

My project is a proposal for an extension of the Museum of Modern Art (Mambo) in Bogotá. More important however, is its role in and the relationship with the city center. Both, as an important connector in a fragmented city as well as a cultural entity on its own, this project addresses the need to increase the qualitative public domain in Bogotá. This city with its serious car problem, is not only replacing private parking lots for making room for a bigger museum, most of all this is done to turn this particular location into a semi-private space. This will be an open accessible sculpture park to allow pedestrians to use the city's public domain more, meet others more often and claim the city according to their own wishes. This project aims to facilitate in people's needs by offering shelter and seclusion, without imposing intention and order.

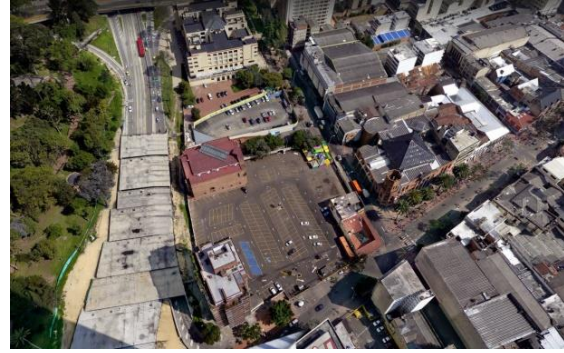
The studio 'Methods & Analysis' picked the capitol of Colombia, Bogotá, as the context for our project and invited its students to come up with a site and program. The project, its scale and the kind of intervention, gives a freedom to the student to find a matching method. For me, theory was an good basis for this project, which allowed me to link my project in an early stage within the existing field of research done on the topic of the (quality of the) public domain. Which is important for people to meet others with different thoughts and opinions. If this exchange of thoughts doesn't take place among strangers due to the fact one simply doesn't meet these other people, one is living in a 'bubble'. Although this lack of exchange can be a choice as well, buildings and the built environment are more and more preventing those meetings from happening; they are literally a cocoon / bubble/ enclave that keeps the outside and the inside separated. This is why being all in enclaves would reduce the public realm to nothing but a transit zone. This leads to the question if these bubbles are bad and might suggest that we need open up all those enclaves, tear down those walls and fences. It is therefore good to mention that too much openness and sharing isn't the answer either. The concept of 'togetherness' - the idea that if anything is shared among people, much should be shared - works destructively in cities. So it is the aim to find a better tuning between those two extremes. In society, people in our cities, should be able to choose when they prefer to go deeper in their bubble or go out of it. According to Hannah Arendt the tension and choice between being on private and public domain is essential for the individual to function well. This tension and the degree of being part of that public domain has proved to be meaningful for both research and design.

Besides a city, the studio of 'Methods & Analysis' also introduced a theme: The Commons. It addresses a scale which is smaller than the public domain and has more focus on spontaneity in daily life rather than specific programs or events. During the project I found out there is a lot of room for interpretation for the student to link this with a intervention in the city. Due to the small scale of The Commons, research in my project focused a lot on the experience of being in the public domain, how it is like to be on the street of Bogotá. At day one, we all chose a direction to start to explore the theme. For me this was 'Levels of Publicness' around the Eje Ambiental in the center of Bogotá. Using Google Maps I was observing the use of the streets and I noticed a lot of activity especially near entrances of carparks, often joined by a street vendor. This was the moment the interest in the relationship of the building and the public domain was introduced into my project. A topic which I explored much more when writing my position paper, developing the theory around this project and positioning myself into the existing architectural discourse. Because of the lack of a program or a specific site at the beginning of the project, the theory about the quality of the public domain in cities became important for the project.

Bogotá is a huge city of more than 8 million people, but the project focused mostly on its city center, which is also the area where I did most of my research during the fieldtrip. When walking in the streets of the city center my first observation was the big amount of blind walls, fences, barb wire and security guards. My first response was to open up all those harsh boundaries and enclaves. Also the amount of cars on the streets and carparks got my attention. It seemed for a moment that people moved from one secured location to the other and buildings where used to reject or keep out everyone who wasn't welcome. Which means most people in the public realm. But soon I noticed a lot of people



Photo of a street in the center of Bogotá.



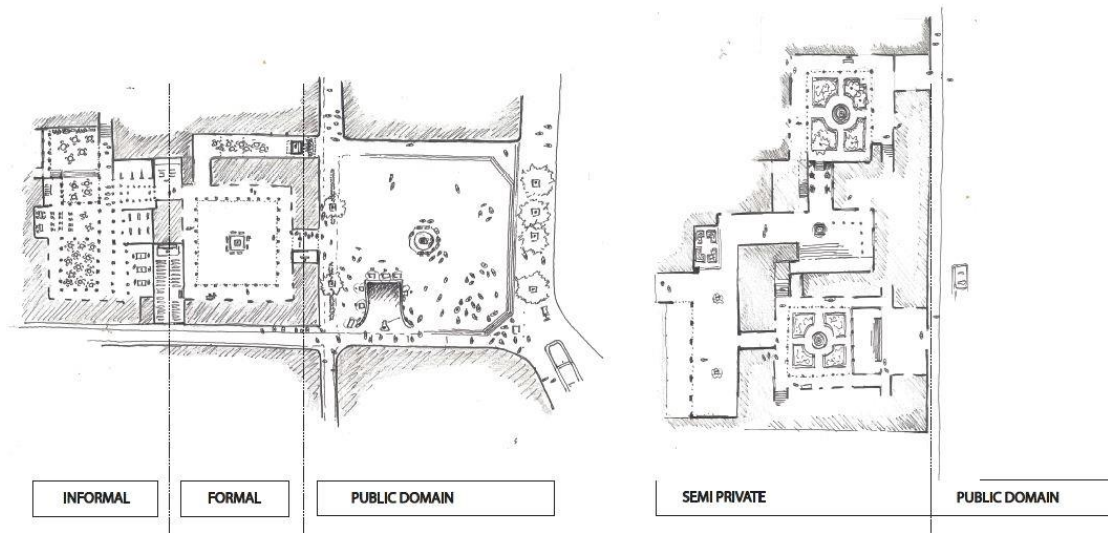
Chosen site for this project.

actually using the available space in the heart of Bogotá in full potential. Even the blind walls. It was clear I had to be careful with linking the theory, about cities of enclaves within a transit zone, with the real world. Due to my own observations from walking in Bogotá, as well by doing research online, my conclusion of Bogotá is that the city is more and more transforming to an open city. By this I mean that there seems to be a political and social shift towards collectivity. The amount of people on the streets in the city center was immense, with some extremes like the event Cyclovía, which allowed pedestrians and cyclists to take over the streets. Also the crowded Carrera Septima is a good example, an important street through the city center that recently was closed off to cars. Recent developments in the city already drastically improved the quality of the public realm. Bogotá's mayors worked on better transportation, parks and public buildings and also reduced crime rates and other bad behavior. The need and political will is there to increase the quality of the public domain even further which motivated me to rethink its role in the city of Bogotá too.

During the fieldtrip I slowly got more interested into the inside of the enclaves and I was wondering how people used the space on the threshold between the inside and the outside. First, together with another student we mapped the use of the in-between space of buildings and the public realm. After drawing a floorplan and section on location, we mapped where people were walking, standing and sitting. This was done at public buildings with courtyards and squares. Although it was not always clear what the reason was to pick a site for doing analysis, looking back now, I see the link with the first topic 'Levels of Publicness' as the common denominator in this research. For example, in the courtyard of a university faculty building designed by R. Salmons (a well-known Colombian architect) there was a unobtrusive transition between the in and outside of the building, made possible due to the mild climate. The contrast however with the university building on the Rosario Square I visited was big. The old Spanish Colonial building had only one entrance, almost a gate where I had to go through security first, begging to have a peek inside. But when I made it through, it became clear that a part of the city fabric continued behind that border. Standing there on the courtyard, I had to admit this outdoor (semi) private bubble was an added value to the city, although only for a few to enjoy.

After this, I choose to observe how people use the public domain. Still keeping the subject of squares, courtyards and the threshold of buildings with the public realm. Based on my observations the topic shifted to the question what the city and its buildings affords people. One of those things was the existence of the different world behind the guided gates. On a smaller scale I noticed that the city has a lot of overhangs, allowing people to sit underneath. Niches for windows and doors were used to keep some distance towards the crowd on the street. The blind walls that I disliked in the beginning of my visit allowed people to sit or stand against, sometimes putting merchandise on a blanket in front of it and every low wall, traffic pole or stairs functioned as a place to sit. These common figures led to the three aspects of the city that I tried to absorb in my project as well: the topics of shelter, seclusion and freedom. The latter meaning a lack of order or imposed intention regarding use.

With the idea to increase the interaction between building and public domain, my interest in the other world of the courtyards and my three topics (shelter, seclusion and freedom) I asked myself the following: "would it be possible to open up the enclave, adding an 'other' world to the city, which allows shelter, seclusion and freedom to all?" Based on the literature study this became more concrete



My drawings from the fieldtrip in Bogotá.

with the ambitions of (1.) The defragmentation of the urban fabric, (2.) The connection of different social, economic and cultural landscapes and (3.) Focus on the interaction and relationship of (semi) private and public domain. Looking back on this period where I tried to define the goal of this project, it must be said that, although formulating the ambitions was helpful, there were a lot of topics, ambitions and tools that felt connected but were not easily described as a clear or manageable explanation.

Clearer was my goal to replace some of the many carparks in the city center, building gaps with great potential as addition to the urban fabric, but held hostage due to the fact it is easy earning money with them by just making them carparks. Doing a precedent study in order to gain ideas about what to do with these carparks I found a few playgrounds, a terrace (with trees and waterfall), a big art piece and a pop-up pavilion, all within building gaps. For me it resulted in the intention to improve the public domain by turning a concrete carpark into a green area with art. Also here I not only looked into the program but also to the physical boundary the precedents had with the outside world. To obtain the 'other' world with its own atmosphere some projects used a closed wall with a big door and others just a small element to mark the difference from the street. A terrace in a building gap in New York, used stairs to create more distance to the crowded street and had trees and falling water to introduce an own unique atmosphere. The pop-up pavilion was a big volume lifted from the ground, which had till today a big influence on my project because this project gave me the tool I needed to provide shelter (one of my topics). Later on in the project a similar reference influenced my design as well, the museum in Sao Paulo by Lina Bo Bardi. The conclusion after doing this was that small changes in material, floor height or the certain presence of trees can play a role in make distinction between different areas too.

When I was looking for a few small locations to replace (private) carparks with green and art, making them public domain, I found one big site that meets all the constraints I was till then looking for. This location is next to the Museum of Modern Art (Mambo), in the middle of a cultural hotspot and in-between the park and the pedestrian route on the Carrera Septima. When also turned out that the Mambo museum has the wish (and approval) to expand, everything came together on this particular plot. It led to the idea for making a sculptural park and an addition to the museum, which not only should become bigger but also more focused on education and workshops. Because of very recent developments around this site (introducing the pedestrian route on the Carrera Septima and building a pedestrian park bridge on the other side in order to reach the actual park) this project could fulfill a role in connecting those two projects. While becoming a place to be on its own as well. On this location between courtyard buildings in the South and pavilions in the North it also seemed to be the ideal place to combine the two types. At this point in the process I had a site, a program, an architectural topic and a strong interest in the interaction of building and urban fabric.



Photo of the courtyard in the faculty building by Salmons.

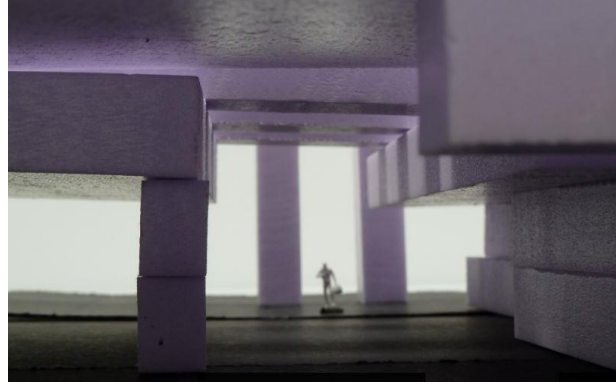


Photo from the modeling / photographing exercise.

Next was the start of the actual designing process. But the focus was (too much) on the programmatic demands of building a museum / school. The scale and complexity of the program resulted in a long period of zoning and therefore talking and thinking about the amount of square meters I needed. Like when doing analysis, there were many different ideas but his time they didn't come together. In order to stimulate the designing process I tried quick sessions of model making and photographing those to define an atmosphere or architecture I could use. I was also looking for references but for a long time I was unable to go beyond a superficial note about the fact I liked something. Working on this project gave me lots of insights in my design process. Because of the length of the project I was able to recognize problems I created over and over again, till a moment when I could see a clear pattern in my ways of doing. Being very enthusiastic about every aspect of the project, I often went to a next step in the design process too soon. In the attempt to design the building as one thing, I worked on different scales and topics at the same time, but forgot to follow an order, a sequence of design steps that made sense. This resulted for instance in throwing away work like façade drawings, after having changed the building volume. Working on such a big scale with a lot of conflicting constraints made me come up with solutions / ideas for parts of my site without using them to come up with one coherent concept for the whole building complex. For a long time the lack of a clear direction allowed different parts of the project to become projects on their own, resulting in having multiple projects instead of one. The problem was therefore as well that I didn't realize what caused my trouble during the project. Looking back I see that the master plan / urban strategy I used during that time, was not at all sufficient to design the building itself. Second, the program and by that the amount of square meters I started with was too much to handle as well.

During the process I simplified my project and the program, reduced the size of both the plot as well as the desired floor area. It helped me to come up with the final concept for the design, finally approaching the building complex as one project and focus more on architecture rather than solve a big zoning puzzle. By doing so, the project became step by step clearer, more coherent and stronger. At a certain moment in this process I had one sunken courtyard with a park on top, connecting three building volumes: the existing Museum, an exposition space lifted from the ground and a tower with mainly offices, all merged together by the areas under ground. Having this clarity in organization and form allowed me finally to develop the project, working step by step on the smaller scale. The form of the building volumes turned out to be so clear or distinct that I had to be careful with 'interesting' catchy façade openings, sculptural stairs or remarkable materials. There was no need for it. With the choice late in the project for Bogotá stone as the façade material, which is the local sandstone of the city, the search for a certain degree of modesty within my architecture is realized. Building a new contemporary public building in Bogotá was for me balancing between a mature and overwhelming architecture. Between formal and informal and trying to be sculptural without aiming for an iconic building. At least, I think this is the case.

Looking back on the research and the project now, the topic of 'Levels of Publicness' is very important in this building. The building and its courtyard are now part of the city fabric, the plot can be entered without the need to buy a ticket. The main role for the courtyard in this project comes

together with my precedent study into the atrium for the course 'Probing into Precedents'. The link with analysis and design is therefore strong, although I used it often just for inspiration only rather than copying a certain kind of organization. Looking at my project I recognize many common figures I saw in Bogotá or found during my precedent study like stairs to sit on, the lifted volume creating shelter and the courtyard with its unique closure from the outside. But most of all I think and hope I reached a level of freedom, allowing people to sit, stand or walk where they want to, letting them use the building and park without imposing too much intention and order.