have found solutions to some of the most challenging problems of the city. This is precisely the particularity of Bogotá's transformation and the reason it merits study, beyond the simplifications of political and media discourses.

How can the success of recent administrations be explained? Earlier we noted the five tangible causes of Bogotá's transformation proposed by Alan Gilbert (2008a): good mayors, the end of clientelism, technocracy, continuity of administrative policy, and an increase in economic resources. We have related these five causes to four determinant sociopolitical processes: the constitutional reforms of 1991, the process of democratization and decentralization, the new laws of urban reform, and local development plans. These processes have produced changes in the administration of the city that differ significantly from contemporary practices of public management. Despite the emphasis of local development plans on increased competitiveness as the means to urban development, there has also been serious engagement with social development. Public expenditures on infrastructure and social programs targeting the poorest sectors have been noteworthy, and although the gap between rich and poor remains a major cause for concern, important reductions in poverty have been made.

Do these successes make Bogotá a development-model for other cities? Not exactly. Not only have those successes been closely linked with a particular sociopolitical process, but Bogotá's transformation is an incomplete process that has not been free from social stress and contradiction. Even some of the projects most lauded today were extremely divisive when they were introduced and remain controversial. What Bogotá's experience does demonstrate is that it is possible to spark a rapid improvement in governance and to transform the political practices of local governments and citizens. Ambitious projects were realized, thanks to significant increases in public expenditure, facilitated by improvements in tax collection. These increases have proved to be sustainable. The government also proved that it is possible to manage public finances responsibly while maintaining public expenditures on infrastructure projects and expanding social spending. The experience of Bogotá shows that the combination of good management and social development can produce positive results in key areas like security, mobility, education, health care, recreation, and access to public services.

Chapter 2

Urban Transformations

A Small-Scale Analysis

Urban Settings or Ambiances: A Preface on Methodology

The core of our research on Bogotá consists of an analysis of three recent and paradigmatic projects: Jiménez de Quesada Avenue, Tercer Milenio Park, and the Tintal zone. This analysis seeks to understand the impact of each project, taking into account the larger changes in Bogotá's urban dynamics that have already been described. It includes observations from fieldwork, descriptions of urban settings or *ambiances*, and conclusions based on interviews with Bogotá residents. Here, then, we seek to go beyond generalities or political intentions, and to understand the concrete impacts of specific projects that have been undertaken as part of the larger urban renovation program.

To understand the development of the city at this level requires us to collect what might be called the story of the place. Each story, while being unique, is never singular but is diverse and multifaceted. Each focuses on practices and ambiances, blending past, present, and future, and informing residents, policy makers, and designers about the things that shape everyday urban life.

To collect these stories is an exercise in listening, thinking, and finally enunciating the place. To this end, many methods that come from urban research have been formalized, including commented walks, recurrent observations, and "reactivation techniques." The story can then be expressed through words, photography, sound, drawing, video, or even body language. Each place, each project, and each actor's context becomes an opportunity to test and modify methods used to collect and bring together the perceptions and representations of all the participants.

These tellings are both ordinary and expert, and are given to us most often in situ: thus the place influences the story, acting as a third party between the narrator and the interviewer. These methods are not

tools for consultation on their own but rather openings toward understanding the character of a place, together with its ambiances and social practices, that is, its ordinary or quotidian heritage. They produce knowledge relevant to all phases of urban intervention.

To understand how the three sites are experienced and perceived following profound transformation, we have deployed, in addition to classical cartographical and typo-morphological analysis, a set of methods and field tools that have allowed us to get as close as possible to the urban settings, on one hand, and to the inhabitants' and users' accounts on the other. These methods include observations and field notes; sound, photographic, and videographic recordings; commented walks with both users of the site and professional experts; and shorter interviews. All these are ways both to understand and describe what we call "urban ambiances."

What are ambiances? We are all attentive, sometimes even "captured" by the perceived atmosphere of a place as we arrive there. We may be alert to a remarkable lighting effect or special sound, energized by a bustling public place, or on the contrary brought to contemplation in a place bathed in peace and quiet. Often singular and irreducible, the setting or ambiance of a place depends on the date, time, weather, and the people who are there, as well as our own actions. Yet despite these variations, it generally has characteristics that give it a specific and recognizable identity.

Every day, we experience and are affected by ambiances. Yet while we feel and even share these sensory experiences without difficulty, the notion of ambiance defies formal definition. We experience ambiances as indivisible wholes, without separating sensory channels or distinguishing actions from perceptions. Yet in analyzing ambiance we also dissect it, separating one sense from another. Thus the more knowledge we accumulate about composition and

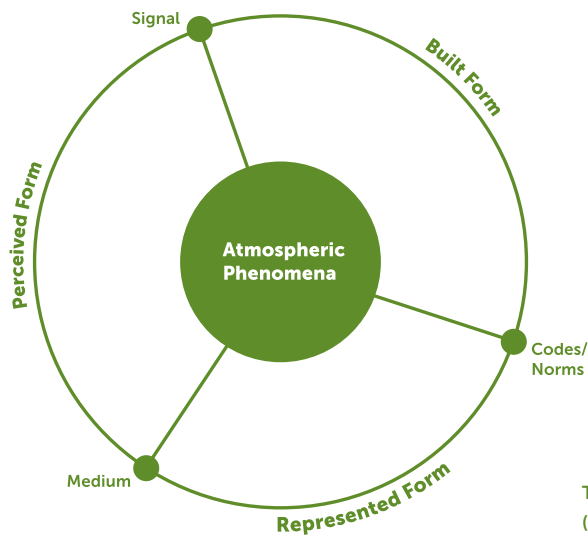
constitution, sound, light, tactile and spatial qualities, and social experience, the more we risk losing contact with the thing itself. An interdisciplinary approach is needed to enable us to go beyond the useful but simplistic level of analysis that describes human environments in terms of their comfort or discomfort.

The expression “architectural and urban ambiances” is very French and resists easy translation into the terms of other research cultures. The notion covers a range of different approaches, depending on countries and authors; thus in Brazil, anthropological and political dimensions are prominent, while geography and aesthetics color German approaches, environmental and operational dimensions North American ones, and so forth (see Böhme 1995 and Zardini 2005, as well as the contributions published in the international ambiances network www.ambiances.net). Nevertheless, the basic notion of architectural and urban ambience may be quickly summarized as follows (see Amphoux, Thibaud, and Chelkoff 2004 and Adolphe 1998):

- It involves a sensory relationship to the world that combines both separate and simultaneous sensory impressions.
- Its study requires a multidisciplinary approach with attention to the built, sensory, and social dimensions of living space.
- It does not refer to a particular spatial scale. Used for housing, public spaces, work, and commercial areas, spaces of mobility and of representation, it refers to a situation of sensory interaction. Thus it is a trans-scalar notion that applies to “ordinary” as well as to more scenographic spaces.
- Employed to study and design spaces, it places the user’s experience at the heart of the project.

The study of architectural and urban ambiances, far from being restricted to specialists, is an open and porous research field enriched by physical modeling and descriptions of sensory space, and research in aesthetics, cognitive sciences (particularly the ecological approach of perception), and the sociology and anthropology of living spaces. It is also an internationally growing research field, and one goal of our research has been to test its applicability in a context very different from European cities.

Thus, collected materials (sound, photographs, video recordings, noted observations, micro-interviews, walks narrated by residents, local documents) are a way to “capture” urban situations as much as a way to let oneself be “captured” by these same situations. For us, then, multiple points of view and



The notion of ambience (CRESSON 1990).

multiple methods are essential, both to maintain the required distance between the research and its object and to ensure that understanding remains connected to the place as perceived by the senses and experienced by its users.

The challenge is then to build stories out of the whole corpus in order to understand how these spaces have evolved through people’s practices and representations. These stories should connect individual and singular perceptions with global observations, allowing one to feel the life, richness, and complexity of any situation while identifying the urban figures of the space. To this end, we proposed employing text, images, and sound and video recordings, plus a combination of all of them in a multimedia form that we call “urban transects.” To create these records, in addition to the usual research tools of reading, direct observation, and writing, we used digital cameras, video cameras, portable recorders (for interviews), and digital sound recorders with either a cardioid microphone with 120-degree aperture (for soundscapes) or a dummy head microphone (for “onboard” recordings). The results are contained in this printed volume, the accompanying DVD, and the associated website.

Since the beginning of the twentieth century, walking has occupied a central place both in urban research and as the fundamental mode of practice of urban space itself. Among the well-known works on the subject to which our work refers is Jean-François Augoyard’s *Step by Step* (1979), which proposes a groundbreaking analysis of the rhetorical dimension of walking. We might also mention the writings of Kevin Lynch on the perception of city space by walkers and motorists and, from the same period in France, the works of the writer Georges Perec and the sociologist Pierre Sansot (Lynch 1960, Perec



1974, Sansot 1973 and 1986). Each developed in his own way a direct relation between ways of seeing, hearing, and walking and modes of description of urban space from an immediate, “engaged” perspective (see Thibaud and Tixier 1998). Since the 1990s, Jean-Paul Thibaud has developed the method of the “commented walk”—the walk accompanied and narrated by one or more residents—according much importance to the sensory components and technical aspects of the walker’s experience (Grosjean and Thibaud, 2001). Following on the work of these two authors, many researchers have developed ways to analyze the everyday experience of walking in the city and to represent their results, using photography, video, and sound-recording techniques. Yet as interesting as many of these are, all seem more useful for analysis than for practice, as they give little attention to architectural form or geographical context.

By contrast, the materials we have brought together could be thought of as a mosaic that enables us to capture the complex and lively public spaces of Bogotá, as well as to understand the city’s diagrammatic and rapid changes. This is particularly necessary because, although Bogotá has been in the

international spotlight, there have been few studies based on fieldwork. Our research aims to fill this gap by making available not only our analysis but also the living material we have collected.

In our view, a crucially important part of that living material, and a fundamental basis for analysis, is the viewpoints of residents and users of the urban spaces, collected in the form of interviews conducted in situ. Combining social representations, perceptions, and evocations of use, these interviews complete the description of places and their ambiances, while provoking debate on political, institutional, and scholarly discourses on the urban transformation process.

As is usual in sociology, interviews are a way to reach the actors’ social representations. In this sense, two objectives have guided us in our research: to restore the polyphony inherent in every city; and, more specifically, to juxtapose the ordinary city users’ representations with those of experts or actors involved in urban policy, without necessarily assuming either agreement or opposition between them, but rather tracing the extent to which citizens have appropriated the “official” urban rhetoric.

Walking through Tercer Milenio Park, April 4, 2009.



While many researchers use interviews, the originality of our survey lies in its being largely conducted in situ, thereby minimizing the overestimation of social representations in relation to concrete experience. Expressed around a table, ready-made discourses too easily become detached from the richness and complexity of a living context. Working in situ ensures recognition of the influence of context on perception through the physical and social environment and through the situation, that is, the commitment of the user or inhabitant to an activity.

To seek users' or residents' accounts in situ can also allow access to a more detailed knowledge of a space in relation to various individual uses. The interviewees, as firsthand resources, offer an insider's look at the site, shaped by daily or occasional presence, that the researcher cannot match. Thus collecting accounts in situ is a way to let the place talk, completing the observations and reading of ambiances.

Forty-three recorded interviews were conducted between March 31 and April 6, 2009: sixteen for Tercer Milenio Park, thirteen for Jiménez Avenue, and fourteen for the Tintal zone. For each space, diversity was sought in terms of age, sex, and sociocultural status of respondents. Thus the typical users we interviewed include street vendors, policemen or watchmen, casual passersby, residents, and students. In most cases, interviewees were approached "on the fly." Presenting our work as a study on public space in Bogotá, we launched interviews with the phrase,

"We would like to know your personal perception of this place." Depending on respondents' availability, half of the interviews were conducted as walks (following the interviewees in part of their journey), half in a stationary position. Similarly, availability and the interviewees' comfort level led us to keep some interviews brief while letting others extend to fifteen minutes or even more. Two very long interviews, each more than half an hour, reflect walks along the length of Jiménez Avenue. These have a special status because they enabled the interviewees to present rather specific narratives: on the one hand, the views of architecture students describing the environment along the avenue, on the other, a homeless man who was quite bitter about Colombian social policy and who described the same avenue through the lens of a difficult struggle for survival. Two other long interviews, each about an hour, reflect walks conducted in the vicinity of the Biblioteca El Tintal (the Tintal Library) with a longstanding local resident, whose comments focused on the transformation of the neighborhood and its social life. Finally, we spent more than an hour walking in the area and interviewing the architect who built the nearby secondary school.

The Three Study Sites

The Jiménez de Quesada Avenue project is one of the major developments in the city center's urban renovation. Its goal was to rehabilitate the most important axis of the city center, and to adapt it to the new Transmilenio bus system. The creation of the Tercer Milenio Park was also part of the renova-

Researchers walk along Jiménez Avenue with two interviewees, April 3, 2009.

tion plan for the city center, an immense intervention that involved the demolition of an entire marginal neighborhood located in the heart of the city. Finally, the intervention in the Tintal zone represents the radical transformation of a peripheral district, including the rehabilitation of a garbage treatment plant and a city dump into a public library and park, the rehabilitation of various public spaces, and the construction of public schools, bicycle paths, and public transportation.

These three projects share a number of important elements: all correspond to important urban interventions that concern the rehabilitation or construction of public spaces and infrastructure, all are connected through the Transmilenio system, and all have tremendous metropolitan significance. In addition, the three projects were all a central focus of the Peñalosa administration's development plan for the city.

Many of Bogotá's urban projects have generated significant social, economic, and regional transformations. There is near consensus that their impact has been positive. However, their magnitude, as well as the different economic, social, and political interests behind them, are continued sources of controversy. At the same time, the interpretation of concepts such as public order and public interest, inherent to the public space discourse developed by successive city administrations, has created conditions that legitimize urban actions regardless of their potential impact on different social sectors. Thus an analysis of the Tercer Milenio Park reveals serious failures in terms of the project's social management by the city administration (Castro Cabrera 2003). Other interventions within the city center also leave doubts about the city's capacity to formulate policies to mitigate the negative effects of urban development, including gentrification and the displacement of some of the city's most vulnerable residents.

Though the construction and rehabilitation of urban infrastructure repeatedly produces significant social impacts, these are usually considered collateral damage and, as such, external to the projects themselves. These impacts include not only gentrification and displacement but also changes of use and redirection of investment and growth. Typically it is the poorest sectors that are most negatively affected, through loss of homes, community networks, jobs, property, and access to social services (Castro Cabrera 2003). Bogotá's urban projects, including our case study sites, have produced these patterns to varying degrees, yet public opinion has tended to justify every intervention as being in the public interest regardless of its potential social impacts.

The case study sites present observable patterns that imply important transformations, both positive and

negative, of the socioeconomic dynamics of each site. It is important to understand these new dynamics and to identify the benefits and disadvantages of each. This is too infrequently done within the urban planning discourse, which considers development projects necessary to the public interest and, to justify them, discounts negative consequences as collateral. Yet as Michael Cernea (1997) argues, administrations should recognize that the unfair distribution of gains and losses is not an inevitable consequence of urban development.

The case of Jiménez de Quesada Avenue is a good example of incipient changes of use that will likely lead to gentrification. Tercer Milenio Park, the most complex and controversial of the three sites, involved a significant displacement of population, a change in use of the public space, and a radical morphologic transformation of the entire zone. The real estate operations already underway, in addition to those projected, point to the gentrification of adjacent zones as well. The Tintal case represents the dramatic transformation of the area's social, economic, and physical conditions through the creation of public services as well as the emergence of significant real estate operations. Even though the three cases are radically different, a common feature is that each has boosted various kinds of real estate operations that may significantly transform their surroundings. Each case is part of a larger urban strategy that includes a radical transformation of entire urban areas, far beyond the actual project sites. Each will continue to undergo significant transformations due to ongoing urban projects.

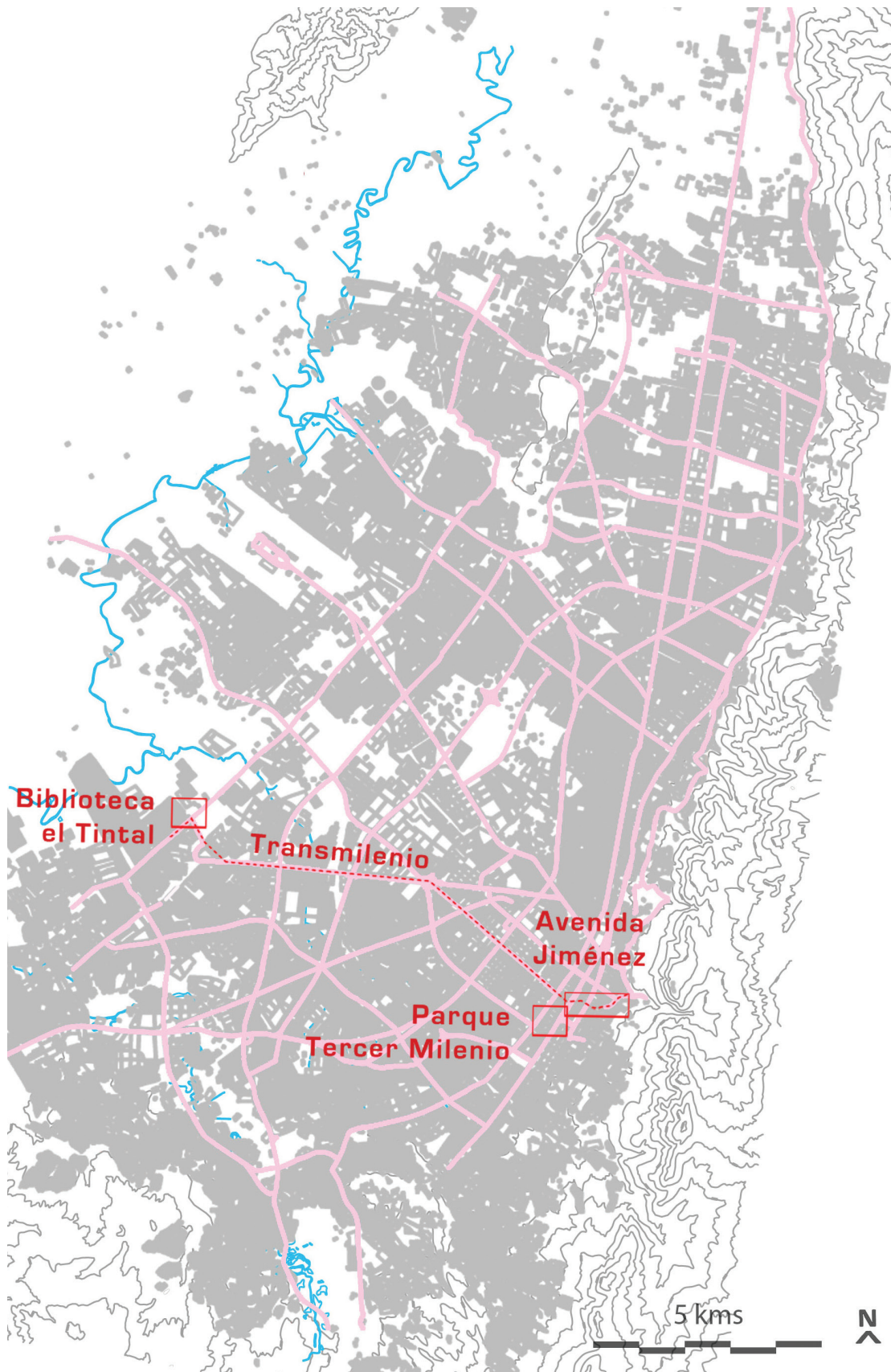
Two of the sites, Tercer Milenio Park and Jiménez Avenue, represent part of an urban strategy for the center of the city, and so a brief explanation of this strategy, called *Plan Centro*, is fundamental to understanding their context. In addition, regional planning decisions adopted for this zone are considered the starting point for the future development of master plans for the entire city, so that what is proposed for the central districts foreshadows the goals for the entire city.

The vision of the city center's renovation is based on the expectation that the center will continue to be the most important historical, cultural, touristic, residential, administrative, and commercial space in Bogotá and in Colombia. The plan anticipates that in approximately thirty years the city center will contain 500,000 residents, or twice the number living there in 2005. It also anticipates that the center will be the region's most competitive economic space due to the internationalization of the economy, technological innovation, and the strengthening of economic, educational, and cultural institutions. In short, planners



Authors walk with a resident of the self-built neighborhood of Patio Bonito, arriving at El Tintal Library, April 6, 2009.





Plan showing locations of the three studied sites.



expect that the center will achieve high levels of competitiveness, becoming a strategic leader and cultural reference point for the continent. This transformation will be the result of policies, programs, and projects that encourage economic competitiveness, social inclusion, and respect for the environment through an equitable and participatory process. Policies include integrating the center with the city and region, increasing the residential population, raising residents' quality of life, protecting and recuperating cultural heritage, increasing the competitiveness of the zone, restoring the area's positive image, and promoting urban renovation. These policies are to be developed through four programmatic areas: social (inclusion and cohesion), economic (competitiveness), environmental (integration of the natural environment into public spaces), and urbanistic (improving existing elements and activities and enhancing the center's ecological, economic, and social connections with the region). In other words, the plan aims to consolidate the offer of goods and services in the city center, the interdependence of the center and its environment, and the promotion of its competitive and singular advantages. In the most concrete and immediate terms, it implies the development of multifunctional urban structures offering both attractive residential spaces and a broad range of activities for the rest of the city and region, as well as high-quality public spaces and infrastructure.



Chapter 3

Case Studies

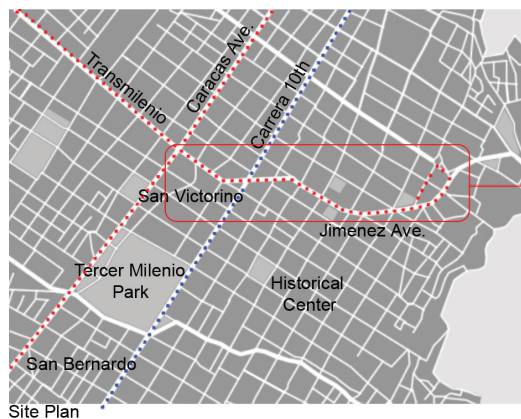
1. Jiménez de Quesada Avenue

Background

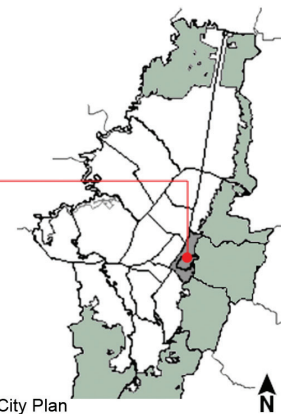
The Avenida Jiménez de Quesada, or Jiménez Avenue, is considered the most important axis of Bogotá's central district. However, in the colonial period, it was the city's northern limit. Breaking from the rational grid of Spanish urban planning, it followed the sinuous path of the San Francisco River as it descended from the *cerros orientales*, or "eastern mountains," that define the city's eastern edge. The city's founders chose to place its foundational square, the Plaza Mayor, at the base of the mountain and between two rivers, the San Francisco and the San Agustín, reasoning that the mountains and rivers represented frontiers as well as natural defenses. The city's northern entrance was a bridge, located in today's Carrera Séptima, or Seventh Avenue.

When the city started to grow beyond these natural limits, planners adapted the city's orthogonal geometry to the river's meandering path. The Carrera Séptima bridge gained great importance because it connected three key spaces: the central square, or Plaza Mayor; the San Francisco monastery; and the city's first market, the Plaza de las Yervas. Commercial use of the north-south axis determined the future importance of the Carrera Séptima, and especially its intersection with Jiménez Avenue.

By the early twentieth century the San Francisco River was essentially a sewer and a garbage dump. Due to the decisions of public health officials, the city started to canalize various parts of the waterway. Finally, like many other rivers that extend across the city, the deep gap that isolated the city center was entirely filled in, giving birth to the avenue we know today. Since then, this avenue has undergone many transformations. Enlarged at the beginning of the twentieth century, it was partially destroyed—along with a large part of the city center and the tramway along the Carrera Séptima—in the *Bogotazo* of 1948, the urban revolt that followed the assassination of the popular presidential candidate, Jorge Eliezer Gaitán.



Site Plan

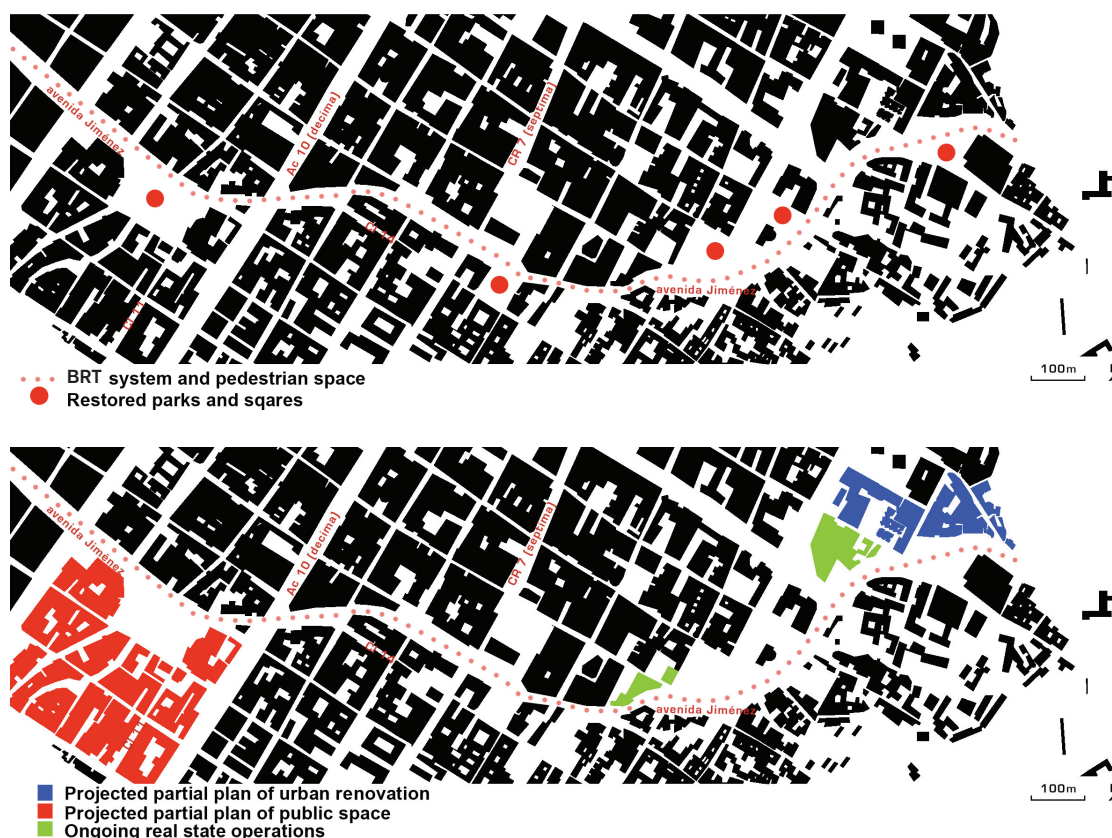


City Plan

Plan showing location of Jiménez Avenue.

The *Bogotazo* also initiated the exodus of the upper classes from the city center toward the north. Since then, the two-story colonial houses along the avenue have been replaced by major cultural and administrative institutions as well as modern office buildings.

Jiménez Avenue starts at the eastern edge of the city, where it meets the mountains, and continues to the Plaza San Victorino, where it becomes 13th Street. Its atmosphere changes gradually as it descends toward the west. The shops, restaurants, and mobile markets give a special quality to the street, which is crowded with pedestrians. Due to the presence of universities and educational centers, the eastern portion of the avenue is frequented mainly by students. Around Carrera Séptima the population is more heterogeneous, a mix of office workers, students, street vendors, laborers, businessmen, homeless people, and vagabonds. Small restaurants and shops are mixed with major financial and corporate centers. Approaching the Plaza San Victorino, the atmosphere changes even more. Around Carrera Décima, or 10th Avenue, just before the San Victorino zone, commercial activity becomes more informal and unregulated, movement increases, and transit is even more chaotic because of the numerous street vendors. Due to the area's diverse activities, its use changes substantially according to the place, time,



and day of the week. While the entire avenue is full of pedestrians, workers, or students during the day, most people leave the center at night, the resulting emptiness reinforcing its image as an unsafe place.

The recent transformation of Jiménez Avenue into an alameda, or tree-lined avenue—it is also known now as the *Eje Ambiental*, or environmental axis—is the result of an architectural project designed by the well-known Colombian architect Rogelio Salmona. The construction of a watercourse along the avenue, consisting of a continuous descending line of small basins or pools, makes reference to the San Francisco River and aims to reinforce the area's cultural heritage. The Institute of Urban Development described the project as an architectonic development that would restore the historic memory of Bogotá's citizens through the recuperation of important landmarks of the city center (Durán 2003). At the same time, the Institute predicted that the renovation would contribute to the construction of civic values, including a sense of belonging, the protection of the city and of its cultural heritage, and an interest in its development. Overseen by the Peñalosa administration, the project is one of most visible parts of the *Plan Centro*. The transformation was radical: a highly congested street was transformed into a partial pedestrian way equipped with street furniture to serve the new Transmilenio system.

Vegetation was also introduced, creating with the new watercourse a pleasant contrast within a highly urbanized zone. This transformation, together with a significant increase in tourism and the consolidation of the center as the epicenter of cultural activity, has made the avenue one of the most visited places in the city center.

The transformation's most evident consequence has been to give a significant boost to commercial activity. In some areas, this has meant replacement of activities directed at lower-income consumers with commerce directed at students and young employees. Elsewhere, much of the new commerce is directed toward tourists and wealthy consumers. So far, the changes have remained moderate. But major real estate operations are now in process, including the transformation of abandoned buildings into luxury hotels and middle-income apartments. In addition, at least eight partial plans for the city center are in formulation, which will completely transform the morphology of entire districts. Of these, at least three are adjacent to Jiménez Avenue, and one affects an entire neighborhood located within our study area. Although radical changes to the zone's social dynamic have not yet occurred, current real estate operations will possibly lead to the gentrification of its poorest sectors. Given that the *Plan*

Top
Transmilenio system and renovated public spaces along Jiménez Avenue.

Bottom
Ongoing and projected urban transformations around Jiménez Avenue.



Centro aims to double the number of residents, a substantial displacement should logically not occur. However, the experience of the Tercer Milenio Park, as well as other international development experiences, suggest that the displacement of the poorest residents is likely.

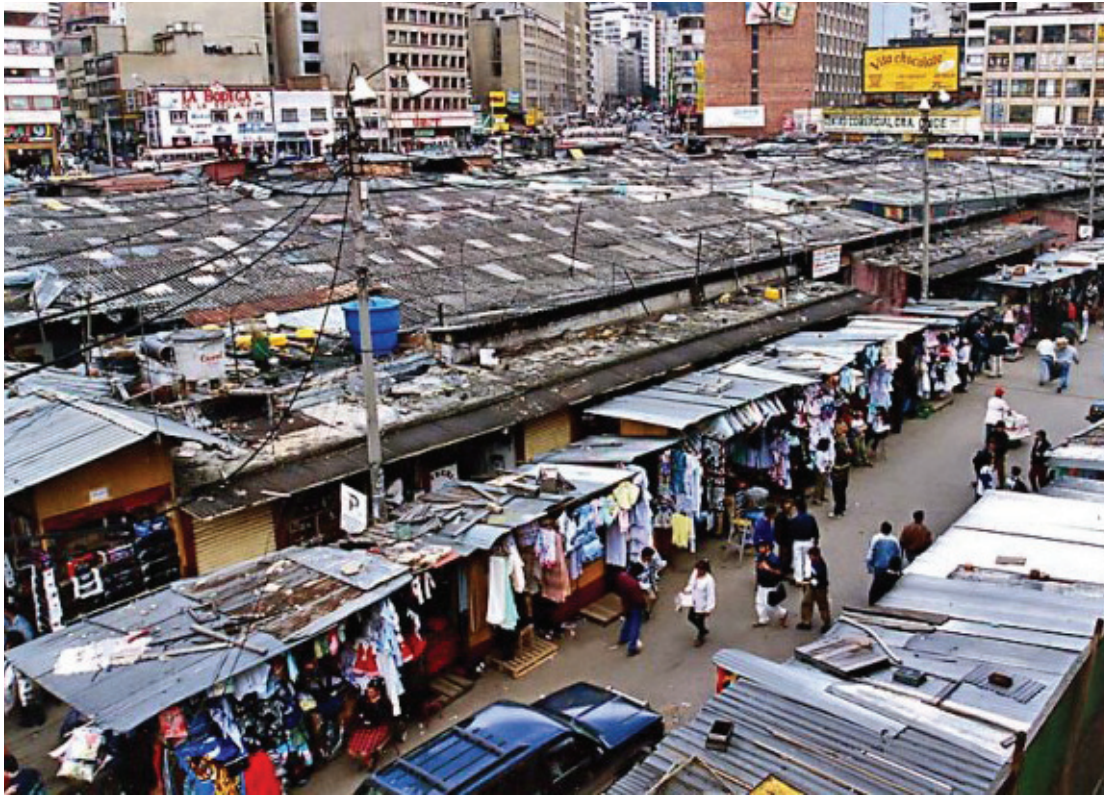
Citizens' Comments

Fifteen interviews were conducted, including both short sidewalk interviews and longer commented walks (the numbers in parentheses following the quotations below identify the recordings of the interviews). Some were conducted with couples or small groups, raising the total number of residents interviewed to twenty. They represented different generations and social backgrounds and included an apprentice gardener who comes regularly to “pass time” on the upper part of the avenue, university students, laborers at a university campus, street vendors, an elderly woman who receives social services, a lawyer whom we met in a university bookstore, students at Los Andes University and the American University, a security guard at one of the universities, two young engineers, and a homeless artist. The interviews took place on the upper end of the avenue. Interviewees could not or did not want

to continue walking down to Plaza San Victorino, so the comments we gathered focused mainly on the upper part of the Avenue.

A persistent theme that surfaced in these interviews was comparison between the avenue before and after its reconstruction. During the time of the survey, several sectors of the avenue were still under construction, and the city as a construction site was a theme evoked in many interviews, often with allusions to some of the controversies generated by the *Plan Centro*, such as construction delays and the need for costly maintenance once projects were completed. It should be noted that the construction sites made completed redevelopment projects seem more noticeable. Almost all the interviewees contrasted the avenue before and after construction, highlighting the improvements it brought about while recalling the pollution, traffic congestion, and insecurity of the recent past.

I hadn't been in the city center in a while, and I was struck by what they are doing, the construction of Transmilenio. Because of the long delays, it's been ages since they did the planning.... Well, it's good that they've finally done something. (17a)



The Plaza San Victorino before reconstruction.

Without the environmental artery, this area would be very ugly. It would be worse, more dangerous. (22b)

Not long ago, the upper part of the avenue was described as a place congested by buses and impassable for pedestrians. Yet now it is perceived as more safe and secure.

Previously, this area was terrible. The minibuses used to come up here and then they went down through Jiménez Avenue. It was awful, the buses, the traffic jams. The area was really unpleasant for walking. (17a)

It's safer now, and easier to get into the city. The avenue has truly been 'de-slummed.' There used to be a lot of pollution, poverty, homeless people. (28)

As the rate of robbery has declined, people have started to come here more and more. (24)

In contrast to the urban bustle reigning along the lower parts of the avenue, its upper part is perceived by all interviewees as "pleasant," "attractive," "peaceful," clean, and maintained. Some interviewees likened it to a park, with its vegetation, running water, and clean air. It is also perceived as more "open," with its background of the eastern mountains. Some

also commented on the avenue's historical connection with the river. All in all, the presence of water, benches, shade, and cleanliness makes it a place where people enjoy spending time.

[The avenue] used to be a river that passed through the city, called the Rio San Francisco. (22a)

It's really nice to arrive in the morning when the hill is lit by the sun: it's an incredible view. (22a)

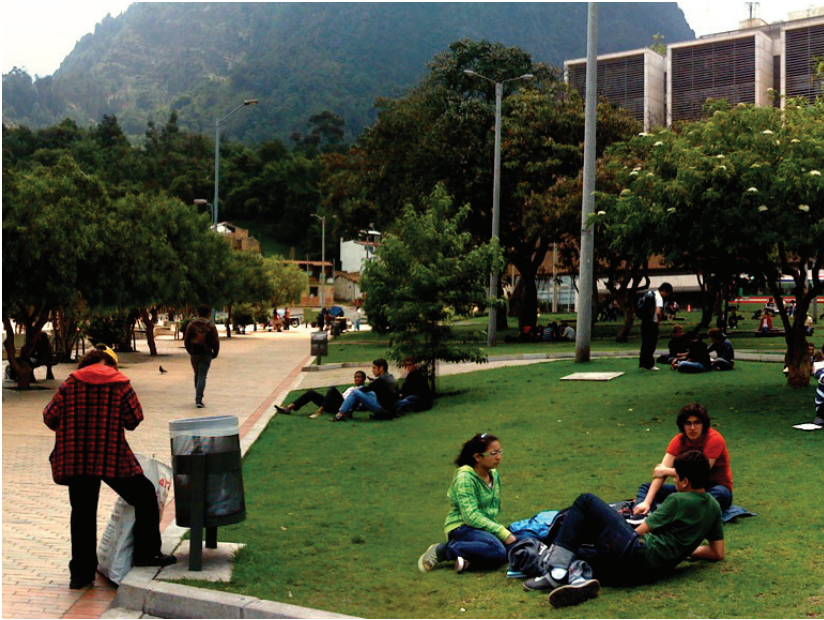
In the mornings, women and old men come to sit and read in the sun. So they have the sun and the shade of the trees, and they sit down to read in the mornings when the place is alive. It's a contrast I love. (22a)

Interviewees were as sensitive to the avenue's maintenance as to the amenities it offered.

It's very clean. People take care of the place. The maintenance people always keep the water clean. (19)

But it's getting worse. Just look, only litter and stuff. (20)

I've seen people cleaning the water, then I wonder if this is efficient, how sustainable it is. (17a)



Pressures and Distortions

City Dwellers as Builders and Critics: Four Views





While the avenue is considered a gateway to the center and a tourist area, its upper portion is mostly associated with the presence of students attending the surrounding universities. In fact, students appropriate the space. During the daytime, they sit on the edges of the basins to smoke, make phone calls, or chat. After classes, they go to the nearby bars.

I used to sit here most of the time with my friends to talk and then go into a bar. We used to come out of the bar to smoke a cigarette and sit here. But sometimes I'd prefer to sit in the landscaped area with friends; we'd sit down to talk. (19)

This meeting place is known as "the ashtray." It's a meeting point for the young people in the afternoons.... I don't know,... probably because it's a bit dull at night. But yes, this is a real downtown meeting place. (17a)

The daily presence of people supports many street vendors, who station themselves along the watercourse. At the same time, this presence animates the public space, giving it the image of a modern city.

Here the city becomes a vertical city, a metropolis that has this dynamic. There are the students, the restaurants, the Transmilenio, it's the image of a city in constant movement. (22a)

The appropriation of the space by students, or more generally by the university, is made evident by the presence of numerous security guards, who are recognizable by their uniforms. This gives the place an ambiguous and somewhat conflicted status in the minds of some interviewees. The notion that this is truly public space is questioned by a street vendor we interviewed, whose livelihood appears "threatened" by the security guards.

Here are the rich kids, upscale people who talk affectedly, with a lot of trendy phrases. (18)

Who stays around here? The police from time to time. I think it's mainly because of the people who come down here to steal things. But most of the police are actually university guards. I think it's the university that pays them. (23b)

All in all, these and similar comments put in perspective the observation made by many interviewees that the place is more secure and appealing than before. They reveal that here (as in other areas where we conducted interviews), a mutual mistrust remains between different social sectors. In particular, the presence of police, a guarantee of security to some, signifies insecurity for others. Similarly, a student was embarrassed to admit that he considered the place's tranquillity somewhat disturbed by the presence of beggars. Moreover, the district is still considered dangerous after nightfall.

Public space is one thing, but actually it's the university that's taking care of its students. Because the public space.... You can go down there, and those streets are horrible. So what I think, and I could be wrong, is that the university has something to do with this.... I think this place is like it belonged to the university. (23b)

Sometimes there are lots of homeless people. I don't mean to discriminate against anyone, but let's just say it's a little uncomfortable when you're just calmly walking along and someone comes to you asking for money. That's what bothers me a little. (19)

It can be very dangerous at night. Once, in fact, we went out at night, and on 19th Street passed



a man holding his ear, it was bleeding...that was really upsetting. (17a)

As one descends the avenue, the presence of passersby intensifies, while the pedestrian path gets narrower, causing collisions in a complex and often congested circulation network. The atmosphere of this sector is negatively described in terms of contrast: between the tranquility of the upper sections and a feeling of "tension." The perception of the watercourse disappears under the invasive effects of pollution, traffic noise, congestion, the smell of exhaust fumes, and dirt and noise related to construction. The tension increases as one walks down the avenue, producing a gradual immersion in its bustling activity and saturated atmosphere.

As you come down the avenue it becomes more stressful, because of the crowd. San Victorino is crowded, and you have to watch out for your belongings. (22b)

Here everything feels different. The noise, all the commerce, start to become annoying. The noise is tiring. (22a)

In a more positive mode, the interviews evoked the contrast between the urban landscape and the spectacle of the moving passersby. The descriptions of this sector reveal the effect of telescoping between the old city, still present with its low-rise houses and









narrow streets, and the modern city with its high-rise office buildings. Similarly, interviewees mentioned the social contrasts arising from the diversity of commerce and the closeness of different social classes.

Around Jimenez and 3rd or 4th Streets there was a French restaurant.... And right in front you can see the Lerner Bookstore and the 'crepes and waffles' restaurant. You can also see the contrast between the upscale students of the Los Andes and Rosario Universities and the lower strata of street people. There's also an Arabic restaurant, also very deluxe, reserved for the rich folk. (28)

To the left is La Candelaria, that's the historic part. You can see the contrast between the old low-rise buildings and the streets for pedestrians. Although there are spaces for pedestrians, they're very narrow. And on the other side are the modern buildings. They're like two cities living next door to each other. I like this coexistence, not everything has to be modern.... Here it's not only people but also the historic and the contemporary that live together, those who have lived here all their lives and those who have come here to study.... (22a)

The urban landscape of Jiménez Avenue and the social mix found there constitutes, from the interviewees' point of view, the main signs of Bogotá's renewed metropolitan identity.

When I walk around here, I feel that Bogotá has improved a lot, that we're getting better as a city, not just in terms of image but also as a society. Here there's more proximity among people. (22a)

Continuing down the avenue, between Carrera Séptima and the Plaza San Victorino, the few interviews we conducted were dominated by ambivalent perceptions. The section of the avenue that prompted unanimous comment was the intersection with Carrera Décima, crowded both by an informal sidewalk flea market and construction for a new Transmilenio line. The intersection is described as chaotic, extremely polluted, and unsafe. It is associated with thefts, drug traffic, and criminal activity. According to two students of architecture we interviewed, the density of activity and traffic have made the intersection a "world apart."

Damn It, there are police everywhere.... You see the guy right there, he had a computer keyboard.



Yeah, damn it, look at that, there are cops every ten meters. And there are cops everywhere, but there's still crime—robberies with knives and all other types of crime. (29)

The Carrera Décima makes me think of chaos: a truly impressive degree of disorder. I'm a little afraid here because there are a lot of robberies. That's the image I have; it makes me think of dirt and noise. It's not even an image. It's the reality. (22b)

Generally speaking, the rehabilitation project in this sector has not erased the avenue's bad reputation or its "dangerous" memory. Yet change appears to be occurring. One of the two architecture students described this sector as a public space that is being gradually tamed, and whose qualities beyond the dirt and noise are being discovered. These students—who were among the few interviewees willing to continue the walk this far—see this sector of the avenue as an urban model, due to its image as an open space, its amenities, and the presence of the public. Their descriptions, evoking the choreography created by



the passersby, confirm our observations about the impact of new amenities provided by the street furniture.

"I've learned to like it somewhat, but the first few times I came here I was frightened because you always hear it's one of the most dangerous places



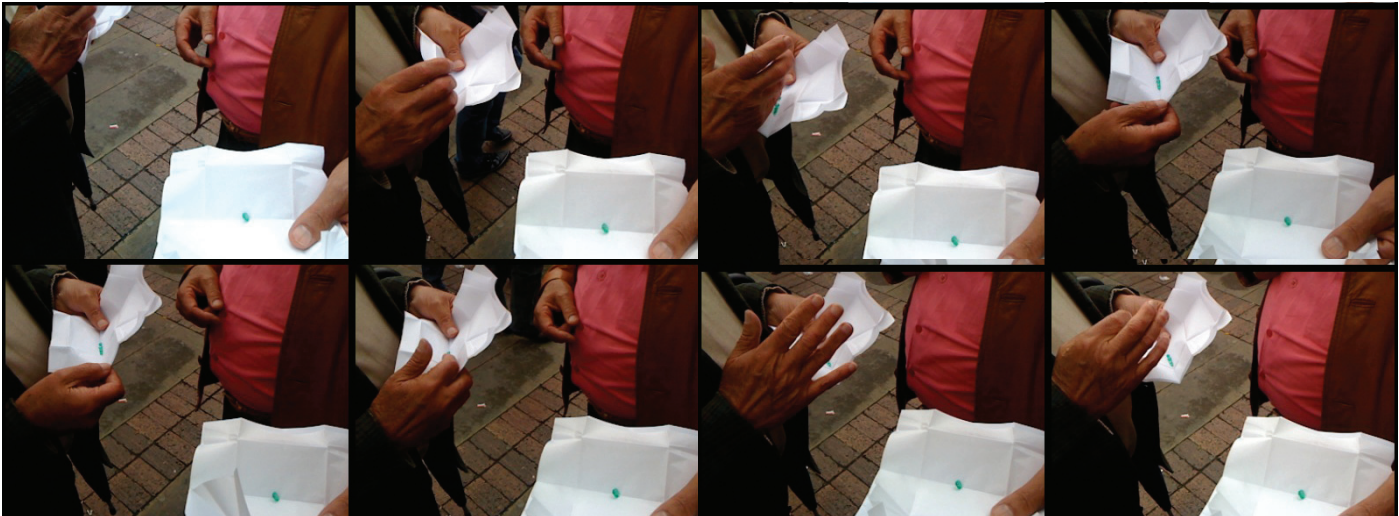
around.... Gradually you begin to notice the good things and to figure out that it's not that dangerous, but you still see plenty of bad things. The water is very dirty, there's a lot of noise here. It's not a place to sit down. (22b)

In the Plaza San Victorino one arrives at a space to relax. It's extremely open. There are a lot of people, but you don't perceive the crowd. Here, in contrast to the environmental artery, which tends to carry you along, one likes to stop and sit for a bit. Maybe that shows the influence of public space on people.... (22b)

If, for most of the interviewees, the construction represents the possibility of greater social harmony and a more cohesive society, Jiménez Avenue is nonetheless recurrently described in terms of its appropriation by particular social groups. Thus the Plazoleta del Rosario, associated with the poor and working classes, is also occupied by students of nearby universities and by informal activities that attract street vendors and performers. The portion of the avenue between the Carrera Séptima and Carrera Décima is also where the emerald sellers, shoe-shiners, beggars, and indigents tend to congregate, and the appropriation of public space by these groups regularly prompts comments about Colombian society as well as questions about the nature of public space. While daily

contact with homeless people makes the experience seem "normal," it remains disturbing. This is true also of street commerce, such as the sidewalk emerald trade, which brings together dozens of merchants every day on the same sidewalk. The existence of illegal networks is more or less known and prompts further comments. One interviewee, who lived in the street, described Jiménez Avenue as a place of social conflict and struggle where merchants negotiate access to spaces for commerce with money and sometimes





violence. Reflecting a kind of Latin American fatalism, street commerce is often described in terms of ambiguity: while not legal, it is frequently tolerated.

Between the Carrera Séptima and the Carrera Décima is where I feel most vulnerable. There are a lot of men, and that's uncomfortable for a woman. (22b)

There's some insecurity in the Plazoleta del Rosario because of the popular markets and street vending. (28)

I think it's terrible to come here and see the homeless people inhaling solvents. It really hits you the first time you see that. Later it becomes normal, and that's horrible too. (22b)

Emeralds, yeah, it's a mafia. These vendors are in direct contact with the families who own the mines. You have to be from that region to have the right to sell the stones, to have the connection. That doesn't belong to the Colombian people, it belongs to certain families... they're armed and they intimidate people as if they were a paramilitary. Maybe they're allies of the paramilitaries and the narcotraffickers.... (29)

In the streets of Bogotá, certain categories of users are immediately recognized, such as the police, security guards, and the military who are instantly identifiable by their uniforms or their fluorescent jackets on which their functions are printed. Similarly, their carts of displays make street vendors recognizable. In addition, indigent people who live in the street are recognized by their poor and ragged clothing. These indigents are also considered to be highly unsocialized because of their disoriented behavior and habit of sleeping on the ground or in the middle





of passageways. The fact that these categories of citizens are visible all over the avenue acts as a social labeling factor or indicator that marks public spaces.

When commenting on these themes, interviewees frequently revealed personal judgments about other social groups, often relating the question of social diversity to that of security. Their point of view differed according to their own social class. Thus upper-class interviewees (lawyers, students, engineers) expressed their ambivalent opinions about the poor and homeless, frequently linking the presence of these groups to the feeling of insecurity they felt in certain places, especially between the Carrera Séptima and Carrera Décima. As noted earlier, their proximity in the public space often prompted discomfort and embarrassment, even among those who hesitated to admit it.

Despite all of this [the improvements], there are still street people who come down from the eastern mountains or from the peripheral neighborhoods and mix with the other people. (28)

Described as a source of disturbance and a violation of public space, unregulated street vending is also considered a synonym of insecurity. At the same time, many interviewees recognized it as a necessary evil. Faced with an economy that offers few options, no one denied the right of street vendors to go about

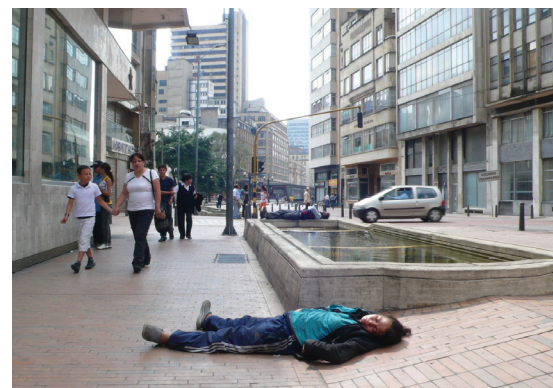
their work, and some even described working in the street as a contribution to the national economy.

Now the problem of street vendors has diminished, but the chaos did not disappear because of the unemployment rate. The informal labor market is always present in Latin American cities, but they keep looking for solutions, the city administration is still working on that. (28)

In this country and in Latin America, public space is a place to earn a living somehow. So you find people who shine shoes or organize betting on animal races. It's a crucial factor in the city's economy. (22a and 22b)

I think street vendors represent a step backward; it's unfair that these people don't have work; it's miserable to deny them the chance to work, but still it's not good to have them occupying the public space. (22a)

At the same time, upper-class interviewees demonstrated a high level of agreement with the official rhetoric of urban regeneration. While describing the recent improvements as a source of greater coexistence and social diversity, they also associated the improvement of comfort and upgrading of the urban landscape with a feeling of greater security, a main



objective of the rehabilitation project from the government's perspective. Remembering the past, one interviewee, a lawyer whom we met in a university bookstore, recalled the huge informal market that had grown up in the Plaza San Victorino and invoked the image of the famous Cartucho quarter, with its slum dwellings and illegal activities. While recognizing criticisms of the redevelopment, he concluded that radical renovation had solved "radical" problems.

Now there are nightclubs and international restaurants because there's more security. Because of the police station right here in Jiménez.... This has encouraged an influx of students and people in general. (28)

There's going to be a big change, because they're building a new Transmilenio line in the Carrera Décima...which is going to renew the sector up toward Las Cruces. There are a lot of people who criticize it, calling it an attack on the history that's contained in these houses, but maybe radical actions are needed for radical problems. You know this place did not exist before, don't you? It was taken over by street vendors and was filled with kiosks.... The change is radical, a very strong action by the city, accompanied by a lot of criticism, but at the same time it gave us something that's very good for everyone. (22a)

While some commentators valued the area's greater tranquility, the two architecture students argued that it was precisely the presence of people that created security.

The presence of people generates safety, as security is not just the police but rather people who take care of each other.... That's what public space is: it brings people together to take care of each other through living together rather than through police repression. (22a)

Far removed was the testimony of interviewees who worked or lived in the street: they saw the question of safety and security in very different terms. A street vendor who had worked many years near the university described her good relationship with the students who were her principal clients yet emphasized her daily fear of being a victim to the security guards, who were "regularly after her." In fact, one of the strategies that street vendors and the homeless must adopt to defend themselves from the defenders of public order is to be constantly prepared to move.

Of course if a student is going to sit there I move my cart. But they see us working and generally go sit somewhere else; they respect the space.



Sometimes the university kicks us out. Some of the security guards treat us very badly....

[So, do you think of this as your space?] No, not mine. Because they can throw me out any time, and I can't say this spot is mine. I fight for it, because it's the source of work for my brother, and he's fought for it too. This spot means a lot to us. We stay here even when it rains, we get wet, and when the sun comes out, here we are.

When they tell us go away or move we have to find another spot in the park. (23b)

We also met a thirty-year-old homeless painter who was born in Cali and returned to Bogotá after ten years in France: he now sells arts and crafts and

marijuana, sleeping in the street or in cheap hotels. While for some, police surveillance fosters a sense of security, for this resident it represented a direct and indeed constant threat.

I'm very angry because I can't do what I want here. I mean, I paint, and here it's very hard for artists, so I'm forced to make crafts.... Well, I'm selling them, and I sell some marijuana and that's about it. As we say, I try to cope, because I can't paint here. Here, painting is only for the rich.

We've never had a president with such security regulations. Things look better, but problems are the same. There's a huge corruption problem, a huge social problem, people are dying of hunger, people are living in misery, they are forced to

steal and to kill to survive. That's not normal in a country like this, which isn't at all poor. Colombia a poor country? If Colombia is a poor country, then I'm Santa Claus. No, I'm not Santa Claus, and Colombia isn't poor.

There are guards everywhere. Even in the toilets there are security guards. (29)

The situation of this artist is precarious not only because of his illegal activities (selling marijuana or arts and crafts) but also because of his lack of housing. Fearful of sleeping in the street, when his income permits, he sometimes sleeps at hotels, some of which try to extort money from him. He is also threatened by new and sometimes violent popular campaigns against prostitutes, drug addicts, the homeless, and homosexuals associated with an ideology of social cleansing.

Once I had the idea to sleep up there, in the street. It was cold and I didn't have a good sweater. Yes, it's possible to sleep there because we're well protected. The question of security in Bogotá is difficult. I try not to sleep outside, something that's not easy in a society where you have hotels at 100,000 pesos per night. And you sleep but they'll wake you up to ask for another 100,000 pesos. So, yes, I sometimes sleep in the street but not just anywhere. And most of the time I don't sleep at all, I try to sleep during the day, but it's scary to sleep in the street of Bogotá.

People who sleep outside, that is, the homeless, are at risk of getting murdered by killers. I am not talking only about this place. We've had flyers saying we'll kill all the gays, all the hookers, all the homeless people, all the drug addicts. It is a bit scary, but I'm only afraid of God. I can't talk too much, you never know who's who, but it's hard. There's no mercy. ... People get killed in the street because they're sleeping there....It's pretty cruel.... Because there are guys who come by in cars, they approach you, they say 'fuck you,' and then they shoot you. These are guys who act like Nazis, you know.

They kill people they don't like. Yes, there's more security. But it's clear that it's only for the rich and for the oligarchs.... (29)

In the context of omnipresent supervision, it is worth mentioning that surveillance is mutual; the security guards are themselves monitored. During our conversation, the street vendor in the university sector of the avenue observed and pointed out to us the



mistrust that the guards were demonstrating toward us. They were recognizable by their uniform and dog, and we saw several of them continuously observing the periphery of the nearby university. And yet all of the monitoring does not produce a uniformly shared sense of security.

[During the night] I wander around, trying to not fall asleep, because if I fall asleep I'm scared, not really scared because I have faith in God, but it's something I can't explain. More worried than scared. I'm not afraid of dying, because I have to die sometime. It's more like an ambiguous feeling of insecurity in a country where there are no laws, or the law is a dead letter, as Bolívar said. (29)

[A security guard:] I'm forbidden from speaking to you, because you could bribe me or extort something.... Here the cameras show everything.... It's the same with girls, I can't speak with them or greet them. That's my job and I have to respect it. (24)

Chapter 3

Case Studies

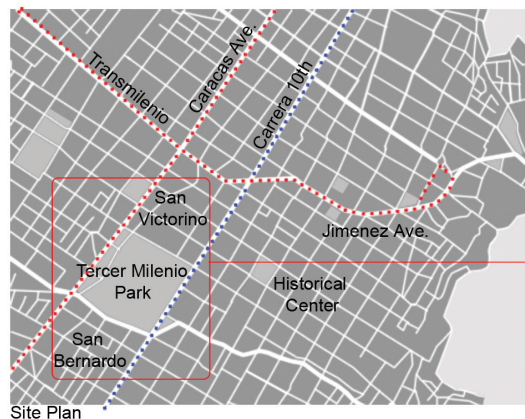
2. Tercer Milenio Park

Background

Tercer Milenio Park is centrally located in the area known as Los Martires, two blocks west of the presidential palace. Before its transformation under the Peñalosa administration, it had been a low-income district. Proposals to turn the area into a park had already been made in 1947 and 1960, as many considered state intervention necessary in a zone that had been identified as problematic as early as the 1940s, and that, despite being one of Bogotá's oldest districts, had never been recognized as a legitimate part of the city's heritage (Perilla 2008).

Since the colonial period, Bogotá had centered on the Plaza Bolívar, located a few blocks east of Tercer Milenio Park. Justice, religion, and local government had always been concentrated and represented there, and until the beginning of the twentieth century the plaza was also the preferred residence of the upper classes, who built elegant stone-fronted houses around it, in contrast to the lower-classes adobe homes found in outlying areas (Perilla 2008). Until the nineteenth century, the district of Santa Inés, site of today's Tercer Milenio Park, was such an area, both rural and poor. As the city started to grow, mercantile activities expanded northward, along the axis of the Carrera Séptima, leaving Santa Inés neglected. Colombia's opening to the international economy at the beginning of the twentieth century did not change this pattern. To create an image of modernity and attract foreign investors, the city built prominent hotels and public buildings. It also expelled certain socially unacceptable establishments, including brothels and the taverns known as *chicherías*. While the institutional city continued to expand northward, the forbidden practices were pushed to the southeast and west sides of the city.

After the 1948 riots, the bourgeoisie migrated northward from the city center toward the wealthy new district of Chapinero. The neglected district of Santa Inés became a center for illegal activities and expe-



Site Plan



City Plan

Plan showing the location of Tercer Milenio Park.

rienced increased rates of violence, homelessness, and instability. Known as the Cartucho, the zone increasingly served to concentrate marginal sectors that included poor families, cooperatives of recyclers, and local mafias, and was marked by drug dealing, prostitution, and homelessness. Physically, the area became highly deteriorated. Located just blocks away from the presidential palace, the Cartucho was beyond legal control. It presented a major obstacle to revitalization plans for the city center.

Fifty years after the *Bogotazo* of 1948, the Peñalosa administration launched the most ambitious projects for the center's renovation seen in decades. One of the main elements of the *Plan Centro* was the creation of a metropolitan park in the Santa Inés sector, involving the demolition of an entire central district of nearly twenty hectares, the displacement of 3,030 families and 1,620 commercial establishments, and the dislocation of a further 2,000 people considered part of the zone's floating population (Castro Cabrera 2003). Although very controversial, the project ultimately received the support of both the media and the public. Today, city authorities and citizens alike are proud of the disappearance of the Cartucho, and the project is widely recognized as an achieve-



ment of Peñalosa's administration. Nevertheless, despite its success, the planning process revealed clear deficiencies in terms of managing its impacts on residents, many of whom were never properly compensated (Castro Cabrera, 2003).

Authorities described the Tercer Milenio project as key to recuperating the city center (Durán 2003). Politicians presented it as an opportunity to increase Bogotá's competitiveness and improve its quality of life, and these discourses were largely replicated in the media. At the same time, the city was considered to bear the responsibility for managing the project's negative impacts on residents, and to mitigate these, a social strategy was promised. Yet according to urban researcher Magali Castro Cabrera (2003), there was a general consensus that conditions of marginality in Santa Inés could not become any worse, and this view probably impeded serious efforts to manage impacts. Today it is difficult even to measure the project's impacts on former residents because evaluation and monitoring programs were never implemented.

The intervention completely transformed the Cartucho. Of the entire district only one building remains, and along with the physical disappearance of the neighborhood, the social capital represented by the communal networks constructed by residents through the years has also disappeared. What was widely recognized as the most dangerous zone of the

city is today a metropolitan park that has visitors from diverse parts of the city, is the setting for cultural and recreational activities, and has even become a stage for social protest.

The park is the heart of a zone of the city center that has undergone significant transformations, including the renovation of the Plaza San Victorino and the adaptation of the main avenues around it to the Transmilenio system. These operations, along with the construction of the park, have fundamentally reshaped the sector's physical and social dynamics and, as with Jiménez Avenue, have prepared adjacent zones for similarly far-reaching transformations. A large mall is currently under construction on the north side of the park, and the entire San Victorino district will be the subject of a partial plan for public space renovation. The San Bernardo district, located on the south side of the park, will also be the subject of a partial renovation plan that will reconstruct entirely the district's urban fabric. Although this project includes new mixed-income housing projects for area residents, it is unlikely that the poorest residents will be able to afford them, leading to new displacements. On the western limit of the park, residential development is projected as well. Once these interventions have concluded, an area of more than fifty hectares will have been radically modified.

The design and construction process for the park, lasting almost seven years, was difficult and some-



times violent. Although most home owners agreed to sell their properties, leaving little need for governmental expropriation, most residents were renters, and evicting them from their homes and workplaces was not an easy task. An even greater challenge was to force out the organized crime rings that controlled much of the zone.

The government's efforts to mitigate the project's impacts were not entirely successful, but they did represent a significant advance over previous development projects in Bogotá. A neighborhood census was organized and information campaigns created to help shape social policies, which were formulated in discussions with neighborhood delegates. An office was created to direct the implementation of the resulting programs. These included social mentoring for at-risk residents, strategies for information and economic support, creation of an industrial park for 190 graphic arts companies relocated from the area, establishment of an association to relocate 1,140 recyclers, payment of economic compensations, and a program of fixed rents for displaced families.

Despite those efforts, Castro Cabrera (2003) argues that the process was miscalculated and that the entities responsible developed an organizational culture

that was ineffective in coordinating the process. She adds that the state's responsibilities were not clearly outlined; that slowness and lack of coordination impeded the development process; and that the administration underestimated the emotional and economic costs of displacement, disregarded the need to reestablish social and family networks, and failed to devise alternative development plans to reduce income losses. Although some sectors received sufficient compensation, failed assessment procedures cost many residents their right to reparations, and lack of information about residents made it impossible to locate many of them for inclusion in social programs. All in all, Castro Cabrera estimates that many former residents are worse off today than before the project. If so, a project intended to create a more cohesive and inclusive city had the opposite result for at least some residents.

Citizens' Comments

Sure, on Sundays ... people come out to do aerobics, play football, just to relax. Most come to relax, take the children out. Like any park. In the afternoons, mainly the afternoons, after midday, Sundays, holidays, folks come out in the afternoon. (07)

Above Left
 Ongoing urban transformations

Above Right
 Solid-void plan of the Tercer Milenio Park zone.

To understand the park from the perspective of its users, we interviewed twenty-one people, either alone or with their families, in different parts of the park. Interviews were conducted in early April 2009, on weekdays and on Sundays, in the form of eight short interviews, either stationary or moving, and eight longer ones, lasting between seven and eighteen minutes, of which half were done while walking. The sample of interviewees reflects the diversity of park visitors as well as of services offered within the park. Thus in addition to families who were there to relax, we interviewed two street vendors, a police officer, two social workers, and a bar manager, as well as four families who live nearby.

In general, the park is widely appreciated: it has become a pleasant and popular place. Responding to the question "How do you perceive this place?" answers were enthusiastic, especially from families, employing vocabulary like "great," "fantastic," "magnificent," and "attractive."

I think it's great! (03)

It's beautiful! (06)

It's really cool ... everywhere. (11a and b)

I would say the change in society generated by the park has been really surprising.... It's been enormous. (15)

The park is also described as a place designed for relaxation, entertainment, and recreation, a perfect place to *dominguear* (go out on Sunday), a place where one feels "at peace," away from the bustle and noise of downtown streets, including Jiménez Avenue.

It's ... a very pleasant place. When I have had time to be here in the park, I feel peaceful, away from everything and the noise and the other things that we see in the street. (09)

The park isolates you from the chaos of the street. This avenue is one of the most chaotic streets of the city. You can go down there and you will observe terrible levels of noise and pollution. (02)

In addition to being traversed by those who work in the area or go shopping and those who take public transportation along the Carrera Décima, the park also offers the opportunity to come during the week and take a break, read a book, or eat a sandwich.

A lot of people do this, take this route, because people nearby ... it's a mall, some people use the Transmilenio system. So what they do is cross the park to get to the station. And those who



work here and need to catch the bus over in the Décima cross the park too. (03)

I work nearby. So when I arrive early, I come here to read a little. (02)

You often see people bringing their sandwich, their soda and chips, at lunch time in the nice weather. (03)

These activities and uses are not exclusive: some people who pass through the park during the work-day come back on the weekend for recreation.

Since I sell clothes, I usually take this route, from here over to there. And I go over to Carrera Tercera



where I like to eat fritanga [a popular traditional dish] on Saturdays, there's a good fritanga place, cheap and good. (06)

"Practicing sports," "playing football," "walking the dog"—the interviewees list their own activities and invite us to observe. It is like a spectacle, especially on Sundays when many activities take place in the park: lying on the grass or rolling down hills or on the grass, vending from small kiosks, bicycling or skating, or playing in the cold water (even though swimming is banned). These are common scenes that interviewees appreciate.

People have a good time here ... going around looking at all the kiosks, the flea markets. It's fun here. Instead of staying at home, people come here. (11b)

Referring to the coming and going of people, the freedom of movement, and the mixing of generations, interviewees revealed the ease with which they had appropriated the space. This was especially true of children.

We come here so our son can ride his bicycle, or skate, or run, because the apartments over there are quite small.... And for walking, I like it here; there are paths.... On the weekends there are sports activities too. The people from the recre-

ation and sports department come over and do aerobics and things like that. (03)

You can see all kinds of people here, newborns, pregnant women ... even elderly people, very old;... we're here playing football, relaxing ... a cocktail, a cold drink. So, it's been great. (15)

In general, bringing children to Tercer Milenio represents an important reason for going there. Indeed the park is widely considered a place designed especially for children.



Through its different uses, Tercer Milenio Park appears as a place that works at different scales. Many interviewees described the park as a place for “daily life,” visited on weekdays by families or employees of the surrounding areas as well as by students of the nearby schools who come to practice sports. There is also the army battalion and the nearby police station whose members come to the park for training. In general, for those who come regularly, Tercer Milenio is described as a place where one can recognize the familiar faces of nearby residents.

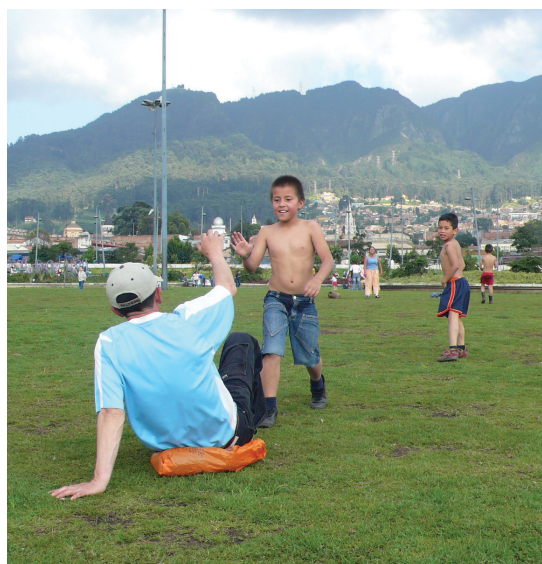
Friends meet here. Loads of people come here. I just met some of my friends who were walking in the park with their families. (11b)

You meet lots of people you know in this park, people from the neighborhood, from Eduardo Santos or San Bernardo. (12a and b)

Besides being considered a place of interrelationship and neighborhood, Tercer Milenio also functions at a metropolitan scale. Interviewees incorporated it into their routes from home to work, thus weaving it into larger regional patterns of movement. They also frequently linked it with other public amenities constructed throughout the city, like the Transmilenio. In addition, they saw the park as an open space serving the entire city.

People from every class ... people come here from all over the city. (03)

An important factor in shaping the park’s meaning for its users is their consciousness of the site’s history. The memory of the former Cartucho is still strongly present in the minds of many interviewees, who routinely referred to the danger that the area used to represent and contrasted the old Cartucho with the pleasant conditions offered by the park today.





Pressures and Distortions

City Dwellers as Builders and Critics: Four Views



To me it seems like a spacious park, recreational for the children, in a good location. They fixed up the area because it was bad. Sure, there's still a small Cartucho [slum area] over there, but still it's a nice park. It's well looked after. (10a and b)

It's great for entertaining the children. Well, actually, the Cartucho used to be here. Now it's a place where children can relax. The park has a lot of good things. At the very least it's removed the danger, erased the bad image. Because before, it was horrible. (12a and b)

The imagery of the Cartucho remains impressively strong for interviewees. Some described it as a "relatively tough zone," others as "very dangerous" and "a place of absolute misery." Bogotá residents often refer to the Cartucho as "una olla de mala muerte," or a cauldron of death. Many considered it too dangerous even to cross.

I worked in this area when it was the Cartucho. You couldn't cross it, you couldn't walk.... (13b)

Interviewees also frequently referred to the Cartucho as if it were "another city," one characterized by every kind of crime, from muggings to arms dealing. Several interviewees referred to rumors that thousands of people had been killed and buried there.

I can't imagine how many dead people are lying here. Thousands, thousands of dead people. Because it was terrible.... (06)

In addition, interviewees linked the negative memory of the Cartucho with the presence of marginalized populations, including the homeless, the indigent, street children, and beggars. The vocabulary used to describe former inhabitants was sometimes very harsh: "jibalos" (drug dealers), "desechables" (rubbish), "people of the worst kind that could be found in the city."

Another common theme was the disruption caused by the urban renewal project and people's efforts to adapt to the demolition of the Cartucho. An employee of a social service organization, currently working on behalf of street vendors and displaced people, described the process, in which he had participated:

People who wanted to participate in the programs of the district did so. A lot of people were given housing in other parts of the city. They gave them a housing subsidy and relocated them. Others went from here to the San Bernardo neighborhood. Others went down to the Cinco Huecos, the area behind the battalion, because basically that street is just for taking drugs. People were displaced, but it was difficult to get everyone out.

Pressures and Distortions



They started with demolition. They started with everything in Sixth Street. It was much easier to negotiate there because from Seventh Street onward there was a lot of industry. They negotiated with the landowners and businesses that were there—they gradually kicked them out. The point of conflict was here....

The people who lived here and opposed the project? The leaders themselves. It was all commercialized here. Rumor had it that about 50 million pesos changed hands daily selling arms, drugs, and anything you wanted. All black market. So obviously the park wasn't convenient for people who were profiting from this. (13b)

Two views of the former Cartucho, from ESCOVAR Alberto., MARTIN Marijke, MARTIN Gerard, GOOSSENS Maarten. (2007). Editors. Bogotá: El renacer de una ciudad. Bogotá. Editorial Planeta Colombiana (copyright reserved).

City Dwellers as Builders and Critics: Four Views



Another interview with two elderly women revealed a different dimension of the story. One was selling takeaway food; the other belonged to a family of car mechanics. Their story reminds one that the Cartucho was not exclusively populated by criminals: automobile repair workshops were an important economic activity in the area. These two interviewees lost their jobs due to redevelopment, and they regretted having to leave the neighborhood where they were born and to which they were attached.

We lived here in this park. We were born here, in all this area there were houses. They destroyed everything and built the park... We lived in a rented house.... Well, this park seems good to me. But at the same time many lost their jobs. Those who made a living here are now out of work.

I used to sell coffee and empanadas.... [A]fter the demolition of the neighborhood, I became unemployed. Now I'm living on the charity of my son, because as an elderly person, we don't have work anywhere.

Some people didn't live here but just had their workshops here. Whoever had a workshop worked during the day. And at night other people arrived and paid rent to work there. Young men would work at night. All of this area was repair shops.

Lots of people were brought up here and got ahead in life. This area has always been badly stigmatized. (10)

The testimony of displaced former residents helps fill in the story of the park's creation. But for many people, the very lack of information about what happened to former residents has become part of the park's meaning.

I don't know what happened to those people.... There were some who gathered in other rundown parts of Bogotá, because there are plenty of those. Probably others returned to a normal life, or maybe they went to other cities. (08)

Despite the enormous disruption caused by the park's creation, even some interviewees who had been displaced saw the park's positive aspects, and indeed frequented it. Thus one of the women mentioned above, interviewed in the park, remarked that it was spacious and provided good recreation for children; according to the other, the government had "fixed up the area, because it had been bad." These sentiments are in accord with the many other park users who describe it—always with reference to its past—as bringing "new life" to the neighborhood, a "project of social interest," or "a point of reconciliation with the city."



The discourse about the park's history is closely linked to views about its current safety. The park is perceived by many people to be a safe place, in part because of the prominent presence of the police.

Now yes, because people pass by. The police...the army pass by here, so this area is safer.... Yes, sure, it's very good now ... this area is very safe. (16)

The Transmilenio system seems to have helped with security: several interviewees described the congestion that used to surround the bus stops as favorable to aggression and thievery.

Caracas Avenue used to be impassable. First because there was no Transmilenio, and the avenue was congested with buses. So there was plenty of opportunity for thieves to escape. But since they got rid of the famous Cartucho and set up the Transmilenio, things have changed a lot. (08)

Despite these positive remarks, the question of insecurity remains present for interviewees, many of whom say they know someone who has been attacked. Some interviewees said residents of Bogotá still hesitate to visit the new park and claimed that no one dares to cross it at night. Asked whether the park seemed unsafe, one interviewee answered:

No, well.... Indeed I've seen people who were robbed here, so it does seem so to me. (03)

Another, asked whether it seemed like a good place to relax, replied:

Sure, yes, although they say that people get robbed around here, but I've never been robbed coming here. (01)

These feelings of insecurity are less related to the park itself than to its surroundings, especially a nearby area known as the Bronx, or the Little Cartucho, toward which crime has shifted. Despite its location behind an army building whose entrance is watched by the police, the Bronx is described as isolated, surrounded by arms and drug dealing, and controlled by organized crime.

Yes, behind that building there's a rundown area, the so-called 'Bronx.' But that's very small compared to what this used to be. It was a whole district, but here it's just two little streets, very small, but still it's a problem for the city because the criminals come here and it's very difficult to throw them out. They vanish into the crowd, and if a policeman enters they'll even kill him, rob him there.... (08)



Meanwhile, marginalized people continue to frequent Tercer Milenio Park, as it is “open” to the surrounding areas. The manager of a bar within the park described the resulting “inconveniences” to his customers as well as his own efforts to counter them.

They [former Cartucho residents] pass by, they go up and down. But if they make problems here, we call security. Because there are people who are quite problematic and stubborn.... For example, if one of those persons comes by and I tell them, ‘Please don’t beg here,’ because it’s not allowed, they get angry, they become wild and rude. So right then you have to go to security.... So that tourists can feel safe, so that you can sit down and feel safe.... In this kind of a place you get to know a lot of people, some in bad ways, others not: very decent people, very embittered people, very good people, very normal people... If I don’t try to take care of customers.... I have to take it upon myself and say, well, here there will be respect. (07)

As on Jiménez Avenue, the question of security is not seen the same way by everyone. To street vendors, the police represent harrassment rather than protection. Asked whether it was easy to work in the park, an ice cream vendor replied:

[Is it easy to work in this area?] ... A bit complicated as the police bother us a lot. They come

after you, sometimes they take your cart, leaving you without work.... As I was saying, one can’t find work, there’s a lot of unemployment. My daughter’s husband also works here; he also sells “Bon Ice,” like me. He also has worked in construction, but he can’t find work either. Yes, if the police are around they don’t let us come here.... But me, there are times when I go over there. I say I’m going to look for my son-in-law so they let me pass. (09)

A policeman explained his point of view:

What we’re doing here is a labor of prevention. The other thing is to make confiscations. These confiscations are made with a legal representative and a delegate from the city administration. The merchandise is confiscated; a legal document is written up, an inventory of what was seized. The merchandise is taken to a city warehouse and is returned to the person as long as there’s no further offense within fifteen working days. If there’s another incident, the goods aren’t returned. Street vendors are prohibited. (08)

He also explained why the police’s efforts to remove street vendors are not wholly successful:

This is how it works. The police, despite all their efforts, can’t cover the entire city. There are very

few police officers for all of the public space, and there are more street vendors. It's very difficult for the police to control the whole city and all the public spaces.... Look, public space should be public space, right? That means not occupied by vendors. You want to pass and sometimes to pass you have to step down into the street. These are focal points for crime, right?... People congregate there and that's where the thieves approach and steal money, steal mobile phones, steal and disappear in the crowd. That's the problem.... It's always easier to pass through a street where there are no street vendors ... a street where there are only pedestrians. (08)

A third point of view is provided by representatives of the Instituto para la Economía Social, or Institute for Social Economics, a nonprofit organization that seeks to mediate the situation by providing a sanctioned space for vendors who participate in their program to use on Sundays.

Security, whether in relation to conflicts over street vending or the presence of former Cartucho residents, provides the dominant context in which interviewees brought up the issue of coexistence between people of different social backgrounds within Tercer Milenio Park. Their hesitations and allusions suggest that they may have been minimizing the conflictual dimensions of this coexistence. Yet the park is considered to be a relatively tolerant public space. During the summer of 2009, its social inclusiveness and security were challenged in a new way, by the arrival of more than 1,000 families displaced from the countryside by ongoing warfare and temporarily resettled in refugee encampments within the park (Wecker 2009).

We arrived here this morning and realized there are displaced people, but the park is managing it. The park lets them settle down here in a campsite, as you can see. My understanding is there's a leader, the person I talked with. They are people who come from another city, although I've seen people I used to know from the Cartucho who are passing themselves off as displaced persons.... (13b)

In the final analysis, Tercer Milenio Park appears as a space both part of and apart from the city, a "different" space. If parks in general fill this role, it takes on particular force in the case of Tercer Milenio: perceived as a place of social appeasement, it is at once an open space that carries the memory of the neighborhood on which it was built, and a memory that symbolizes the hardness and violence of Colombian society. An interviewee muses out loud that Tercer Milenio "is surrounded by power, all sorts of power—the power of nature, the ecclesiastic power, the power of the sky, the police power, everything is here. Unreal..."





Chapter 3

Case Studies

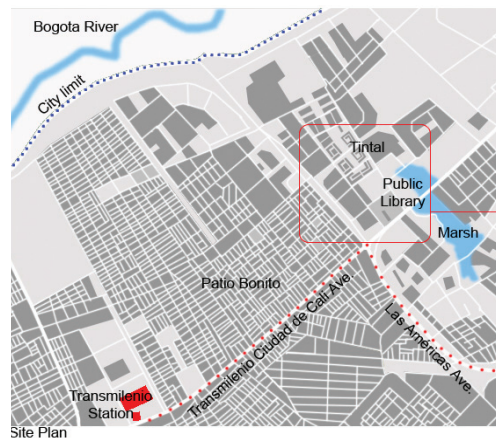
3. The Tintal Library and Zone

Background

The Tintal zone borders the recently constructed Tintal public library. One reason to study this area is that it is one of the peripheral zones in Bogotá that has experienced significant transformations in recent years. An area whose origins lay in informal or illegal urban development has been radically transformed by the construction of public infrastructure. These new conditions have sparked a changed urban dynamic marked by the appearance of major real estate developments. The area includes part of the Patio Bonito district, a self-built working-class neighborhood stemming from the 1970s, and the newly developed neighborhood of El Tintal, founded in 2002. The district is part of the larger area known as Kennedy and is situated ten kilometers west of the city center near a zone of wetlands that are important to the regional ecosystem.

By the early twentieth century, the area—which today is Bogotá's most populous, with nearly one million inhabitants—was a rural area where residents were engaged mainly in agricultural activities. The process of urbanization began in 1938 with the construction of the city's first airport, which was soon followed by the appearance of self-built working-class neighborhoods. Due to the massive migration of rural inhabitants during this period, Colombian cities experienced rapid growth. An increased demand for housing among the poorest residents was satisfied by illegal land developers, who in Colombia are known as *urbanizadores piratas*, or pirate urbanizers. The resulting neighborhoods are not planned or properly designed for the provision of public services, and due to their illegal status, they only receive support from the state after a long legalization process. The formation of these kinds of settlements significantly shaped Bogotá's urban development in the second half of the twentieth century, and today they continue to represent the only housing options for many urban inhabitants.

During this same period, the state promoted the construction of low-income and middle-income housing



Site Plan



City Plan

Plan showing the location of El Tintal Library.

projects in the zone. However, this housing was not available to the poorest social sectors, and so the process of self-building on land sold by illegal promoters continued, and the city continued to grow through a process of low-density urbanization around the periphery, including illegal occupation of high-risk areas such as those adjacent to marshes and to the Bogotá River. The Patio Bonito district is a prime example of this process.

Patio Bonito arose from the urbanization of a former *hacienda* in 1974. Because the land was two meters below the level of the Bogotá River it was not simple to legalize, and as a result residents had to struggle for years not only for legal recognition but also for basic services. During this process they were struck by numerous natural disasters. As in many peripheral areas along the river, flooding has been a serious problem. The first flood came just a few years after the arrival of the earliest settlers, forcing inhabitants to leave their homes and live in temporary shelters for several months. Recent administrations have tried to improve the area's drainage, but floods still represent a serious problem during the winter. Residents have also had to deal with security problems caused by the extension at



times of armed conflict from the countryside into the cities. Although security has improved substantially in Bogotá, including in the Tintal zone, the district continues to be affected by the presence of conflicting factions.

As described in the first part of this report, recent administrations have sought to build or upgrade infrastructure in peripheral and marginal areas as part of a strategy of social inclusion that aims to integrate the poorest districts. The most visible intervention was the construction of a major metropolitan public library and park on the site of a former city dump and garbage treatment plant. The transformation of a garbage treatment plant into a pleasant and accessible public library symbolizes the zone's radical transformation, and the project is greatly appreciated by residents: the library today is a landmark of the city as well as a meeting point for people of diverse social backgrounds. Other prominent projects include a new secondary school, built as part of a program initiated by Peñalosa and continued by both Mockus and Garzón. A line of the Transmilenio system now connects the formerly isolated neighborhood to the rest of the city. Communal dining halls bring improved nutrition as well as sociability. Bicycle paths provide opportunities for recreation and enhance the connections among adjoining neighborhoods. The many social programs of the Garzón administration have brought other

benefits to Patio Bonito residents that complement the more visible physical improvements.

As a consequence of these projects, the zone has undergone many important changes. What was formerly a poor and isolated area is today a dynamic zone connected to the development of the city. Patio Bonito residents now have access to high-quality public services that include parks and public spaces, schools, and transportation as well as social and cultural services. Beyond the provision of public services, a new urban dynamic marked by the emergence of residential and commercial real estate operations may be the most important consequence of the area's transformation. The appearance of new projects has implied essential changes in the socio-economic dynamic of the zone, and a radical change in the form of the area's urban development. The new neighborhood of El Tintal, unlike Patio Bonito, is a planned district that includes significant middle-income housing projects. Unfortunately, it follows the pattern of large, freestanding housing blocks that have already proved to connect poorly with surrounding urban spaces and to reinforce isolation and social segregation.

Putting aside the inconveniences caused by the particular housing form chosen, the emergence of this new urban dynamic can help demarginalize poor and peripheral areas like Patio Bonito by supporting the

Left
 Transmilenio system and renovated public spaces in the vicinity of El Tintal Library.

Right
 Ongoing urban transformations in the Tintal zone.



availability of high-quality public services. Thus they may bring greater benefits to poor residents than do renovation projects in the city center. Of course, the possibility of displacement, with all of its negative consequences, is as real in the periphery as in the center, but demarginalization projects are less exposed to the particular interests that drive the renovation of urban centers, in particular the profit motives that drive the gentrification process. Although an important component of urban transformation in Patio Bonito was the emergence of real estate operations, their negative consequences for the community have been limited. Some years after the interventions, one can say that the development projects in the Tintal zone have helped to consolidate the urban development of a sector whose residents, thirty years ago, were still fighting for the right to basic services.

Citizens' Comments

It's changed 100 percent, because as I said, this was the garbage dump, all of this. They washed cars here, all the city garbage trucks [run by Limpieza Metropolitana, or LIME] arrived here because the headquarters were here, and over there near the roundabout was the radio transmitter for Mariana [the radio station of the archdiocese of Bogotá]. Imagine what the change has been: now the Mariana site is full of apartments. And when the station was here, it was all a big cow pasture. When it rained, you had to put on boots to get across. It was all just pure mud where the Avenida Cali is now.... So this is what I'm saying, that there have been changes, a lot of changes.... It used to be ranches where cattle arrived from China. They would bring seventy heads of cattle, horses, and they would arrive here. Now where would they put them, with all of this being apartments?... Now the wetlands are gone, just this piece of wetland left, because they made landfills. All of that was just wetland where the apartments are. And they filled that. Over

there where the school is it was a cow pasture. Look at the change! (32a and b)

To understand these changes better, we conducted thirteen interviews with nineteen people on April 2 and 6, 2009. Most were micro-interviews, but a resident of Patio Bonito—a service employee who had worked for forty years, was the mother of a teenager, and had lived in the neighborhood since its foundation—led two long commented walks, one through her neighborhood and the other from Patio Bonito to the library. Five people were interviewed inside the library, eight on its front esplanade, one in the park, one in Patio Bonito, and four near the new secondary school. The sample included four people interviewed at work: a peddler and a member of a roadwork crew in front of the library, a security guard for a residential complex near the new secondary school, and a student tutoring at the library.

This was the entrance for the garbage trucks. They came in and unloaded over there. They treated it [garbage] inside. The park was a cow pasture.... Sure, all of this has changed a lot, I'd venture to say 100 percent. Everything. Because it was terrible to walk here. You didn't dare to come here, first because there was no right to enter, it was cow pastures. But for example today it's lovely how you can walk from here to the bicycle path. Everything, everything has changed. For me the quality of life has changed totally. With its problems and all, but... (40)

Those surveyed who knew the Tintal area before its transformation remember it as "unpleasant" and "desolate," a place where "there was nothing," where no one dared to come.

This space was very desolate.... None of this existed. The apartments over there didn't exist. Everything looked desolate.... (35)



Yet some important entities that composed the former area of El Tintal were more precisely described: the cow pastures, the radio transmitter, a place where soldiers came to play football. Before its renovation as a library, the waste-treatment plant was an especially prominent presence in the area: though enclosed by walls, its activity was made visible by the ballet of garbage trucks that also determined traffic patterns in the area.

All this was fenced in. All around there was a wall. This here is where all the LIME trucks came in. Look over there, you see the bridge. They'd dump the garbage from the bridge.... This area from here to there was the perimeter road. And this was all closed, as I've said, there was a wall. (32a)

The memory of the garbage trucks seems to have given symbolic force to a major element of the rehabilitation project, the conservation of the plant's access ramp. But this symbolic power is more widely reflected in expressions of contrast between the new city and its rural and marginalized past.

The whole neighborhood of El Tintal is a sanitary landfill, Tintal is built on a sanitary landfill; all the garbage, everything that wasn't of any use, it all went back there.... [Then] they just put on a layer of grass to cover it, but I've noticed that when they dig a hole to plant trees, you can see the sanitary landfill. (36b)

Cali Avenue was a roadway where the buses used to go; it was a dirt road. (32a)

Interviewees linked the transformation to the creation of the park and library but also to the provision of infrastructure, including the Transmilenio, roads, and bicycle paths, which create a stark contrast with the impassable conditions of the past. Like many residents, Pedro Juan Jaramillo, the architect of the new

secondary school, commented in an interview on the transformation of which the school was part: "But as I said, there were no public services, no public institutions here. At the beginning, there were a lot of community conflicts due to the different backgrounds of the new inhabitants coming to live close together. The poor Patio Bonito population in particular would not mingle with the other communities." Jaramillo explains further that the goal of the new school was to "enable the children of these different backgrounds to meet and mingle. It was part of an urban strategy to build it here. The only place where people can actually understand being part of a community is a place where children are, and also a place where one can study, grow and learn. This is very simple. That's the way schools are now being designed in Bogotá."

For residents, the "development" and "modernization" of the area are also typically associated with the construction of new housing. In this sense, the salvaged wasteland of El Tintal, converted to new residential construction, has become an attraction to new residents. The radical transformation of the area is thus attributed to the new urbanization in a broad sense. A peddler living in Patio Bonito summed it up: "We somehow entered civilization."

While the physical transformations are impressive, the fight for urban services has also left an imprint on interviewees' minds.

Typical problems we fought over; we fought a lot to get the garbage collected on the specified days. Sometimes they would only come once a week to collect the trash. Now they collect it every three days at a specific time. [So we fought over] water service, the paving, all of that. But as time has gone on it's gotten better. Especially with the police. (40)



Pressures and Distortions

City Dwellers as Builders and Critics: Four Views



Above and Right
New secondary school





Security in the neighborhood is generally perceived to have improved, and the issue provokes fewer complaints than on Jiménez Avenue or in Tercer Milenio Park. What problems there are do not concern the immediate environs of the library so much as the more distant surrounding areas. Thus the security guard at a gated community located across from the new secondary school deplored the problem of robberies in the area's apartment complexes, while a resident of Patio Bonito, though agreeing that the situation had improved following the provision of a local police station, also confirmed the existence of theft and drug problems as well as threats against marginalized populations similar to those reported around Tercer Milenio Park.

What worries Patio Bonito right now is...those pamphlets they're sending around to the houses [threatening prostitutes and others]. Terrible!... Because what happens is that Patio Bonito is dominated by three gangs. If you know the neighborhood and they know you, you can walk after ten at night. But there are people who can't go out in the street after nine. Like the schoolkids with problems, the ones they know are addicts.... Because those are the ones who...[are the targets of organized violence]. (40)

Whereas the interviewees we encountered on Jiménez Avenue or in Tercer Milenio Park typically described the uses of the public space itself, the interviews here mainly focused on daily life within the nearby neighborhoods. In this sense, El Tintal appears to be, at least for the moment, less a clearly identified district in its own right than a place of convergence among districts. This in part may reflect the diversity

of relationships in the area evidenced by our admittedly small sample. Yet even so, we believe we can discern a pattern, that those who grew up in Patio Bonito express a stronger awareness of neighborhood life than those who did not. They manifest an attachment to Patio Bonito, which they designate as their district, through memories, experiences, and habits. And they see El Tintal as an extension, whether spatial, historical, or in terms of their personal or family trajectory.

My neighborhood [Patio Bonito], well, it was great, that's where I lived and where I grew up most of my life, and it's good to see those places that are linked to you. Like the pizzeria I always go to, or the man who sells chickens, or the lady in the bakery that's been there more than twenty years. Because these moments give you new life. It's good to be in my neighborhood. (35)

One interviewee, a longtime resident who walked us through the neighborhood, pointed out a myriad of places of many different kinds, whose functions and histories she was familiar with: markets of all kinds (including those that specialized in smuggled goods), neighborhood bars, schools, local parks, an Internet café, communal dining rooms, a street informally known by the name of a long-vanished empanada shop, and so forth. Clearly, Patio Bonito has achieved a considerable degree of social organization and continuity. Many of this interviewee's comments focused on ongoing concerns of security (the presence of gangs and former paramilitary members, delinquency) and public services (continuing deficiencies in street paving). But others pointed to the neighborhood's progress on many fronts, including some that would not be obvious to outsiders.



Following Pages
Neighborhood institutions
in Patio Bonito: a church and
a communal dining room
(top). Formal housing and
athletic facilities in El Tintal
neighborhood (bottom)



Pressures and Distortions

City Dwellers as Builders and Critics: Four Views



That church exemplifies Patio Bonito. Initially it started in a very tiny space. As the neighborhood grew, the church grew too. It didn't used to look like this. It was made of wood, it was quite ugly. (40)

Not all changes were positive: a number of local bars that had once been pleasant, family-oriented places had become focal points for delinquency and crime.

When asked whether there was much communication between Patio Bonito and the Tintal neighborhood, this same interviewee answered:

Well, sure.... For example, there are families from Patio who buy ... well, it might be that the children got married and went to buy there. So then, the parents go from here to there, and the children come here. (40)

The bicycle routes provide one element that helps to create explicit connections between the two districts. But the park and library do so too. Of three interviewees who said they came to the park regularly, either in connection with other daily activities or to escape from such activities, all correlated visits to the park with the library. When asked her opinion of the park and library, one woman replied:

It's perfect. I come here in the mornings with my husband to walk. We wanted to remain active as we got older. Instead of sleeping, we come here. They organize expeditions from here, too. They take us to the museums. Sometimes they take us to the museums, libraries, especially in August—to the art museums, the national museum, to get to know all of that. Things we couldn't do, things we couldn't do when we were young because we were working. (30a and b)

Another interviewee, who came to the library "every day, to read, read, read," was just as enthusiastic about the park:

It's a very welcoming place. I have a lot of memories in this place. I come here because it's a very good place, where you can think, you can unburden yourself of your feelings, free yourself, maybe even try a little "gnosis." I have good memories of this place. I come here whenever I feel "down" because the place brings me a lot of memories. And it's a very good space, you see a lot of people.... (35)

Some interviewees came to the park only occasionally, or for a specific purpose. For example, one who came midweek, or roughly every fourth day, was part of an informal group of friends who came to the park to feed the stray dogs, for whom they felt sorry.



Another interviewee liked taking long and vigorous walks but saw the park more as a place for relaxing and so came only in December (summer).

Of course, on Sundays it's full of people. People come here to play in the park. They're always here in the good weather. The kids come by playing with the dogs.... (32a)

As already noted, memories of old pastures and wetlands remain strongly attached to the park's imagery. Though the change is generally seen in strongly positive terms, two interviewees, part of a university-based youth group dedicated to ecological awareness and protection of Bogotá's wetlands, saw the issue from a different perspective. One remarked that the changes were "productive on the one hand but sad on the other, because all of the wetlands are disappearing, and that shouldn't happen. One needs to have wetlands."

Only a few interviewees, mostly young people, used the library regularly, both to read and borrow but also to surf the Web. Two retired people came to take lessons as part of a wider town activity program in which they participate.

We come here for two hours on Thursdays, from 2:00 to 4:00. The first hour is like a Spanish course. During the second, a young lady comes and teaches us singing. We feel very grateful because the young people are very patient with us.... We go to a group called "Simeon" on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. We have a classroom routine there, ... because I was a teacher, so we recite, sing, play games. On Wednesdays a teacher comes. Last Sunday we danced. (30a)

Regardless of their specific activities, all interviewees appreciated the library as a pleasant and useful place, and certainly as one that did more than provide books. Interviewees emphasized the diversity of spaces and services, noting the large attendance of children who have specific rooms and supervised activities, such as computer training, multimedia, free Internet, games, and assistance with information searches. Many interviewees mentioned doing homework as one of the most common activities that take place in the library, underscoring the importance of libraries, in addition to schools, in providing access to culture and social life for families of modest backgrounds.

The library was a very good thing. Because there's Internet here, photocopiers—lots of things. You can come and take whatever book you want, and whatever you want to research, you'll find it here. (32a)

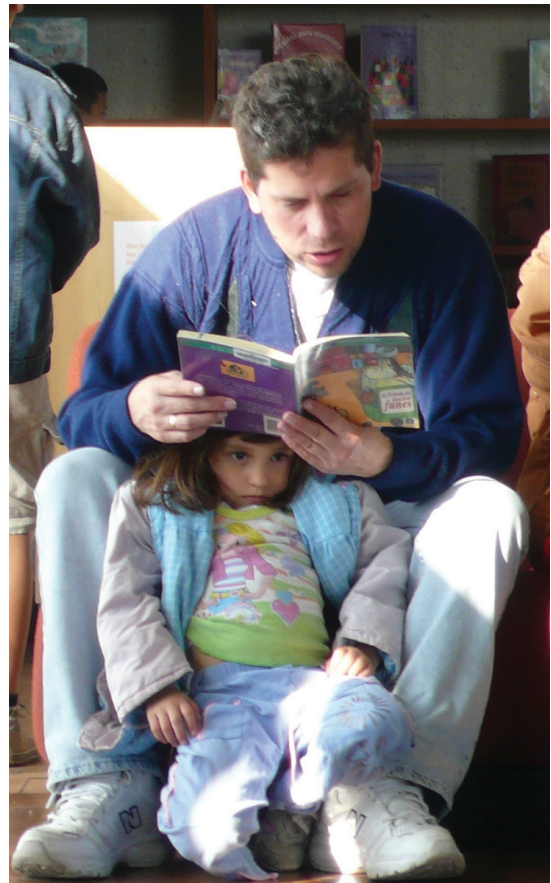


From the point of view of social practice, spaces like these seem to be very useful. In my case, for example, I give computer classes for children, who would have difficulty getting access to a computer if not for this library. Of the twenty children enrolled in the class, generally only one might have a computer, so that's a point in favor of the library. Apart from all the resources of books and computers, this library serves three areas, Fontibon, Kennedy, and Bosa.... one does notice that the children are coming here. I don't know whether it's because they want to or because the parents don't have anywhere else to leave them so they bring them to the library. If they're little children they have lots of things to do: they have those courses here, they have reading sessions in the children's room, there's a game room, there are regular exhibits in all the branch libraries of the city.

I don't know why they shut it [the waste-treatment plant] and decided to rehabilitate it. They left the old structure and added some nice new things and made the library.... [T]hey created this park around it, and that really did change the area completely, because before there was nothing, no housing projects, there was nothing. I think it came out very nicely, considering the fact they didn't start from zero, I think it came out really well, and I think it won an architectural prize. (33)



Scenes in El Tintal Library



Conclusions and Openings

Two general points about these sites emerge from our study. The first is the important role played by the perception of transformation in the sites: in describing current conditions, interviewees frequently referred to the site before its development, either invoking personal memories or planning policies. The second is the importance of social markers in describing public spaces: interviewees regularly pointed to uses dominated by particular social groups, categorizing and differentiating places accordingly. In this context, one may also note a recurrent tendency to situate public spaces in broader social contexts, whether general or personal. This second point is consistent with our own observations, both of certain types of users or activities (street vendors, indigent or displaced people) and of strong signals of monitoring (police, security guards, watchmen, cameras) that mark these spaces.

Spatial Characteristics of the Three Study Sites

On another level, this study highlights three strong characteristics that all of the study sites share, regardless of their significant difference.

A Metropolitan Dimension, Both in Use and Atmosphere

What gives these public spaces a metropolitan dimension?

First, although spatially discrete, each results from a public policy that has been applied to multiple locations within the city. Thus local action takes place within a larger metropolitan discourse.

Second, each is a large-scale project that is legible due to its well-defined perimeters. As such, each seems to belong more to the metropolis as a whole than to the immediate neighborhood, in which it is not so much integrated as installed.

Third, in each space the combination of an open configuration and a degree of separation from the densely built surrounding zones gives rise to rare metropolitan

perceptions. Tercer Milenio Park has a magnificent 360-degree view of Bogotá: apart from a skyscraper roof or the tops of the eastern mountains, this is one of the rare sites where one can see a large part of the city. From a sonic perspective, the situation is equally metropolitan: we hear a 360-degree soundscape coming from the city in a continuous yet discrete and almost panoramic way. The library at El Tintal, placed within a park, is markedly detached from its surroundings: whatever our angle of approach, it is perceived from a distance, and by the same token, all directions are possible as we leave it. Finally, Jiménez





Avenue stand out clearly against the background of streets and neighborhoods that surround it. Though it crosses the city for several kilometers, it is sufficient to take any transverse or parallel street to realize how distinctive it is. In this context, one should also include the Transmilenio, which offers a unique experience of crossing the entire city and providing a series of superb urban scenes. The sheer length of the trip contributes to this metropolitan dimension, as do the stations, placed in central and isolated locations in the middle of wide avenues and in some cases extending for more than 1,000 feet in length.

Fourth and finally, while representing everyday places frequented by surrounding residents, each site (as the interviewees themselves pointed out) expresses a metropolitan dimension through its heightened attractiveness. In part, this is related to the Transmilenio service. In addition, Tercer Milenio Park appears as a new recreational public space in the city center. El Tintal Library, as well, is considered a place of convergence where Patio Bonito and newer neighborhoods begin to come together. Each site establishes an urban integration that is both spatial and social, covering territories that previously had been marginal. Thus, Tercer Milenio Park has constituted a means of eradicating (or at least displacing) the previous zone of extreme poverty and criminality. Jiménez Avenue also has eroded pockets of social marginality that had developed in its vicinity.

Hospitable to Individual Bodies and Groups of People

If one were to eliminate the people, these spaces would appear relatively barren. Largely lacking plants, buildings, or elaborate street furniture, their design is based mainly on their ground surfaces, with care having been given to the choice and installation of finishing materials. They also provide a wide range of seating options, including benches, curbs, and level changes, thereby offering many opportunities for the human body to sit, walk, lie down, and so forth. This of course is something that William H. Whyte described long ago in his observations of New York (1980).

Additionally, these spaces work as reserve spaces, offering people the opportunity to cut themselves off momentarily from the metropolis, buffering the urban aggressions of noise, traffic pollution, and unwanted social interactions. Thus people frequent them to relax and recharge themselves. Even Jiménez Avenue contains sub-spaces of this calming nature.

They are also highly flexible spaces, in which both individuals and groups seem to find appropriate places, thereby creating many sub-spaces that function at particular times for different activities, including both collective and individual sports, Sunday picnics, or workday lunches. This flexibility of use extends at Tercer Milenio Park to accommodating the police and army for training, and even to accepting encampments of refugees.



Beyond accommodating distinct groups or activities, these are places where people encounter others. They are considered meeting places, both for planned activities and for more serendipitous encounters. Moreover, they are places where people are close to others and where the coexistence of different social groups and activities, albeit challenging at times, is possible. Again, this quality is characteristic of their metropolitan scale.

Continuously Reconfigured by the Public

As the sociologist Erving Goffman (1971) showed, the public nature of a space is not a mere question of physical accessibility. Far from being a predetermined quality, its public nature is defined as the “socially organized functions” (Quere and Brezger 1993) that take place there. Encountering unknown people along a path, starting a conversation, and standing in line are all actions that each of us carries out routinely and without thought, a fact that demonstrates our awareness of the implicit rules that organize and govern social life. Managing forms of co-presence and mutual observability among strangers, or in a broader sense adjusting one’s behavior to fit daily urban situations, proves the existence of this “ephemeral order”

(Quéré and Brezger 1993), which governs public spaces through the activities and social interactions that take place there.

Although this is true to some extent of all public spaces, it is especially notable in our three case studies, whose ambiances—as the accompanying sound and video recordings demonstrate—are fundamentally characterized by the presence of the public. In this respect, Jiménez Avenue is particularly exemplary. As a central public space, its patterns of occupation reflect the great rhythms of the city. During the daytime when shops are open, the flows and the ephemeral masses formed by the public dominate: streams of passersby going up and down the avenue, crowds around street entertainers or hucksters, groups of pedestrians waiting to cross the intersection of the Carrera Décima, and families taking pictures at the Plaza San Victorino. These figures of crowds are more or less porous and in continuous motion, affecting even the physical form of the space and at certain times totally eradicating the perception of built form and space.

In general, this physical reconfiguration of space is directly linked to individual and collective activities

that take place in the streets, and in particular to the strong presence of street vendors. Substantial changes in this configuration can sometimes take place very fast. From this point of view, two types of phenomena are worth noting. First, gatherings of particular groups in anticipation of specific events, such as draftees, displaced persons, journalists, or people waiting for distributions of clothing, demonstrate the existence of border zones, sometimes vague, between the ordinary and the extraordinary, without necessarily creating a break in the course of public space. Second, street vendors themselves play an important role in creating this ambience. Often lightly equipped, perhaps with a small cart or a simple bag, our observations have shown that some of them move in the space following the events or the crowds, which intensify and vanish at a certain rhythm, thus contributing to the rapid mobility of the public and the fluid variability of the space. Some of these factors can be seen in the one-hour video, provided on the DVD accompanying this volume, which was taken between 5:00 and 6:00 in the evening at the intersection of Jiménez Avenue and the Carrera Décima.

At Jiménez Avenue, Tercer Milenio Park, or the Tintal Library, we are in the presence of metropolitan public spaces. But their public dimension is conferred not merely by the physical definition of their spaces but also through the shifting patterns of individuals and groups that are constantly reconfiguring them. Our sound and video recordings demonstrate the variety of these patterns and lead to a further observation. If we take these elements as our criteria for evaluation, then all three spaces are enjoying great success at the moment. Yet the continuation of this success is far from assured. One threat comes from the intensive gentrification process, which, if continued, will at some point prevent any real social mixing. On the other hand, any effort to reappropriate all of the space for a single type of activity, such as a permanent market, would hinder the continuous reconfiguration of spaces, times, and people that make these public places so successful. In short, managing these spaces so that they remain places for everyone, while accommodating multiple activities, calls for dealing carefully with a complex of practices at the same time.

Urban Narratives, Situated Controversies, and Transects

Beyond the characteristics of the spaces themselves, and what they tell us about the urban interventions that created them, our research has led to some broader observations about how urban narratives develop, how they both contribute to and are supported by the urban projects themselves, and how new methods of research can enrich our understanding of how to act on, and in, cities.



From Broad Urban Stories to Everyday Tales

In Bogotá, urban, cultural, social, and economic transformations have fostered the narrative of politicians and city professionals, especially during the mayoralties of Peñalosa and Mockus. A unifying story, drawn from a range of actions and projects that in some cases predated their terms, was built up to explain actions that did not necessarily represent a common aim or predetermined plan. Beginning with Mockus's second term in office, a broad consensus on public space policy, transportation infrastructure, competitiveness, and other issues arose among the different administrations as well as the media. This unifying narrative, of

rapid and efficient urban transformation, was in fact largely built “in the midst of action” and sometimes even afterward. Formally presented, accepted, and internationally celebrated at the Venice Biennale in 2007, it has served to give a global logic to the whole whose very explanatory power has helped to obscure the more complex and nuanced stories that have evolved. To say this is not to criticize either the projects or the larger initiatives behind them: on the contrary, we remain generally enthusiastic about the actions that have been carried out up to now. Yet we also want to bring out certain other lessons about urban project management that can be learned from these transformations. The real story is of actions taken where possible, when possible, and using available means, but above all, of actions supported by a real metropolitan story. Each local action, then, is part of a global story that includes social, cultural, educational, functional, and environmental issues. We are very far here from the kind of large urban projects that, seeking to establish an ideal spatial organization, are incapable of prompting narratives independent of the master plan itself. The real projects of Bogotá are multidisciplinary, and they cover all urban scales, from the provision of food at a communal dining room at a particular address—to the many remarkable cases of libraries, parks, and schools throughout the city—to the global reordering of the metropolis through the Transmilenio.

What this research shows is that this story is now effectively shared by three types of people, and that this sharing has enhanced its power and efficiency. First, prominent city actors (both politicians and other professions) continue to focus on the cultural, social, and public values of urban transformations, even as decisions are partly driven by factors external to their objectives, such as commercial real estate development. Second, residents know and have made this story their own, as part of a shared culture of urban actions and projects. Remembering Bogotá before the interventions, their urban narratives largely corroborate the official discourse, especially that of the recuperation of public space for the public. Our interviews show that a large number of people have “recognized” and in a way “adopted” these urban transformations, without denying the existence of what we might call situated controversies: that is, emerging disagreements about appropriate activities, mobility, the onset of gentrification, and so forth. Third, planners around the world, as well as the international media, have taken up the story of rapid and spectacular transformation, usually (as we have noted) rather uncritically.

More than the transformations or policies themselves, it is this global urban story, perpetuating itself and becoming increasingly disconnected from

reality, that motivated our sense that a closer look was needed: that it was necessary to return to the narratives of ordinary people, to consult the daily and lived experiences of residents, and to carry out field observations at the sites themselves in order to anchor urban narratives in observed reality. Again, our goal is not to contradict the public story of Bogotá’s transformation but to show that the way toward genuine regeneration must take us through the social reality and the involvement of all concerned actors.

To this end, we are convinced, first, that it is important to produce descriptions based on lived experiences and field observations; and second, that these descriptions should take the form not of a continuous tale but of a mosaic of sensations, stories, performances, observations, and reflections that seek to capture the experienced reality of all the participants. Moreover, we consider the collection, creation, and sharing of these elements to be part of public life, and therefore also part of the new projects themselves. Capturing and being attentive to real situations and narrations, through walks, interviews, observations, pictures, sounds, videos, and so forth, do not in themselves constitute sociological expeditions, detached reportage, or even a research paradigm for understanding a global situation. These recordings of reality and its stories are meant rather to be the first concrete evidences of a complex, varied, and evolving urban situation. Our goal thereby is to enable the sharing of these stories for the purpose of transforming observed reality, or at least putting it into debate.

Situated Controversies

Our research suggests that Bogotá’s policy of recovering public spaces should be understood in relation to three distinct kinds of spatial recuperation:

- Spaces that are statutorily recovered: that is, spaces that are made truly public and accessible to all through the reduction of illegal privatization as well as obvious forms of permanent appropriation, such as street vending.
- Spaces that physically recover through “fitness” or “reshaping”: that is, through detailed physical interventions, including innovative renovation and daily care and maintenance.
- Spaces where people recover: places where people spend a moment to step back, take a break, and distance themselves from the sometimes exhausting city.

All three of our study sites are recovered spaces in the senses outlined above. But that does not mean



they are free of controversy. To describe the disagreements that surround them, we draw Bruno Latour 's analysis (1991) of scientific controversies to propose the expression "situated controversies." For us, situated controversies point to dialogues taking place between local and global issues. But in contrast to scientific controversies, we think that urban controversies need to be located, and therefore incarnated, in order to be productive and not merely rhetorical. In addition, these situated, located, or incarnated controversies need to be reinserted into the overarching public narratives projected by politicians and the media, not in order to diminish the transformations that have been achieved but to update the urban story and restore its social richness as a basis for genuine discussion and constructive action.

Our observations provide insight into Bogotá's situated controversies and a context in which to understand them. We observe, for example, how the world of "before" resurfaces again and again. This is significant because, in giving rise to the new global narrative, the projects have also obliterated the very conditions of their implementation: the destruction of neighborhoods, displacement of populations, removal of markets and peddling permits, and so forth. In fact, the physical projects themselves did not eliminate poverty: it merely moved to the next neighborhood, the drug dealers have gone a little farther, and street vendors have invested elsewhere. Yet citizens remember. They know or wonder, for example, where the ghosts have gone (as some used to call the Cartucho inhabitants). If they are concerned about what people have become, they also show fear of their returning in uncomfortable numbers. Nor is it only former residents who continue to live in the consciousness of these public spaces: interviewees also recall the former garbage dump of

El Tintal and talk about the garbage that continues to resurface in the district around the library.

Here and elsewhere, renovation activity too often proceeds through removal or displacement of the former uses, and through imposition of a new social order that includes reinforced surveillance and more rigorously codified activities. People discuss these changes, but they do not necessarily criticize them deeply, because in general they appreciate the projects. Nevertheless, they worry about the neighborhood's evolution, talk about future projects that will not be meant for them, and express concerns about increasing gentrification and the danger of a more thoroughgoing elimination of social diversity.

These concerns point to a current tendency to reduce or control the sharing of public space, and they reveal a growing gap between the public story, which remains largely that of earlier mayoral administrations, and the stories of current residents as they perceive the evolution of the projects in question. Here again, we believe that the sharing of narrations, with the consequent reactivation of situated controversies, would help participants to know how to pursue these urban transformations today and for the benefit of all.

We remain convinced that living together in the city is possible only if there is a dialogue between different stories, a dialogue that does not negate controversies but instead admits them into the debate. We cannot continue indefinitely imposing a story built only from outside and increasingly unconnected to the reality of current residents. Instead, we need to breed a new collective reality by updating the story, drawing on residents' knowledge and experience of places, and sharing this information.

A shared story is one that builds on what exists and what everyone is willing to bear. We have found this forceful relationship in Bogotá. But there is no guarantee that it will continue to exist, automatically and forever. Rather, it is something that must be continuously built, or there is the risk that it will be lost. As Siegfried Kracauer suggested in a different context (1930), the sharing of stories, finally, is not about making Bogotá change but about letting everyone change Bogotá.

Urban Transects

We hope that our work has facilitated this kind of mutual creating and telling. To accomplish this, to blend stories and places into a unified understanding, we present not only our own text, accompanied by photographs and quotations from the interviews, but also our sound and video recordings taken in situ. The final component, not included here, is a form of multimedia presentation that we call a *transect*. It allows the connection of various types of data along different urban sections: spoken words, photographs, video sequences, soundscape extracts, and also analysis drawn from our literature study and interviews with experts. The transect is an imaginary line that defines a section through the city linking our case studies: public spaces, public transport, and cultural facilities.

At the regional scale the section has been a favored representation method used by geologists, geographers, and landscape designers. At the beginning of the twentieth century the Scottish urban planner Patrick Geddes underlined the "synoptic" potential of the section, its capacity to reveal the relations linking human lives to physical geographic frames. His use of the section aimed also to put together different disciplinary perspectives in one visual representation. Since then, there has been a link between the graphic and cultural conventions of the architectural section and those of the transect as used in human geography and the social sciences. The use of the famous "valley section" (conceived by Patrick Geddes fifty years earlier and inspired by the geographical studies of Alexander von Humboldt) by Team X opens new possibilities of hybridization of these two representation methods to serve the urban and architectural project. Yet until now this representation method has been underdeveloped. Rarely used at an urban scale, its potential as a tool of representation and design for the city and metropolis remains to be developed, particularly with regard to contemporary social and environmental issues.

The section offers many advantages. Rather than implying a predominant discipline or requiring exhaustive data, it selects everything that appears on its way and creates a meeting point between architectural, social, and sensory dimensions, between the



public and private spheres, between the built and the mobile. It allows a reading of historic strata. Its metonymic potential allows inscribing in filigree both narrations and perceptions of atmosphere or ambience in a static and graphic representation.

For geographers, the word "transect" refers to a tool that permits observation or representation of space through a section taken vertically in order to show a superposition, succession of spaces, or relationships among different phenomena. Thus a "transect" is not only a method of graphic representation but also a path through the space. Yet as opposed to the casual urban walker or "flâneur," the creator of a transect knows that he must make intrusions, transverses that cross the line of the transect. Thus the transect differs from a clinical section in that it involves the body of the viewer itself.

For us, the urban transect is an observation tool, located between the technical section and the sensory trajectory. Action as well as meeting place, the transect uses the technical representation of the section and trajectory in order to hybridize them; it is conceived in situ as well as through drawing. Adding atmospheric dimensions to architectural representation, and making possible the inclusion of narratives, the transect is a promising tool for representing both the sensory space that people inhabit and the daily practices they engage in there, for the purpose of analysis and conception. Above all, we believe the transect could provide the groundwork for urban narrations in which situated controversies can be expressed, updated, and discussed.

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(All recordings of interviews with residents are identified in the text by numbers following the quotations.)

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