

BOOG

OTA





# Positions in Practice

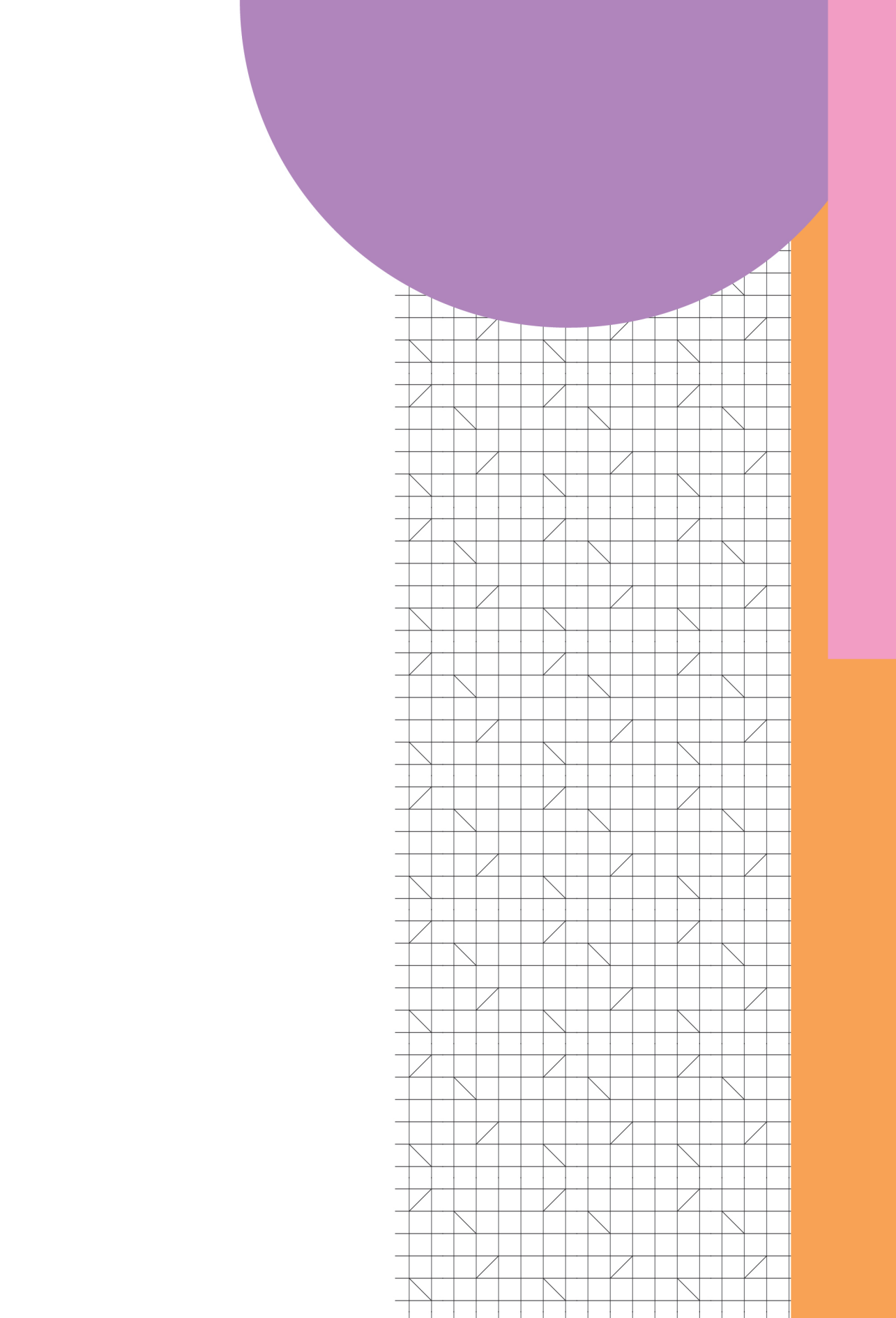
Constructing the Commons in the Latin American Metropolis

Experiments of Analysis and Intervention  
MSc3/MSc4 Graduation Studio - Spring 2017

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# Bogotá: our introduction

We were, for the most part, foreigners in this city. Apart from one native Bogotano in our group, we were unfamiliar with Bogotá and its culture. That was one of the reasons the city had been picked for us by our tutors, for the graduation studio of Methods & Analysis of the TU Delft Department of Architecture.

The focus of the chair is to investigate the existing architectural, social, political, cultural and economic structures around us, and the design processes that had created them. Particular emphasis is given to the under-studied places of the world, and working cross-culturally. Therefore, disarmed of the tools we would normally turn to, dealing with fresh faces and unfamiliar design cultures, we needed to build new tools and create new approaches. We arrived in the city with the intention of learning about it, and from it. We then developed our own architectural positions on how to face the challenges that face this fast-growing metropolis in the Andes mountains, and from this create informed urban and architectural propositions.

Bogotá, like most Latin American capitals, has undergone exponential population growth throughout the 20th century, rising from 700,000 inhabitants in 1951, to more than 8 million today. This growth has been the result of simultaneous and interrelated processes of attraction to the city as a source of opportunity, prosperity and safety, and repulsion from unproductive and violent rural peripheries. Accommodating successive and continuous waves of rural immigration has, for decades, been a challenge for the city, both in political and spatial terms. Issues of identity are manifest in diverse communities and their particular spatial practices.

Our group started by studying the area of La Soledad, just north of the historical city centre. It is a middle class, cultured, and safe part of the city. It is, however, not without its problems. The pressures of migration, densification and gentrification are noticeable in this area of the city - it has a large homeless population and various poorly functioning urban elements. On the other hand, the neighbourhood is relatively well-functioning and as a result it has been under-studied in the past in favour of more problematic areas. The aim of our investigation was understand the root of this area's success, and interrogate its shortcomings.

This book covers the research phase of the project and shares our initial investigation of Bogotá. It summarises six months of insight, explaining how we developed our own methods of analysis, investigated the city with them and formed initial architectural proposals for Bogotá. The second half of the year will be concerned with developing these proposals into plans.

We all stood in small circles in the large room. Groups of seven, six who lived in Bogotá, and one who did not. Introductions were quickly made, the new names slippery, as hard to remember as last night's dreams as the new day begins. Eyes were upon us. Were we to lead the way, in a city that our group mates call home? After seconds that felt like minutes somebody suggests "Let's get going".

During our first week we took part in a workshop with undergraduate students of architecture and industrial design from Universidad de los Andes. The focus was on the joint development of site research and an interdisciplinary response to public space in La Soledad, Bogotá. Investigating the "Commons" involved traversing multiple scales of intervention, and finding methods to reconcile these different scales. Within the limited timeframe of one week, we envisaged a movement from on-site investigation towards a design of public furniture, collective places and public space.

We were sorted into small groups, in order to share our knowledge and approaches whilst investigating I

La Soledad. Initially we were concerned that the workshop was preventing us from exploring the city ourselves. However the combination of our experience as masters students with their local knowledge lead us to develop prescient ideas that have become fundamental to our projects. Our ideas have been strengthened by the input and value gained through working with our Colombian colleagues. By the end of the week, the different groups had created proposals, ranging from strategies for housing the homeless, revitalising public spaces, and turning private balconies into a public resource.

As we became more familiar with our surroundings, we experienced the dissonance of



walking a street first explored on the internet halfway across the world, as the memories of our previous visit, made virtually using streetview, were filled in with sound, smell and feeling. We explored different urban areas, visited Bogotá's finest buildings and experienced the cultural life on offer. We made connections with local architects, designers, and manufacturers of building materials, including visits to the offices of Rogelio Salmona and a tour from the Sociedad Colombiana De Arquitectos. By the end of our trip, we had greatly increased our understanding of Bogotá, of Colombia, and of the people who live there. Returning to the Netherlands we began to process the findings of our trip, developing our analyses of the city.

In the months following our trip to Colombia, we have been working across a wide range of interests, themes and methods of working. A common preoccupation of the group has been the study of human activity at various scales, from city wide systems to an individual's behaviour in the street. It relates to the wider investigation of the Chair of Methods & Analysis

around the notion of the "Commons," a challenging theoretical construct which has emerged across the fields economic, political and social sciences, suggesting radically different ways to organise our societies based around shared ownership of, and responsibility for, resources. The commons can often have a strong spatial appearance or have aspects that affect the organization of space. Urban architecture is not only able to organize societal spaces, but can also contribute extensively to their very accessibility, appearance, location in society and possibility of appropriation, hence the of the theme of the commons.

As a whole, we have tried hard to understand the history of the city, the way it formed according to the rules of colonial Spain, and how the dramatic landscape has affected its growth and shape. The history of architectural thinking in the city has been crucial to our understanding as a group, having studied individual buildings designed by Colombian architects, entire building typologies such as housing, and larger systems of infrastructure.

There are also some overlaps between the



types of methodologies we have employed in our analyses. Some have used narrative investigation as a creative way of writing about the city and the experiences it creates, and to study those who have already written about Bogotá. The group has also pushed beyond traditional forms of architectural representation, using painting, photography and illustration to develop a multi-temporal approach, encompassing history, daily rhythms and concrete reality in a singular piece of work.

In order to understand how the city was shaped by government decisions, Floris van der Burght took a keen interest in the housing policy of Bogotá. Using cartographic analysis, he has looked at how class divisions can be concretised and manipulated by the government, and how borders between administrative regions can be as divisive as physical walls. Meanwhile, he accessed the archives to trace how housing policies were translated into physical architectural projects in Bogotá in the second part of the 20th century.

Complementing this data-oriented research

on the city of Bogotá, Guillermo Luis Rodríguez embarked upon a narrative journey to investigate how Bogotá has been portrayed in literature, mapping out the city's appearances in books over the years. He has combined this with a study of different aspects of literary production, from writing to graphic design, and from libraries to bookstores within the Teusaquillo locality, arriving at a strategy to combine several of these disciplines in a craft school.

While the two aforementioned projects studied real and imagined accounts of the city, Martine Huisman has instead explored another field of tension very present in the city on both spatial and social levels: the theme of visible/invisible. She discovered how the almost defunct rail network is used as a site for the city's informal waste recycling. Investigations into material flows, Bogotá's waste disposal network and the transport network, has given her an understanding of an underappreciated, yet vital, part of the city. Her proposal will help the city grapple with the vast amount of waste it generates, whilst simultaneously supporting those who rely on waste collection for their

livelihood, as well as reappraising the existing rail network. The project not only unlocks the spatial potential of the city, but also the social potential of an “invisible” group in society. The trajectories of the waste appeared to be intrinsically linked with the daily practices of some poor urban communities.

The idea of daily narratives was used in a rather unconventional way in the work of Matthew Cook. He has employed narratives as a way of giving a voice to the architectural elements of the city, as classified by Kevin Lynch as the edge, path, district, node and landmark. He anthropomorphised the elements, creating stories of life in Bogotá from their imaginary perspectives. Using this literary technique, he explored why they work, why they fail, and how small changes can lead to drastic effects. With this, he has returned to the Rio Arzobispo, his site of study during the workshop, by mapping its path and preparing for the task of addressing its weaknesses.

Looking at one of these urban elements, the edge, Lilian Tran focused on the appropriation of space. She studied edges as active borders where moments of social encounter could take place; or boundaries, hard edges separating two social groups. She later widened her scope, moving from the theme of edges to that of the thresholds allowing to transgress them, to encompass appropriated spaces across the site, studying bridges, bookshops, universities and statues, combining close architectural analysis with impressionistic watercolours, creating an essence of place. The lessons learnt about appropriation, along with her extended precedent analysis focused on framing of views and routing, have given her the knowledge to design complex buildings interacting with the urban fabric of Bogotá.

#### Probing into Precedents

We spoke no Spanish, she spoke no English. She gestured to us to follow her to her daughter, who could speak with us. We explained we were students from the Netherlands, and would like to study the house she had turned into a bookshop, a hidden oasis of calm in the busy city. We saw a face of confusion as her daughter relayed our request. We received an answer, “Sure, go ahead”, delivered with a quizzical look.

Alongside these studies, we selected a number of precedent buildings in Bogotá and compared them to European buildings, using them as ‘sparring partners’. The contrast between the two architectural projects allowed us to distill their most important aspects, so that we could learn from the techniques used to create them and eventual use them in our own designs.

Floris compared municipal housing in Bogotá and Algiers, investigating the different approaches used by the Colombian and Algerian governments in building large multi-family housing blocks. The differences in climate, family culture and inter family dynamics were all apparent in the architecture of the blocks’ design and uncovered through Floris’ detailed research.

Martine and Guillermo started by looked at a modernist theatre in the heart of La Soledad that had formerly been a large home. Martine progressed onto looking at the unrealised Potteries Thinkbelt plan, studying how a single institutional programme can become a citywide network of departments. Meanwhile Guillermo developed his understanding of differing approaches to domestic architecture, comparing an early 20th century Colombian villa with an innovative Dutch home designed 50 years later. He studied their different approaches to layout, programme and circulation, reflecting on the societal norms these differences represented.

short paragraph with main shared conclusion / ambitions?

Matthew and Lilian started by studying a bookshop in Bogotá, situated in a converted home, an oasis from the busy city. Matthew compared the bookshop to Le Fresnoy School of Contemporary Arts, detailing how both buildings used thresholds and a feeling of transgression to create their individual atmospheres. Lilian compared it to the STUK performing arts centre, and the two buildings’ use of framing devices and architectural routing.

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TALLER  
DEPARTAMENTO DE DISEÑO

2017

## WORKSHOP [SMLXL] COMMONS

LUNES 13 A VIERNES 17 DE MARZO  
8:30-12:30 p.m. ESCUELA TALLER -  
ESTACIÓN DE LA SABANA

### Coordinators:

Klaske Havik; Faculty of Architecture of the TUDelft.  
Daniel Nadal, Claudia Mejía; Arquitectura, Universidad de los Andes.  
Christiaan Job Nieman, Eliana Sanchez; Diseño, Universidad de los Andes.

### Participants:

30 Students Diseño Uniandes (Estudio 3) / 30 students Arquitectura Uniandes  
6 MA Architecture students TUDelft

**Information:** [cj.nieman20@uniandes.edu.co](mailto:cj.nieman20@uniandes.edu.co)

A teaching collaboration between the Chair of Methods and Analysis of the Faculty of Architecture of the Delft University of Technology and the Departments of Architecture and Design of the Universidad de los Andes. The workshop focuses on the joint development of immersive research and an interdisciplinary response to the public space in Bogotá. The interests of the different departments coincide in an approach to the idea of the collective, tracing a route that crosses different scales of intervention, coinciding in a response that allows these scales to articulate. It proposes to work in a scenario that gathers community, public furniture, collective places and public space, developing a global/local response of urban design, from the commons. The work will collect perceptions and observations about the different scales of public, closing with the conclusions of the analysis and strategic proposals of urban intervention.

# 01

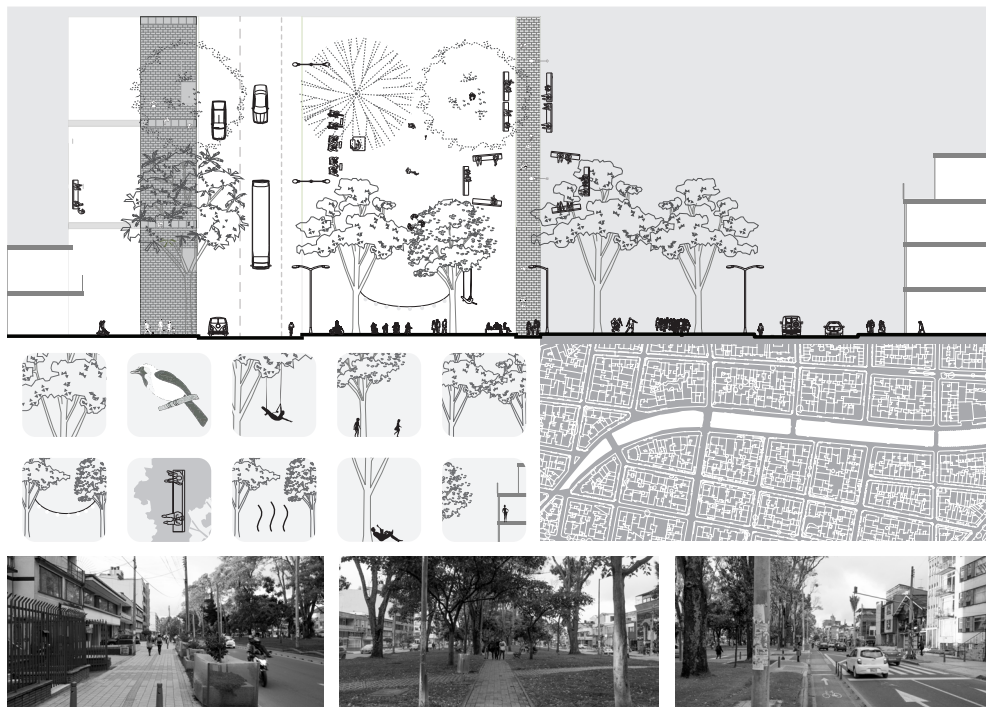
## Workshop

- 1.1 Alive Commons
- 1.2 Invisible Communities
- 1.3 The Discursive Landmark
- 1.4 Street Vendors Under the Bridge

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# Alive Commons

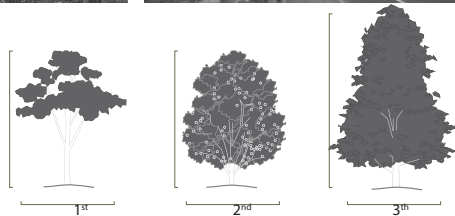
Guillermo Rodriguez



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Under the direction of the Austrian urbanist Karl Brunner, the Park Way was designed following the principles of the garden city. Decades later, the Park Way is a strip of public space covered by vegetation surrounded by a dense urban fabric. Thanks to this, the people in the neighborhood have in high regard this particular public space. The question that haunted us in the workshop was, how the vegetation enhances the experience of the space. We could appreciate the numerous interactions.

Throughout the short time of the workshop, we wanted to understand how the vegetation, and especially the trees, alter the interactions in the public space. We sat on one of the numerous benches, this one under a tree. From there, we tried to identify and describe. The product of our effort was a diagram in which we list the relations and features seen there. The diagram also seeks to reflect the vitality of the Park Way. We saw young people eating and drinking under the trees, clearly students either from the schools or colleges that are located nearby. There were acrobats practicing with their ropes attached to the trees. The dwellings and office



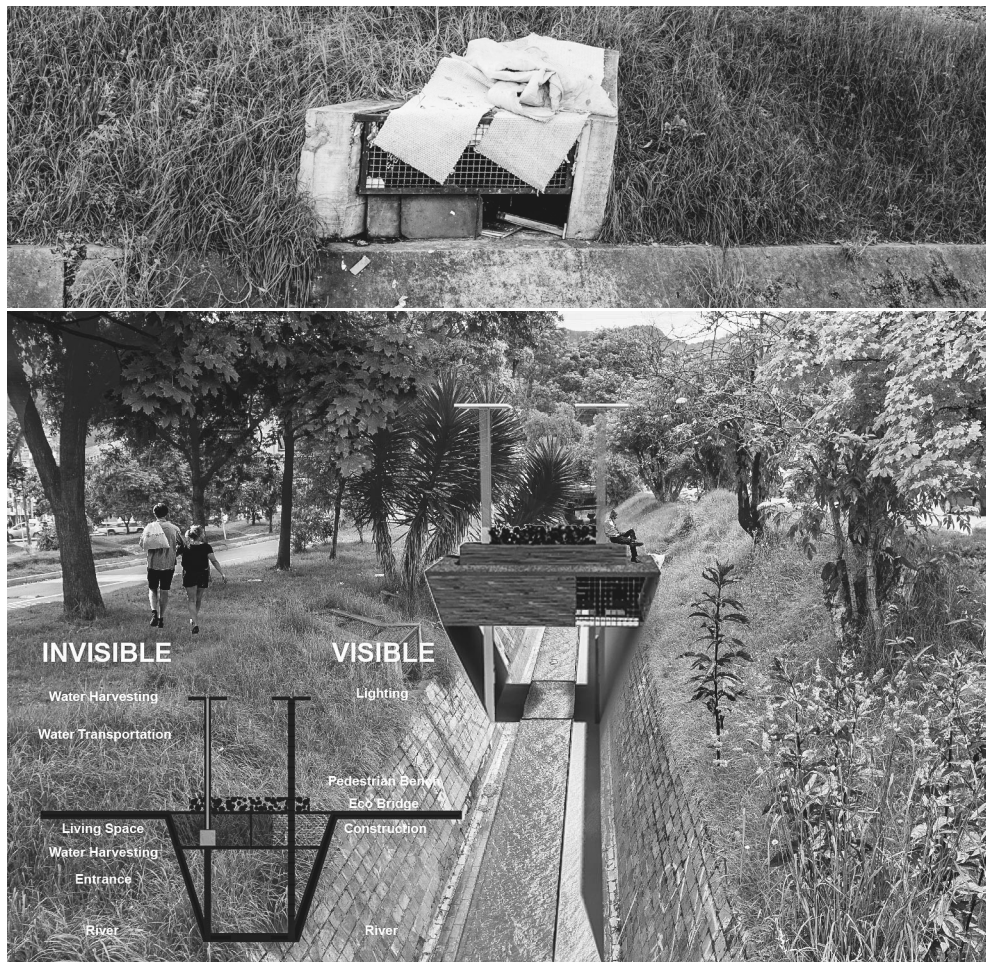
from the first floor upwards are partially hidden from the view. In the late afternoons, we could see birds nesting on the trees. We venture two explanations on why this public space is so lively, namely the attractiveness and the safeguarding of the neighbors.

Firstly, take advantage of the features of each tree species is essential for the enjoyment of public space. The most common species is the Urapan. A tall tree with scarce leaves high on the top. At the eye level on the street, the Urapanes do not block the horizontal view. Secondly, the people around the Park Way feel compelled to protect and take care of the park. After a few hours of taking notes and photos, we were approached gently by one of the passersby. He wondered what we were doing. Neighbors know what is happening in the public space, a sort of silent control.



# Invisible Communities

Martine Huijsmans

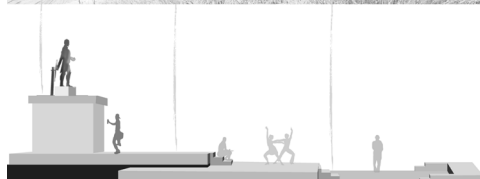


During the workshop I developed an interest in hidden aspects of urban life; the Invisibles. After an on-site explorative walk we came across an everyday element along the Arzobispo river; the sewer outlet. The sewer outlets and spaces under bridges were used by the homeless community to sleep and store their personal belongings. Each of them had appropriated their own place in this system, going so far as to add decoration and personal items.

Our aim was to design an intervention which would create a function for the invisibles (the homeless) as well as the visibles (the neighborhood residents). The eco-bridge is a pedestrian link, connecting the two sides of the riverbed. Between the double structure we created a hidden safe space, with room for storing goods or sleeping. Incorporated in the design are two double function elements; the street lighting which is also a water harvesting device and the bench/storage cabinet.

# The Discursive Landmark

Matthew Cook



Our group started the exhibition by exploring la Soledad, investigating the various character areas within the district. Two features of the area proved interesting. The Rio Arzobispo and the Parkway are two topographically similar linear strips of green space disrupting the pattern of city blocks, yet behaviourally they are completely different. The Parkway acts as a park and cultural hub for la Soledad and the Rio is quiet and underused, apart from homeless people looking to avoid the rest of the city.

We focused on the objects within Parkway, finding a statue of Admiral Padilla particularly interesting. It was used as a place to protest, perform, sit, meet and teach. This one architectural element was a focus for the park.

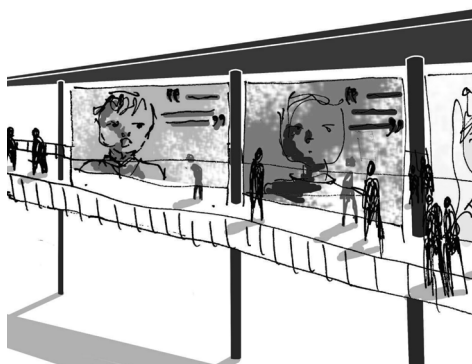
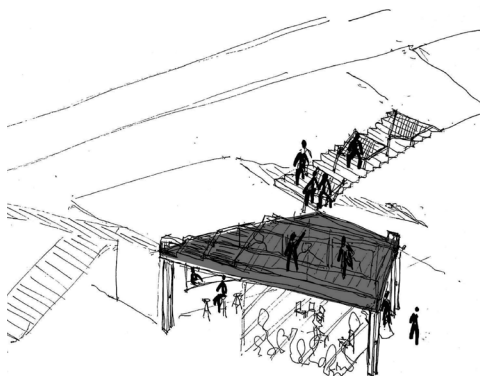
We dug into the design of the statue, working out how it supported such a huge range of social activity with such a simple construction. We identified it was a combination of seating, stage and historic landmark that caused it to be the focus of the park.

Our final proposition was to transplant the architectural qualities of the statue from Parkway to Rio Arzobispo. This would give the river a point of focus and potential for new activities, helping transform the whole river from dormancy into a well used urban element. We proposed a sunken stage, surrounded by seating, focusing on an empty plinth. This plinth would take advantage of people's propensity to climb atop objects, and they would become the statue



## Workshop Investigation

Lilian Tran



Under the bridge were many vendors selling food and convenience items. This is their livelihood, and there are no viable alternatives. Many have regular customers and their presence makes the area feel safer at night, so their service fosters a sense of community. However, speaking to locals about the area, they complained that their work was under threat, because Mayor Peñalosa intends to remove all vendors in an effort to 'clean' the streets.

The bridge allows nearby University students to cross the congested highway, directly into an enclosed, pedestrianised space. This makes it an ideal place to communicate with fellow citizens, so the structure also facilitates a kind of forum.

Our proposal: one of the stairs is located such that it is obsolete. Appropriate it with simple wooden structures, transforming it into seating. The landing has lightweight extension, providing a roof for vendors underneath, and a platform above for local artists to hire. Proceeds from this would go towards an awareness campaign, to highlight the plight of the vendors.





# 02

## LiteraryBOGOTA

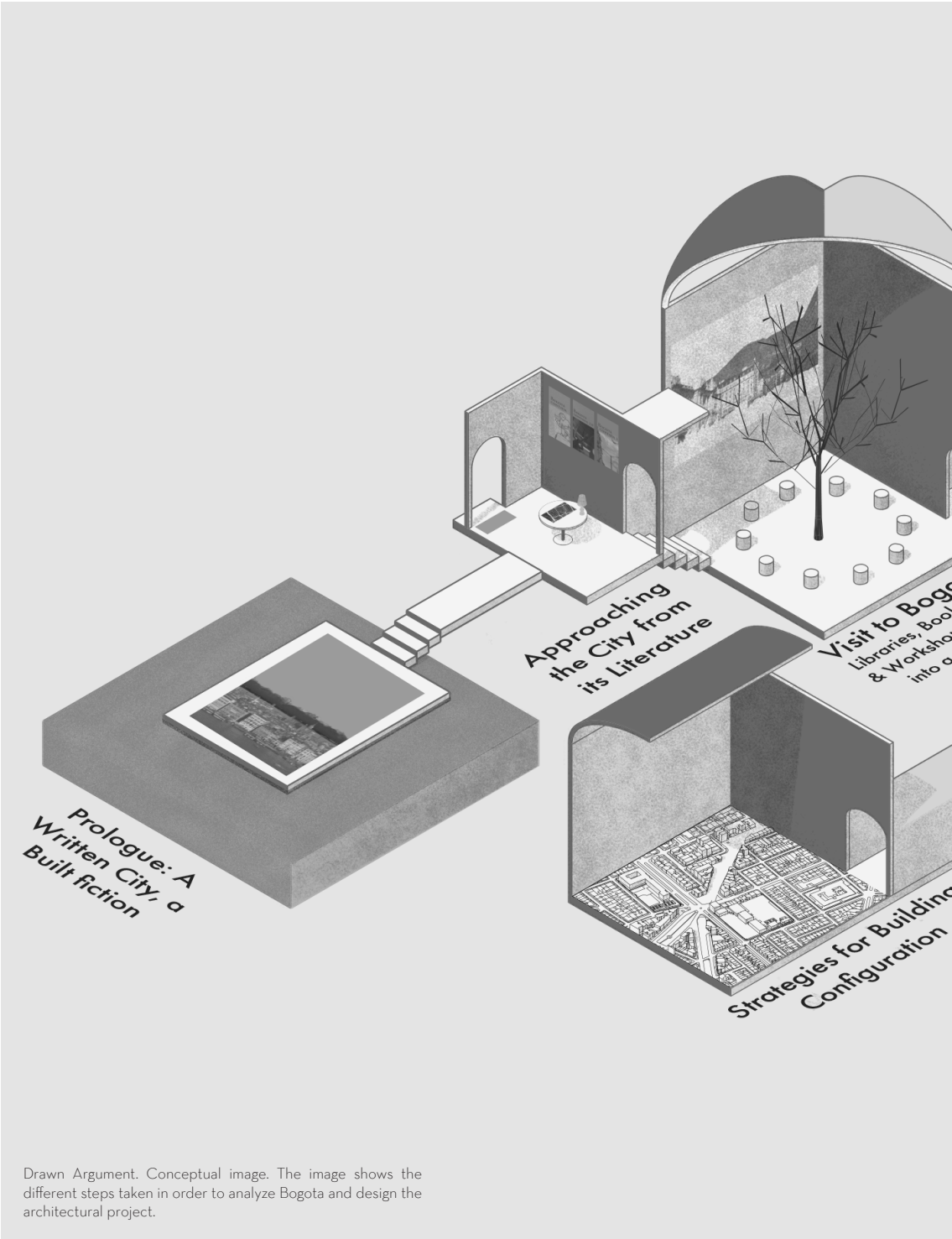
Guillermo R. Verjan

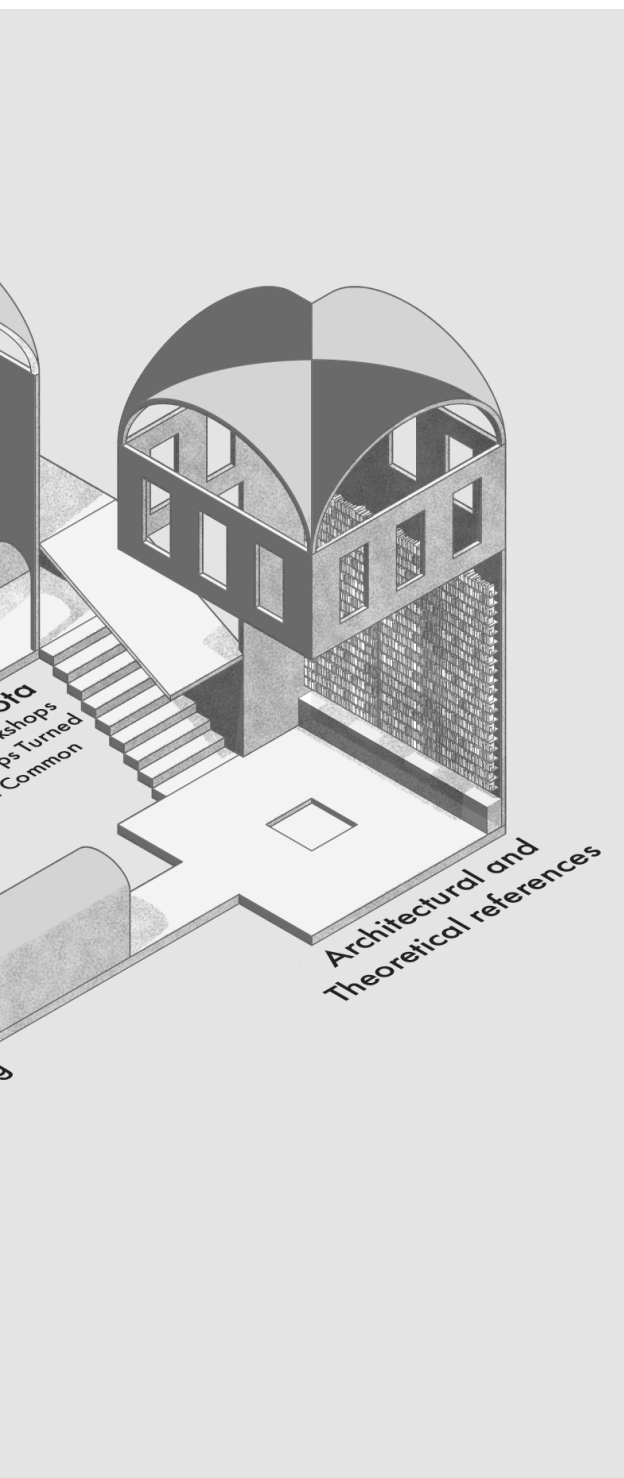
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# Phases of Analysis and Design

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Everything started with a question. The theme behind the project is to identify and interpret the shared resources of the city; what we call the commons. Thinking of the city's shared resources helps one to realise that it is a large network of commons. The image of the city, its atmospheres and public spaces are among its most defining commons.

When someone says that a city is their home, such a statement entails that they know aspects that are unknown by any visitor. However, it also happens that a visitor can recognize details and aspects unknown by its inhabitants. A city always carries its own measure of complexity and ephemerality that mocks our effort at comprehension. There is a record of those complexities and those ephemeral events made of multiple voices. This record is literature. Indeed, literature deals with what is common to us all. Literature is a common that says who we are as much as the public space that we inhabit daily.

Bogota has a flourishing literary scene. It has been the subject of narrations both by locals and foreigners. An example is the experience of "Bogota Contada". On three different occasions the city has invited several foreign writers to visit the city and write about it. Coming back to the initial question, it is this: Considering the literature as a common, how can architecture incorporate literary narrations and descriptions in order to understand and interpret the elusive notion of the place. I attempt to answer with five components that had been developed in a more or less sequential order.

First I develop a theoretical essay in which it is argued that there are tools shared by architecture and literature. The essay is titled *A Written City, a Built fiction* and takes Venice as a study case to prove its hypothesis. The second component focuses on Bogota and the stories written about it. The third component is our visit to the city. The fourth is the architectural references that inspire the project. The last component is the reasons behind the choice of the location for the architectural proposal.

# A Written City, a Built fiction:

Architecture, Literature and the Elusive Notion of Place.

## Introduction

How many times have we been in a city and felt a strong desire to know it, in a unique and personal way? We often draw, record, interview, take pictures and try to remember every little detail as we stroll through the city. Although equally often, we end up with the feeling that our image of the city is incomplete, somehow our image have blurry areas. The writer Georges Perec, part of the Oulipo group (workshop of potential literature), became famous because the constraints he set on himself to write. Constraints such as writing an entire book without the letter E. Perec set the challenge of describing a city as follows: "Note down what you can see. Anything worthy of note going on. Do you know how to see what's worthy of note? Is there anything that strikes you? Nothing strikes you. You don't know how to see"<sup>1</sup>. He assumes the task of choosing twelve different places in Paris, and describing them two times per year, for twelve years. 'What I hope for from it, in effect, is nothing other than the record of a threefold experience of ageing: of the places themselves, of my memories, and of my writing'<sup>2</sup>. I argue in this essay that architect can learn from these literary tools, in order to enhance their research of the city and its architecture. Furthermore, I argue in this essay that the fiction (the creation of characters and events), helps the architect to have a better comprehension of the elusive notion of place. The relations between architecture and literature are much closer than one might think.

## Literary Descriptions in Species of Spaces

I will argue here that the purpose of the book *Species of Spaces* is to investigate space, and particularly the spaces of Paris, by describing it. In other words, Perec tried to show that, by describing what is evident and customary, one can achieve some understanding of the subject at stake. To use those literary descriptions on a more architectural basis, I decided

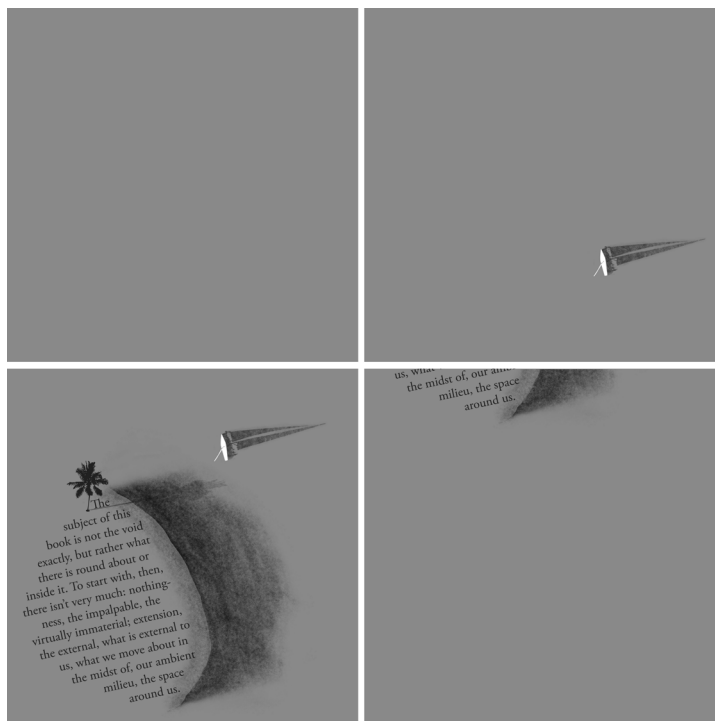
"Do you know how to see what's worthy of note? Is there anything that strikes you? Nothing strikes you. You don't know how to see"

to use drawings to investigate a city other than Paris, where the original descriptions were written. The use of discourse and drawings to do architectural research is certainly not new. The architect Emre Altürk wrote about the speculative drawings made by the architectural group Achizoom. "The text hypothesizes an urban condition and the drawings investigate this condition through form, develop its spatial counterpart, and radicalize it to render it visible. The drawings, as basic and unpretentious as they are, inevitably are more multivalent, open to various readings. Whereas text frames their signification, limits the possible readings, and anchors them to the specific discourse of the group." Its conclusion is, that words and images in tandem constitute a research method of the city.

Using the Perec's descriptions and practical exercises, I drew conclusions from the city of Venice. The structure of this research method on Venice is as follows: from each chapter is taken an excerpt that reflects on the most important aspects of it. Then each excerpt is illustrated, combining the text and references taken from Venice. The city of Venice is known by its numerous bridges, but once a year the city install a temporary bridge from the church of Il Redentore over the Giudecca canal. The event is called Festa del Redentore. I consider The event in three illustrations, because this event creates an interesting connection over the biggest canal in Venice.

## A Built fiction

Nowadays, it is often argued that we live in a "highly developed visual image culture"<sup>3</sup>; and usually those who hold that opinion condemn such culture. For them, visual culture means a society in which consumption prevails over activism; narcissism prevails over compassion<sup>4</sup>. One of the first to condemn the rise of such society was Guy Debord. His position towards the images could be recognized when he states that "the more he contemplates the less he lives"<sup>5</sup>. Nevertheless these denouncements seem to be far too apocalyptic. They blame the media, and not the message. This position fails to recognize how important



## Foreword

The book starts with an intriguing image. It is empty square on a page. Below, one can read "Figure.1: Map of the Ocean". Suddenly one feels that the square is not empty, but it represents a space. A space occupied. So, one can understand that the space is not a void, but something else. It is in the more extreme places, like the deserts and oceans, where people are more conscious of the notion of space. This circumstance has been portrayed by J.L. Borges in the short story The Two Kings and the Two Labyrinths. In the story, a king is left to die in the middle of the desert, a labyrinth "where there are no stairs to climb, nor doors to force, nor weary galleries to wander, nor walls to block your way"

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## The Page

The space begins with words. This is, it begins with language, in conversation.

### The Apartment

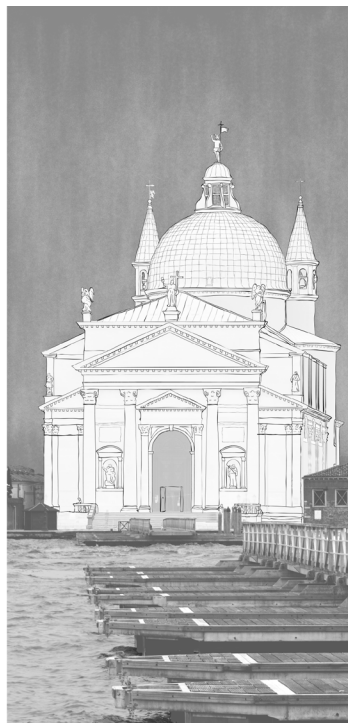
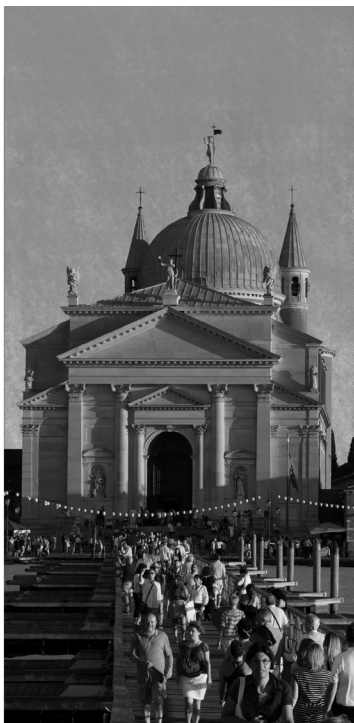
It is certainly hard to image such a useless room. It is easier to think of spaces that are useless, that is to say, spaces that have lost the rituals that once housed. It is true they the ruins have lost their use, but again and again, we see how they acquire new uses. Their primarily 'use' now is to be contemplated. Venice have a special kind of the useless spaces. The strangeness is that they are constantly maintained, but they are closed to any use. The entrances of certain palaces are always closed, but remain visible.



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### The Street

This chapter explains how Perec understands the task of describing. By describing, Perec can give life to the apparently anodyne subjects. Perec considers that everyday life is full of things worth communicating, but one must train the eyes to see them. The illustration tries to show the difference between describing on the spot, and describing by memory. In the first illustration, the things that strike one's eyes are drawn. In the second, only the things that strike one's memory are shown.





visual communication is. The increasing number of images available should not be seen as a threat. Even when the body is still, the imagination is always working. Images have been of paramount importance for humanity, since early times. To demonstrate this, one could mention the cave inscriptions in Altamira, which still today exert fascination and mystery; one could also mention the important role played by the painters in the science expeditions to the New World, and their drawings and paintings which revealed their encountered wonders to Europe. Even, the French writer Marcel Proust, wrote the well-known passage in which a writer dies of joy looking at a Vermeer's Paint <sup>6</sup>.

Architects spend most of their time producing images. Images, diagrams, plans and maps are preferred over written or spoken language for several reasons. The ideas contained in images can be understood at a glance; images do not need to be translated into other languages; and there are images used by architects that are not only representations, but are essentially analytical tools. These drawings are what Emre Altürk called speculative drawings. In his words, speculative drawings are those *"that mobilize questioning by changing the syntax and the signification of their object; the drawings that compare, juxtapose, superimpose their objects; relate them to other discourses; shift their context; isolate and exaggerate their elements; render their specific qualities visible or offer alternative*

*readings."* <sup>7</sup> Because of their analytical nature, this images enable to speculation, draw arguments and set a position towards the studied subject. The importance of the speculative drawings is, that the drawings are often consider both the tool and the end result of an architectural research. Thus, in a discipline so dependent on the use of images, is there any room for literature to strengthen the architec-

tural research? I argue that this is possible, and that it is even more fruitful than one may think.

#### Fictional characters and events

Architecture demands a poetic interpretation and translation. First, an interpretation of the elusive notion of place, and then a translation of that notion into a built form in which humans will dwell. If we consider the work of Alison and Peter Smithson, who devoted most of their career to residential architecture, they are aware of this poetic translation. Dirk van den Heuvel wrote: *"This idea of architecture as 'the direct result of a way of life' was the closest the Smithsons got when it came to a definition of the relation between architecture and sociology; yet again, it should be noted not as some universalist truth but as cultural and local specificity. To translate cultural pattern into architectural form was then part of the poetics of the architect, the issue at stake to 'drag a rough poetry out of the forces at work' as the Smithsons further explained less than two years later"* <sup>8</sup> The poetic translations and interpretations are sustained by perceivable conditions. Two of the most ubiquitous paints of the history of art illustrate two opposite relations with the place.

One is the Wanderer above the Sea of Fog, painted by Caspar David Friedrich in 1818; the second image is The Angelus by Jean-François Millet. One could imagine a scenario in which an architect is asked to design a house for the each of the characters depicted. Those two houses must be different, because the places they seem to inhabit differ, and because their relation with the place are essentially opposed. That architect would have to imagine, what is the best way in which architecture can translate their experience of the world; how they behave, what events could take place there and where the house. Out of this thought experiment, the architect is continually facing this same question: how people are going to live in the designed spaces?. Architects must create characters and events in the space, as they would in literature.

Architects are trained to draw interpretations from particular cases, so they can come up with general spatial strategies. That is to say,

1 Perec, G. (1997). *Species of Spaces*. London: Penguin Books, p. 50.

2 Ibid, p. 56.

3 Gerrewey, C., Teerds, H., & Patteeuw, V., (2013). What is Good Architecture?. *OASE*, 90, 4.

4 Holtrop, A. (2013). A Possible Architecture?. *OASE*, 90, 28.

5 Debord, G. (1990) *The Society of the Spectacle*. New York: Zone Books.

6 Proust, M. (2003) *In search of the Lost Time*. London: Penguin. p. 207.

they construct specific fictions that have general implications. The path from the particular to the general happens in both those narrations and buildings that are considered a paradigm. Aldous Huxley tells us that the writer is as an observer, an organizer and a communicator of the human experience of the world. The writer's method, according with Huxley, is to focus on a specific case, to observe it so thoroughly that finally the writer can see it clearly. Every specific case, public or private, is an open window to the universal. *"The King Lear, Hamlet, Macbeth: three horrific anecdotes about human beings highly characterized in extraordinary circumstances. But, through the narration of unique and improbable events, Shakespeare saw, and miraculously made it possible for us to see an enlightening truth on every level. From the theatrical to the cosmic, from the political to the emotional and physiological, from what is extremely familiar and human to the unknowable and divine"*<sup>7</sup>

Architecture also operate in this manner. Van den Heuvel quotes the architectural historian Peter Collins: "Wright, Gropius, Mies van der Rohe and Le Corbusier, originally gave expression to their theories by building either villas for wealthy connoisseurs or, after the 1918 war, modest dwellings for artisans or impecunious artists. The romantic suburban villa was not so much a minor building-type characteristic of the early nineteenth century, as a paradigm for the architecture of the whole age."<sup>8</sup> So, given that architects use the fiction while designing, and they extract general lesson from particular projects, it is relevant to draw architectural conclusions while using literary fiction. Which is in fact, the case of Wim van der Bergh and Mark Poosten.

## Haustheater

Wim van der Bergh and Mark Poosten teach a master's degree workshop, which is described in their essay *Narrative as an Educational Approach. Literary Methods in Architectural Education*.

Their workshop deals with the radical difference between function and use. In order to make this evident, they use theatrical plays. 'Function' refers to the practical aspect contained in the labels such as dinner room, bedroom or kitchen. In that way, the function of a dining room refers to a space which, in certain cultures, contains at least a table and a chair. Function refers to quantities, and not to qualities. In contrast the expression 'use' refers to much more. It states the experience of performing and acting in the space. Van der Bergh says: *"For many years, we observed that students, while making a design, mainly concentrated on getting the first aspect, the 'static and uneventful scenes' right. In other words, getting their spaces in terms of square meters, function and distribution."*<sup>11</sup> Students are assigned a play and a paradigmatic house. They have to situate one act in the house. Finally, the assignment is presented by the students who read the play whilst showing floor plans in which the play's actions have been drawn. The tutor referring to the educational aim of this assignment as: *"Since most of the houses we selected are widely used as references in literature and lecture, students tend to think they know these houses. But there is a difference between recognizing a house and really knowing a house. Again, by focusing on the house as a temporal frame or context for 'use', the act of staging, or so to speak the introduction of a narrative, forms the basis for a thorough investigation into its architectural characteristics."*<sup>12</sup> The strength of the assignment is that by giving a play as a starting point for the architectural research, the students can focus on how the architecture accommodates events and generates experiences. This assignment helps to show that an important part of the architectural job is to think about the way architecture is 'used', and consequently how the

7 Altürk, E. (2010) Drawings that take sides. In M. Riedijk (Ed.) , *Architecture as a Craft*. (p. 57.) Amsterdam: SUN

8 van den Heuvel, D. (2013) *Alison and Peter Smithson a brutalist story*. Retrieved from doi:10.4233/uuid:7e9d6f1f-9b3e-4b85-a4ce-72f7eca919ba

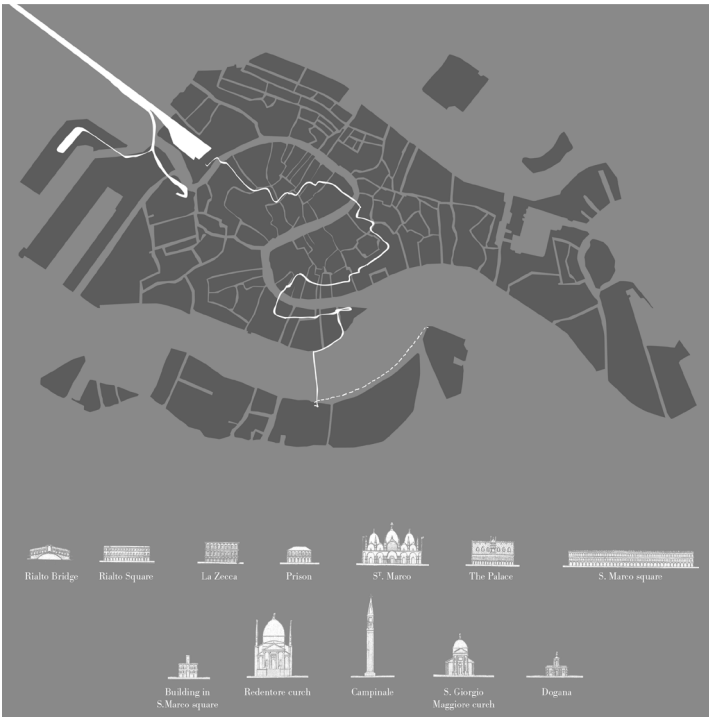
9 Huxley, A. (1964) *Literatura y ciencia*. Barcelona: Edhasa. p.13



### The Neighborhood

It is usual that many neighborhoods receive their names accordingly to a Parish. The dictionary states that a parish is a small administrative district having a church. This is the reason why the illustration shows the different churches and the streets that connect them. Venice have an incredible density of churches.

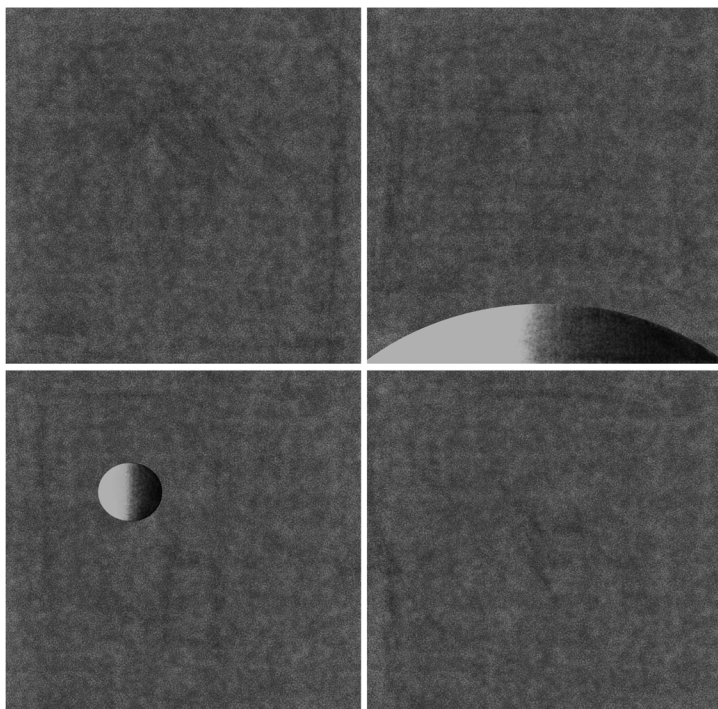
25



### The Town

Visit a town for the first time is like filling blank spaces, that at the end constitute a sort of narrative. When visiting an urban space, the architect is driven by questions that try to answer. It is a sort of derive. A touristic visit seems like a net connecting the monuments and sights of interest. The illustration shows the road that connects the most visited monuments of Venice.

Space  
 Space melts like  
 sand running through  
 one's fingers. Time bears it  
 away and leaves me only  
 shapeless shreds: To write:  
 to try meticulously to  
 retain something, to cause  
 something to survive;  
 to wrest a few precise  
 scraps from the void as it  
 grows, to leave somewhere  
 a furrow, a trace, a mark or  
 a few signs.



26





architecture affects its 'user'. In this case the, 'users' and events are defined by the literature, but in a professional assignment that user is a defined client. Even in public spaces an architect must imagine who are the people who will use it and what is their cultural background. In that case, architects can learn for particular cases, but must be able to work on a wide variety of projects.

### A Written City

Literary description has been written and used by architects many times in the past. Therefore, the literary description in architectural research is not so much an exchange between disciplines, but more like an enhancement of an architectural tool; one that writers also have at their disposal. It is important to note that architects combine those descriptions with drawings, so they can interpret their findings more easily. A way to show the importance and relevance of literary descriptions and drawings for architecture by paying attention to the description made by some architects in their formative journeys. An important book in this category is *The Journey to the East*, by Le Corbusier. The young architect helped himself financially by writing short descriptions of the places he visited, so these reports would be published by a newspaper in his birth town, Chaux-de-Fonds. His descriptions have an undeniable literary worth; Another example are the letters of Viollet-le-Duc. In one letter he wrote to his father from Rome on the 4th November of 1836. In the letter, he described the Coliseum of Rome. But the literary description allows him express not only what he is seeing, but also allowed him to imagine its 'use'.

*"I go to the Coliseum, I observe for half an hour the exterior, but the cold push me inside on the arena; there, I felt tired, I sit and after great effort to comprehend some construction systems, the imagination transports me. I see the Coliseum with its huge sea of seats covered by the Roman population: here the senators. I see the purple velvet hanging over this crowd, whose murmur is like the distant sea, later the murmur turns into screams of joy, wild roars, and this arena, today quiet, I see it tinted with blood. But the red cross in the middle brings me back to the reality; I look around, and instead of the crowded seat, there is no more than amorphous ruins, fallen archs, green shrubs, dust and hoariness."*<sup>13</sup>

### Conclusion

Both architecture and literature deal with what is usually called 'the theatre of life'. The ties between these two disciplines are profound, although not always explicit. It is not for nothing that the theatre refers at the same time to architectural and literary concepts. I have shown that the two disciplines share tools on each's own researchs. Architects could gain a lot by paying more attention to how writer describe reality.

10 Van den Heuvel, D. op. Cit., p. 81

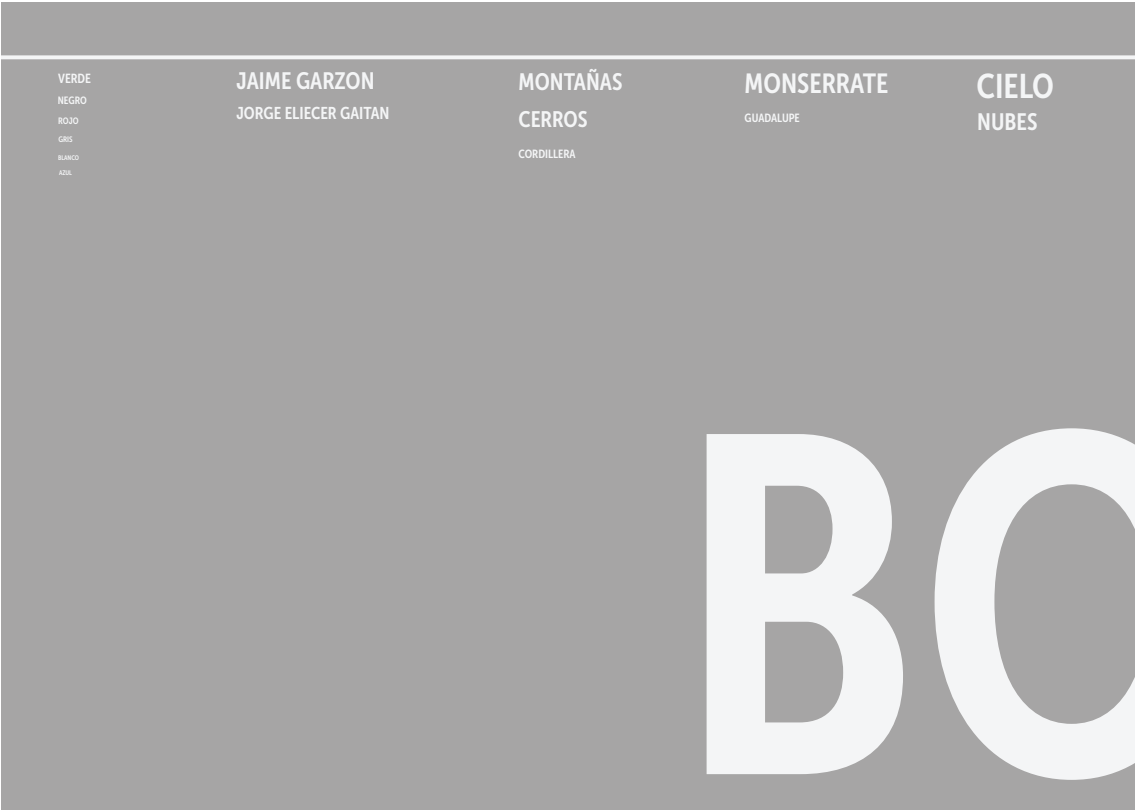
11 Van der Bergh, W. & Proosten, M. (2016). Literary Methods in Architectural Education. In Havik, K., Mejia, J., Schafer, M., Proosten, M., & Oliveira, S., (Eds.) *Writingplace : investigations in architecture and literature*. Rotterdam: nai010. p. 114

12 Van der Bergh, W. & Proosten, M. op. cit.

13 Mansilla, L. (2002). *Apuntes de Viaje al Interior del Tiempo*. Barcelona: Colección Arquithesis. pp., 134-35.

# Literary BOGOTA

Approaching the city from its literature



28

This is how everything start, with words.

*"How difficult is to escape from the mentality of those who have just arrive, he thinks again and again, the recently arrived reporter. How easy it is to pay attention to what all the foreigners pay attention to; this is what the foreigne reporter thinks. The rolling weather, yes, and the presence of the mountains, and the mind-blowing graffities, and the estratos, and the violence or the shadow or the memories of the violence. To scratch under the surface, thinks the shaking reporter, I need more than a week. I need months or years, thinks the doubtful reporter."*<sup>14</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Hasbún, R., (2015) Las Palabras. In: Garcia, A., (Ed.) *Bogotá Contada 2.0*. Bogota: Libro al Viento.

[up] Diagram. The size of each word is determined by how many times is mentioned in the 15 stories collected.  
[Left] Fragment. Drawn Argument. Conceptual image.

This is a fragment of a narration written at the Bogota contada, in its second edition. Written by the Bolivian author Rodrigo Hasbun, it clearly expresses the challenge of understanding a foreign city. In each edition, they invite nearly a dozen of authors to visit Bogota and narrate it. Each writer faces a foreign city and looks for a theme to write about. Some narrations focus on the territory, which is the first attribute of a city and from many of its characteristics arise: its climate, topography and its flora and fauna. There are also writers that leave aside what is first seen, and look for themes not so evident. for example the particularities of the culture or how the inhabitants shape the city. We found, in the narrations a third approach, which is an attempt to find what is familiar among the foreign. Several writers emphasize how similar Bogota is to other Latin-American, in particular their common histories. In each approach tensions are spotted, and because of them, the narrations are relevant as prior knowledge

GRAFFITI

VER

VIAJAR  
ESCUCHAR  
LEER

VIOLENCIA

GUERRA

MEMORIA

MUSEO

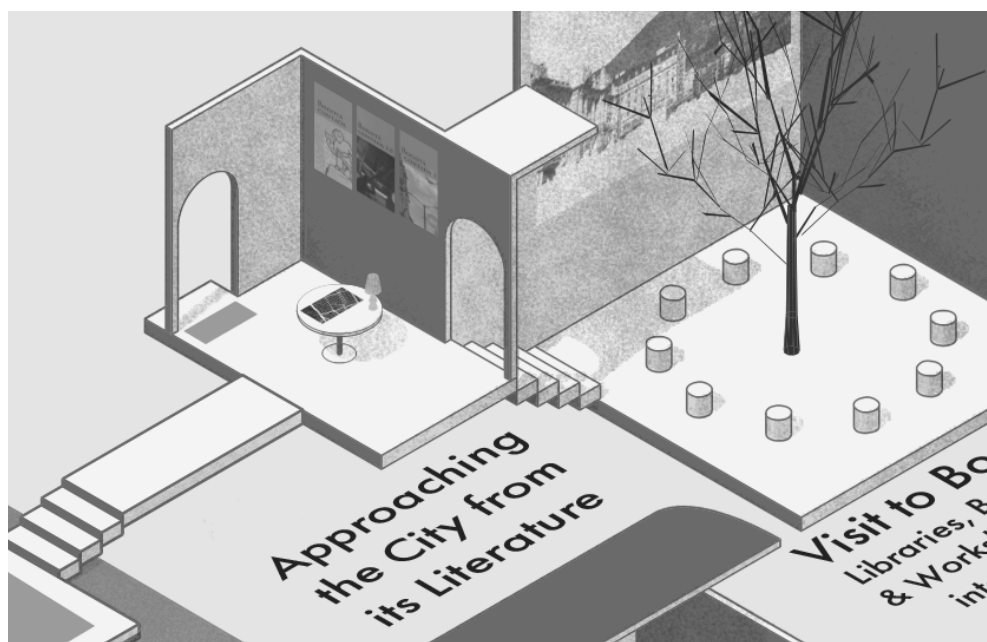
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OGOTA

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those recurrent subjects, places and memories described in the narrations. Consequently, two sets of maps were created, each one collected in a book.

The first book deals only with the narrations by foreign writers. This set of maps tries to understand the narrations on two of its levels: on one side, the narrations describe spaces in Bogotá, on the other they portray the atmospheres of them. In order to show those two levels, the book is printed on tracing paper, as a result the maps are superimposed. We shall explain how those two levels are mapped.

[up] Map of narratives in Bogota. The stories and the places they narrate are represented.





There are spaces in the city that are recurrent subjects of the narrations, such as the poetry house Silva, the central cemetery or Luis Angel Arango Library. The Guatemalan author Rey-Rosa describes the library in his narration. A place where he found himself at ease. It has been a meeting point for numerous writers and intellectuals. Rey-Rosa depicts the library as an island of peace, in the midst of a chaotic and violent city. So, the map of this level focus on the location of the library, its surroundings and its architecture. The narrations also describe the experience and atmospheres inside the space, its long corridors, the abundant marble and numerous skylights. The second level is

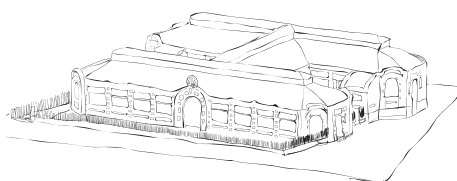
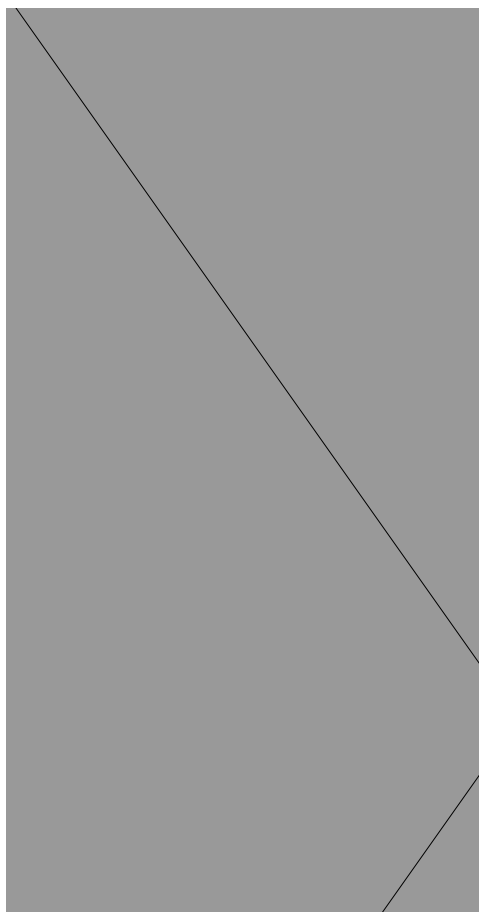
therefore portraying with photos and drawings. In short, each narration is presented and printed on three pages, one layer holds actual narration, underneath are the locations and finally the illustrations.

The second book seeks to oppose the narrations of the foreigners with the ones made by local writers. Bogotá has several writers who have describe and use the city as a background in their narrations. A well-known example is the narration by of William Ospina in Ursua. There the writer wonders about the very existence of a capital in such an isolated place on the Andes.

[continue on page 23]

The first time I visited Bogota, not long after my wanderings in India, I got to know the Library Luis Angel Arango. I don't remember if I got there on my own, or I went with a book fair delegate. The truth is that the building and its facilities -an impression of marble and glass, and silent corridors full of books- I was dazzled. The fact that I could find there everything I was looking for made me think it was an ideal library. I said to myself, while I was strolling in its corridors looking for the exit, that a city, even if it is hostile and cold -and in 2001 Bogota was hostile due to its violence, and the weather was not that welcoming- with a library like this it would be possible to live well. I came back seven years later, and it was a different city: less violent, more welcoming. I went again to the great library, and I thought again that Bogota, thanks to that place only, could be a good city to live in. 15

He got the impression that Bogota was a city of priests and organ-grinders, birds-vendors, gypsies and harmless lunatics that live and happily flourish. In the evening of the first day among the Bogotanos, he got into an open Tram, payed a cent of dollar and sat, waiting to know where the line ended. It went to the south, winding across the outskirts until a factory where the line ended. He stepped down and climbed a stone staircase which finished at a beautiful forest. Walking through the forest, he saw a small orchid, partially hidden. He carefully picked it up and saved it between the pages of his passport. Later, he sent it by mail to Oakes Ames, who described it as a new species. This is how, on his first day in Colombia he discovered an orchid unknown by science. It was also his first sample picked in Colombia, the first among more than 25,000 that he collected. 16



Here goes another attempt to describe Bogota. The painter of the postcard lived in Japan, which explains his perception of the landscape. As it happens in a Haiku, the nature is the subject, but as a poem, a painting can't be just beautiful. It is necessary to provoke turbulence, a disorder of the senses. My experience of the city lacks a second part; a second stanza that was completed a Sunday, when I was climbing the mountains. [...] In order to have a precise description of the city, I learnt, the most adequate genre is not the narrative. Bogota is a Haiku. A formation of two images that are only

completed in the mind.<sup>17</sup>

Muddy street, beaten by the wind ... /  
Streets of Bogota, with eternal winter, with cold  
and smog ... /Streets that gave up long ago! /  
Progress erased the names: Calle del Embudo,

Calle de Chorritos, Calle del Molino del  
Cubo,

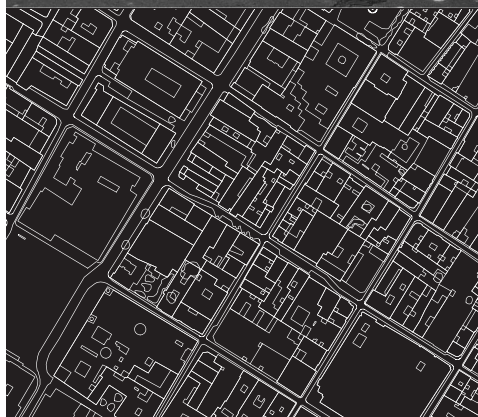
Of La Cajita de Agua, Calle de Venera,/  
Streets that stretch ... stretch ... / With houses  
with adobe walls or raw earth ... /Streets walked  
step by step, / Counted and measured in the  
rigor of the experience, / Wandering solitary,  
content to be alone, / With nothing but to  
smoke and shut up, / And walk ... / under the  
opaline sun, among facades of ash. / Avenida  
Jiménez, Seventh street... / Streets that run by  
/ Wet umbrellas, Streets with signs like Restau-  
rant and Bar, / Straggling streets, hasty crowds,  
/ Which are divided into two zones of/ Different

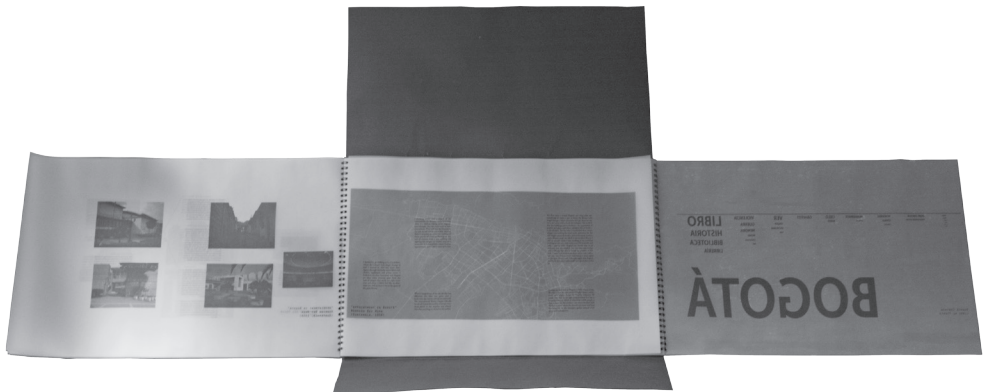
15 "Appointment in Bogota"-Rodrigo Rey Rosa

16 "The River"-Wade Davis

17 "Seven Postcards from Bogotá" - Adriana Lunardi

18 "I've devoted my verses to the streets"- Mario Rivero

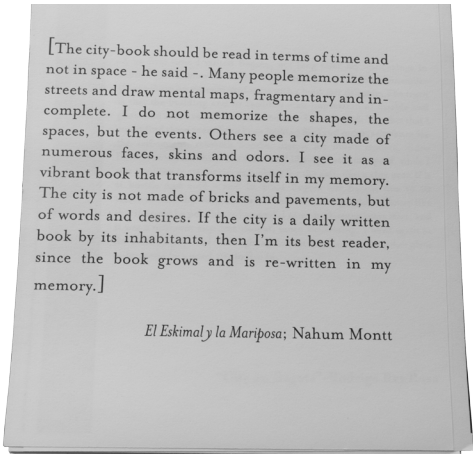






A curious condition in times where all the goods could only reach the city carried by dunkies climbing the mountains. Each narration is illustrated with a collage that represents the main elements of the narrations, together with a drawing of the spaces mentioned. The book is printed in such a way that several histories can be seen simultaneously, and therefore the book plays with the idea of mixing images and stories, and consequently produce new interpretations about the city.

[Left] Book No.1 Narrations from Bogota Contada.  
[Right] Book No.1 Narrations both locals and foreigners writers.



# Visit to Bogota

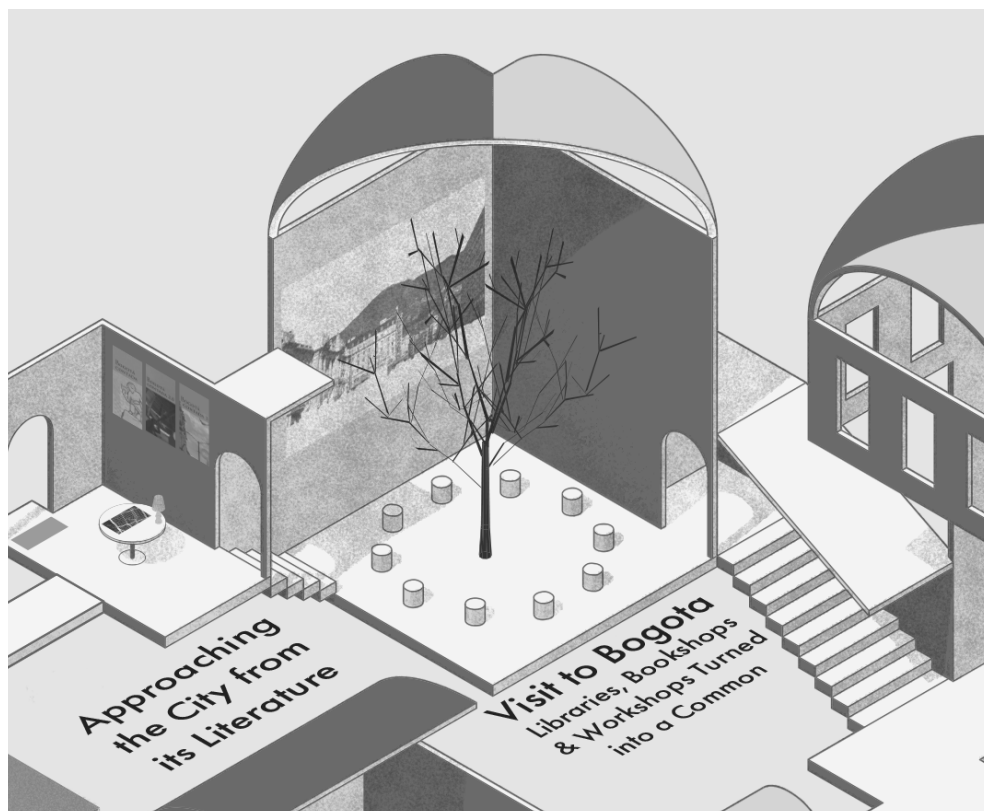
Libraries, Bookshops & Workshops Turned into a Common

*"The city-book should be read in terms of time and not in space - he said -. Many people memorize the streets and draw mental maps, fragmentary and incomplete. I do not memorize the shapes, the spaces, but the events. Others see a city made of numerous faces, skins and odors. I see it as a vibrant book that transforms itself in my memory. The city is not made of bricks and pavements, but of words and desires. If the city is a daily written book by its inhabitants, then I'm its best reader, since the book grows and is re-written in my memory."*<sup>19</sup>

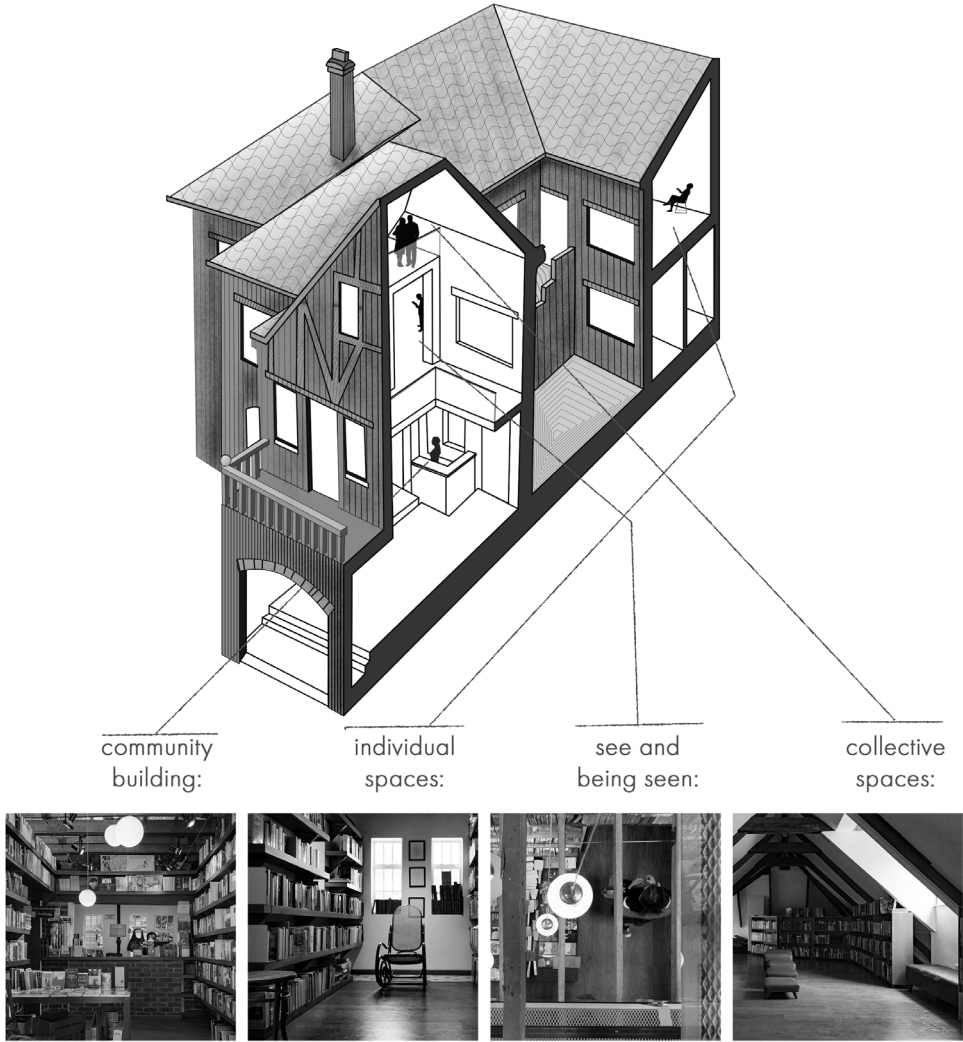
Everyone has an image of the city that is somehow different, narratives and stories can help to change that image. The narratives alter the experience of the city in the sense that literature can set the reader on a certain aesthetic attitude. Such attitude influences the way in which is interpreted our experience. Therefore, each everyone's city is made of memories, spaces and narratives woven through time.

The approach to the city from its literature helped me to find an aesthetic attitude before visiting the city. Once there, I tried to analyze part of the city taking into account the themes found in the narratives. One theme was particularly relevant. Rey Rosa described one of the most important libraries of the city, the Luis Angel Arango Library. He argues that, thanks only to that library, and no matter how hostile and cold the city is, it is possible to find a wellbeing in Bogota. Indeed, the libraries are public spaces on their own right. They are space to be alone, as much as to be in a community. Spaces for creativity, as much as spaces just to be.

19 Montt, N., (2012) El Eskimal y la Mariposa. Bogota: Alfaguara.



In order to endure, the bookshops have  
to build a community of readers,  
therefore they turn into a Common



Intrigued by what kind of public space the libraries are. I wanted to analyze part of the city from the perspective of the industry of the book. The Teusaquillo neighborhood has the greatest number of bookshops, publishing houses and storehouses for the distribution of books in the city. Such concentration of activities around books responds to the localization and architecture of the neighborhood. It is located between four of the city's main universities. Its architecture consists of houses in a row, that in the past housed the economic elite of the city. Such houses have a great quality and aesthetic to make them an invaluable opportunity to be repurposed.

The analysis was carried out by visiting the bookshop in the area and making interviews. All the interviews have in common that they tell how the companies were founded, and their intentions behind it. It is frequent that the people interviewed express fond love for the books. As a conclusion, there are two aspects that came

to light. The bookshops always seek to do more than just sell books, in as much that they have cultural agendas, like lectures, courses and book clubs. The second aspect of the bookshops is their willingness to combine activities in their facilities. In Teusaquillo there are to be found bookshops that are simultaneously publishing houses, design offices, libraries and even restaurants.

[Below] Collection of books about Bogotà, gathered while visiting the bookshops in Teusaquillo.







“The experience of working here has been interesting. I started as an independent bookseller. Nonetheless, five booksellers work here, each with a different field of expertise. Yolanda Auza founded this bookshop two years ago, after she retired. She dreamed of having a bookshop, because she have a fond memory of what was the Buchholz bookshop. First she acquired the house, built in the 1940’s. After she refurbished the house, she gathered a team of five booksellers. That is important because a bookshop is not simply a space, it is a catalog of works for sale. Depending on the interest of the client, there is a bookseller that recommend a book. We also have an extensive cultural agenda.”

Interview at Wilborada.



“We opened 16 years ago. Maria Osorio, the founder, wanted it to be a bookshop specialising in children’s literature. On the second floor of the house are the offices, and what used to be the garage is now a library. We thought this would be visited only by people from the neighborhood, but curiously we receive kids from other parts of the city. The library is an alternative service from the bookshop. Maria thought that often the parents are worried that the kids like a book that they can’t afford. The books are indeed expensive. She felt sorry that the books end being for just a certain elite. That’s why she opened a library with a private collection.”

Interview at Libreria Babel.



# Architectural and Theoretical References

In the process of the architectural project it is fundamental to acknowledge what are the architectural and theoretical references. In this chapter, it is shown a project and an architectural tool that reflect on the different aspects at stake in the final proposal for Bogota. Firstly, it is study the Diocletian Palace in Split, bearing in mind that it contains architectural principles sought to apply in Bogota. Secondly, is presented the literary description, as a tool which combines the literary narrative with the architectural experience. To demonstrate how this tool works, it is used two residential projects, one in Bogota and the other in Groningen.

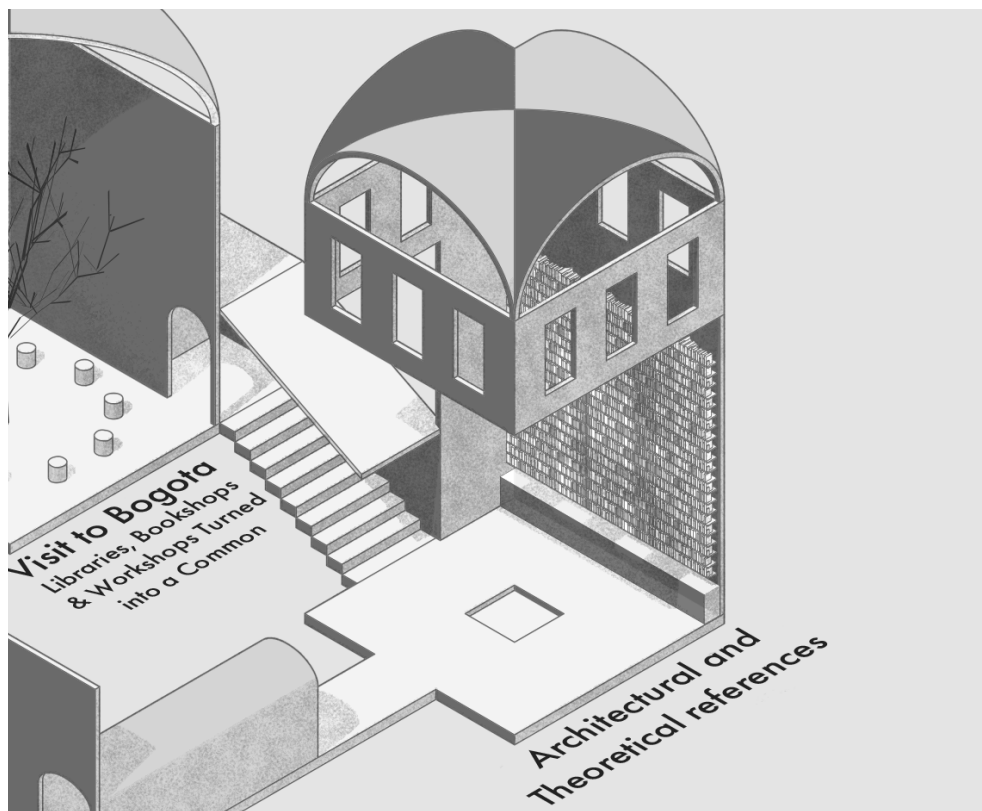
## Diocletian Palace

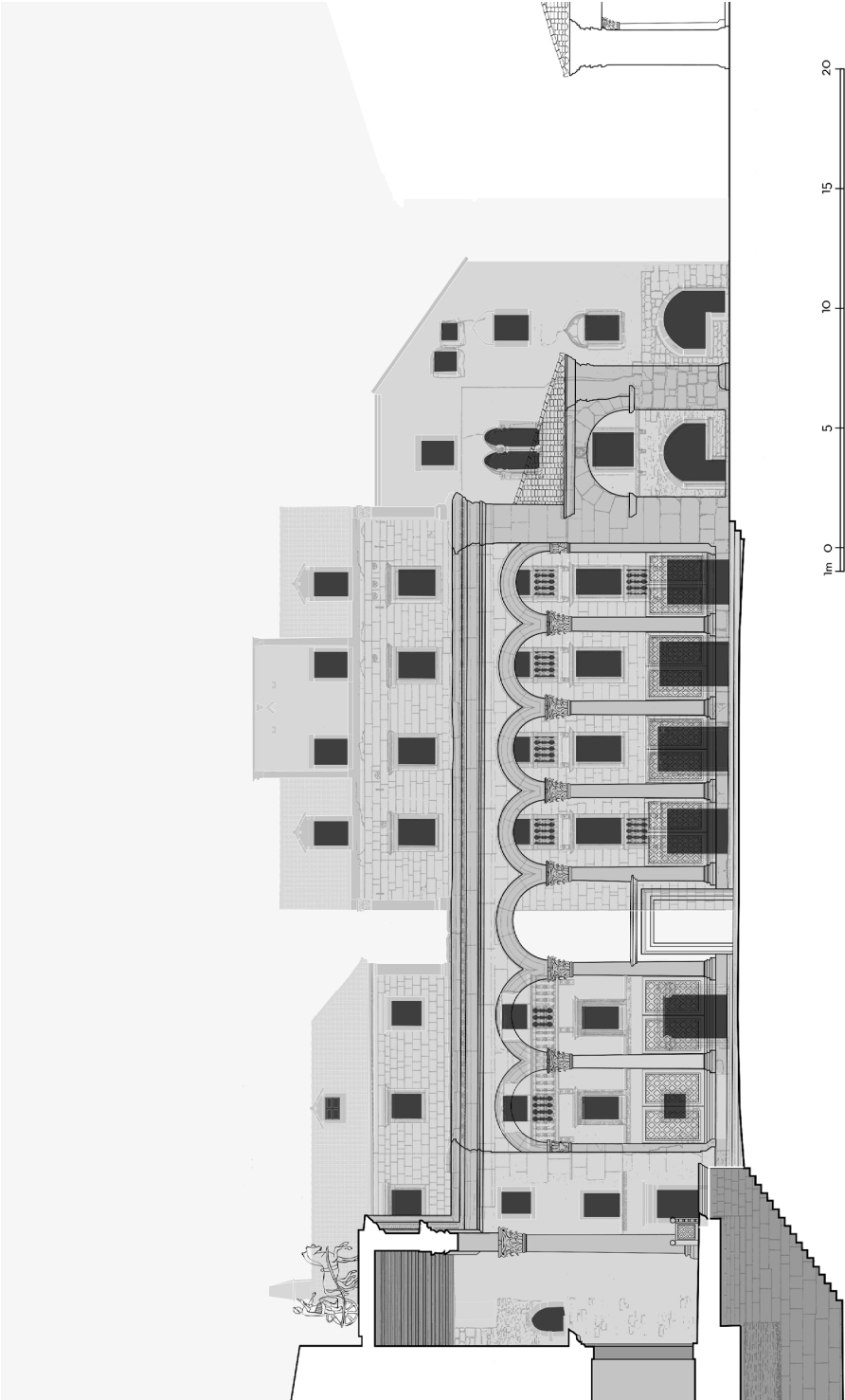
In the fourth century A.D., the roman emperor Diocletian built on the coast of the actual Croatia, his retirement palace. The building, which floor plan is an irregular rectangle, has 150 x 200 meters. As the time went by, the

palace feel in disrepair. Although, the people of the city started a process of transformations, in which they re-used the palace's structure as the foundation for a city of more the 3000 thousand people.

There are three architectural principles behind the Diocletian palace that are of great importance. The first principle is the idea of an open support. The goal is to have a structure which allow to house several units in it. The structure of the palace and its wall are so stable and massive, that the people of Split saw the opportunity of building their city among them. The roman constructions work as a skeleton to support

[Right] Section of the Diocletian's Palace Peristyle combining the recustruction and the actual situation.



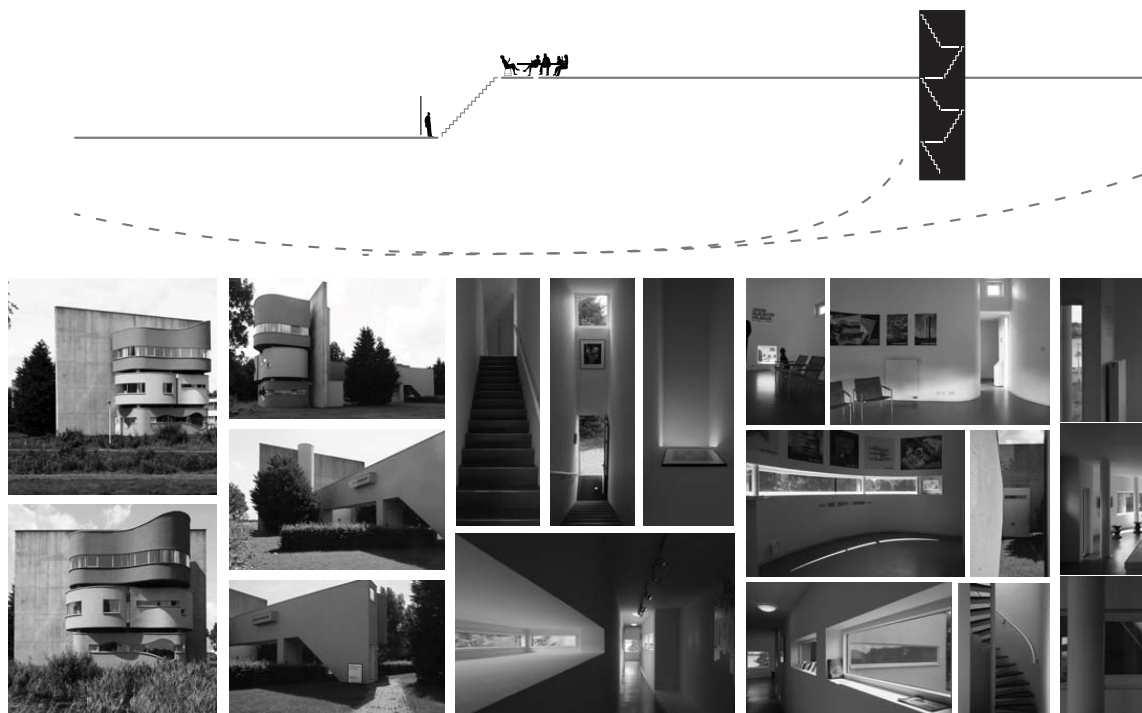


houses with six and seven floors. Each person built accordingly to their needs, resources at their own pace. This idea is followed by the second principle, namely the organic development. In architecture, there is the notion of incremental grow, understood as the possibility of adding parts to the project as the resources become available. In Split, the organic development principle is shown to be more complete than the incremental grow. There is not only the possibility of adding, but also of subtracting parts while keeping the unity of the whole. The third principle is the formal unity that obtain the different parts thanks to the roman skeleton. The principle is better expressed by the Dutch architect Jaap Bakema: "If one stands on top of the tower of later date, one can see how the palace wall became part of a town in which high and low no longer demonstrate themselves but are complementary to one another, forming a dimensionally plastic totality with many transitional forms".<sup>20</sup>

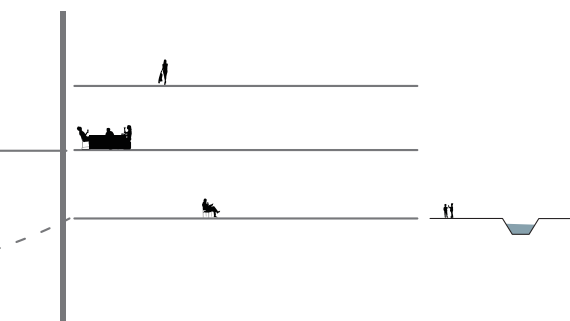
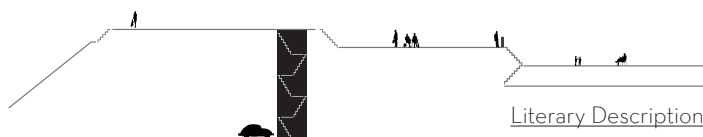
The above-mentioned principles are relevant for a project in Bogota, because they proof that, in order to improve the built environment it is not always necessary to start from scratch, and it even explores a way to revitalize the heritage. The Diocletian palace is a symbiosis between the existing structure and the new building, creating an unexpected harmony. The city of split honor the roman heritage, but is transformed for the needs and aspirations of their inhabitants. In scenarios where the resources are limited as Bogota, the architect can improve the built environment by reusing the existing structures, even if at first look they don't look architectural appealing.

20 Bakema, J. (1962). bouwen voor de anonieme opdrachtgever. Forum, 1, p.41.

[Right] Collection of books about Bogota, gathered while visiting the bookshops in Teusaquillo.







### Literary Description

This tool aims to explore the link between literature and architecture, by means of sequencing the descriptions of the experiences awoken in the space. The descriptions are combined with the diagram of movement along the project. In each space is described the experience. Below is transcribed the description of the Wall House in Groningen. At this stage of the general proposal, the literary description works as a tool to analyze existing projects. Nonetheless, this tool will be use in the actual design of the proposal for Bogota.

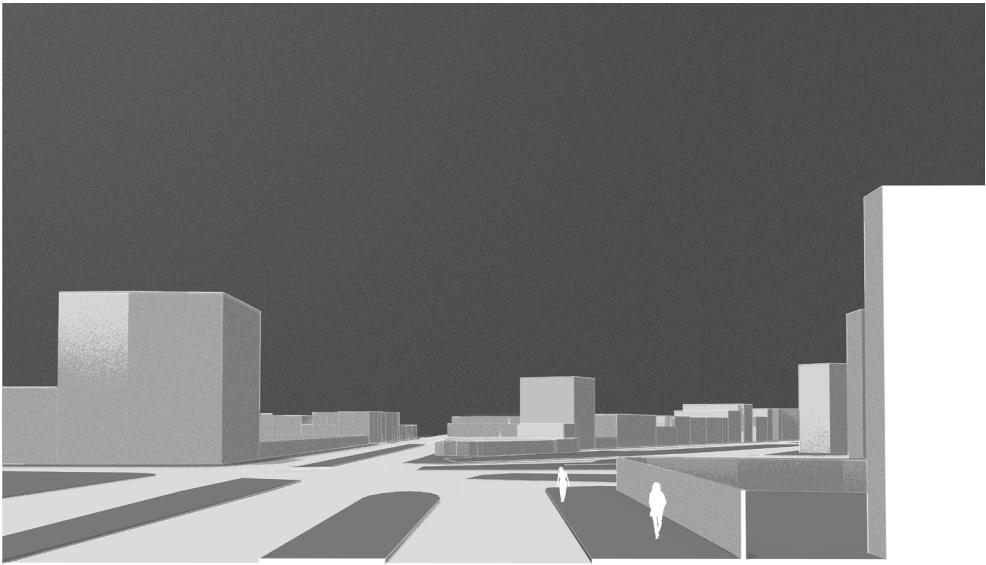
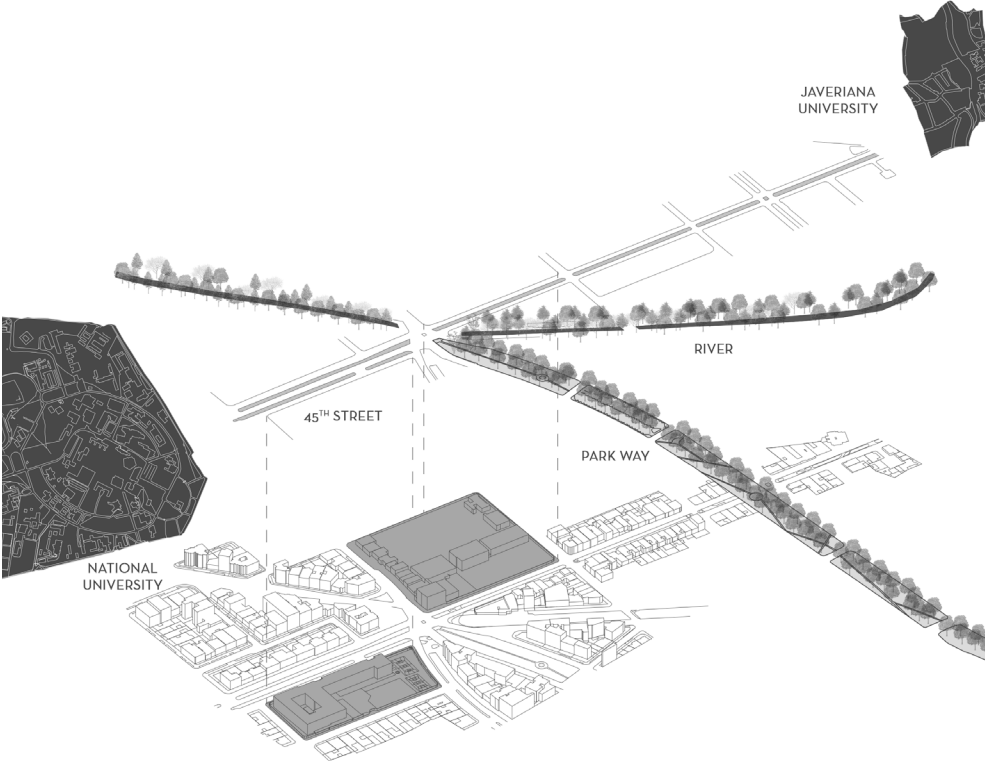
[...]The property lies far away from the city downtown. Facing a river and at the back the seemingly infinite city. It is also a flat property. While trying to enter the house, one see the several volumes of the house floating from the different perspectives. What strikes the most is how long the bridge is. From here one start to imagine the function of each volume. The entrance door is quite simple, the spectacle is inside.

[...] Surrounding the house is also possible. Leave the house trough the kitchen and enjoy when is a doing a good weather. The bridge allows you to have a shade under the house, a place where to sit to rest. From here is not visible the riverside, but it is enough to be in the garden.



# Project Proposal

Strategies for Building Configuration



## The Site

*"He told anecdotes about Le Corbusier's visit. It is good that he left, I said. It is dangerous to offer an entire city to just one urbanist. He thought that I was referring to Brasilia, that was designed by just one urbanist. In Bogotá, I added, the best geometry has an indigenous origin and not the Spanish or Swiss. He laughed; Brasilia is perfect, he answered, and besides you all have Niemayer."*<sup>21</sup>

The site was chosen because it is a cross point of different systems and fragments of the city. As the Brazilian author, Adriana Lunardi would refer, it is a cross point of different geometries. Three systems are meet there: an important street, a river and a park. On one hand, there is the river Arzobispo. There is also

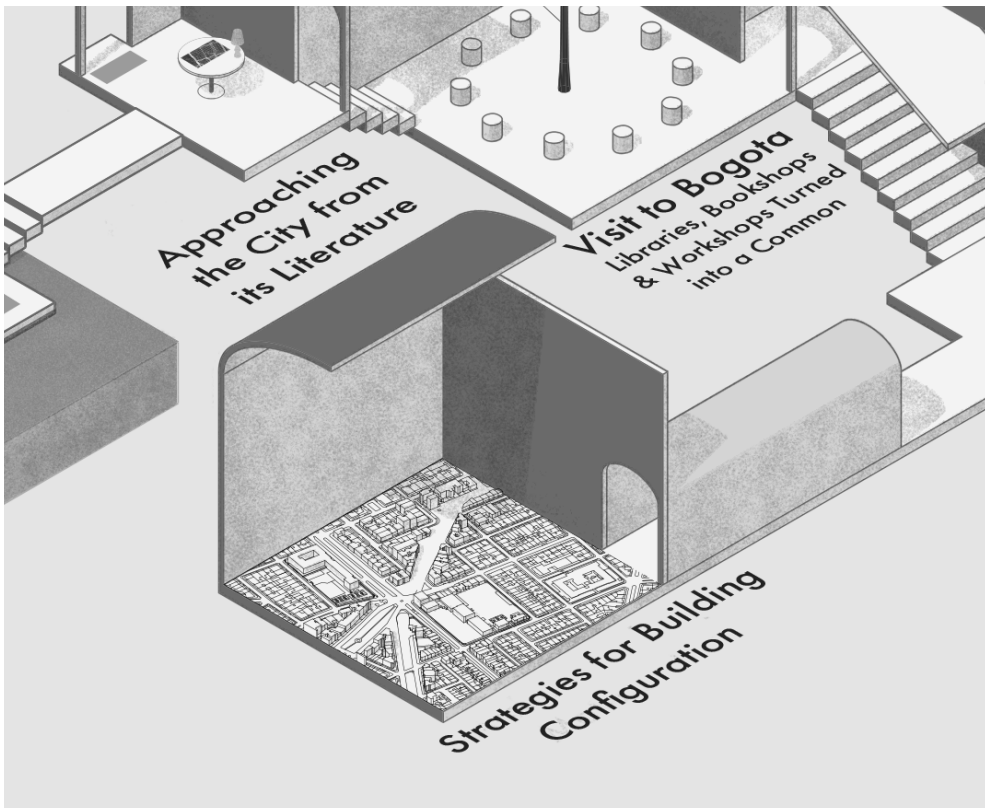
one end of the famous urban intervention, the "Park Way"; designed by the Austrian urbanist Karl Brunner. The 45th street that goes through, and connects two of the main universities in the city, making this neighborhood a cultural melting point.

The problem is that at the cross point there are two primary schools which have blind wall facing the street. These walls cancel any relation with the public space, spoiling the permeability of the street. In consequence, the projects will aim to transform the cross road, giving it more public space and turning it into a landmark.

<sup>21</sup> Lunardi, A., (2013) Postales de Bogota. In: Garcia, A., (Ed.) *Bogotá Contada*. Bogota: Libro al Viento.

[Top Right] Book No.1 The crossing of different systems on the site.

[Bottom Right] Image of the site, included in the literary description.









# 03

## Urban Voids & Other Hidden Resources

Martine Huijsmans

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# Urban Voids & the Invisibles

Urban voids are all the areas in a city whose functions and designs have not yet been decided upon conclusively. These may be reserved areas, fallow land, derelict industrial sites, vacant buildings, polluted or unused properties. According to De Sola-Morales these 'strange places exist outside the city's effective circuits and productive structures,' and from an economic point of view represent places, 'where the city is no longer'. As cities are becoming more and more dense, a variety of professionals have turned their attention to these previously overlooked and seemingly vacant areas. These voids make up a significant part of our everyday surroundings, so it is all the more important that they be given their fair due.

The creation of urban voids is intrinsic to the process of urban development and decay. They are formed due to a number of reasons. Some voids come into existence due to natural geographical features, for example the spaces where the city meets a river, forest or mountain. These borders between natural features and urbanity often are a vacuum of activity. A second type is created due to a faulty planning system. The ordering, zoning and separating of the urban landscape needed to plan the urban sprawl of the city leave leftover space in the morphology. This type can be experienced in the mute space where neighborhood X meets neighborhood Y or where an immense infrastructural provision cuts through the city. A third type is the functional void; these appear where functions or built mass have become defunct and abandoned. A mayor contributor is the disused nineteenth century industrial urban infrastructure, such as factories, slaughterhouses, barracks, rail yards and docks. It can be said that the urban voids are the spaces which disrupt the urban tissue, leaving it incomplete and throw into question the use of those spaces. They are at the edge between private and public space, without belonging either to the one or to the other.

The term void is something which is 'being without' hence an urban void can be interpreted as an urban area being without use and social realm. This same assumption on the character of voids is done in current planning. Undeveloped plots, ruined buildings and abandoned city structures are marked as empty - diminishing and denying all that was already there. As Doron addresses, naming something a void contributes to creating the void. He argues that the terminology used is not descriptive but constitutive, meaning they do not describe a space but they produce it. When a plot is named wasteland, vacant, empty, blank, vacuum or dead it is essentially marked as a potential site for development and gentrification. This terminological denial of content opens the place up for a tabula rasa approach, thereby undermining social, historical and political values.

Somewhere every culture has an imaginary line for what it excludes and what it includes, or what is visible and what is invisible. The excluded or the invisible often have their own reading of the urban terrain. Marginalized communities are evicted from the centre of the city, driving them into equally marginalized spaces. Slums are demolished and pushed towards the boundaries of the city, excluding the inhabitants from the visible city life. Throughout time there has been a strong connection between the void spaces of the city and its invisible inhabitants. Jane Jacobs, in her book *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, was one of the first to really speak out about the urban space of marginalized communities. With her reassessment of the urban qualities found in slums Jacobs creates a vivid, wide ranging critique of the dominant views of city planning at the time. Slums were seen as a void in the city, a derelict area which was ripe for so-called slum clearance. By denying the relevance of the slum inhabitants the city planners attempted to appropriate their territory. Another example of this behavior can be seen in the times of colonization. The land of South America was seen as a void by colonial intruders - a void in which no civilised use existed. Indigenous Americans were perceived as inferior; therefore their terrain could be claimed and reappointed towards the use of the intruders.

Naming and perceiving a certain urban territory as empty can already be a gesture towards actions of appropriating and transforming it. Doron rightly describes such interventions of regeneration as acts of re-colonisation on an urban scale. My starting position is that to study the urban voids of Bogotá I must look further than the place and scale on the map. The void can be properly studied only when taking into account the hidden resources, histories and activities that they might hold. I propose that when these void territories are looked at in reality, they are rich in opportunities and can offer alternative social, political and economic realms. With this research I attempt to answer a twofold of questions; (1) What hidden resources do the urban voids of Bogotá hold and how can these potential resources be activated? (2) Can a balance between visible and invisible communities be restored by introducing a common network

#### Sources

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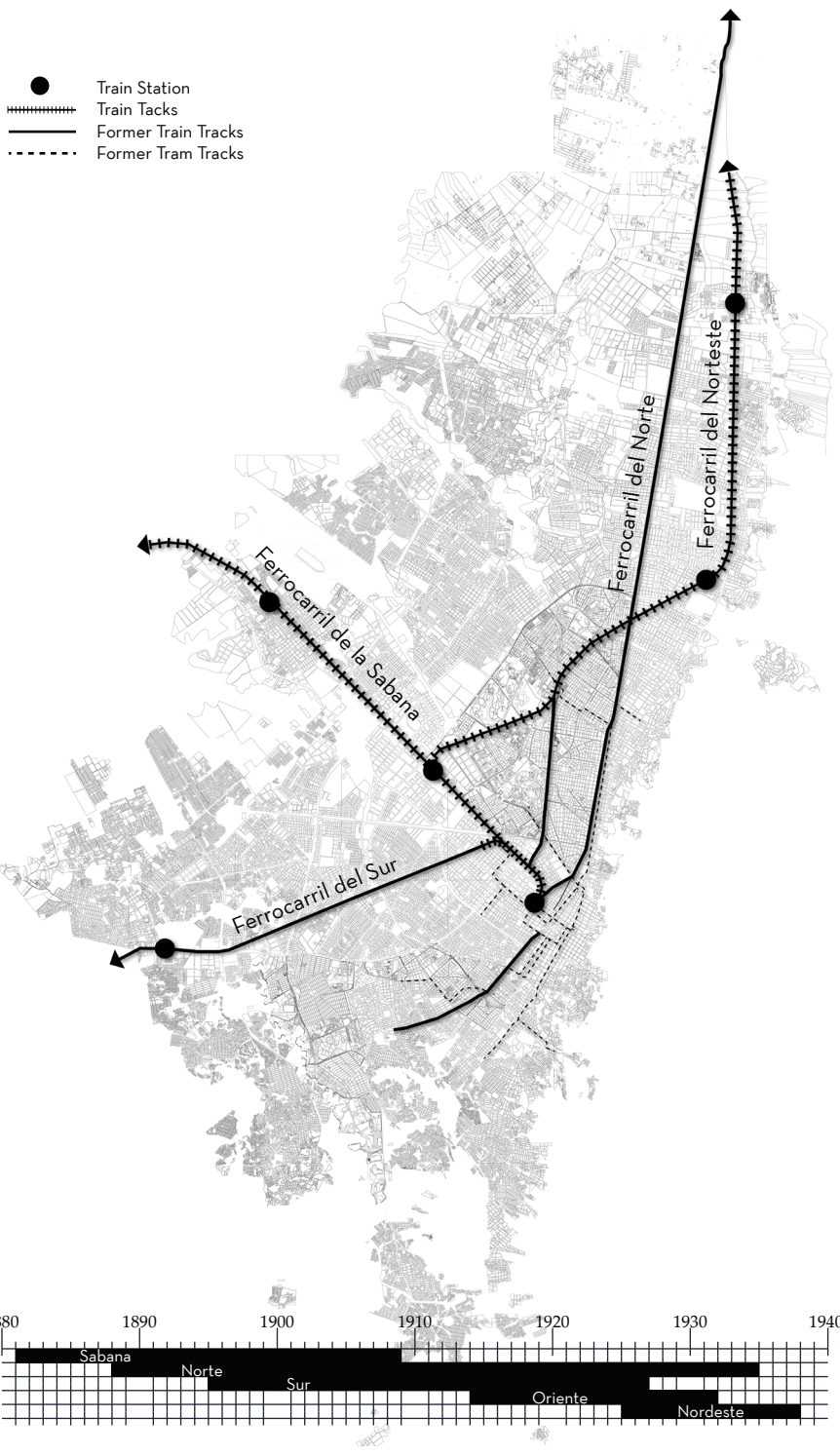


# Bogotá Voids

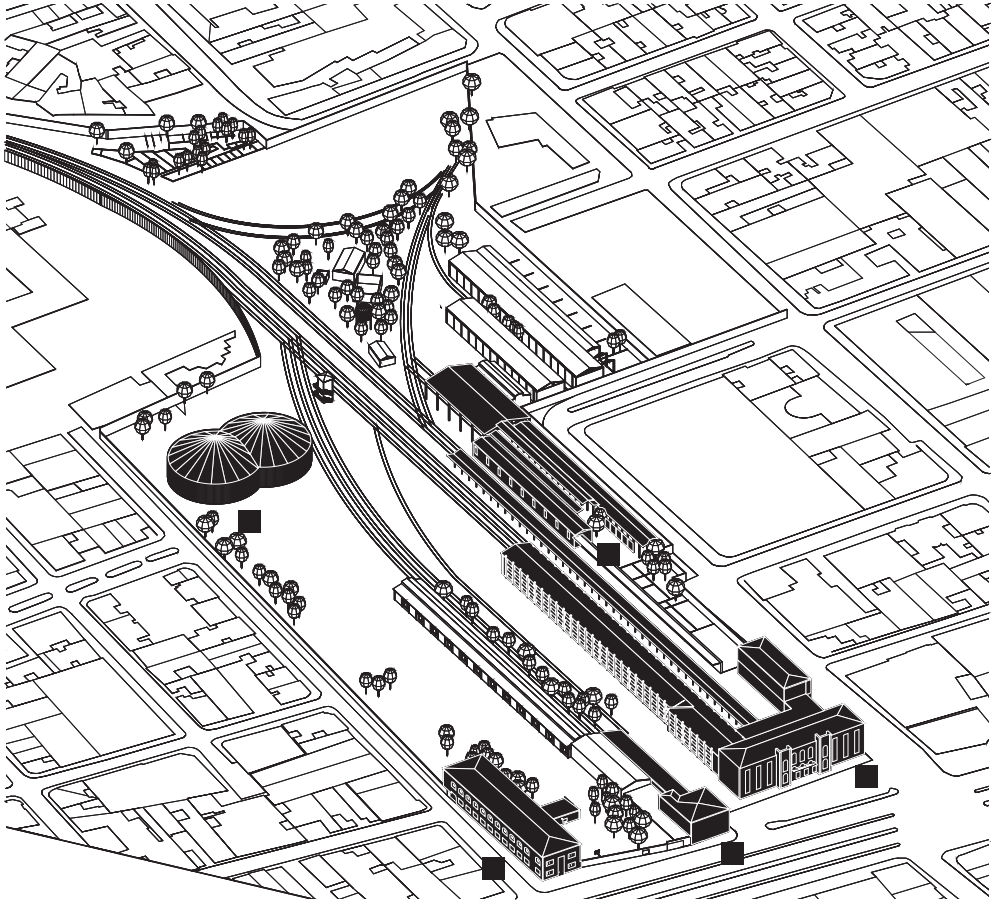
Current day Bogotá strikes as a fragmented, diffuse place. The city has seen an enormous growth in the last decades, displaying an average population growth rate of 15,7% per year since 1980. Until the 1970s the city expanded largely toward the north and south. During the last two and a half decades it has also begun expanding westward. Moreover residential stratification by income levels has caused high-income population to settle towards the north of the centre and low-income population to grow towards the south and southwest. Knowing about this increasing need for space I expected a dense city centre, explaining the need for urban sprawl. However during my fieldwork I observed many open spaces in some of the most centralized barrios. The city centre has a surprising amount of abandoned buildings, underused parking lots, derelict building plots and roadside voids. As I started to record the types and locations of the urban voids in the city I came across the old railway system. A characterisation of this particular urban element is its linear quality; lines go through large areas of the city stretching through stratification zones from east to west and north to south. I propose this linear element can function as a common connector. In my project I therefore decide to examine the void that is the railway system.

The Bogotá railways have been long abandoned as a form of public transport or even as cargo transport, with the exception of a tourist ride to the neighbouring villages every Sunday. The construction of the railway was authorized in 1873 and its lines spring from the centrally located la Sabana railway station. Throughout time there have been 5 railway lines; Ferrocarril del Occidente (Western line), Ferrocarril del Sur (Southern line), Ferrocarril del Norte (Northern line), Ferrocarril del Nordeste (North Eastern line) and Ferrocarril del Oriente (Eastern Line). The development of transportation in Colombia was however complicated by its rugged mountainous terrain and the railroad system was not able to accommodate the rapid demographic and territorial expansion of the city. With the rapid development of the road network the car became a more viable means of transportation. The decline of the railways in Bogotá and the country ended with the liquidation of national railway company.

What remains of the railroad tracks today is in some cases operational tracks, some abandoned plots where tracks used to be and some plots replaced by roads. The east and north lines have been wiped from the city and a significant part of the route is now replaced by Caracas Avenue. The surviving north-east line is still covered in tracks and functional for the tourist train. The West line has a track laid but is not in use at this point of time. The South line tracks stop shortly after departing from la Sabana station, along the path of where the tracks used to be there is now a linear vacant space. Within the city boundaries there are still six train stations remaining in various states of decay. They represent the diffuse architectural styles seen throughout the city. The stations themselves create another void along the linear void of the tracks. The central Sabana station is particularly interesting; the area around this station consists of a plot the size of multiple urban blocks.







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### Sabana Station

The Sabana Train Station in Bogotá is a neoclassical style building, designed by Mariano Santamaria and built between 1913 and 1917 by the English engineer William Lidstone. This building replaced the old station built in 1887 for the opening of the railway between Bogotá and Facatativa, becoming the central station of all train lines to the capital of Colombia. Its plot is located to the west of the city center in a barrio named Los Mártires, a low-income area characterised by its light industrial functions.

The main building is used as a departure station for the tourist train. Behind that there is a group of industrial halls in which trains and wagons are maintained. Since the liquidation of the national rail company the plot has attracted a few new functions. It houses two schools; the first is the Escuela Taller, a craft-oriented school teaching diverse trades as masonry, carpentry, stonework, forging, painting, ceramics, gardening and others. The second is the Circo para Todos, a circus school housed in a classic two pitch circus tent. Both schools serve a large amount of students from marginalized neighborhoods like Los Mártires. Also housed on the plot is the central office for the traffic police of Bogotá.

1. Escuela Taller
2. Traffic Police
3. Train station
4. Circus School
5. Train Workshop





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The mix of residents, the centralized location and the presence of unique and historical buildings make Sabana a site with great potential.







#### RAILROAD INVISIBLES

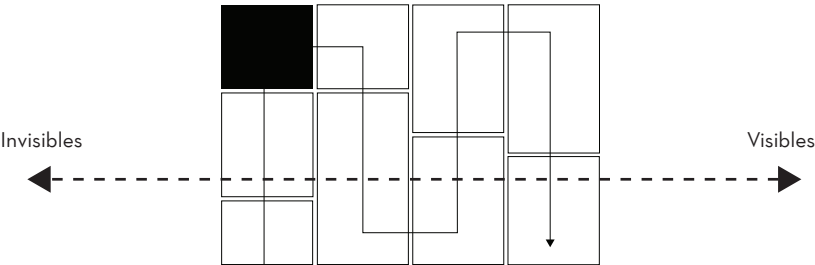
Whilst I was in Bogotá I took a walk along the railroad tracks. In the strips of land that run parallel to the tracks many heaps of waste can be seen, scattered but also clustered or sorted into material piles. It seemed the void was being used for an unusual activity; that of informal waste processing. The recycling community makes a living collecting and reselling recyclable waste. For the least fortunate of them, the railroad is an important space in the city – it provides them with a space in which they can work and sometimes even live.

# Wasteland

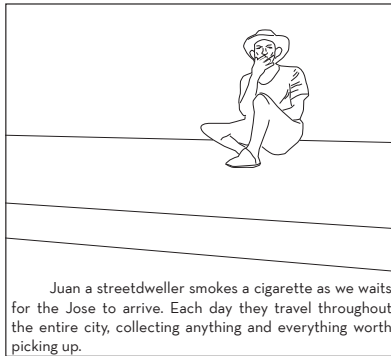
Many thousands of people in developing cities depend on recycling materials from waste for their livelihoods, Bogotá is one of them. The city has two waste management cities, a formal system operated by the municipality and an informal system run independent organizations and citizens. Like many other cities, Bogotá is seeking to modernise its waste system as a part of a broader modernisation effort. It is estimated that 9000 tonnes of waste are generated daily, of which 1200 tons are reused and recycled informally. An estimated 20,000 recyclers work in the city to achieve this. Though only 11% of the recyclers are affiliated with the municipality, Colombia's recyclers are among the most organized in the world, creating independent organizations such as Recyclers' Association of Bogotá (ARB).

The informal sector is characterised by small-scale, labor-intensive, largely unregulated and unregistered, and low-technology manufacturing. Informal waste recycling is often carried out by poor and marginalised social groups. These invisibles resort to scavenging/waste picking for income generation and some for everyday survival.

To understand the steps which the waste goes through in this recycle process I made a comic. Wasteland shows how the process in itself is one that goes through from the "invisible" to the "visible" layers of society. It moves through many parts of the city as waste is produced, collected, processed and sold in various locations. It starts out with the street dwellers scavenging the streets to collect material, a task easily taking up more than a full workday. The waste pickers transport the recovered waste to the so-called 'bodegas' (collection and weighing centres) and receive an income based on the amount and type of collected waste. Bodegas are either run privately, by independent organisations or by the municipality. The price for the materials fluctuates strongly due to macroeconomic forces; the income of the waste picker is therefore generally irregular and low. The Bodegas sort and ship the materials to small workshops or larger sellers. These buyers are often specialised in one particular material; they process the waste to create renewed value. It is not always easy to find a buyer for waste in smaller portions so usually the bodegas will pile up for a while before a buyer is found. A few examples are metal workshops that make furniture or small factories that make bricks out of old plastic, which are then sold to the consumers.



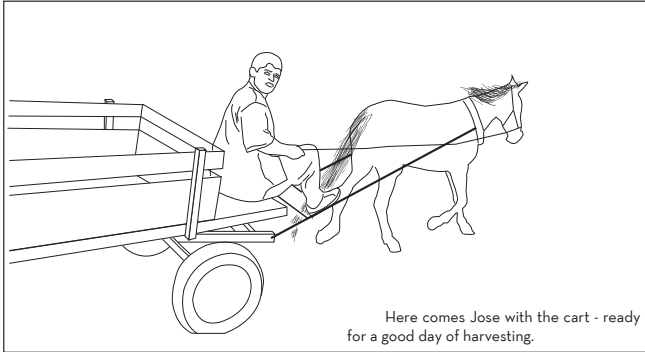




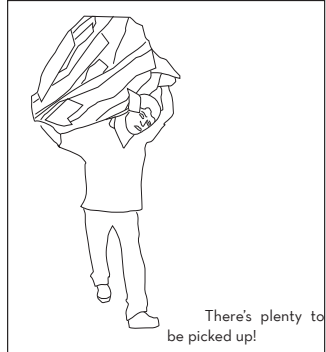
Juan a streetdweller smokes a cigarette as we waits for the Jose to arrive. Each day they travel throughout the entire city, collecting anything and everything worth picking up.

## Waste Land

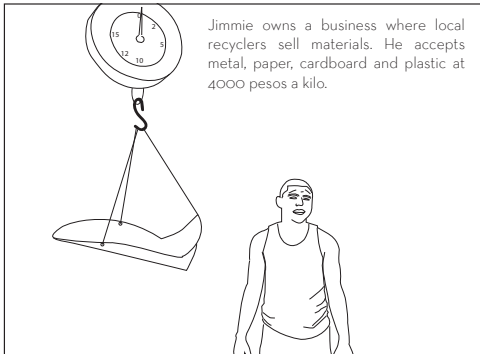
The Informal-to-Formal Process  
of Recycling in Bogotá



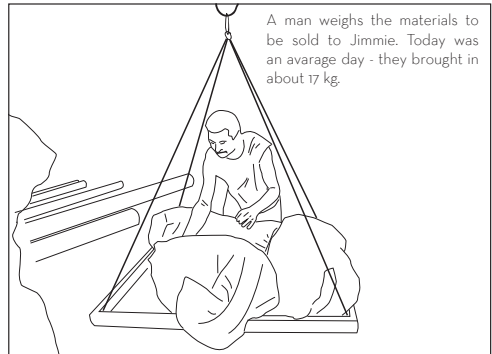
Here comes Jose with the cart - ready for a good day of harvesting.



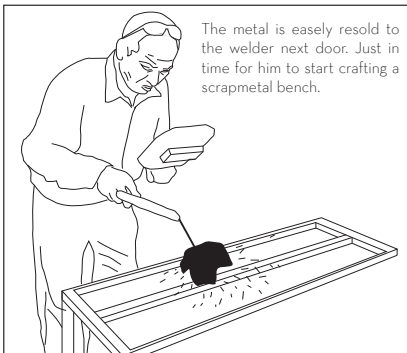
There's plenty to be picked up!



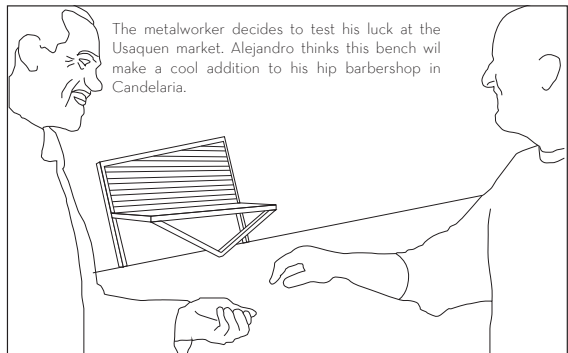
Jimmie owns a business where local recyclers sell materials. He accepts metal, paper, cardboard and plastic at 4000 pesos a kilo.



A man weighs the materials to be sold to Jimmie. Today was an average day - they brought in about 17 kg.



The metal is easily resold to the welder next door. Just in time for him to start crafting a scrapmetal bench.



The metalworker decides to test his luck at the Usaquen market. Alejandro thinks this bench wil make a cool addition to his hip barbershop in Candelaria.





### Waste Flow

Transportation is an important aspect of the waste process. To get an idea of the waste flow on city level I made three maps showing the density of recycling activity per barrio. Each barrio is represented through a collection of circles, these circles represent the density. A fully filled circle being the most dense and an empty circle being the least dense.

- (1) Locations where the waste-pickers reside.
- (2) Locations where waste is thrown out.
- (3) Locations of bodegas.



The waste pickers generally live in lower income areas, often estratos 1,2 or 3. Some of them have homes or rent rooms, others are street dwelling, living in makeshift shelters. The highest densities are found in Suba (North), Ciudad Bolivar, Kennedy and Bosa (West). The densities of waste are highest in high income estratos and industrial areas which are located more towards the east of the city. The highest densities are found in Usaquen, Chapinero (North), Candelaria, Santa Fe, Antonio Narino and Puente Aranda (Central). It happens that residents and recyclers make agreed exchanges. A group of residents gives a recycler their source of separated recyclables in exchange for the recycler removing all the waste in front of their house, or through paid exchange where the recyclers work for an institution such as the university. The bodegas are highest in density towards the outskirts of the city, accumulating in Suba, Kennedy, Bosa, Ciudad Bolivar and Usme. It is estimated that there are over 3000 bodegas within the city, varying in size and material preferences. The largest bodegas are most likely to accept only one type of material, the smaller bodega often accept many which they then resell to other bodegas. This inventory of densities shows a clear movement between perimeter and centralized districts which the waste pickers have to travel daily.

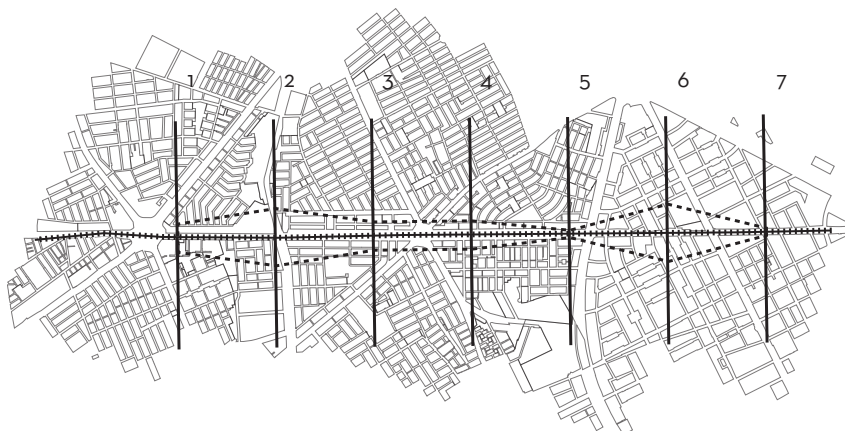
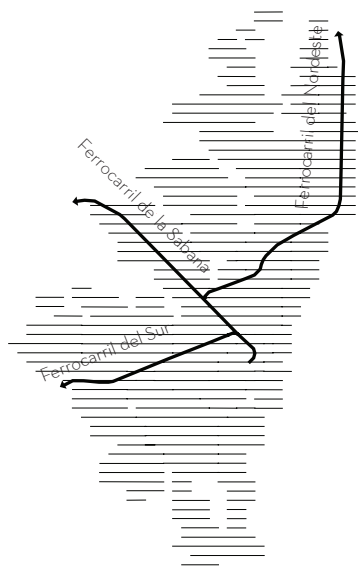


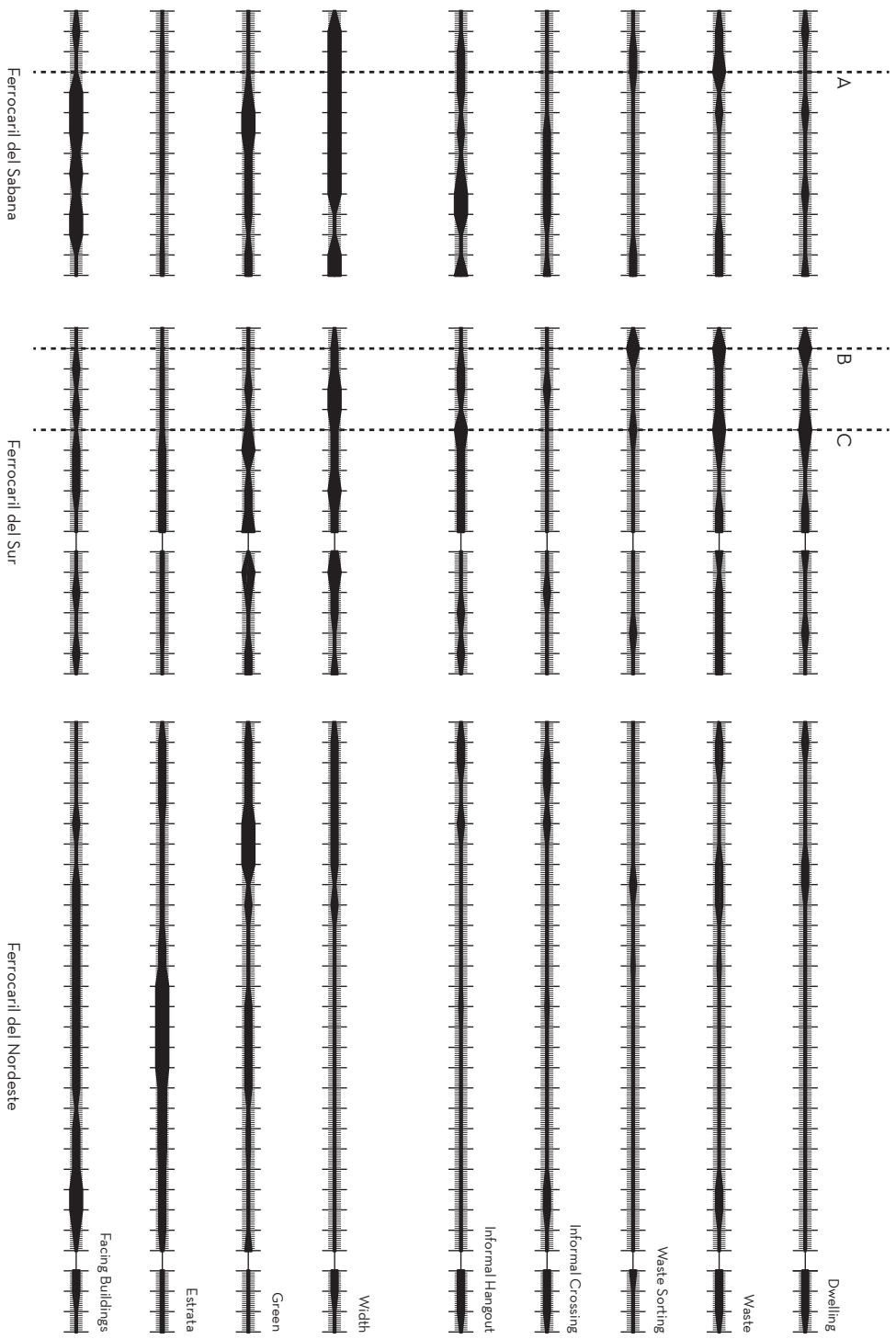


### Rhythm Analysis

To understand of how this process connects to the railway systems I made a rhythm analysis on the three existing lines. Dividing these lines up into stretches of about 50m allows an assessment per point on the intensity of activities there. I studied two categories; the Invisible and the Visible.

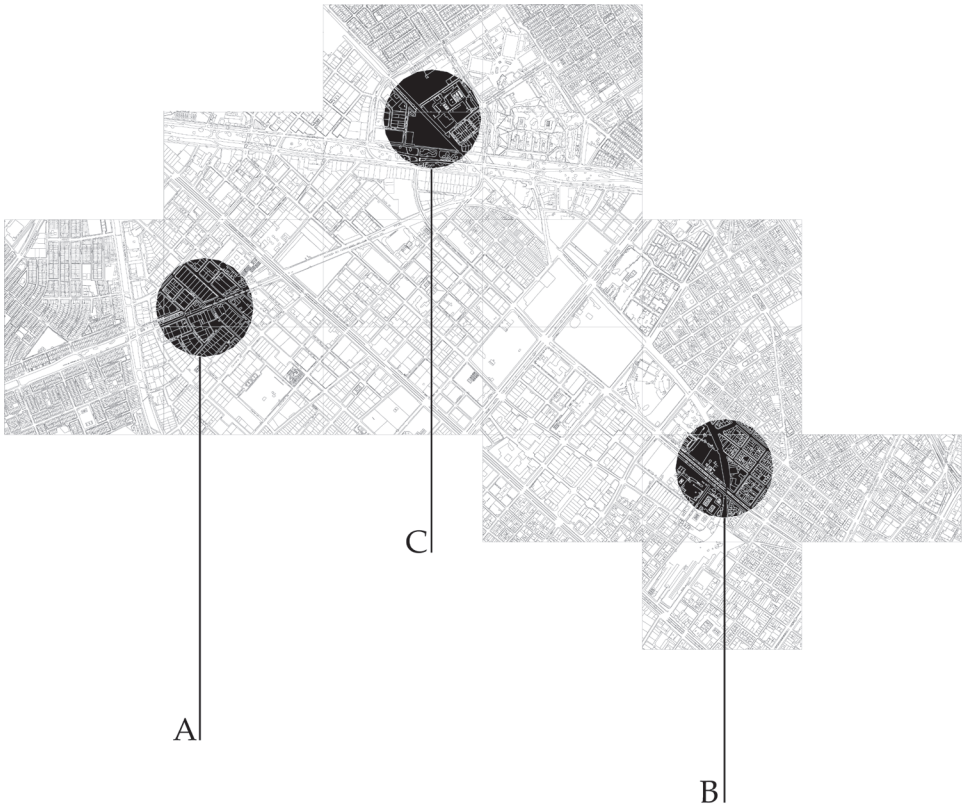
For the Invisible side I have pinpointed where informal settlement, waste distribution/sortation, informal crossings and informal hangouts are located. For the Visible side analysing the more traditional urban planning elements such as width, estratos, green, and bordering buildings. The correlations I have found between the subjects are the following; (1) The west and the south line have more Invisible activity, seemingly due to the fact that there is more available space, and its bordering on lower estratos areas. (2) The sorting of collected waste has very specific points which tend to gravitate towards the more central areas.





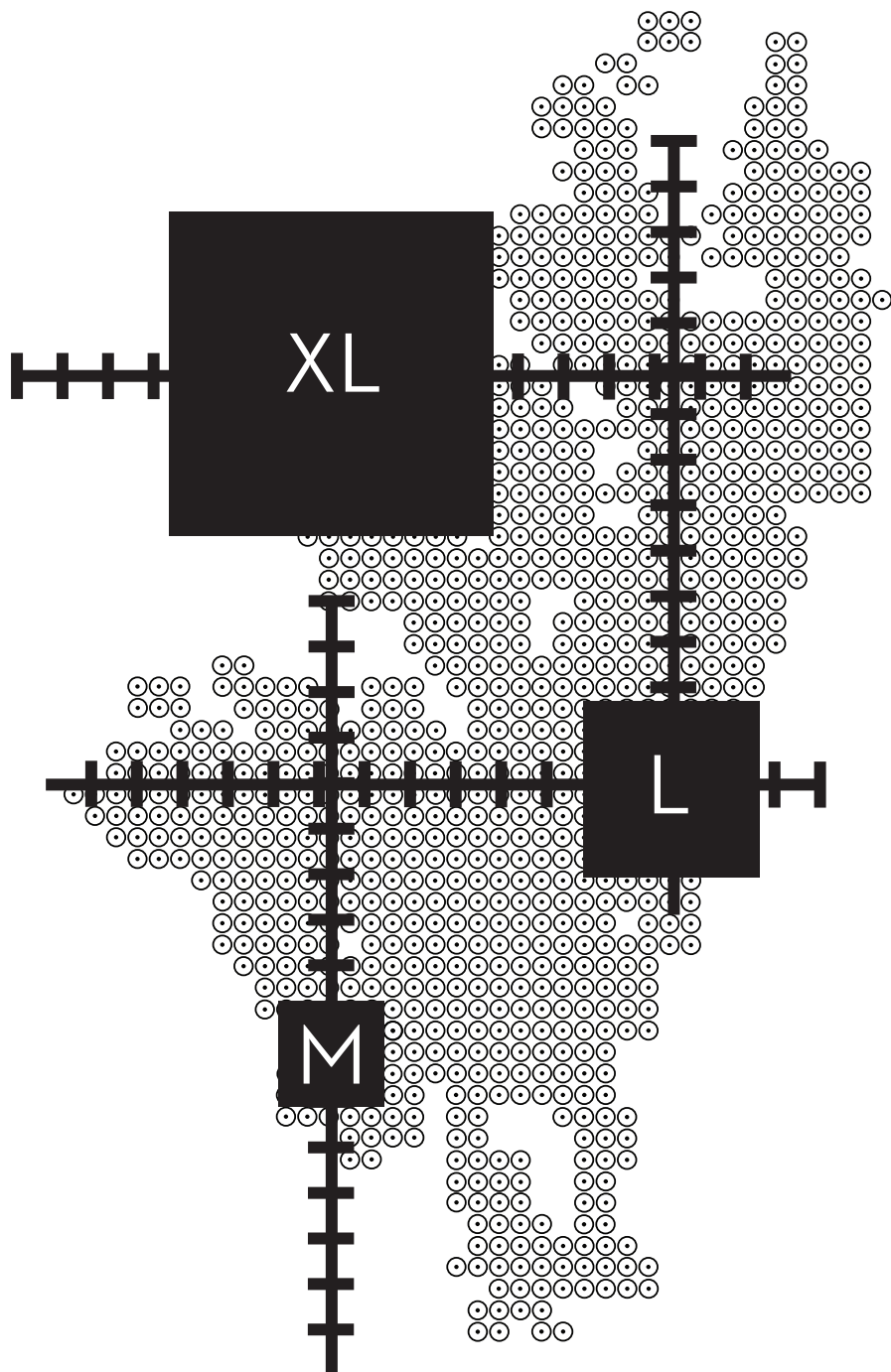






### Hotspots

From this analysis I have selected 3 locations which are the main hotspots for invisible activity to further spatially analyze. The hotspots are all located in close proximity of the Sabana station. The waste activity in the hotspots is varied, ranging from sortation and storage to living. The activities however spread on the site, creating a clear boundary between waste and waste-picker. The main points of activity all seem to be pushed into the perimeters of the void, giving a sense of seclusion. The activities are placed in areas which connect to secondary roads, but are in close range of primary roads. Giving easy access for transport but not revealing too much.

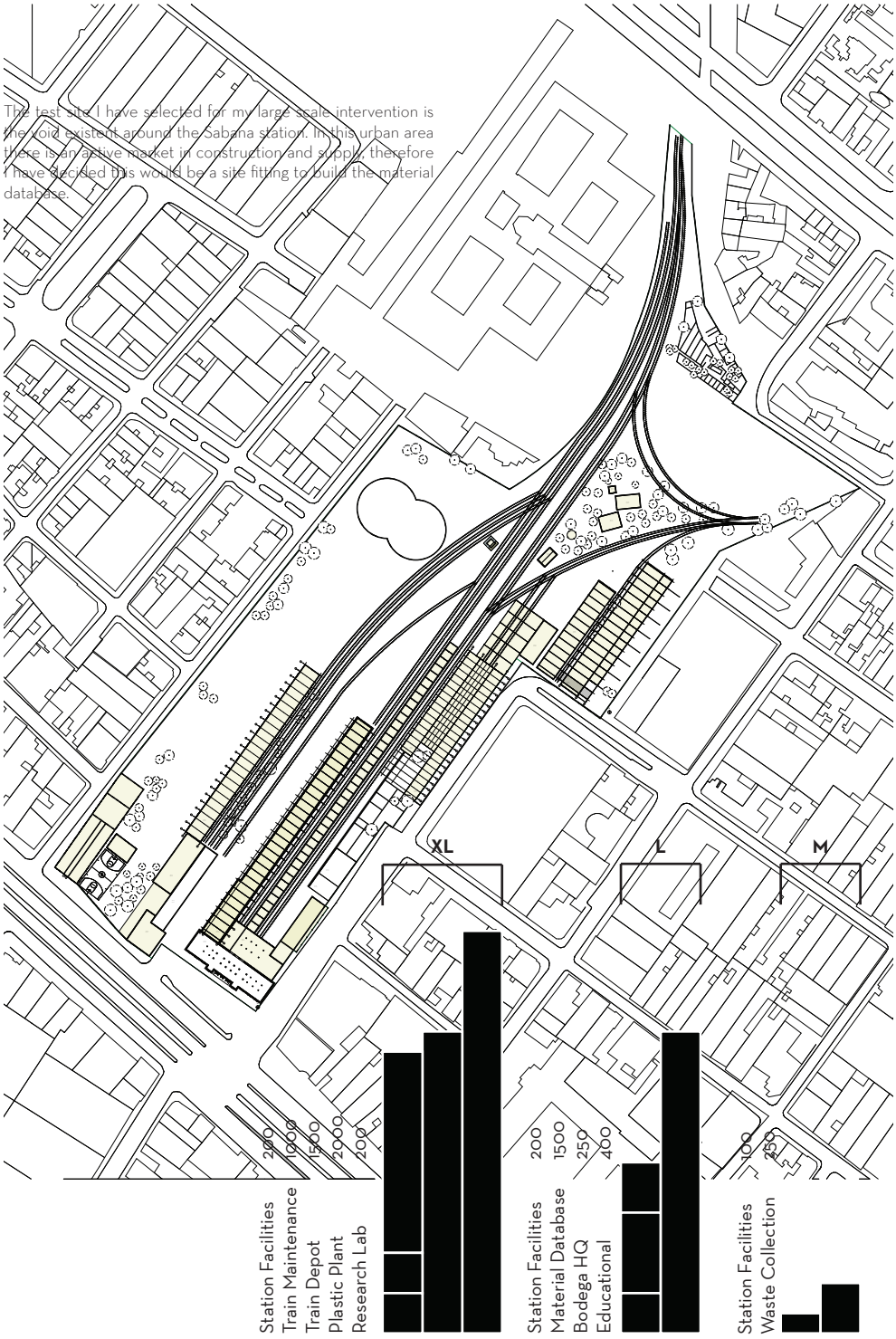


# Project Proposal

On a global scale it can be seen that developing countries are faced with an increasing waste problem. Along with increasing waste production comes the challenge of managing it effectively; many social and environmental consequences arise from doing so poorly. Bogotá's recycling system is emblematic of those across the global south, where the informal sector plays a central role in managing waste but faces pressure from modernisation plans. In a matter of sharing knowledge, responsibility and resources the preferred option is to integrate the informal sector into waste management planning. The municipality of Bogotá wants to scale up its recycling model, as a pilot project it has already opened three municipal bodegas spread throughout the city. With my project I would like to join into these conversations and reflect upon the future dynamics between waste and the city.

Taking conclusions from my research I propose to design a recycling network, making use of the existing spatial and social qualities found along the railway void. The linear qualities found in the railroad network pose a chance for transport, in a city which is notoriously congested. My project aims to break down the barrier between the Visible and Invisible communities by creating a common network which allows for an open environment and cooperation. By integrating the Invisibles the city can build on their resourcefulness and experience while working to improve efficiency and the living and working conditions of those involved. By creating a place of visibility for the otherwise Invisible activity the project attempts to create an overall more coherent understanding between consumer, waste and production.

Architecturally the project consists of multiple interventions on various scales connected by the railroad track. I imagine four main scales; (XL) The Factory (L) The Urban Recycling Hub, (M) The Local Transfer Station, and (S) The Objects. The Factory, which processes waste on a large scale, is best suitable for more industrial recycling processes. These are located towards the periphery of the city as not to disturb the inner city ecology. So for instance this would be the glass/ paper/steel recycling, which are characterised by a more polluting process. The Urban Recycling Hub is positioned in the inner city, making use of larger voids in the existing morphology. These main stations function as a light industrial marketplace where material is stored, sold, and adapted. The program of waste is juxtaposed by a public function, for example an educational or museum facility where the greater public can interact with the production process. Distributed along strategic points of the tracks will be the local transfer stations - dedicated to the collecting, sorting and transportation of waste. The final scale is the Object, the modular and mobile elements which connect the system, for example train carriages. I envision the recycling community active in the system to be a mix of formal and informal workers, providing place in the system for working under permanent employment as well as temporary.









# 04

## Writing Bogotá

Matthew Cook

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# Writing Bogotá

Narrative investigations of the Rio Arzobispo



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The Rio Arzobispo is a small urban stream running through the city of Bogotá. The translation of its name, 'the Archbishop's river', seemingly suggests a grandeur that is absent from this polluted, concrete channel. The stream falls from the edge of the Andes mountains above, quickly becoming polluted as it meets the city and its lacklustre plumbing. Most of the time it is little more than a malodorous trickle of water, but in the afternoon downpours it becomes a roaring torrent, fed by wet air from the Pacific Ocean meeting the high wall of mountains that surrounds Bogotá.

I first encountered the Arzobispo within minutes of starting our on site research, and months later, after shifting my focus across the district, I returned to it as the site for my architectural proposition. I was curious about my loyalty to this one spot. I was concerned that perhaps I had imprinted on it like a newborn animal imprints on its mother, attached to the first thing it sees of the world. Or perhaps it just showed the underlying importance of the Arzobispo, even in its current state of dilapidation. Where else would we start but at the moment where city and mountain meet, creating a path much older than any human construction around it?

Investigating Rio Arzobispo, the surrounding barrio La Soledad and the wider city forced me to reconsider the methods I had learnt in my previous years studying architecture. I had to build new tools to analyse this unfamiliar place and new culture.

To understand the city and the people within it I chose to make my analytical tools from words and stories. I inhabited elements of the city, giving them a voice, writing monologues of their experience of the city. By personifying the concrete form of the city, I could represent the different activities that take place throughout the day, and illustrate how this has changed over the years. The use of narrative inhabitation has allowed me to simultaneously analyse Bogotá subjectively and objectively, to be both distant and intimate in my attention. I have been able to represent the multiplicity of voices the city contains.

Through this analysis I found a site for my architectural propositions, and I understand why the river is valuable, yet poorly functioning. Narrative inhabitation of Bogotá allows precise, considered design interventions to be created and has given me the tools and the knowledge I need going into the design stage of this graduation project.



## Moments of intense social experience



The statue was of a naval officer, the first Colombian Admiral. All of the interaction with the statue had nothing to do with its memorialising of the Admiral. It had undergone a 'détournement', a hijacking of its original use. I was curious about this phenomenon and started to notice other similar objects. I realised that these objects were the locations of 'moments', as defined by Quentin Stevens. I began to investigate the locations of these moments and the behaviour and the architecture that encouraged it.

Stevens, Q. (2007). *The Ludic City*. London: Routledge

# Moments & Elements

Elements and the City's Image



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The Public → The City

The City ← The Public

*There seems to be a public image of any given city which is the overlap of many individual images. Or perhaps there is a series of public images, each held by some significant number of citizens[...] Each individual picture is unique, with some content that is rarely or never communicated, yet it approximates the public image, which, in different environments, is more or less compelling, more or less embracing. Kevin Lynch, The Image Of The City,*

In studying these locations of moments I realised they could be classified using Kevin Lynch's theory in The Image of the City. He classified elements into the path, edge, district, node and landmark, and studied people's perception of these in the city. His analysis was exclusively looking at how people perceived the element. As I was studying people, I decided to reverse the analytical direction, studying the city's perception of the people.



# Monologues

Writing the city's view of the people



To analyse the people of Bogotá from the point of view of the city, I chose to employ a method I called Narrative Inhabitation. I built on narrative theory such as Jane Rendell's *Site Writing*, a technique of investigation both intimate and distant, subjective and objective. Through literary methods I could coherently communicate the different timelines, places and people involved in the activity around these places. I anthropomorphised the elements, writing as if I were them, in their own voice, of how they saw the residents of the city. I wrote short monologues, explaining their opinion on what was happening in front of them. The monologues encompassed the daily rhythms and longer term history of the site.

Once I had written the monologues, I illustrated them, creating an analysis that works visually and verbally. They accompany the monologues on the following pages.

This mode of analysis has allowed me to create an empathetic analysis, recognizing the variety of experiences in the city. It has also allowed for a multi-temporal approach, with the ability to analyse one object over a long time frame.

**Path/Bridge** - *It's a strange group that I live with.*

*The six of us, all here, in the same place, but all leading very different existences. We all have different routines and motivations, but basically we are all the same, all here to get a job done. We all get people from A to B, it's as simple as that.*

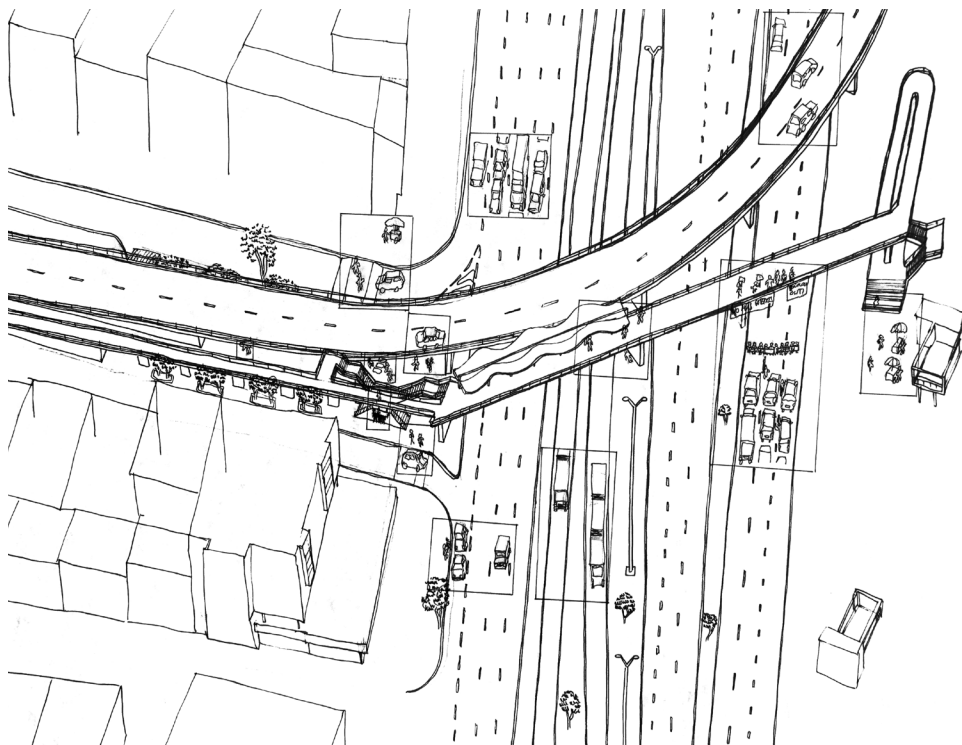
*You won't find a more interesting group of people than the ones I carry though. They must be the smartest collection of people in the city, maybe even in the country. They know everything. Most of them don't yet know one crucial thing though, what they will do with their lives, what they will turn into. I don't get many celebrities, politicians or famous people crossing me. Mark my words though, if you follow the people crossing right now, for the next 20 years, you are going to get to some pretty cool places. I'm certain of it.*

*I'm not saying the others don't have interesting people travelling along them. Look who I'm crossing over; the road down there. Almost every person in the entire city has to go through it first. It knows everyone, as long as they can afford a car. From the bin men to the taxi drivers, to probably the Mayor himself. They all know it.*

*That route next to the road, the parallel partner, it knows everyone too, but in more of a working class hero kind of way. It knows the street traders, the 9-5ers, the ones with two jobs, three kids and a leaking roof. They come from miles away, roaring*

# Monologues

Path/Bridge (continued)



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through, crammed in, getting to know each other in silence, riding the bumps and holding tight for the corners. They call those two the spine of the city for a reason, everyone needs those two.

I feel a bit sorry for the bridge next to me, crossing that lot below. It's like the road, knows loads of people too, all the drivers, in their cars, their vans, their taxis. They don't care about the bridge though, they just use him to get to the road. Just a stepping stone to something else.

My favourite two are that pair below, although maybe don't mention that to the others. That duo take the cyclists and the pedestrians. They are quieter about it and don't know as many people as the others, but that's where all the interesting stuff happens. People come from all over the city just to place themselves next to those two. They come just to be close to the people walking and cycling by, to have a chance to interact, to distract them for a moment, to swap their money for food, drinks, goods, services. Warhol had his Factory, the place to be if you wanted to see or be seen, I like to think we have ours right here. Less glamorous, but maybe more important. I'm kind of part of it too actually, slightly on the periphery,

but crucial, at least I like to think so. They use me as a sheltered spot, a place to build a permanent shop, a bit of shade, a location to meet at.

The most interesting thing to do is to watch how the different groups interact. A while back, my people, the students, they were getting sick of things. The roofs sheltering them whilst they learnt were leaking, there was even a collapse. Their education was suffering. They decided to take their grievances right to the people who could do something about it. So where did they go? City hall? Congress? No, they came here, to the road below that carries everyone. They stood in the road and it was shut down. The people in their cars were furious, honking, shouting, swearing, gesturing. They had things to do, important places to be and decisions to make. They also knew what the problem was and what the students wanted: 'No Más Goteros'. Maybe they would think about that next time city budgets came up. I played my part too, I held the banners, I was the stage. You can see me there in the photos, standing my ground. I may not look like much, just carrying people across a road, so they can continue on their route, but it's important. I can feel it.



# Monologues

Edge/Wall



*Originally I and all like me were nothing lines, known only to our inventors and the people around them. We are arbitrary, but to be without us is to be without an inside, perpetually external. We gained definition slowly, just a change in materials at first, marking the edge of control. You could step over me at any point and there was nothing I could do to stop it. For the most part it would be fine when I was stepped over, transgressions by strangers would be fleeting, and friends were not transgressing at all. There was still a potential though, a risk.*

*Some of us started to grow. I grew into a small wall. You could still step over me, I wasn't stopping anything. You knew you were stepping over me though, it was inescapable. You were crossing a line and you couldn't pretend otherwise. Beyond me was a space that was not yours. Some people were upset about the division and didn't think it was very neighbourly. If you ask me though all it meant was you weren't allowed to cut that corner, you could no longer walk four abreast, and you couldn't 'accidentally' look through the window. If you wanted to do that you had to be brazen about it. A low wall wasn't enough though, because of*

*course some people are brazen. If you had taken the time to create an interior, the last type of people you wanted coming in were brazen ones. As a result I got taller. I'm about 2 meters tall now. I'm made of brown brick, and I have white railings. You aren't crossing me without some serious effort, you better be good at climbing. You're staying out unless you are let in. I'm still pretty open though, you can still enjoy the view of the garden inside, you just can't pick the flowers. I'm pretty happy with my height, I think some of the others have taken it a bit far though. I was surprised when I heard about barbed wire topping off the wall, and even a little worried when the first electric fence was put in. It's really not that bad around here is it?*

*I'm a bit unusual actually. My fence opens. I don't mean the gate, that's as standard. The fence topping off the wall. That lot inside, they open it up in the middle of the morning and serve food through it, like a counter in a shop. They even have their umbrella over the top. They sell the usual, perro caliente and arepas. Restaurante Teusaquillo, at least that's what they call it. It causes quite the sensation, everybody comes.*

# Monologues

District/Teusaquillo



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*I have several names: Teusaquillo, la Soledad, Home. Depending on who you ask, my boundaries shift and vary, but I know who I am. A lot goes on inside my limits. I am large, I, as they say, contain multitudes.*

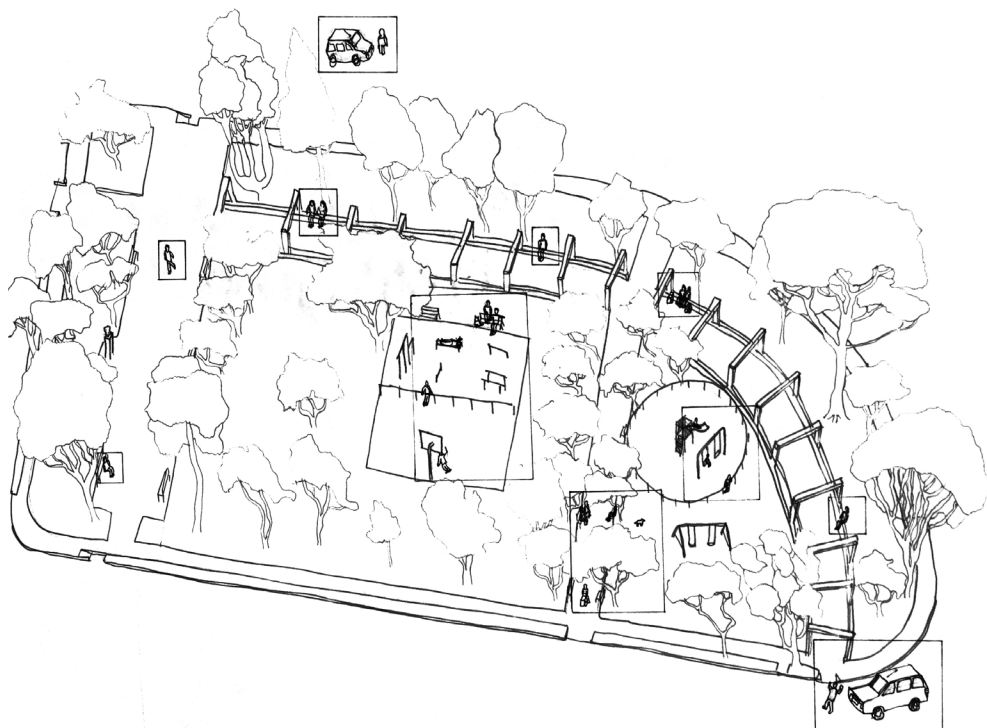
*At my heart is Parkway, it runs through me, gives me a structure and a centre. It's an important place. It's where all the life of the area pumps through. Eating, drinking, buying, sitting, watching, playing, walking, this is where it is happening. It may be a complete cliché, but it's also a very romantic place, my heart. The couples come and they promenade. If you have the hots for someone, and you want to be with them, outside, then you come to the parkway. Away from parkway I am for the most part a quiet place. I am home to academics, students, Bogotá's bourgeois. I breathe, I fill my lungs, and I exhale. People enter, they come to work, then they go home. They come to the theatre, and then return to relive the babysitter. They come to study, and then they go back to their small shared flats. These breaths become daily cycles, rhythms of the city. 9am, busy, 11am, quiet, 1pm, busy, 3pm quiet, 5pm busy, then overnight before the new day, quiet again.*

*A river runs through me, Canal Arzobispo, the archbishop's himself. It is not holy though, it is a place of effluence. The fresh water comes off the Andes, and immediately filth, rubbish and sewage is added to it. The river is then full of substances ejected from the homes and businesses nearby. It has also become a space of a different kind of ejection. The community of those without homes lives there, rejected from the rest of the city. This is the place they are made to call home, the place of things people don't want to deal with.*

*Through my roads flow people, on foot, bicycles, in motor vehicles. They give Teusaquillo its life, they carry with them the goods and the ideas to keep the area prosperous and active. The wires above the roads flash with information and power. They direct the activities below, and make the remote local through instantaneous connection. As I feel my extremities, the Avenidas, I brush passed countless other lives like the long grass flowing through your fingers. My definition as an area is given by the routes that others use to bypass me. They skim my external surface, only seeing paper deep. The relationship is fleeting, and forgotten moments later.*

# Monologues

Node/Park



*We are a local institution. Everyone nearby knows us, most have visited and many visit regularly. If a visitor to the area is trying to narrow down exactly where they are going, there is an excellent chance it would be our name that is invoked.*

*We like to think we offer a lot to the local community, and we know that they contribute a great deal to ourselves as well. We try to keep a wide range of opportunities open to make sure everybody feels welcome when they visit us. You can see our positive affect on the local community by looking towards our neighbors' buildings. They get a rather nice price boost from our being here. You can see why though.*

*We're generally at our busiest at the weekends. Weekdays are quieter but only just. On a typical weekday you can expect the boys to be playing basketball and exercising. They sit right in the centre of the park next to the ball court. Some people like to sit and watch them, although they can also be a bit intimidating. I'm sure they are nice enough but a big group of testosterone filled lads can get out of hand sometimes. Trust me.*

*We make a good place to meet, so at midday it's not unusual to see our visitors enjoying lunch with*

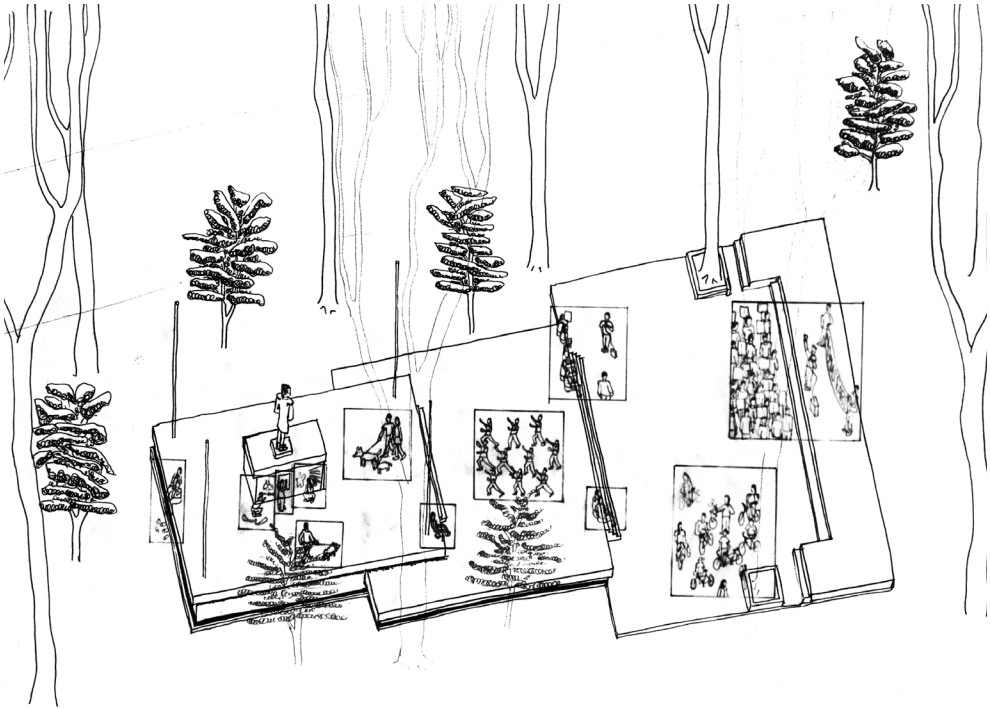
*each other. We aren't that close to the area where most of the offices are so we are quite flattered that people make the effort to come up.*

*We have lovely mature trees here with us. We feel lucky to have them, they cast such a nice light underneath. One of our regular visitors is a taxi driver, he'll park just outside on the street, underneath one of our trees. He'll then have his lunch break, he'll eat his sandwiches, he'll even clean the car out and give it a polish. He seems awfully proud of his car but then I suppose you have to be if you want to keep a taxi spick and span, especially with all those people climbing in and out all day.*

*At the weekend, when things get a bit busier, you'll be able to see all the neighbours here. They generally come in the hope of tiring out their dogs, or children. All the mothers will find one of the benches near the play equipment and underneath the trees. That way they can keep an eye on their little darlings, and also have the first conversation all day that does not involve Dora the Explorer. All in all I would say we are quite the attraction. A local institution. Irreplaceable. I don't know what people would do without us.*

# Monologues

Landmark/Statue



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*I am Admiral Jose Prudencio Padilla Lopez, leader of the Colombian fleet, liberator of Santa Marta and Cartagena, scourge of the Spanish admiralty. I have sailed the seas West and East, enforcing the freedom of all men of the Americas. I am now the protector of Teusaquillo in this city of Bogotá. I stand guard here, made from brick and brass, watching over the citizenry. I am their leader and their protector. Befitting of my centuries of service I now have a role that is somewhat more relaxed compared to my naval adventures. I stand here tall above the parkland, the rolling waves of wind passing through the trees about me. The light shimmers through the foliage as though on water's surface. I feel the rain on my face and am reminded of the spray from the Caribbean Sea. Hordes of horseless carriages pass along the roads either side of me, they make the air foul and I feel as if I am covered in a black filth in a way that even the longest of voyages did not leave me. As I stand here I watch the citizens of this great Colombian nation go about their business in the verdant parklands below me. I am horrified by what goes on during some nights. The local miscreants drink noxious juices*

*on my steps, and allow themselves into a state of drunkenness and disorder that would see them locked up on a ship of mine. Not so many moons ago a figure approached me in the darkness. It was the girl who sits at my feet at noon. I was shocked that such a girl as her would dare come out at this dark hour, especially without a chaperone. To my horror she began to smear posters onto my plinth. I could not read these posters but I know them to be sedition. I stood there, in humiliation, for days, until a young man tore the paper from me. I had previously thought the boy a scoundrel having seen him making crude remarks to the women on their afternoon promenades. I now suspect these woman to be part of a radical female infiltration by the Spanish and the boy to be a good patriot. There is only so much one man, one statue, even one as great and as decorated as myself can do to keep a city safe. It is up to the living men of this area to keep it secure from infiltration and to ensure the great nation of Colombia lives long as the jewel of the Americas. As God is my witness I will do all I can, and together, bricks and mortar, flesh and blood, we shall succeed in maintaining the security of the city and of this nation.*



# Anti/Hyper

Speculations



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The monologues gave me a good understanding of their present situation, and an idea of their history. To further my investigation I moved from a descriptive analysis to a speculative one. I tested the elements, often to destruction, by subjecting them to two potential futures. These futures were the 'Hyper', where the key function of the element was strengthened, and the 'Anti', where the same function was diminished. I then speculated on what the behavioural ramifications of these changes would be.

I created monologues exploring these scenarios, learning about the delicacy of the elements and the potential result that architectural intervention could have.

The following pages contain the entirety of the anti path and hyper path monologues. They are followed by excerpts from the remaining anti and hyper monologues.

# Anti/Hyper

Anti Path



*Youth is a fleeting thing, one minute you are a young, hanging out with students, freshly painted, gleaming, the next thing you know you are grey, water stained, and crumbling. My crumbling happened all of a sudden, when my stairs gave way. Suddenly I could not do what I live for, I could not help people cross between the city and the university. My stairs, where they met the city after spanning the road were dangerous.*

*As I came face to face with my own mortality, the students started to face the new spatial situation. In terms of transport, it was easy, they just walked a hundred metres up the road to cross at the Transmilenio station. There was more to it than a simple diversion though. The police closed my entrances, to try and stop people climbing me, but that wasn't much of a barrier to anyone. The students took no time in claiming me back, not as a path, but as a platform, a place to remain and a place for activity. I had aided their transport every day, but now they could not walk across me, my true potentials became clear. They had come to see me as one of theirs over the years, and this did not change. They made use of me, I was a place to meet, visible to the whole city. They began to meet on top of me, just socially at first, later they would talk about the issues that were troubling them. After that they started to plot.*

*They realised with the city passing below they could make their claims, and they protested, chanting from my sides, turning me into a billboard, communicating the student's troubles straight to the city. The authorities were not happy about this new development and sent the police to bring it to an end. They came, heavy*

*handed as could be expected, and ordered the protesters to come down. The students refused, having sensed the air of confrontation. The police prepared to take the bridge back by force, but the students climbed onto my sides, hanging off the barriers above the highway below. Any physical action now could send my friends falling off me down onto the tarmac below, probably not fatal but undoubtedly dangerous and definitely not what you want to happen in front of the TV news that had quickly appeared to document the scene. The confrontation lasted for hours, they had to close the road all day, the city ground to a halt, it was on TV all over the country, people were furious. Eventually after some time, negotiations and promises, the students came down.*

*The city fixed me up very swiftly after that, to get everything back to normal as quickly as possible, but I think it's too late. Some academics crossing the other day said something about me becoming a liminal node in the city, whatever that means. All I know is that everyone in this city has seen what can be done with a bridge over an avenida, how it can be used by the people. And seeing as every avenue in the city has bridges like me, well, that makes an interesting proposition.*

# Anti/Hyper

Hyper Path



*Who could have seen it coming? Universidad Nacional, in the list of the world's top 50 universities. We all knew that they were good but this was a bit of a surprise, that's Ivy League numbers. It obviously did the trick though, because suddenly every Spanish speaking kid from the Estadios Unidos who wanted the top education for cheap was here. You might wonder how that could affect me, just a bit of the urban fabric, but it's surprising.*

*The first thing I ever heard about any of this was the chatter from the students just after it was announced. They couldn't believe it, one of the world's best universities, and they were studying at it. I should have seen what was coming, because six months later in August it suddenly hit me. Thousands of footsteps on my back appeared overnight. It felt like the time I was hit by a truck. I'm strong so I could carry them all, but that wasn't the main problem. The issue I was having was how to fit everyone onboard. There were queues in the morning and evening, dense crowds crossed over me, I groaned. I was packed to my gunnels, it was lucky that nobody fell into the road. It was that busy.*

*They came up with a solution though, they repeated me, they built another bridge just like me, right by my side. Actually I have to admit I felt quite jealous. Suddenly there was plenty of room and we didn't have to worry about accidents so much. It was funny, watching the people pick between me and my clone. Some stayed loyal, some abandoned me. Some would vary from day to day. People would spot friends across the gap, attempting a conversation through the noise of the cars below. It was just too wide, and just too loud for a chat.*

*Life underneath us took a slightly peculiar turn though, I think it was the lack of light that did it. Nobody wanted to walk underneath anymore, and the stalls moved away from the underpass. The shelter they once depended on for their stalls was now threatening. The stalls line up along the street, safe in the light but exposed to the harshness of the sun and the rain. The huge crowds keep them from moving away permanently though.*

*In the middle of the road on the central reservation, the local homeless population have found that the permanent gloom is useful for them, taking residence in the space as a place to sleep. The local government is not too keen on this, they installed lighting to try and discourage it and to bring back more publicly acceptable uses, but it made no difference.*

*Things have changed, somewhat for the better, somewhat for the worse. It's ok right now, but I don't know what will happen if the crowds go. Right now, things may be no worse, just quite different, but they are certainly less balanced.*

# Anti/Hyper

Excerpts from the Anti Monologues



**Anti Edge** - The walls came down! The whole city agreed that it was time to open up, to lower our boundaries and to share our spaces, so they outlawed the humble garden wall. Now if a space is closed off so only you can use it, you'll have the planning department round telling you to change your tune. There was opposition of course, but it happened anyway, the cries in favour were too loud to ignore. Now wherever you look the front gardens are open and the grass goes right to the edge of the street.

The layout of the street changed at the same time, its borderless now. There is no set lane for driving, cycling, parking, it's all the same. It can be a pain to weave through the streets, around the parked cars, but at least everyone drives a bit slower, takes a bit more care.



**Anti District** - I was identified by my names, they made me who I was. If I was named, then I was known, a place in people's minds. Being struck by tragedy is painful, but to fade, in slow motion, to irrelevance, is tortuous. That was my fate. My definition was given to me by my abundances, more students, more culture, more food, more parks. Without these abundances all you are is city, formless and indistinguishable.

I lost my abundances, I lost my identity, I was forgotten. My name faded, in the memories of my residents and the painted signs on my streets. I was still here, yet referred to in the past tense. My name faded, people didn't call me la Soledad, I just became another place to pass through, another place to ignore. I was not spoken off, I was just there.



**Anti Node** - There's no point blaming us, we tried to stay open but it just couldn't happen. It was not our decision, rest assured we would not have dealt with things as they have been dealt with. We even tried to warn them but it was to no avail, we were a problem and apparently, we had to go. Typical government, pushing into the lives of normal people who just want to get on with things. Well, our reputation is in tatters now, and they are to blame for it. I won't dwell on what happened, that is passed now, but the effects of it today are just horrifying.

The situation, as it currently stands, is this: we were shut down, a fence was put up around us and nobody was allowed in. The reasons, frankly, were spurious. I think looking back, that was the moment this neighbourhood lost its charm. Hopefully we will reopen one day.



**Anti Landmark** - I remain Admiral Jose Prudencio Padilla Lopez. I remain the first leader of the Colombian Fleet, that beat the Spanish back and helped birth Colombia. I remain this figure in the lives of the people around me, yet they do not recognise me as he. It is simply an impertinence and I am deeply disturbed by it. The people do not know their history, and my place within it. The spot on which I stand has become meaningless, it is graffitied by criminals, fouled upon by beasts, drunks sit at my feet and the groups who do meet here pay me no attention.

Luckily there are still good men in this nation. In the government I helped build, powerful citizens have become disturbed by Colombia's lack of knowledge about their own origins. They took steps to fix the rot. Gone were the scoundrels and the loafers and the vandals.



# Anti/Hyper

Excerpts from the Hyper Monologues



**Hyper Edge** - We grew. We all did. I had hoped it would never happen but then it did. Fear of the other and desire for some strange idea of order drove us skywards. Now we all sit here, roughly four metres tall, opaque, separating a few from the rest. Reinforced concrete that cannot be climbed, broken, or even looked through, defines the edges of all lives now. Private oases are inside, with views of only the sky, the mountains and just a few of the tallest towers in the city. Life outside my gates has changed. People stopped walking, the men who once served food across me to the local students no longer unfold their umbrellas or set out their chairs. All the cafés have died, the parks are basically unused. People rush along the roads, driving everywhere, the traffic is awful.



**Hyper District** - I became popular, in demand. The university was attracting students from around the world, my parks were full, the theatres were putting on the best plays in the city. Tourism changed, Chapinero was at capacity, the city hotels were soulless and people wanted to imagine they were living like a true Bogotáño, a Rolo. The landlords worked out that they could charge ten times the rent if they were letting out their homes to middle class American tourists rather than to middle class Colombian teachers. My people started to struggle to find a new places to live, whilst the number of tourists steadily increased. My internal rhythms changed, the regular beat turned to fibrillation, irregular, unpredictable, and dangerous. I do not want to become ill.



**Hyper Node** - We were thrilled! Recognition at last. We welcomed the crowds that appeared to be the fruits of our labour. We were safer than Parque La Esmerelda, quieter than Parkway, and bigger than El Publico up the road. It helps that the stars from that show on the TV moved in nearby too, but it was mostly us. We were soon full, we barely had enough room. I'm not going to say there haven't been problems, when the popularity goes up the quality can't always stay the same. What with all the people, all needing a bit of space, all wanting to do something different, and not necessarily complementary to each others' plans, a couple of arguments were understandable. We used to be rather relaxed about what goes on here, too relaxed maybe. With all these guests the rules needed to be tightened somewhat.



**Hyper Landmark** - I stand here, my purpose to protect Teusaquillo. I stand here, witness to an awful crime and to an incredible reaction. I stand here, a failure. I stood here that night and I watched the young woman paste her posters upon me. I declared sedition, but now I see my grave error. A local hooligan had been accosting her and she had had enough, she made her protest in the form of pasted paper. The hooligan ripped them down, but this motivated her more. The fateful occasion occurred one night as she was replacing her posters, putting them back up after they had been ripped from my base. The hooligan was waiting for her. I have seen many things in my life on the seas and my lifetimes spent standing here, I am a hardened man. Still, I cannot bring myself to speak of what happened. The thought will haunt me until I am dust.

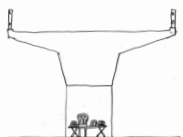
# Element Analysis

Dissection

## Path



Occupation



Shelter



Route

## Node



Inaction



Activity



Grid Exception

## Boundary



Inaction



Wall Exception



Wall

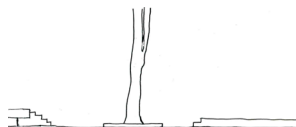
## Landmark



Statue



Seat



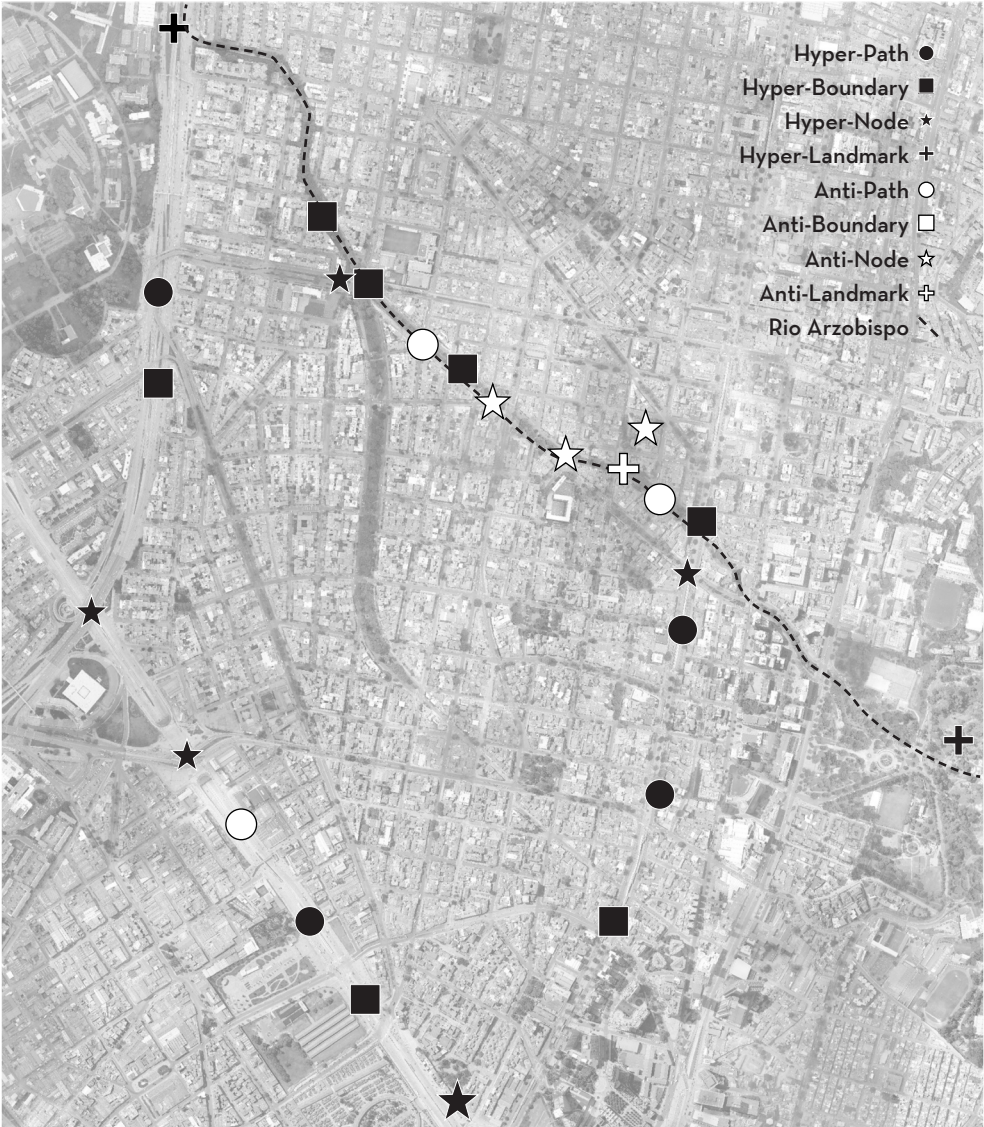
Stage

I began to dissect the elements, splitting them into their constituent architectural objects. By looking at how the combination of various objects formed the elements I discovered how they could be proposed elsewhere. The elements often rely upon a type of disjunction

or architectural exception to become successful, through encouraging the behaviours that resulted in an element's détournement. A hole in the wall or stall beneath a bridge are excellent examples of this.

# Element Analysis

Broken Elements



Once I understood positive elements, how they worked, and how they could be broken, I started to look for potential interventions for my project. I plotted ‘broken’ elements in the area and found that overwhelmingly they were located on the edge of la Soledad. These were boundary places, with large roads or changes in administrative control. The north boundary interested me in particular, with its mix of different elements and its ostensibly pleasant river environment. I decided to focus on this area, the

Rio Arzobispo. It acts as a strong boundary and a weak path, but would be much more useful to the city as a strong path and weak boundary.

I needed to investigate the river, and turned once again to narrative analysis. I inhabited the water running through the river and recounted its experience of arriving in the jungle, as it enters the city for the first time.



# Rio Arzobispo

Writing as the site



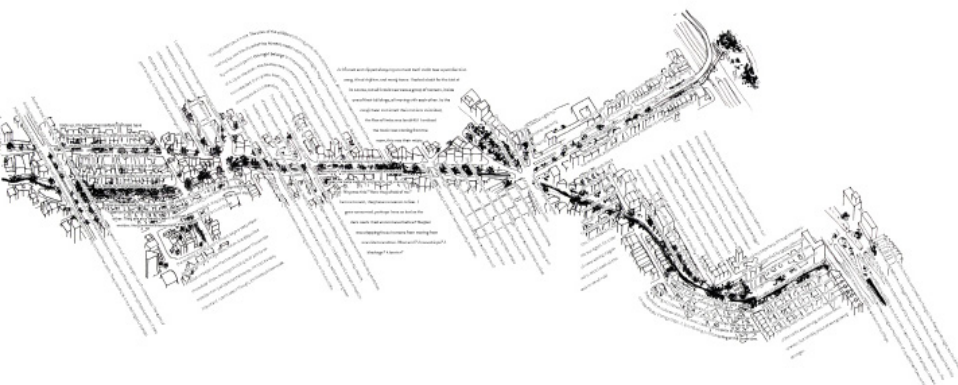
90

This text is an extract of a monologue that follows the path of a drop of water as it flows along the Rio Arzobispo. I used the text to create the hybrid illustration shown above.

*Another road, bam, black, roaring thunder above me, the air is thick with soot. This road is wider, I am cut off for longer. I don't understand. The walls of this tunnel tell me, this is the spine of the city, and the thunder is from a thing called Transmilenio. As I appear out the other side I glimpse groups of people, by the side of this road, watching the red thunder monsters, trying to figure out a way to cross their path. They are stuck, it is a sad sight to behold. I look up, it's darker than before, the trees have returned. The boulders, these buildings as they were called, are smaller here. There are less people, it is quieter. I ask a building what this place is like. It tells me this is a place of education, powerful people used to live here but now it is home to things called universities.*

*The building, it calls itself a house, says a very important person used to live here, not an arzobispo like me but a mayor, and that his death meant thousands more died. There is a huge building built just to remember him just behind the house, I'm told its very important. I can't see it though, it's blocked from view. I can hear a noise, shouting and screaming. I am concerned, what is happening? Is this a violent place? Apparently my concerns are unfounded, it is juvenile humans, they are playing, running and shouting. I can't see them either, but they are there, locked into a giant building, to be taught about the ways of the world. More humans walk passed, not juveniles, but still young, they interact, talking, sitting together, occasionally disagreeing or arguing, but mostly just keen to impress each other. They are also here to learn, but they are not forced, they are older and more mature, they want to discover and investigate the land around them. This part of the river has more bridges, but*





they aren't the tunnels of before, quick flashes of shadow rather than long stretches of black, glimpses of faces looking into the water. Under one of the bridges I was suddenly lifted away from my friends, suddenly I was in some kind of plastic container, trapped, looking out at the rest, rushing by. I looked around, a small collection of objects sat there, all this person's possessions. My plastic prison is being used to wash them, filthy water washing even filthier pieces of fabric. I stay within the container. The human finishes the washing and I sit there, on the concrete. The night falls once more. The cries of the children are long gone, the students have left. All I can hear now is the sound of the cars, rushing by, and the sound of the humans underneath the bridges, they don't make much sound though. Nobody walks by on the hard paths, the night belongs to the people down with me, but they cannot take any advantage of it. Upon the dawn, the human next to me stirs, a siren interrupting rousing him from his concrete bed. During this

interruption of rest I was knocked, sent toppling over, draining back into the river. I rejoined the flow, back in my element.

As I flowed and slipped along my own hard bed I could hear a peculiar birdsong, it had rhythm, and many tones. I looked about for the bird at its source, but all I could see were a group of humans, inside one of their buildings, all moving with each other. As the song's beat continued their motions coincided, the flow of limbs was beautiful. I realised the music was coming from the room, this was their music. I swept along, beyond the sound from the dancers. I noticed all the humans that walked near me were walking my length, not crossing over. Why was this? Were they afraid of me? I am no torrent, they have no reason to fear. I grew concerned, perhaps I was as bad as the dark roads I had encountered before? Maybe I was stopping these humans from moving from one side to another. What am I? An arzobispo? A blockage? A barrier?

# Rios de la Bogotá

Precedent analysis



**La Avenida Jiménez de Quesada** - This river runs from the Univesidad Los Andes into the heart of the city. Its path has defined the surrounding street layout and the city has grown up around it. The river itself has been turned into a series of cascades, creating an attractive public space. It is now a key pedestrian route in the centre of the city.



**Parque El Virrey** - In the north of the city El Virrey runs through a residential neighbourhood. The local residents campaigned to turn its path into a large park. The river is now a leisure space as well as a route for walkers and cyclists in the city.

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**Sendero Quebrada La Vieja** - This river runs along a small gorge, creating a steep valley. The houses around it have been built at the top of the valley. The river itself is a wild space and is the start of a hiking route that follows its path to the top of one of the mountains above. Even when you are surrounded by large residential buildings it feels as if you have completely left the city behind.

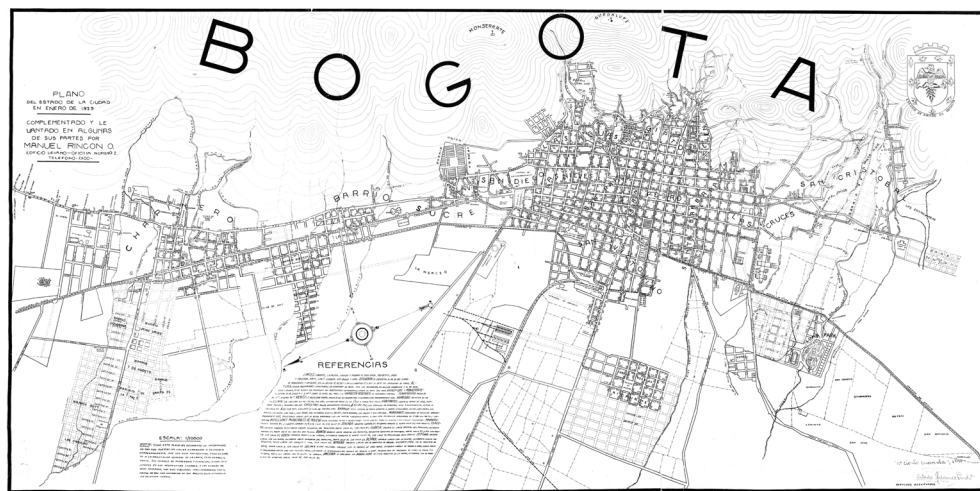


**Parkway** - Although Parkway itself has no visible running water, it follows the route of a culverted river below. The street is a popular park, used as a space to promenade and go for an evening stroll. The park is a very social space, with many people using it for a variety of uses. The street is home to a large number of cultural spaces, restaurants and bars. In the evenings the space is thriving.

Following on from my analysis of Rio Arzobispo I began to investigate other streams and linear parks in the city. I found out how they interacted with the city and how their designs could be learnt from in the transformation of Rio Arzobispo. These four case studies have a range of sizes, site profiles and relationships between city and nature, all important in my own proposals.

# Rios de la Bogotá

The rivers' role in shaping the city



Rivers are key influencers in the early years of a city's growth. The rivers in Bogotá are no different. The modern sprawl of Bogotá was once a series of villages, located in the shadows of the mountains and next to the streams coming off them. People built the villages alongside the rivers to use them as a source of water. The villages were then connected together, with the roads that became the avenidas and autopistas of today. The orientation of the streets and the strong north-south axis of the city can be ascribed to the influences of river and mountain. The above map from 1923 shows the early years of the city's sprawl, Rio Arzobispo is visible, and its path is virtually the same as it is today. Rio Arzobispo and the other rivers throughout the city can be seen as guidelines for the city, the original streets. Their interaction with the city building regulations of colonialist Spain have formed the city and created its current shape.

The rivers now connect the major avenidas together, and can act as pedestrian links between transit links along these routes. The contrast between the natural element of the river, connected to the mountain, and the city is strong. I can use this contrast to create the intensified social experiences that define the moment, and can make them stronger by making that contrast greater.

To be able to increase this contrast I need to understand the experience of the river without the presence of the city. To achieve this analysis I studied the Delkin stream, in my own home village in rural Britain. The stream shares a number of similarities with Rio Arzobispo, it's length, strength of flow, its path spawning from springs in the hills and the definition it gives the layout of local human settlements. The major difference was the size of my village of 766 people, compared to Bogotá's 8.1 million residents. This was ideal, as I could use this analogous water-course, but without much of the human intervention present along the Arzobispo.

Walking along the stream I began to remember occasions from my childhood when I had visited the stream. I was using it as a device to measure my life against, the landscape being constant, as the surrounding buildings and my own personal situation changed around it. I realised Rio Arzobispo could work in the same way, providing an anchor to Bogotáños as their rapidly growing city changes around them.

The following page contains an extract from this walk, and some of the photos I took on that day.



# The Delkin

Writing the river without the city

*I turn left, face the limestone hills and start to follow the stream towards them. The fields either side of the river gently undulate, due to ancient ridge and furrow ploughing. The stream is wide and muddy, cows have churned the banks whilst drinking from the stream. Tree roots have been exposed, the earth washed from around them to reveal the structure, normally subterranean. I walk along the stream's meanders, the water occasionally hidden within the trees, thorns and nettles. A willow has fallen over the Delkin, the wood, popular for its strength and flex, used for cricket bats and balloon baskets, not snapped, broken at the joint. I clamber across it, pulling myself between its branches. On the opposite bank I pick my way through brambles and thistles. Nature is not made to human scale, and crossing its boundaries or following its path is often a challenge.*

*I look to my right and can see my grandparents house several fields away. They followed us to the village a decade after we arrived. My grandmother will probably be up there now, and could see me if she were to look out her window. Before my grandfather's death he used to walk these fields picking blackberries, he would come back with purple fingers and kilos of wild fruit.*

*They blackberries are visible now, they will soon be ripe, but now they hang firm on the bramble. Mushrooms grow in the fields, I'm not sure if they are edible or not. Sloe berries are growing in the hedgerows, sour to eat, but good for jam, or in gin. Elderberries can be used for the same, and the cordial syrups from the elderflower will be in cupboards across the village already. The stinging nettles that have stung my legs can be used for soup and wine, not that I have tried.*

*A friend of mine used to live next to this field. Their house was demolished several years ago. There are new houses and new families there now. I walk along the stream's side, fighting through the undergrowth. I played here as a child with the friend from the house above. His mum used to watch us and our siblings as we would play around in the stream. I am now about the same age as she was when she watched us play and my friend now is a father to two children himself. I feel both old and young at the same time.*





# Project Proposal

Soften the edge, strengthen the path



Locations of moments are valuable spaces in the city. They are places of debate and transgression, helping create new ideas and ways of operating. My aim is to create a plan for Rio Arzobispo that encourages these places of intense social experience as much as possible.

The river itself is a valuable but underused element in the city, and its contrast of nature against the intense urbanism of Bogotá are well suited as locations for moments. Shifts in behaviour are more likely with shifts in environment, so a strong contrast between city and river is worth promoting in order to create valuable social experiences.

The river also acts as a mnemonic device, a 'theatre of memory', and the historic consistency of its path means it can be used as a reference point by local residents. Even as the city shifts around it and peoples' lives continue, its refusal to change creates a space that provokes memory, helping people place themselves in the landscape, even if the built environment is unfamiliar. The mountains above Bogotá are often

used by residents to orientate themselves in the city, and rivers can be used in the same way.

I will propose a series of spaces of encounter that can be used by the occupiers of the surrounding buildings. This will create shared spaces where interaction will occur, softening the hard edge the Rio currently forms and giving a venue for moments. I will do this through a masterplan for the river, that will result in positive, helpful, social, experiences. It will do this whilst strengthening the positive elements of the river, such as its function as an east-west pathway. The landscape can also act as a personal anchor, creating a relationship with the space that can be maintained during the inevitable future changes that will come to this growing, densifying city.



# 05

## Critical Thresholds

Lilian Tran

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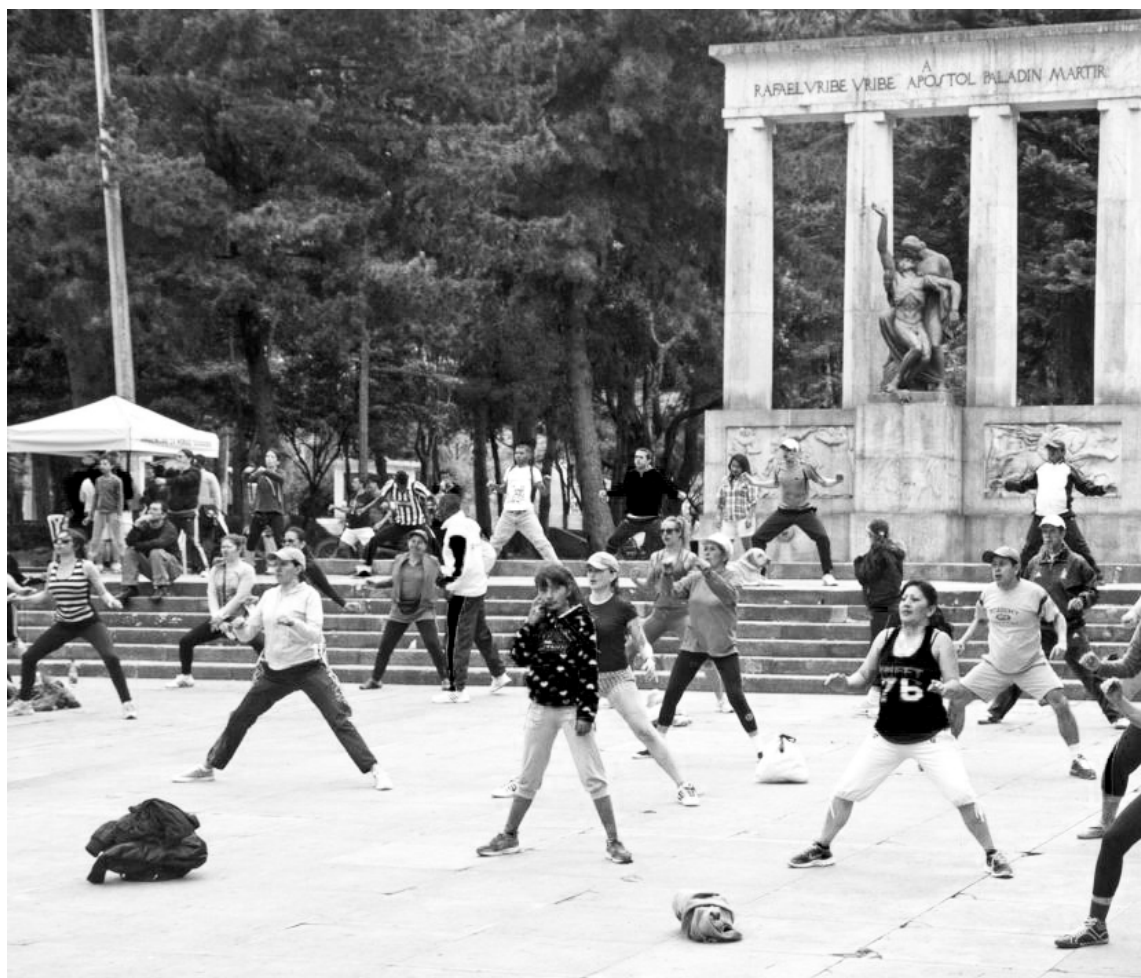
# Patterns of Occupation

Theoretical studies of context and approach, and first hand observations of spatial use

The Methods and Analysis graduation studio reconsiders the position of the architect, in light of new architectural and urban challenges being posed in rapidly growing cities, such as Bogotá. By working in a position of displacement we, as students of architecture, must adapt to foreign conditions and find new ways to respond to alternative contexts. On the wider level, the studio investigates how to 'Construct the Commons' or ways in which we can rethink the commons in response to the changes of contemporary society. Trends such as the shift in which groups or individuals hold agency in urban space projects, how spatial resources are distributed across the city, and the emergence of spaces that are neither public nor private.

In response to these premises, my research can be broadly categorised into two types, theoretical reorientation and first hand case studies. The theoretical body can be further divided into, examining architecture (of and around Colombia) from a position of displacement, and exploring ideas on the modern day commons

The Latin American context is largely uninvestigated in our European architectural education. I wanted to tackle this gap in my knowledge from the beginning, and build a basic foundational knowledge of architectural and historiographical discourse in Modern Latin America. This reorientation of my knowledge took me down several routes, post-colonial theories and architectural discourse of 20th century Latin America,





learning about the formation of Bogotá as a city and Latin America as a whole, and studying how earlier transcultural architects have approached work from a position of displacement.

Secondly, I became interested in many different theories about defining 'the commons' in today's world; where the state continues to relinquish responsibility for the wellbeing of society, and the incomes of private companies are equivalent to those of nations. From this, what is still left of the commons? I examined the writings of key architects, urbanists and social scientists, including Manuel de Solà-Morales, Henri Lefebvre and Rahul Mehrota. Between them, they scope out various urban issues of the contemporary city, such as the importance of

'collective spaces' that are typically ignored by architects, to the theory that the space of the city is made by and exists only because of its citizens' activity. From this study, I developed my own design brief to involve a collection of varying spaces that attempt to conflate ideas of private, public and common spaces. In my next phase, I aim to experiment with how these notions can be translated into a language of complex, interlocking hybrid space.

Thirdly, during our field trip to Bogotá, I was particularly interested in how public spaces were appropriated by various people for different purposes, and how particular spatial qualities or affordances would draw people in. My curiosity was linked to the first premise of acting from a position of displacement, because people's use of, and relationship to, space appeared to be very different to my experiences of European cities. I chose a handful of spaces in the neighbourhood to analyse what was happening in each situation, and figure out what the common factor was in these appropriated spaces.

Following from this, the project aims to create a public neighbourhood space that proposes an alternative to the public/private dichotomy, or the strict distinction, that is present in the site area.

In the case study research, I concluded that the spaces of appropriation, though varying in scale and context, had the shared feature of offering a sense of enclosure. The spaces are delimited, while maintaining an openly accessible space to members of the public. Key to their function was the different means by which this delimitation was materialised, whether it was tall fences and thick vegetation, or an implication of a spatial boundary, a roof above protecting from rain. The project aims to develop a language of thresholds such as these, that play with the traditional relationships between street and structure, or one room and another.



A city characterised by its patterns of occupation

# Reconstructing Peripheral Positions in Post-Colonial Architecture



Grid plan for Casablanca 1946-52

*To what degree can Western architects reposition their approach, to meaningfully intervene in foreign architectural practice and discourse?*

Architectural discourse has historically been propagated from the West, thus the canon of architecture is situated in the conditions of Western culture, society, and development. In the 1980s to early 2000s, however, postcolonial theories emerged as new construct for understanding 'non-Western' contexts, which challenged the presumption that architectural theories of Europe and North America were the 'centre', whereas 'non-Western' regions were the 'periphery'. In today's society, we must reconstruct the canon such that knowledge is reunited, non-Eurocentric, and appraises difference and diversity.

In order to accept and appreciate alternative perspectives, we must first de-familiarise ourselves from the Western hegemonic tradition, and recognise that we can learn from 'non-Western' ways of doing. This begins with working from a position of displacement, which forces the architect to re-evaluate their approach in light of a wholly different cultural, political and aesthetic value system.

## Latin American discourse

During the 1980s, Latin America questioned the notion that their practice was a derivative of the European architecture, and sought to define an identity that founded upon their own time,

place, and development and spatial condition. They were aspired to be "the centre of [themselves]." Their primary debate focussed on the notion of Critical Regionalism, a concept that argued for an effort to adapt to the themes of Modern architecture to suit local situations and needs, in order to ward off universalising solutions that resulted in the same architecture everywhere. Chilean architect and critic, Cristian Fernandez Cox, challenged the notion of 'the spirit of the times.' Universalising notions such as 'Zeitgeist' were only reflective of the ideals of the West, and could not simply be adapted to 'local peculiarities', because they are intrinsically rooted in a different geographic, cultural and spatial conditions.

## Transcultural architects

However, architects such as Michel Ecochard and Lina Bo Bardi worked to disengage with their Eurocentric thinking, to varying levels, and practiced in a way that was holistically sensitive to the context. Ecochard was a French architect, urban planner and archaeologist, who worked in multiple transcultural conditions. He challenged the heroic narrative of the Modernist architect, arguing that they needed to "be very close to the inhabitants" in order to understand them. In the mass-housing project that he led in Casablanca, he made rational, ethnographic surveys of the users, in order to account for the character, topography, economy or social conditions of place, issues that were often disregarded by tra-



ditional urbanism. By doing this, he suspended his knowledge of how European cities operate, and learnt about the everyday practices of local people.

Arguably, however, he did not completely displace his way of thinking, because his method was still based on applying the Avant-garde culture of CIAM to foreign urban realities. His 8x8 housing grid resulted from a European analysis of Moroccan habitats, for which he adapted the US neighbourhood unit concept into a more flexible system. This demonstrates that whilst he was sympathetic towards the vernacular tradition, his approach was still inherently a structuralist one.

By contrast, Lina Bo Bardi made a stronger impact with her work in Brazil. She was an Italian born architect who moved to São Paulo, Brazil in 1946. Her early works, such as her own home (the Glass House 1951), were associated with the Avant-garde Modernism and Italian Rationalism; industrial materials and the simple, repeated form. Later works, however, demonstrate an expressive language that reflect local artistic traditions. In SESC Pompeia, São Paulo, Bo Bardi reappraised and transformed the old steel factory instead of using the established tabula rasa route. This was a revolutionary at the time - it paid tribute to the social and historical value of the site, and was a sustainable response to the brief by renovating a structure that was in relatively good condition. Her office also physically relocated to the building site during construction, to have a closer relationship to the builders,

and experiment first hand with new options.

Bo Bardi's later approach was a dismissal of the Functionalist movement, and an adoption of more vernacular methods. The Modernist values that she continued to maintain were a desire to invoke the social and cultural potential of architecture, and the possibilities of large-scale concrete construction for place-making. Beyond that, however, she wanted to "amplify the existing, nothing more".

Whilst Ecochard made efforts to adapt to local environs, more than his counterparts in CIAM did, his approach was still, in its essence, a form of exporting CIAM logic to 'non-Western' contexts. On the other hand, Bo Bardi's work transformed by adopting the characteristics, social and aesthetic values of the region. Her research is situated and specific to the local context. In other words, Ecochard re-engineered his way of thinking to suit a foreign condition, whereas Bo Bardi reduced certain aspects of her old way of thinking, and appropriated local customs in their place. Overall, however, we can still draw on the methods of transcultural architects, such as Ecochard and Bo Bardi, in re-evaluating peripheral positions in architecture, and validating the notion that we can actively learn from other peoples' ways of doing.

Adapted from submission for Lecture Series Research Methods AR3A160, 24 May 2017

# Bogotá and the Commons

Learning from Modern Latin America

## Bogotá's formation

Like most cities of Latin America and the Global South, Bogotá experienced extremely rapid population growth during the 20th and 21st centuries, and retains the hallmarks of most post colonial cities, a strictly defined grid system. In the last 50 years, Bogotá swelled from a population of 300,000 to 10 million, particularly from the mass migration from countryside to city as people attempted to flee the violent activities of rural areas.

The result was that Bogotá expanded in a very fragmented and uncoordinated way, and successive waves of migrants have settled around the peripheries of the city. We see this is reflected in the urban character of this city; for example there are areas in which intensive development is adjacent to empty spaces.

However, Bogotá is unique in that it was awarded the Venice Biennale Golden Lion award for cities in 2006, for its response to problems of public space, innovations in transportation provision, housing and social inclusion. The urban transformation of the city was largely accelerated under the administration of two unlikely mayors, Antanas Mockus and Enrique Peñalosa. Their campaigns to improve citizenship culture and reclaim public space dramatically impacted the identity of the city, which later became an example for other Latin American countries to follow.

Another shift occurring in Bogotá during the 1960s was the emergence of a group of ar-

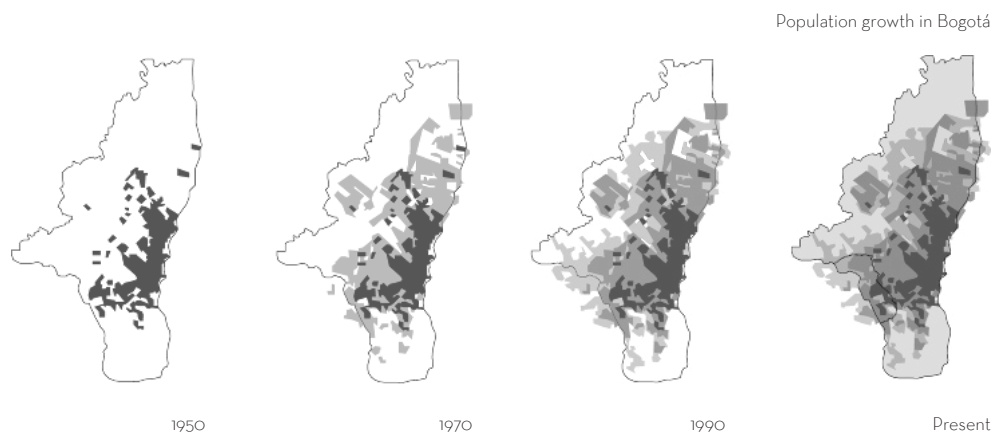
chitects that departed from the prevailing logic of Functionalism, and developed a new spatial intention that was suited to the use of brick construction. Three key figures of this movement were Fernando Martínez, Guillermo Bermúdez and Rogelio Salmona.

In particular, Salmona's body of work has had a major impact on the architectural identity of Bogotá, such as his characteristic use of red bricks. His public space projects aimed to improve the urban condition of the city and create public spaces that would foster a more open and connected society. He was revolutionary in his use of publically accessible courtyards, such as in those of the Torres del Parque. Instead of gated communities, these gardens are open to anyone, and transports the passerby to a luscious world of tropical plants and peaceful spaces, right in the middle of the city. From the Centro Cultural Gabriel García Márquez to the Virgilio Barco library, his catalogue of works have redefined the atmosphere of public spaces in Bogotá into common spaces for all.

## Constructing the Commons

While in Bogotá, I looked at how the spatial logics of different spots around the La Soledad neighbourhood facilitated various types of spatial appropriation. The spaces of my case study analysis demonstrated the difficulty with categorising private, public, and common, since there invariably exists many overlaps between these; the semi-public, the semi-private.

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This issue is dealt with in the writings of Manuel de Solà-Morales, who argues that collective spaces, which are neither public nor private but both, add architectural and urban richness to the contemporary city. The private spaces that contain public activity and public spaces used for private undertakings are the places where the day to day life of citizens are played out. Generic spaces such as the supermarket, the sports centre, or the car park are possible places of communal interest, as they are often undefined spaces where the shape of the city is at stake.

Theories of the use of space in the city can also be understood according to Henri Lefebvre, as defined in 'Production of Space'. He argues that all space is socially productive and socially produced, and that "to inhabit is to appropriate, not in the sense of possessing it, but as making it an oeuvre, making it one's own". Therefore the relationship between spatial qualities and how they are used, or appropriated, is a fundamental question of architecture.

However, the notion of appropriation of space, is particularly pertinent to South America, where its pleasant temperature and more informal structure of economy facilitates a certain flexibility. In 'Rethinking the Informal

City', Rahul Mehrota describes the 'kinetic city' as an urban condition of constant motion. Much of the city's operation and character is temporary in nature, for example, with processions, festivals, or street vendors, and patterns of occupation determine its form and perception. The typical European city might be described as a 'static city' - more permanent in its nature, and can easily be comprehended in two-dimensional maps. The architecture of the city is the spectacle.

Mehrota objects to the dualistic concept of informal versus formal, which are not mutually exclusive orders, but interdependent, indefinable systems of the city, and also indefinable. Therefore the challenge for designers of the contemporary Latin American city is to respond to its needs in a flexible manner, as opposed to the grand visions and urban masterplans of Europe.

Borret, K. (2008). On Domains, the Public, the Private and the Collective. *OASE* #75, pp.302-311.

Lefebvre, H. (1991). *The Production of Space*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Merrifield, A. (2006). *Henri Lefebvre: A Critical Introduction*. Oxon: Routledge.

Hernández, F., Kellett, P. W., Allen, K. L. (2010). *Rethinking the Informal City: Critical Perspectives from Latin America*. Oxford: Berghahn Books.



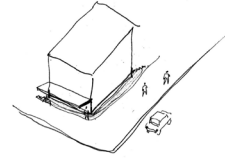
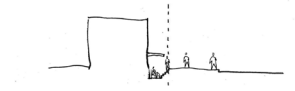
# Thresholds

Borders and boundaries

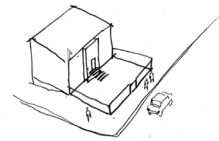
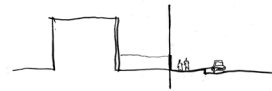
Richard Sennett theorises that there are two types of edge conditions that can occur between differing spaces, borders and boundaries. A border is like a sea-shore, it is an active edge where you find a meeting of different conditions - tension-filled and a synthesis of contrasting activities. A boundary is like a tiger's territory defined by its sprayed scent - it is an inactive edge where the animal has territorialised the space and ensured no one else may enter.

These edge types can be used to analyse the spatial conditions found in Bogota. In some cases, we can see how a space has been designed to encourage the public to enter. A spatial threshold is provided that allows for a logical transition from the street into an enclosed area.

However, there are many more examples where a building owner has permanently appropriated the space of the street, and then warded people off with barbed wire fences. This occurs with private residences most often, but there are also many examples where the threshold is in fact an entrance to a publically accessible place. There is a much more solid division between inside and outside, public and private, which aims to define spatial separation.



Border as an open meeting point of differing spatial conditions



Boundary as a spiked fence keeping spaces separate



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# Case Studies in Appropriated Space

In the workshop, our method of gathering knowledge by talking to locals gave us a new insight into how different urban elements were shaping the spaces of local communities. In particular, I was fascinated by the informal practice of appropriating public spaces, the stable sensibility of an ever present mountain range, or the chaotic scattering of post colonial styles amongst everyday buildings.

Expanding on the workshop aims, I identified four types of spaces in the neighbourhood which people had appropriated in various ways: the Human Sciences faculty at the Universidad Nacional; the monument of Admiral José Prudencio Padilla on Parkway; a tucked away house-turned-library called Casa Tomada; and the space under the bridge at Calle 45.

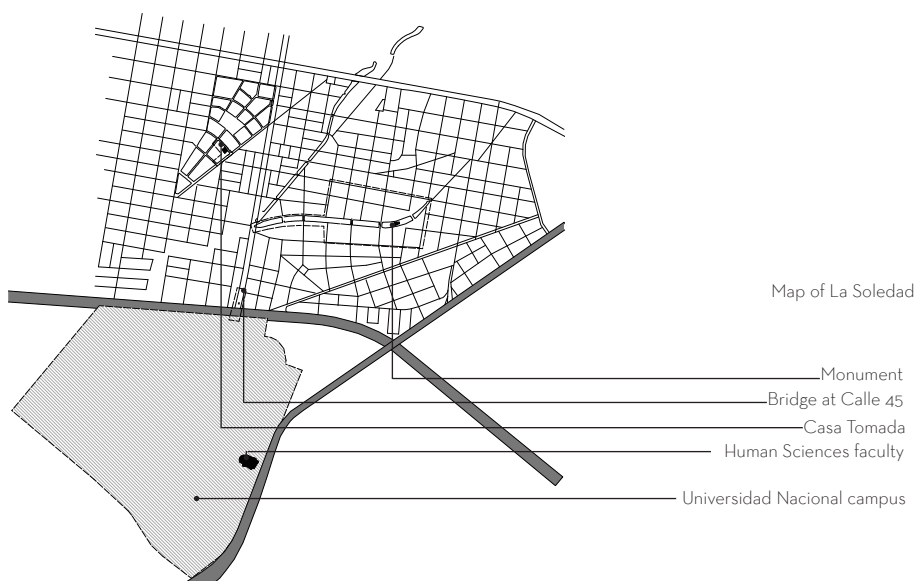
In the Human Sciences faculty, the topography of the roof was used for many activities; children chasing each other, people eating lunch, others lying around. It is a kind of landscape in its changes in levels, winding pathways and niches. There's a controlled access in certain places along the perimeter, so it's a secure place, and also activated by the large number of students that use the building.

Secondly, the monument acts as a landmark or way finding element amongst the repetitiveness of the grid. The public character of the location makes it ideal for people to meet. It has a few changes in levels, from steps to platforms, which have a certain 'affordance' - i.e. the size, height and material properties of these elements inherently suggest potential uses. They appear to naturally inspire people to climb and sit, and the layout provides a natural stage setting for public talks.

Thirdly, Casa Tomada is a kind of secret garden for the neighbourhood which holds cultural events and meetings, and where you can buy books. The house is on a quiet, residential street that comes off a busy road. It's setback far from the street, and has a large garden. A retreat from the city

Finally, the space under the bridge was appropriated by a number of groups, especially vendors and students. It has a nodal position in the urban grid of the city and connects university to the neighbourhood, which is otherwise separated by heavy traffic. Because the staircase lands directly into an enclosed, pedestrianised space, it is a kind of local hub.

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Spatial Impression

Urban context

Sectional comparison

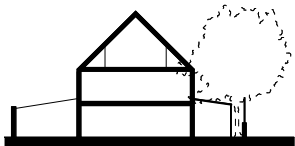
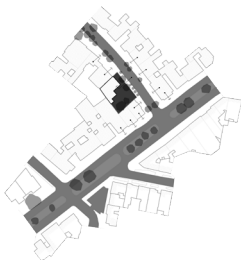
Human Sciences faculty



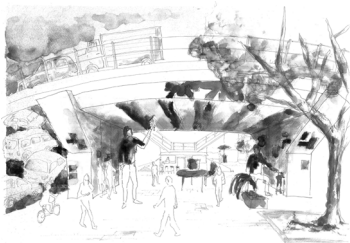
Monument



Casa Tomada



Under the Bridge of Calle 45





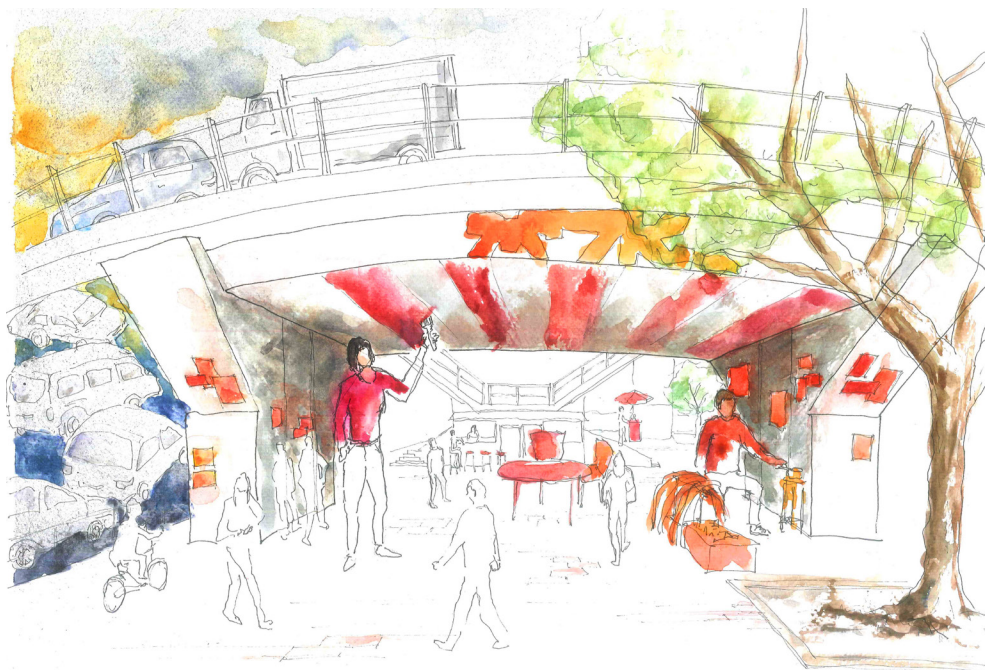
Casa Tomada : House turned library



Human Sciences faculty : a rooftop playground



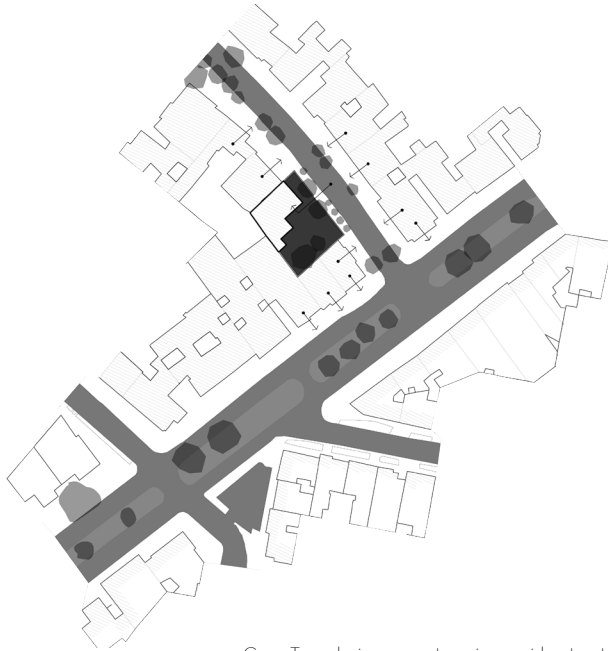
Monument : a local meeting point



Calle 45 bridge : meeting point and eating space



Note: all maps at varying scales



Casa Tomada is a secret oasis on side street ,with its large garden and vegetation that blocks out the traffic. It has a different orientation from the street that retreats it further

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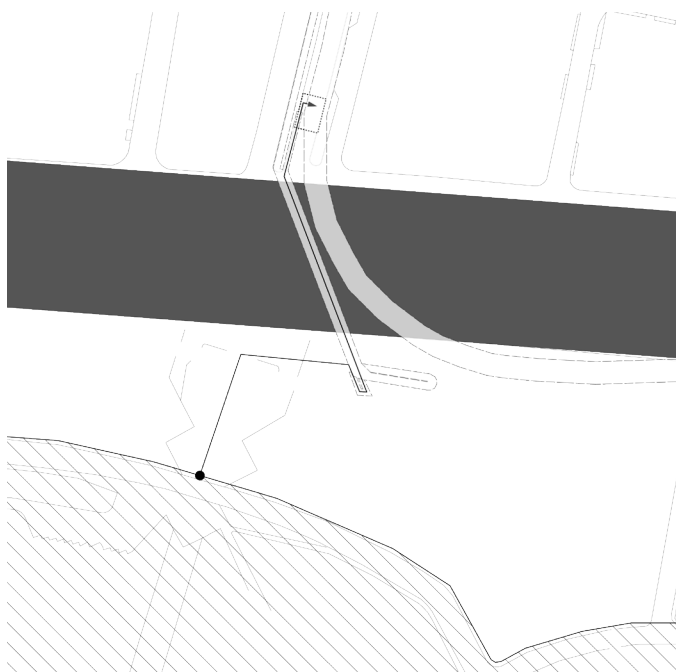
The Human Sciences faculty has a relaxed atmosphere, where students and the public are happily milling around. The building can more easily open up because it is protected within secure walls of University campus



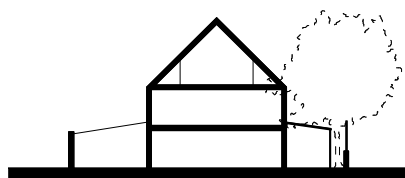


The Monument acts as a wayfinding landmark amongst the repetitive grid of the city, and also marks a key point along the length of Parkway

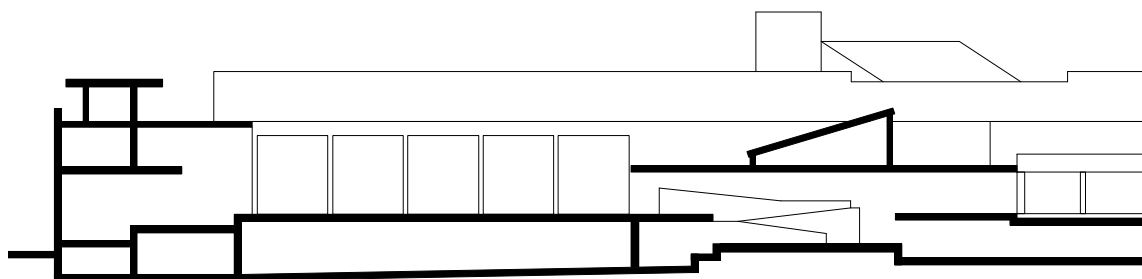
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The Calle 45 bridge brings swathes of University students across the busy highway and directly into a covered space, making it an ideal place for street vendors to operate



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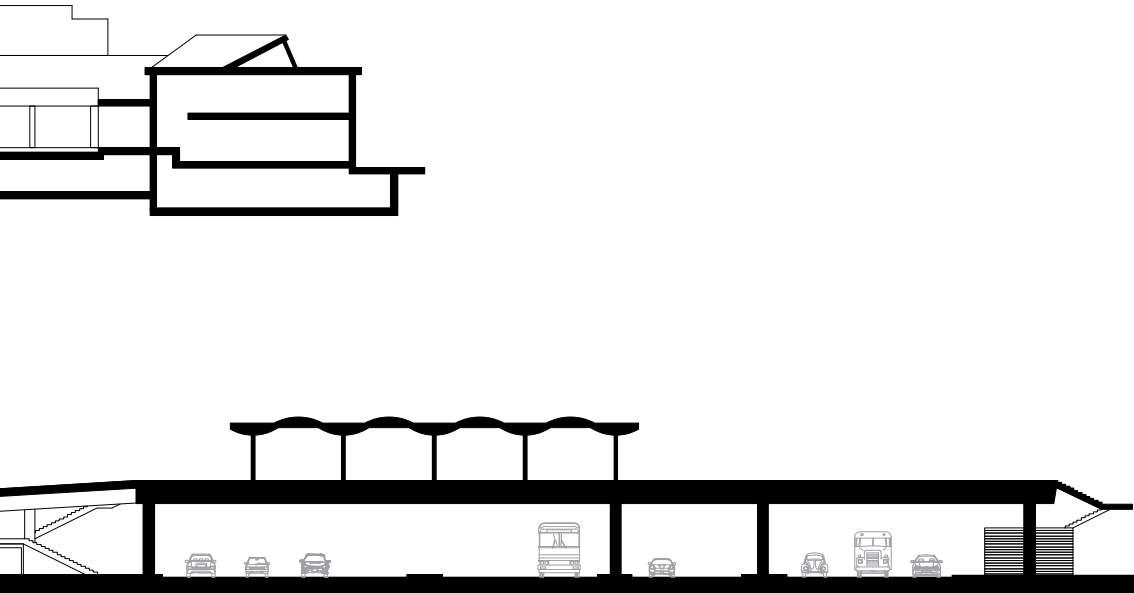


## Conclusions

The common element in all these spaces was that they all provided a sense of enclosure, whilst nearby a critical mass of people.

First of all, Casa Tomada physically withdraws from the street, but is in fact a public cafe and library, for anyone to use. Secondly, the monument is an obvious meeting point, and the platform and steps surrounding it define an edge where people stop and sit. Thirdly, the human sciences faculty is almost like a playground, and full of students and other visitors, but resides behind campus walls. Finally, the bridge at Calle 45 connects the university community to the neighbourhood, and provides a roof to shelter them.

In order to create this sense of enclosure, a notional feeling of being inside something, each of these spaces define a kind of threshold, between the wide open space of the city, and more defined spaces that can contain social activities.



Sectional comparisons 1:500

# Precedent Studies

Xul Solar Museum, Buenos Aires 1993

The museum of the Argentinian artist, Xul Solar, was designed to house his avant-garde, surrealist paintings and works. The building is a remodelling of his existing residence combined with the three surrounding apartments that he owned. The architect, Pablo Beitia, aimed to retain the Italianate character of the facade, but also respond to the ethereal qualities and references of Solar's paintings, by transforming the interior into another world.

The result is fascinating in its plastic manipulation of intersecting volumes, creating a labyrinthine pathway through the exhibits. Spaces are framed with a variety of elements, such as strong vertical planes or archways, but the spaces are not enclosed, allowing for a continuous flow from one point to another. Rooms of different volumes and heights are connected via changes in level, such that spaces appear to overlap, but still creating sense of crossing a threshold.

I aim to draw on the methods used to create a sense of drama, and from this analysing this project, the complex spatial qualities arising from the overlapping and layering of different spaces. I am also interested in the contrast between the strictness of the exterior appearance that suggests authority versus the dynamism of the interior that encourages discovery.

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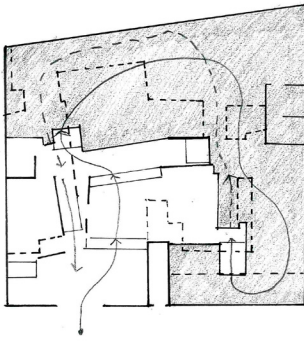


Vuel Villa 1936, Xul Solar

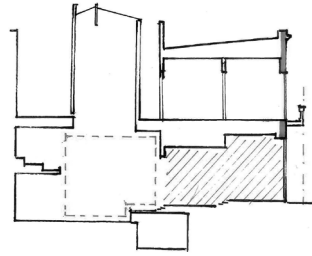


Central zenithal space with skylight tower above

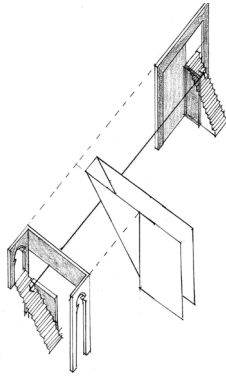




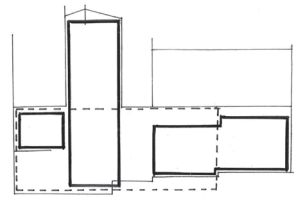
Circulation traverses multiple levels



Protruding balconies imply a threshold zone, the lobby area introduces the user into the top lit space

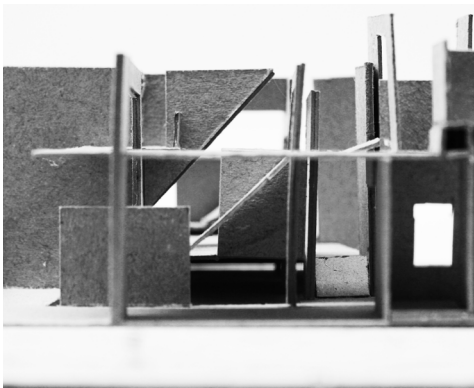


Parallel framing elements create visual relationships



Smaller units overlap with central space

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Study model : parallel planes and intersecting spaces

0 1 2 4m



Original facade obscures open, fluid spaces behind

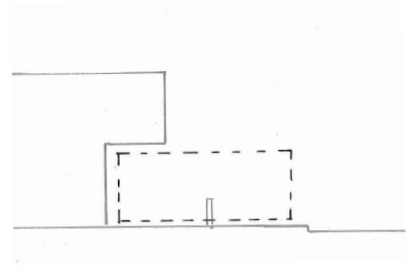
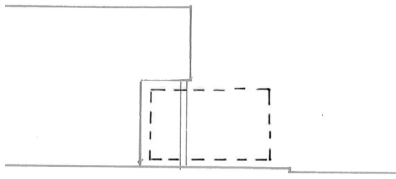
# Project Proposal

Design intentions and principles

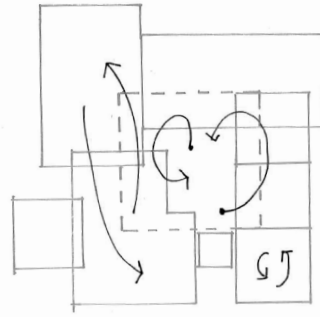
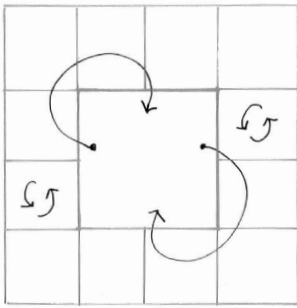
Following on from my theoretical and spatial research, I will use the design phase to investigate how common spaces can interlock with public buildings. Thereby I will create a collection of different spaces that blur the distinction between public and private. This proposal builds on the spatial logics found in the buildings Rogelio Salmona, who champions the notion of 'open collective spaces', as well my case studies on 'spaces of appropriation'.

More specifically, the brief will be to design a cultural hub. This choice is suited to the nature of the area as a cultural and educationally-focused district, but more importantly it provides the opportunity to work on a scale where spatial investigations can be taken to their potential. The cultural hub involves many different types of activities, from drama and performance to working artists and writers, each of which require different types of spaces. Combining these different types of spaces (halls, galleries, passages, lobbies), also allows for the building to be flexible, and could easily be adapted to accept new functions that may be needed in the future. For example a theatre stage could be used for conferences and large talks, work studios can be repurposed into classrooms. Therefore the project aims to articulate a variety of spaces in order to be flexible, and cater to any future needs of the city.

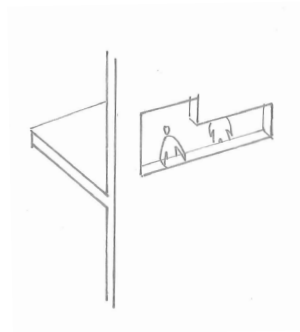
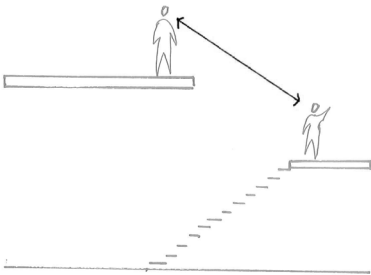
In investigating how to put together different spatial conditions, the study of the thresholds between them is key. I aim to develop a language of spatial thresholds that negotiates between inside and outside on multiple scales; between the street and the building, and the relationships between internal spaces. The intention is to create a sequence of spaces that are delimited, i.e. provide a sense of enclosure, but still openly accessible for people. This will be based on a creating an architectural promenade through the project, an alternative public path that invites the passerby into a pleasantly surprising oasis in the middle of the city. Like Casa Tomada, it will be akin to a secret garden in the city.



Overlapping of street and threshold



Articulated thresholds between different internal spaces and core area



Changing levels and framing devices to create visual relationships





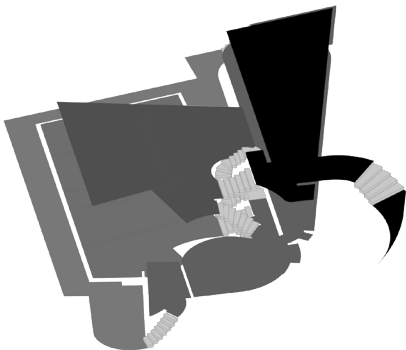
# 06

## Precedents Analysis

6.1	Casa Calderon / Wall House #2	120
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6.3	Casa Tomada / Le Fresnoy	128
6.4	Casa Tomada / STUK Performing Arts Centre	132

# Casa Calderon / Wall House #2

Unify\_



Isolate\_

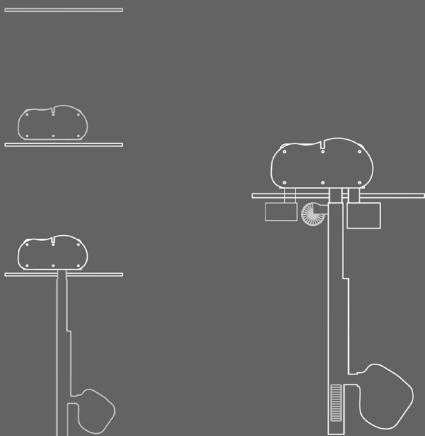


Spatial Strategies

Composition of the Periphery\_

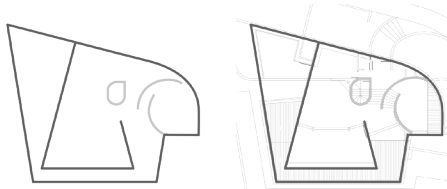


Additions of Volumes\_

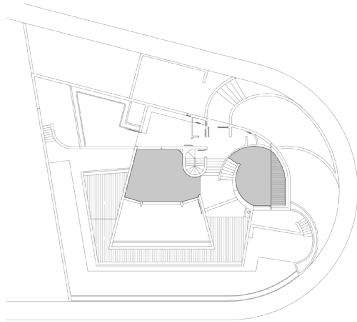
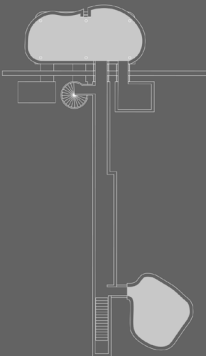


Spatial Strategies

Gregarious Spaces\_



Gregarious Spaces\_



Floor 0

Floor 1

# Casa Calderon

Fernando Martinez

## Unify

Taking advantage of the hill slope on which the house is located, the house is distributed in five different levels. The access is found on the highest level, followed by two levels containing the social areas. The lowest level corresponds with the intimate space, this is the bedroom and a library. The first strategy that can be seen in the house, is the intention of linking every social space of the house through thresholds and windows, but at the same time keeping a clear hierarchical disction between them.

## Composition of the Periphery

The second strategy found in the house is related with the periphery of the house. We saw how the slope is used to confer a hierarchy to the spaces while linking them. Then, the second problem is to define a periphery of the space. Fernando Martinez design a series of walls that fold over on itself. The spaces are further defined by two extra elements, namely the enclosed stair and the curved parapets.

# Wall House #2

John Hejduk

## Isolate

The Wall House #2 is a milestone in a long-term research which John Hejduk started in the 60's. Hejduk's research is focus on what he called the "first principles". As one approach to study the house, it seems that such research is a quest to understand architecture as a language. It is a sentence that hold a meaning thanks to minimum units and their relation. Therefore, this house is an inquiry into the nature of the wall. Nevertheless, once inside it, the experience gravitates not around the perception of the wall, but of the addition of different volumes. And each volume has its own vocation.

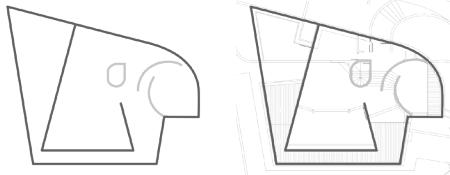
## Additions of Volumes

Each space is design as an additional unit. First, there is presence of the wall, which define and divide the landscape. Thanks to the wall there is a riverside opposed to the side of the city. This is why the wall works as instrument to interpret the landscape. The spaces that make a dwelling are added afterwards. A space to cook, eat, gather and sleep. The access is then added. The entrance is a long bridge which binds the final space. The later is the social space of the house, where the guest are received. In conclusion, the house is the addition of volumes connected by a hall and stairs.



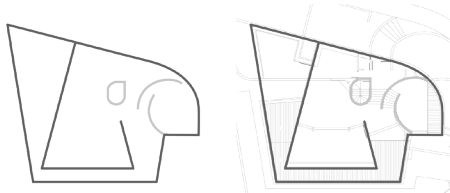
Spatial Strategies

Composition of the Periphery\_



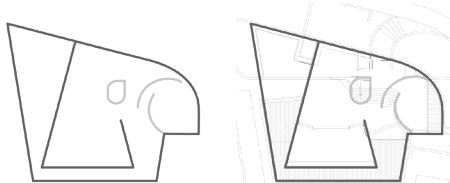
Spatial Strategies

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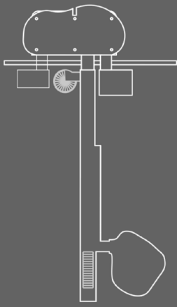
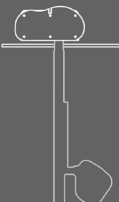


Spatial Strategies

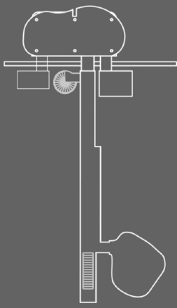
Composition of the Periphery\_



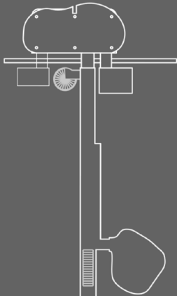
Additions of Volumes\_



Additions of Volumes\_



Additions of Volumes\_





### **Gregarious Spaces**

The third strategy is named gregarious spaces because these are meant to receive and gather with the visitors of the house. Each house establishes different settings to receive visitors, different ritual of representation. Because these spaces reflect who are the owner of the house towards the society. The Casa Calderon have two gregarious spaces. The first is on the second level from the entrance. The most striking characteristic of this space is that, thanks to a well-planned window on the first level, it is possible to see at the same time the mountains and the city. Nature and artifice. The second gregarious space is the dinner room, which is reached after the ceremonial path of going down the stairs.

### **Intimates Spaces**

The intimate spaces of this house are on the lowest level. These spaces, different from the gregarious ones, are compartmented. With one exception, the library. The latter is connected by the double high to the living room. All the intimate spaces are facing the garden, and at the back, the city.

### **Food Preparation**

It is relevant to investigate the spatial strategies around making the food. At this respect, again, both houses are totally different. The kitchen, in the Casa Calderon, is connected to the dinner room by two doors. One normal size but hidden for who is sitting at the table; the other is an unusual narrow door that can be confused as a wooden furniture. This means that whatever happens in the kitchen should be hidden from the visitor. The kitchen is also linked with a smaller room meant for the kitchen personnel. The owners and the employees have distinct spaces to be in. The employees circulate the house through the enclosed stairs without being seen.

### **Gregarious Spaces**

Right after enter the house, and climb the stair, one can find on the right a space which receives the visitor. When the visitor sits, they can understand the shape of the window. The window is placed at 90 cm above the floor. It is placed right at the height of a person sitting, and the views of the river and the trees reach the infinite. This is not the only window on the space. There is a square window that frames the street. It is possible to see who is coming. Example of windows that let you know why they are there are numerous in the house. The windows not only allow the light and air to go inside, they frame and communicate; the windows in this house are like paint ever-evolving.

### **Intimates Spaces**

The most intimate space of the Wall House is the second floor. To access this volume, it is necessary to go up the stairs inside the tower. It is from here that one can appreciate better the landscape, thanks to the height. It is from the intimacy of this room, through the undulating long window that the view towards the river is fully appreciated. From here one can see the boat racing on the water. The roof is curved on one side, making the north part of the room much higher.

### **Food Preparation**

The kitchen is one of the most interesting spaces of the house, it is like a world in itself. From here, it makes evident the strategy of isolate the volumes, because this space has everything that is needed, and still is detached of all other spaces of the house. Still one can enter the kitchen from the street, but needs to surround the house appreciating from below the strange geometry of it.

Compare with the Colombian house, it is evident that the owners will cook. There is no room for any personnel. This means a complete shift of thought. In this house the kitchen is also a space for enjoy oneself. The light and the landscape can enter here.

# Potteries Thinkbelt (PTb)

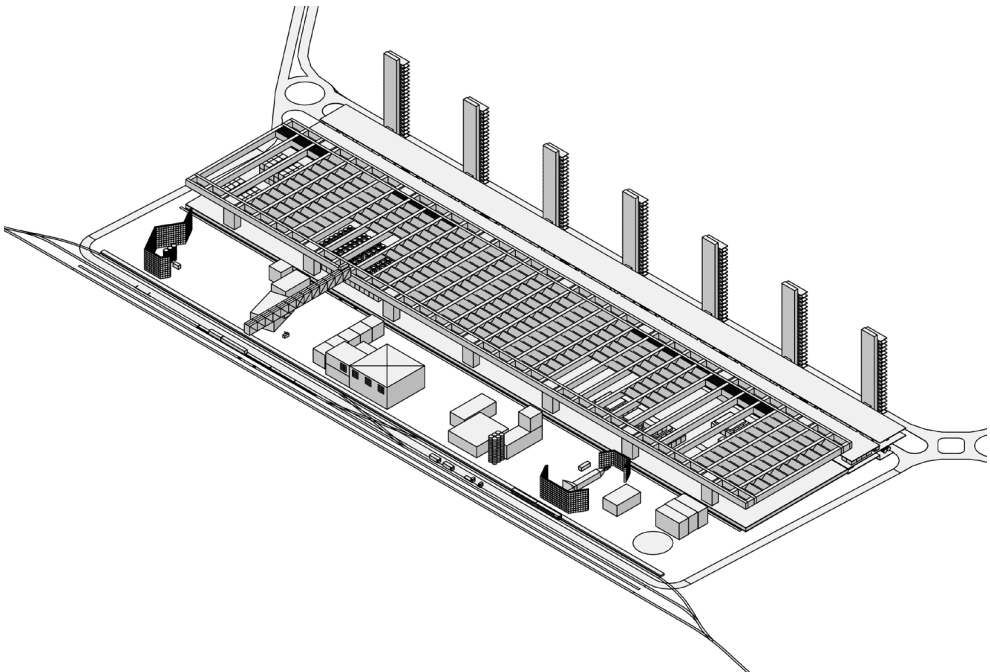
A University Is A Machine For Learning In

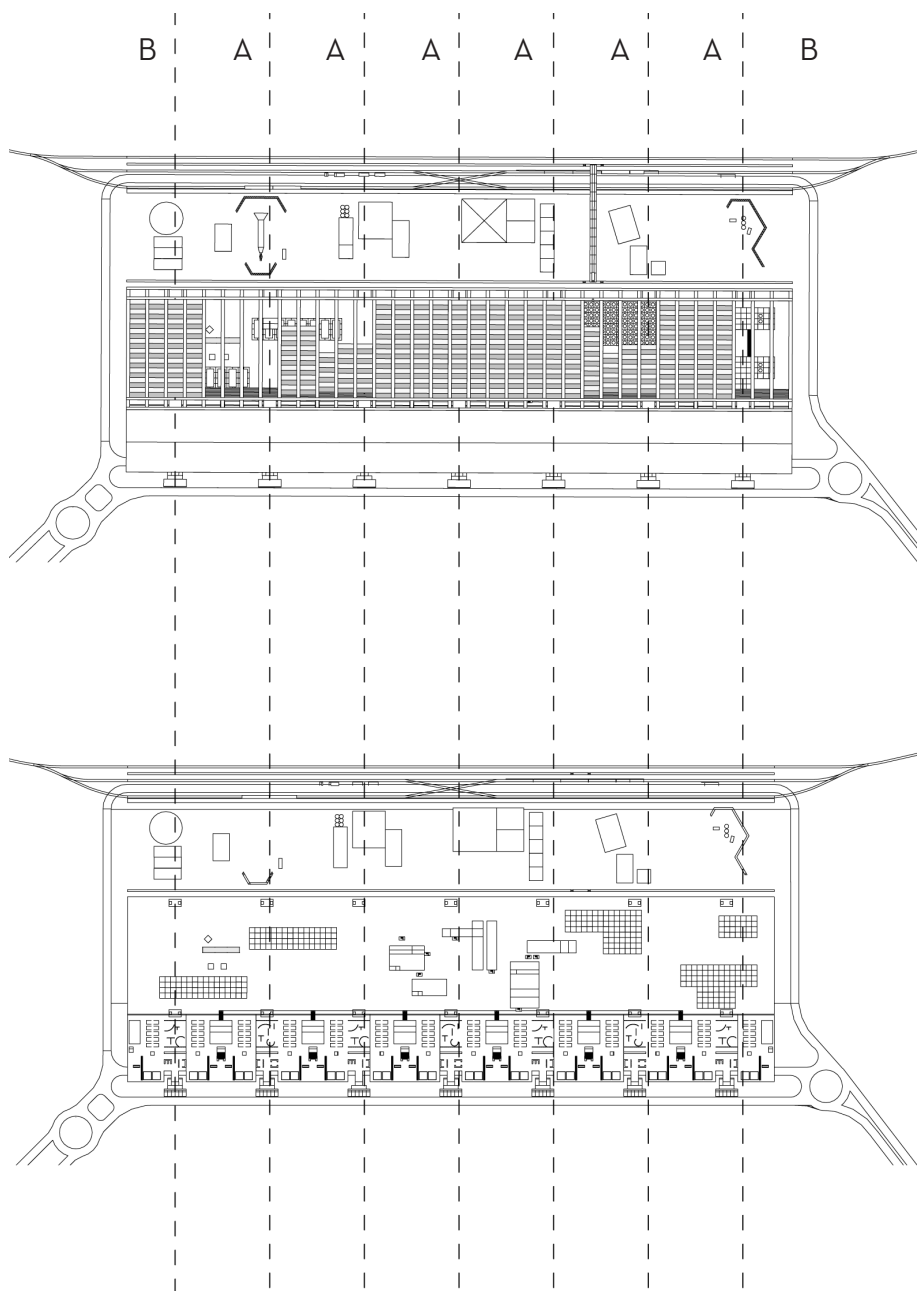
Martine Huijsmans

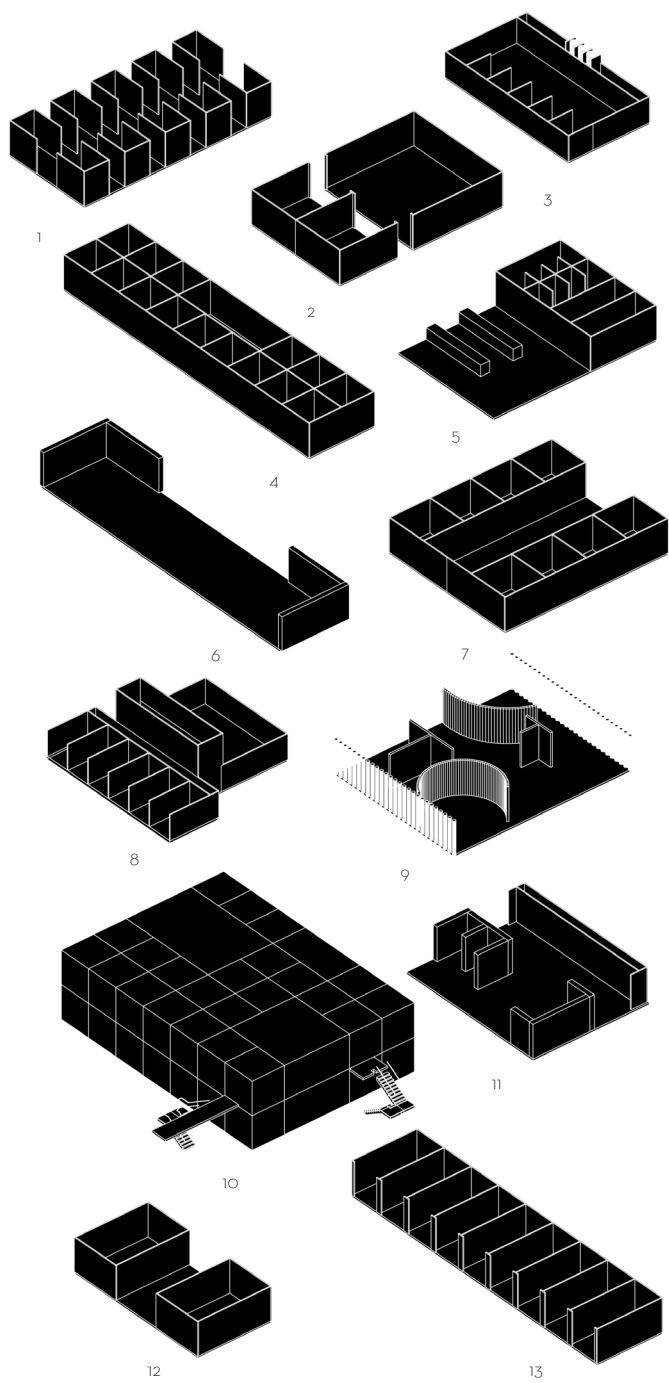
How does Cedric Price use the modular system in PTb to create architecture that transcends scale, use and location?

In the PTb, Price outlined an ambitious project for a centre of higher education amongst the coal fields of Staffordshire. The Potteries Thinkbelt was a series of interconnected faculties and student housing which was linked through the existing road and rail networks, which were underused at the time. The master plan shows the many different components Price envisioned, ranging from housing and faculty areas to mobile learning units. With the exception of the transport networks and transfer areas all elements of the PTb were modular and mobile, capable of deployment to any given location, and then easily relocated to a new site, as required by the continually evolving programme and curriculum. The outer points in the master plan - Meir, Madeley and Pitts Hill - not only defined the limits of the Thinkbelt but also served as principal transfer areas. For the possibility of a more detailed analysis I have chosen to look at Madeley Transfer Station, the largest of the transfer areas.

Madeley can be divided up into six identical vertical slices (and two closing sides) Like in the other aspects of PTb Price designed the building as a logical system in which parts multiplied and aligned to fit the spatial needs of the university. The section shows how the horizontal zoning of the building is placed. At the side of the train tracks are the larger scale industrial working zones progressing towards the side of the residential towers to smaller scale learning and meeting facilities. Each zone has its specific floor plan designed to a clear grid spanning the distance from one tower to the next. The floor plan of each activity zone houses smaller units in which defined activities take place. Designed on a grid of 3600 x 3600 are a variety of activity modules shaped to fit their purpose; small high enclosures for concentrated learning or more playfully arranged dividers for social exchanges.





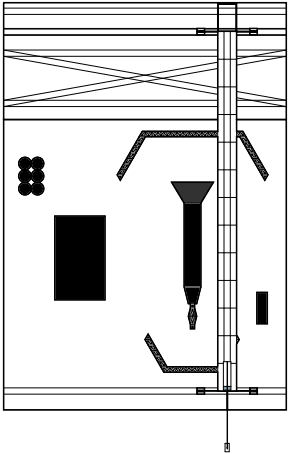




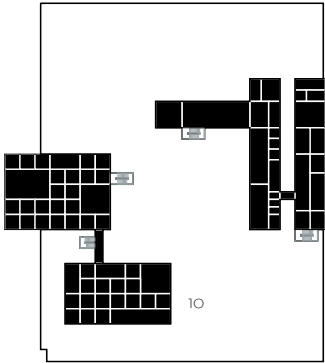
The PTb was not an expressive or symbolic building, but an interactive device in which the subject could undergo a transformation. It defined a new kind of architectural scale, not of large object buildings, but as a vast and dispersed field of discrete objects and disparate events. One of the most radical aspects of the PTb was its concept of education as an industry, not just of industrial education. This analogy of the project as a factory gives a clue to how he transcends scale; by breaking the project up into clearly defined structures and modules but approaching each of the design, micro (activity module) or macro (the transportation system as a whole), with the same functional process oriented mind.

Curiously Price saw the actual provision of enclosures for teaching, learning and experimenting as being slightly secondary to the question of where they might be over time. In PTb, time, and therefore movement, was a principal design tool. Price identified mobility as both mechanism and metaphor for the changing nature of education within the post-industrial society. Each element of the machine was subject to the functioning of machine as a whole. Meaning that if the output requirements of the project were to change over time the machine should be able to adjust to the new situation, by rearranging, replacing, or relinking individual elements.

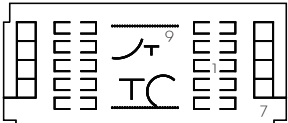
- 1. Concentration
- 2. Conference
- 3. Kitchen
- 4. Secretarial
- 5. Service
- 6. Information Desk
- 7. Administration
- 8. Storage
- 9. Variable Lectures
- 10. Flexible Workshop
- 11. Restaurant / Bar
- 12. Meeting
- 13. Seminar



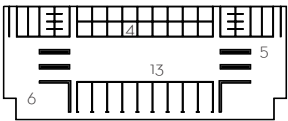
Flexible Faculty Zone



General Teaching Zone



Social Exchange Zone



Accommodation Tower



# Casa Tomada

This study of two buildings seeks to understand the production of a transgressive atmosphere in architecture, and how thresholds are used to produce this effect. I shall compare Casa Tomada bookshop in Bogotá, Colombia with Le Fresnoy School of Contemporary Art in Tourcoing France. They are very different buildings, yet share an atmosphere of transgression. I shall look into how they achieve this so that I can use it as a tool for my own architectural projects.



Casa Tomada is a small bookshop in a residential neighbourhood of Bogotá, Colombia. It occupies a former home where the entirety of the ground floor has been turned into a bookshop. As well as selling books it holds events related to literature, with talks from writers and reading groups. There is a lightweight construction covering the back garden which is used as an extension to the bookshop and as a cafe. The cafe is popular and is used as a workspace for those who write for a living.



The building has a large garden, used as a space to read. To enter Casa Tomada requires you to ring a bell at the gate to enter the garden, after which you are free to enter the house. Once inside the garden you are almost entirely cut off from the city outside.



Casa Tomada Book Shop  
Bogotá, Colombia  
Constructed in the 1920s  
Renovated 2010  
Architect unknown  
70 sqm



# Le Fresnoy

La Fresnoy School for Contemporary Arts is a film school in Toucoring in Northern France, close to the Belgian border, renovated by Bernard Tschumi Architects. Its key feature is a large roof raised above the pre-existing halls that house the teaching rooms. Between the new and the old roof is an inbetween space, containing social space, teaching space and a restaurant, connected together with a series of catwalks suspended from the ceiling.



Le Fresnoy Studio National des Arts Contemporains

Toucouring, France

Constructed in the 1920s

Renovated 1997

By Bernard Tschumi Architects

Size: 7000 sqm



## Public house / Open backstage

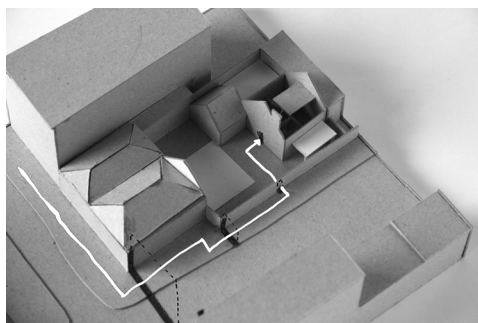
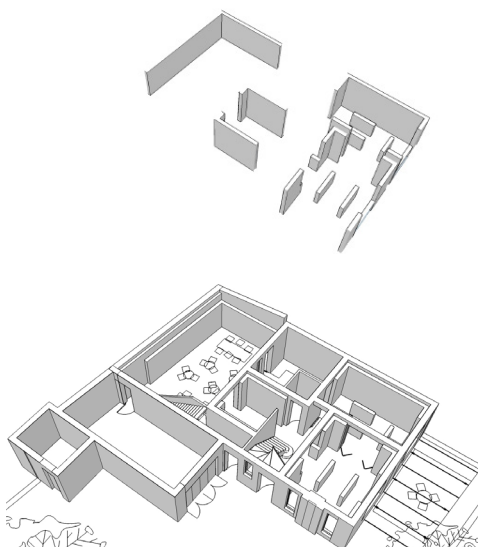
Both Casa Tomada and Le Fresnoy are remarkable buildings, in a similar, but ultimately different fashion. Their similarity, and extraordinariness, is their cultivation of the atmosphere of being out of bounds, seeing something that is not meant for you. Their difference is how they achieve this atmosphere.

Casa Tomada is a former home, and to be inside it is to be under no illusion of this fact. The layout of the ground floor is residential even though there is no furniture, the rooms are truly taken over by books. The name Casa Tomada recalls a story of the same name about a house whose owners lose control of to an unknown, indistinct presence. The buildings material palette is that of a home, warm materials such as wood, brick, plaster. The books themselves become material too, covering every surface in a literary veneer. The top image shows just the bookshelves, the house still visible. This use of material and the layout of the rooms allows what is in reality a public building to feel private.

The house is entirely cut off from Bogotá, you cannot see or hear the city, even though it is only meters away. There is an atmosphere of solitude and studiousness, but also a homeliness. This homeliness is the cause for the feeling of being out of bounds, having exited the city and entered the home of a welcoming stranger.

To create this feeling of remoteness, with the city just across a wall requires a specific use of thresholds. To enter the building requires crossing a series of strong thresholds, you enter the correct street, enter a narrow corridor of trees, ring the bell to be let through a closed gate, then walk into the building through a small residential door. The cumulative effect of these crossings of boundaries, into this residential space, creates the important atmosphere of separateness and creates the subtle thrill of transgression into private space.

Transgression is also key to the excitement caused by Le Fresnoy, and like Casa Tomada it is through thresholds that the feeling is produced. At Le Fresnoy the void between the roofs has a materiality of backstage space. Its gantries and stairs are made from steel and aluminium, utilitarian in their feel. Beyond the prescribed walkway are peaks of tiles as you walk between the roof peaks of the halls below. Whilst a common materials, tiles are usually experienced



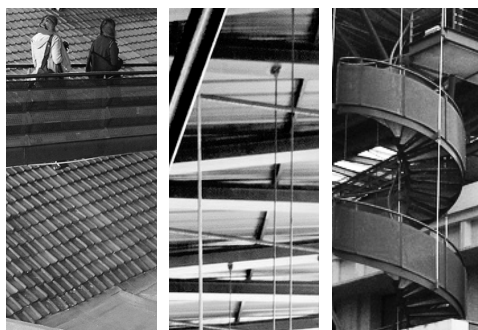
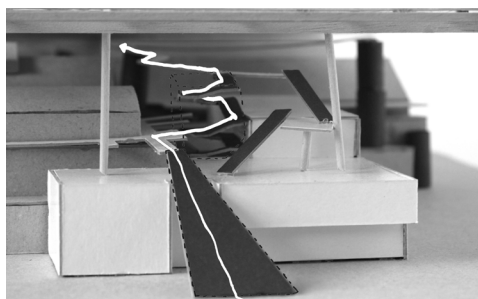
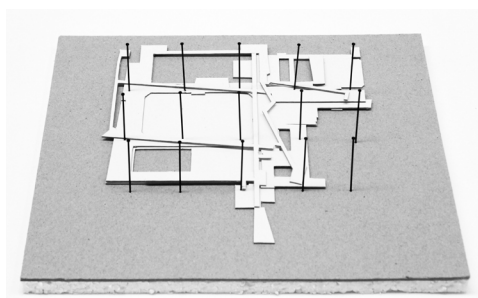
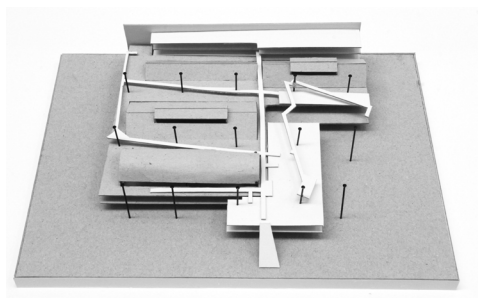
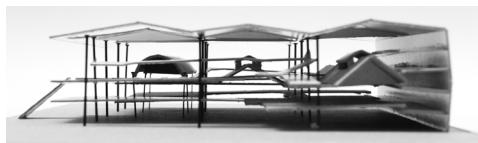


from below or afar, rather than just below the path you are walking. The use of these materials reflects the alternate use of the void, space for the services and structure needed to support the gallery spaces. This materiality creates the atmosphere of the backstage, the catwalks and the pipes, walking high above the auditoria below. This is the source of the feeling of transgression.

The void space is the main public entrance to the building, and unlike Casa Tomada there is only one primary threshold to cross. This is the main flight of stairs that climbs the front of the building, incredibly strong for a single threshold compared to the entrances of Casa Tomada. Afterwards staircases can remove visitors even further from the typical entrance sequence.

Just as the solid walls created a contained residential atmosphere in Casa Tomada, the backstage void is impossible without the structural grid of pillars that support Le Fresnoy's main roof.

In creating a feeling of transgression both buildings complement their use. Casa Tomada strengthens its feeling of withdrawal from Bogotá and creates an intellectual atmosphere of free thought and creativity, Le Fresnoy also creates an atmosphere ready for radical thought, well suited for the experimental nature of the art produced inside it. Without the act of transgression both buildings would likely be unable to incubate such a challenging atmosphere of creative inquiry.



# Probing into Precedents

Comparative analysis of two buildings, in Bogotá and Leuven



132

Casa Tomada , Bogotá

**Research question: How are thresholds and framing devices used to articulate a passage from the street and through the building, creating a sequence of spatial relationships?**

My aim for this course was to investigate how these two very different buildings have similar spatial qualities; a clever arrangement of spaces that form an architectural journey throughout the building.

Casa Tomada is a single family house that has been adapted into a library and cafe. Its entrance is oriented 90 degrees from the street, creating a separation from the surrounding context and twisting the journey through the building. The cafe is located in the extension at the rear of the house, a space that blurs inside and outside.

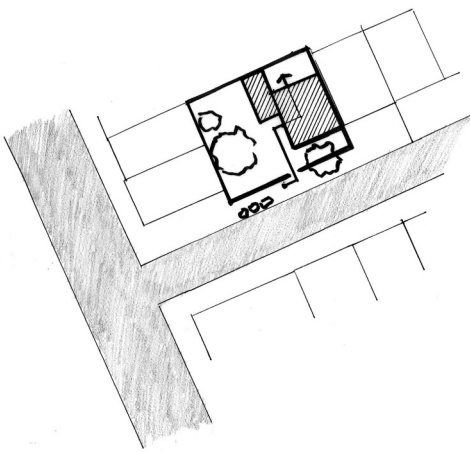
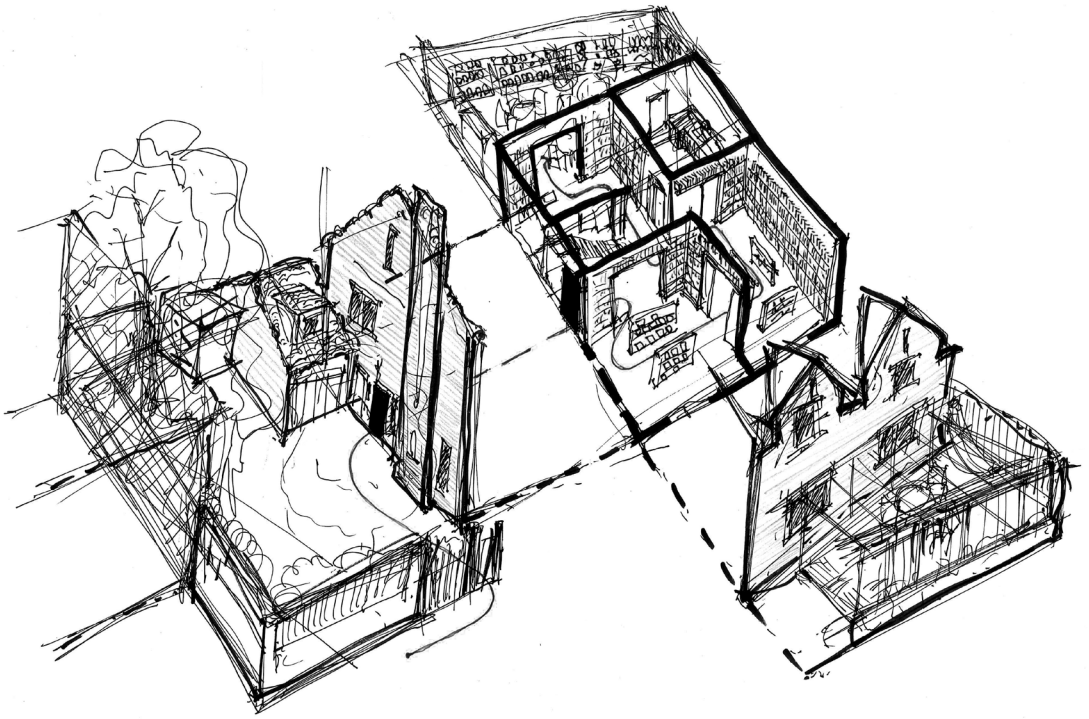
STUK is a more complex structure that combines the renovation of four existing buildings and two new wings, together forming a central courtyard and framing a public routing. This route cuts connects the various stages, auditoria, and rehearsal rooms such that the building is like a city in miniature. It also joins up with a parallel street behind, negotiating a two-storey drop with a several staircases and landings.



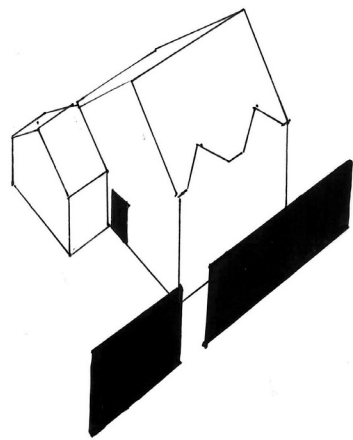
STUK Performing Arts Centre, Leuven

# Casa Tomada

axonometric - typical house but  
surrounded with garden areas



circulation brings one from the widest  
space to the most enclosed space

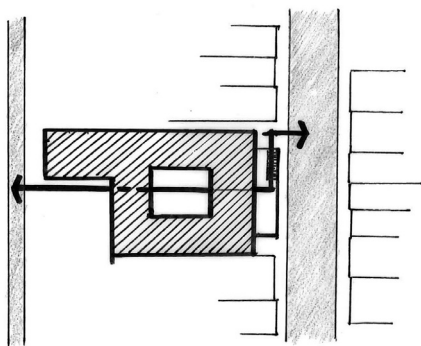
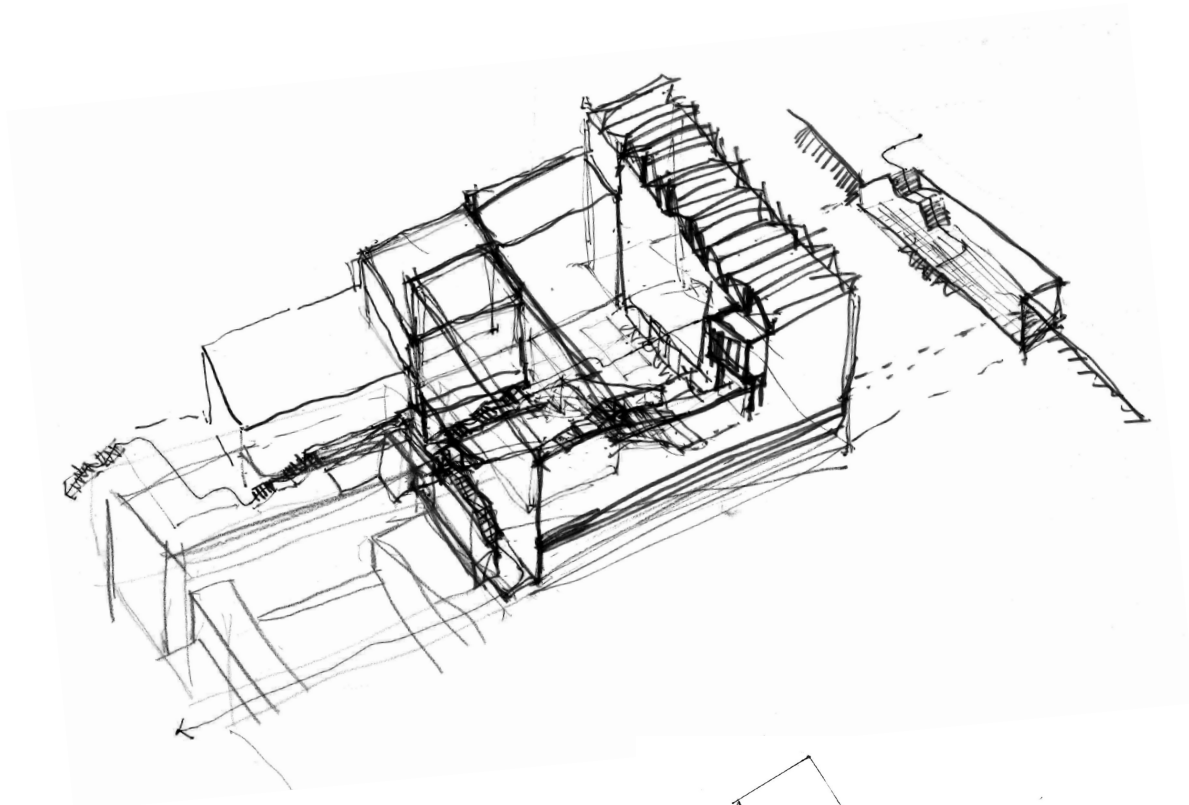


wall as threshold to an unexpected oasis  
of calm in the chaos of the city

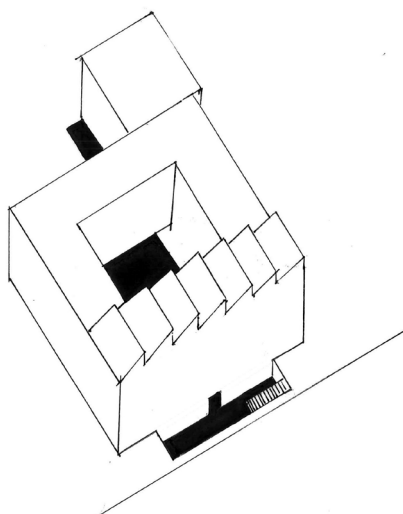


# STUK Arts Centre

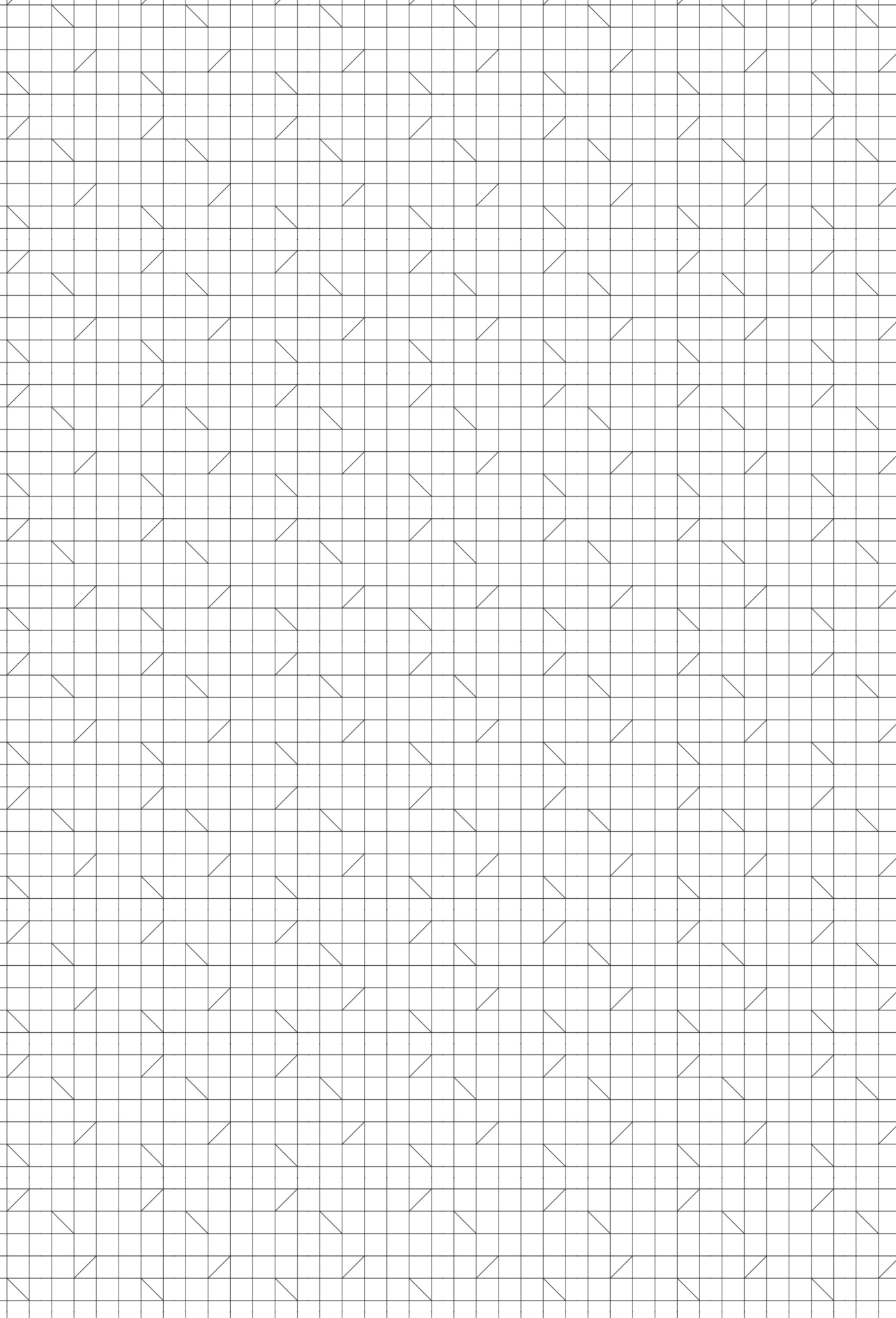
axonometric - complex interlocking  
of new and existing building masses

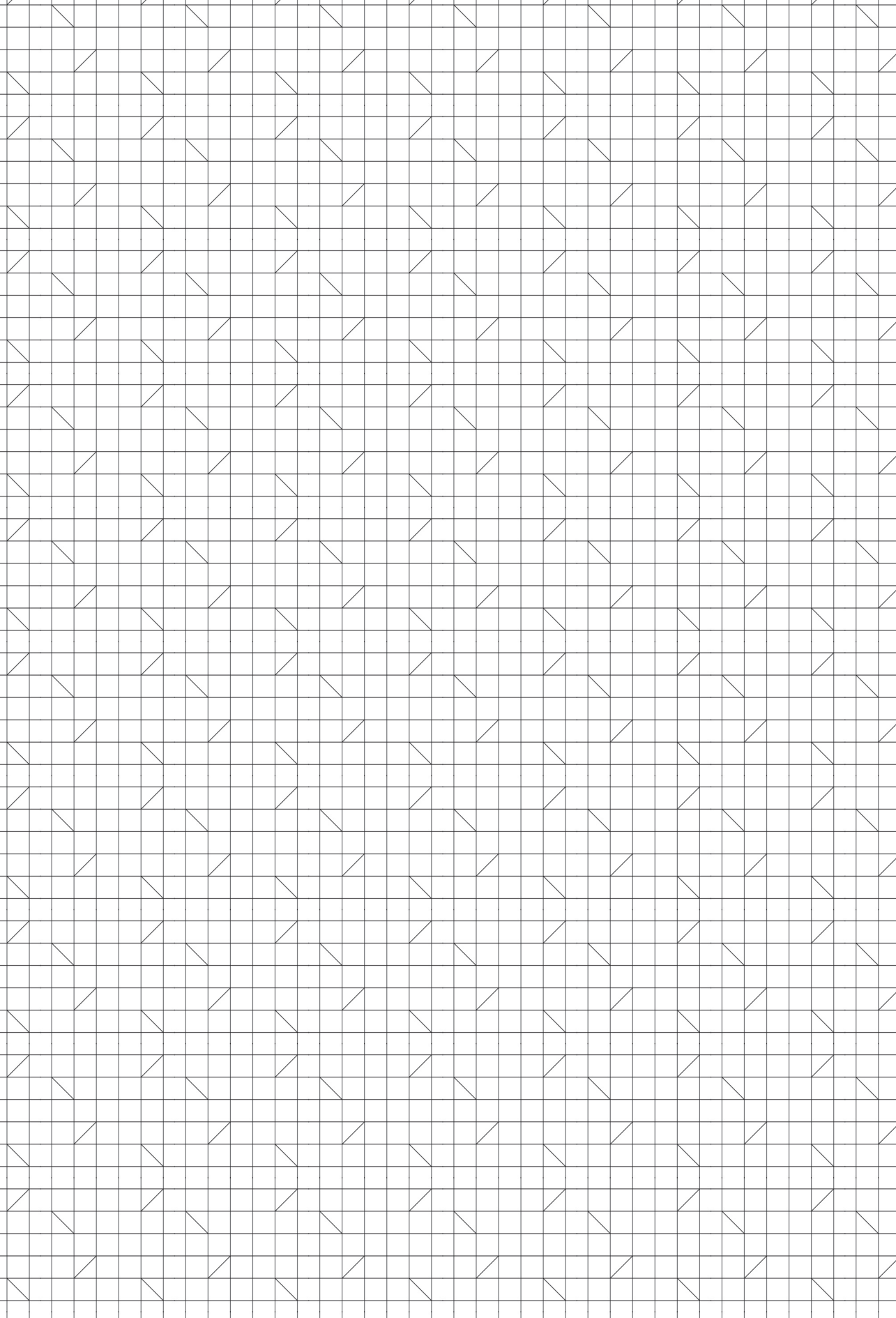


circulation encourages one to wander, and  
to move through to the other side



level changes as a threshold between  
contrasting spatial conditions





# Image Sources

O3

O4

All images are the Author's own unless otherwise stated

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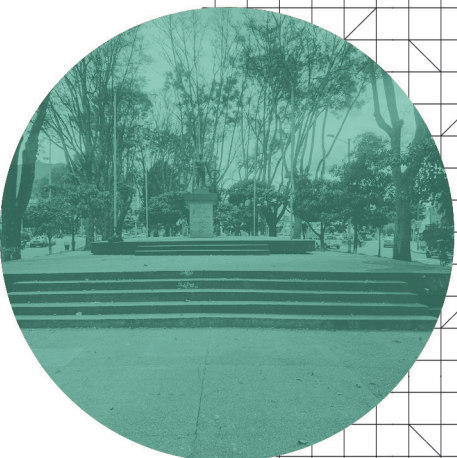
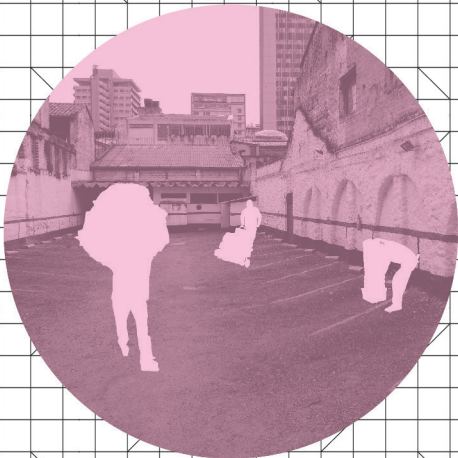
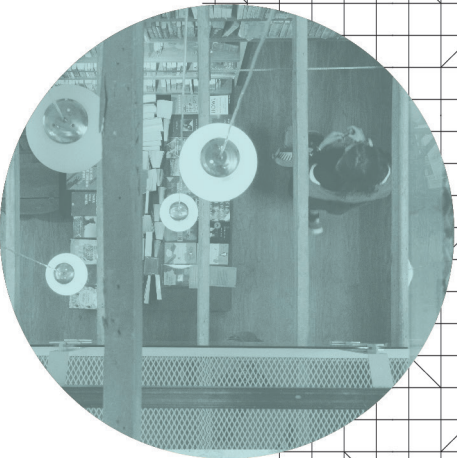
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