

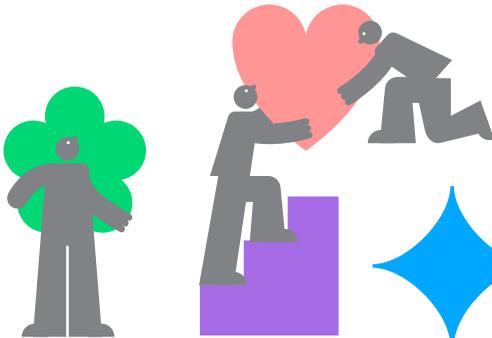


Citizen-Led Urbanism

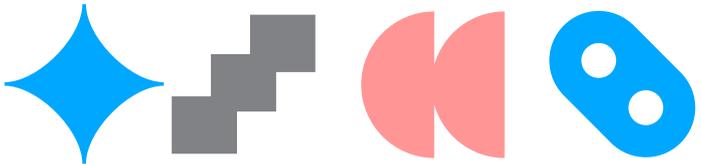


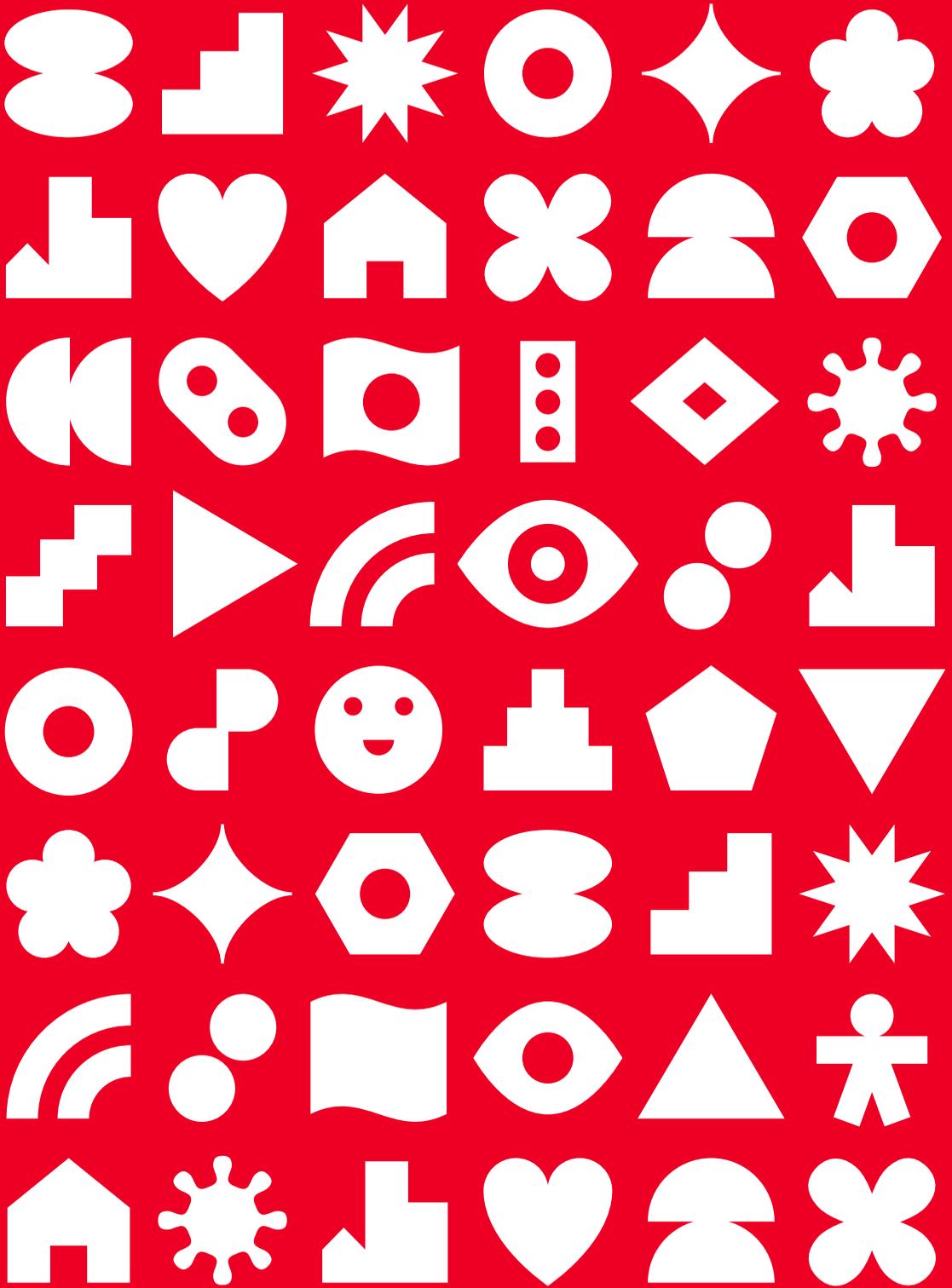
Latin

America



Superbook of
civic actions for
transforming cities





Citizen-Led Urbanism in Latin America

Superbook of civic actions
for transforming cities

2022

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KEYWORDS

Latin America, sustainable cities, public spaces, citizen-led urbanism, tactical urbanism, bottom-up urbanism, placemaking, citizen participation, collaborative processes, civil society, urban self-management, urban innovation, urban interventions



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SUMMARY

This is a publication about citizen-led urbanism processes in Latin America. It follows the recent life of a movement originating from, and driven by and for citizens, who out of a compelling love for their cities, have brought together actors from all fields to co-create new, more inclusive and equitable public space models. By using tools such as innovation, creativity and co-responsible solidarity, citizen-led urbanism has been able to complement the traditional approaches to urban planning and city governance.

This publication also invites us to move from the theory and concepts that provide the rationale for citizen-led urbanism to the actual practical experiences which are helping to shape it and consolidate it as a regional movement. It thus takes us on a journey through successful projects developed in different places and contexts of Latin America and looks at the experience of the first urban innovation labs, as a means to consider the paths that may lead to new horizons of an inclusive future, in view of the challenges, both known and yet to be known, of the first half of the 21st century.

In less than one decade, with their impressive diversity and vigorous urban activity, members of the citizen-led urbanism movement have brought about changes in the streets, neighborhoods and cities where they live: changes in the way of thinking of authorities and fellow citizens; changes in public policies, which have an impact not only on the urban landscape, but also on how we relate to each other through our relationship with what we call “the urban” and with ecosystems, with our individual needs and with the urgency of organizing ourselves collectively to identify solutions for the common good.

This is why this book became a superbook, i.e., an extensive compilation about a fabulous collective adventure, undertaken by thousands of people whose common denominator is creativity and their will to think and do things differently. We hope it may serve as an inspiration to its readers so that they, too, may take a leading role in this story.

Credits

EDITORIAL TEAM

Lia Alarcón
Patricia Alata
Mariana Alegre
Tamara Egger
Rosario Fassina
Analía Hanono
Carolina Huffmann
Lucía Nogales
Carolina Piedrafita

GUEST AUTHORS

Iván Acevedo
Néstor Ricardo Acosta
Verónica Adler
Lía Alarcón
Patricia Alata
Mariana Alegre
Florencia Almansi
Valeria Barbi
David Barragán
Esteban Benavides
Marialuisa Borja
Andrés G. Blanco
Leonardo Brawl Márquez
Carolina Carrasco
Ninike Celi-Atala
José Chong
Cecilia Cianco
Domenico di Sienna
Tomás Díez
Jennifer Duyne Barenstein
Tamara Egger
Hallel Elnir
Carlos Escobar
Ana Falú
Rosario Fassina
Tomás Folch
Victor Franco
Agustín Frizzera
Pablo Fuentes
Pascual Gangotena
José Francisco García
Giovanni Ginocchini
Analia Hanono
Carolina Huffmann
Milagros Hurtig
Laura Lacayo
Isidora Larraín
Matías Lastra
Juan Pablo López Gross
Roberto Madera
Mayra Madriz
Dominique Mashini
Miguel Ángel Mendoza Medina
Julieta Morosoli
Martín Motta
Camila Naveira

Lucía Nogales
Juan Pablo Ortega
John Octavio Ortiz
Manuela Palacio
Carolina Piedrafita
Camila Pinto de Souza Sawaia
Marina Pla
Hélida Quispe
Patricia Ramirez
Tomás Reverter
Alessandra Richter
Cintia Rizzo
Cristián Robertson
María Elisa Rocca
Jota Samper
Daniela Sanjinés
Melina Scioli
Isadora Scopel Simon
Cynthia Shimabukuro
Laura Sobral
Heloísa Sobral
Adriana Vaghi
Franklin Velarde Herz
Javier Vergara
Pablo Vitale
Federica Volpe

GRAPHIC DESIGN

Marina Pla &
Sebastián Gagin

STYLE EDITING

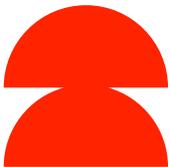
Vera Blitstein

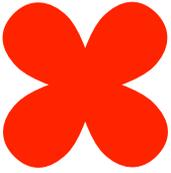
PEER REVIEWER

Ana Laura Martínez

TRANSLATION

Gerardo Bensi and team:
Claudia Baffy
Lucille Godwin
Silvana Lo Russo
Elena Marengo
Karen Tigar
Carolina Tomassini
Guadalupe Uviedo
Marina Uviedo





Prologue

“Cities are a collection of many things: memories, desires, signs of a language; [they] are places of exchange, as all books of economic history explain, but these are not only exchanges of commodities, but exchanges of words, desires, and memories as well”.

Italo Calvino, *Invisible Cities*.

Buenos Aires, Montería, Quito, Mexico City, São Paulo, Montevideo, Temuco... Each Latin American city is an epicenter of life where, as described by Italo Calvino, we as inhabitants build individual and collective meanings, memories and histories. Each city is different, unique and unrepeatable in terms of its conditions, dynamics and potentialities. And each one of them is a living laboratory of ongoing experimentation and transformation.

This transformation is sometimes achieved under stress rather than with grace, as we exist in a reality of finite resources, populations with an exponential growth, climate emergencies, economic inequalities, and health and social problems such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Even though urban public space was already in the spotlight before the pandemic, due to its value as a place capable of generating environmental, economic, educational and community well-being—and due to its uneven distribution in cities—it is currently gaining even greater relevance, given its potential role in reactivating the economy and strengthening resilience and social inclusion.

In this context, the Inter-American Development Bank has supported innovative processes of

collaborative transformation of public spaces in Latin American cities. At the IDB Cities LAB, we innovate by experimenting with new ways of being, doing and living together in cities, with a vision focused on regeneration, resilience and sustainability. We have done so hand in hand with organized citizens, creative leaders, visionary urban planners and, of course, municipal and local governments.

Between 2014 and 2020, the IDB Cities LAB generated, documented and promoted more than one hundred tactical urbanism projects to create, transform and improve biodiverse, inclusive and resilient cities.

It is with great satisfaction, then, that we launch this book entitled *Citizen-Led Urbanism in latin america. Superbook of civic actions for transforming cities*. Here we include a selection of the most outstanding and innovative, small-scale, highly visionary projects, whose methodologies and processes will enable their adaptation, replicability and scalability in other contexts.

We thank each and every person who participated in the projects and reflections included in this superbook for being part of this transformative movement to make cities more inclusive, more creative, safer or more productive, as the case may be. We hope that this publication will inspire public officials, researchers and citizens to *work together* in order to transform, maintain, manage and/or create new and better public spaces that may respond to the social, economic and environmental needs of those who live in cities.

Carolina Piedrafita

Cities LAB Coordinator, HUD-IDB.



Introduction

Why a superbook about citizen-led urbanism in Latin America?

Over the last decade, different sectors of citizens have proposed several initiatives as an alternative to traditional urbanism, in an attempt to respond to diverse issues that affect public space in Latin American cities. This movement has been growing organically through major figures such as Jane Jacobs and Jan Gehl —among many others—, and by developing concepts such as “placemaking”, which evolves from William H. Whyte’s research on public squares and their use —or lack thereof— in New York (Schroeder and Coello Torres, 2019) and the work of the Project for Public Spaces, or through concepts such as “tactical urbanism”, proposed by Lydon, and “urban acupuncture”, advanced by Jaime Lerner from Curitiba.

This intensely active movement, revealed by citizens’ practice and social media, stands in contrast to the scarce research evidence available about its history and evolution in Latin America and the Caribbean. We thus saw the need for looking into the movement’s diversity, surveying data, systematizing projects and tools, assessing cases of study and summarizing lessons learned, so as to provide learning tools that could be replicated and adapted to other contexts. We also intended to reflect upon how the principles of the practices identified can be scaled up into urban public policies. This is how, from the complex diversity of numerous cases of study and experiences, a book, or rather a superbook, was born.

This emerging movement, which is still consolidating, defines itself with diverse terms and concepts: activist urbanism, collaborative urbanism, DIY (Do It Yourself) urbanism, participative urbanism, resistance urbanism, guerrilla urbanism¹, tactical urbanism, urban innovation, social urbanism, feminist urbanism, etc.

In this book, we propose the concept of citizen-led urbanism to designate this whole movement of processes, projects, actors and institutions, which proposes alternatives to traditional urbanism

and seeks to build a new model to think about and produce cities, based on an active citizenry at all decision-making levels and situated at the heart of cities’ design, planning, and urban development. This new model focuses on improving the quality of everyday, common space, by integrating specialized urban knowledge with that which the various actors who live in cities and transform them every day have gained from experience.

Purpose

This book explores the emerging citizen-led movement as an innovative way of voicing the claim that cities should be made and conceived with and for people. We analyze its potential to contribute to the development of a new, more effective, inclusive and sustainable urban model in Latin America and the Caribbean, and intend to position it as a discipline in the current theoretical discourse about citymaking.

We also explore the question about the professional role of urban planners. Several articles and cases advance that “urban experts” should serve as mediators, translators or curators in horizontal urban transformation processes. They are the ones who are able to integrate immediate actions performed by citizens with the long-term visions and strategies of public policies and private practice.

Finally, this book is meant to inspire new forms of citymaking and to invite citizens, public authorities, academia and private companies to join this movement and take an active role in the debate about urbanism in the 21st century, incentivizing the use and exploration of new tools to develop novel urban models for the cities of the world. It is a call to action so as to change the traditional paradigm that governs urbanism in Latin America and the Caribbean, encouraging innovative ways of urban governance that may rise to the major challenges posed by cities in this century.

Cities are made by all of us who live in them!

A collaborative editorial process

This book is the product of a collaborative editorial process among the Inter-American Development Bank Cities Laboratory (IDB Cities LAB), the Ocupa Tu Calle project (Peru) and Ciudades Comunes (Argentina), all of which constitute the editorial team. The process consisted of doing research and collecting information about various actors and projects. This was made possible by the work, trajectory and networks of each organization.

We invited diverse authors who, from both an academic and practical perspective, wrote articles that contribute to developing a theoretical framework which is intended to consolidate the core concept of this book. In curating the catalog, we have sought to represent the geographic diversity of Latin America and the Caribbean, with a focus on identifying cases in the Caribbean, for which databases contained the least data. We have also tried to showcase the diversity of intervention types, methodologies, tools and challenges.

The content

The entire content of this book is focused on discussing citizen-led urbanism in Latin America and the Caribbean on the basis of experiences and cases of study. We invited authors mostly from Latin America, or who live and work mainly in that region, in order to provide information about the local context and its response capacity. This collection of cases is meant to be used as a catalog, so that readers may learn from them, replicate them and adapt them to their contexts.

The book has a subject index (glossary of important terms) to understand citizen-led urbanism and make the text more reader-friendly, in addition to a compilation of key words that can be used to read the book in a different order, so that readers can freely explore the contents according to their interests. Each module or section can be read in sequence or on a standalone basis. The publication's layout design, with its system of icons and colors, helps explore the book in various forms. Finally, we, **the editorial committee, provide our own comments in red throughout the book.**

The content is structured in three parts:

► Part 1. Citizen-Led Urbanism in Latin America The concept

In the first part, we introduce and define the concept of citizen-led urbanism. In order to understand the movement and its strength, we analyze its present-day situation in the region, and invite several authors to describe, identify, and provide a theoretical perspective about the potential of citizen-led urbanism for addressing the issues that affect cities and public space.

► Part 2. Civic Action The diversity of citizen-led urbanism in Latin America

This part is the heart of the book. It displays the diversity and complexity of citizen-led urbanism in Latin America and the Caribbean through the description of cases of study, divided into six thematic areas: cultural city, inclusive city, informal city, mobile city, resilient city and green city. Each of these sections contains the guest authors' reflections, as well as three detailed cases of study, for the reader to understand the local context, the methodologies applied, the stakeholders involved and the lessons learned. In addition, there is a catalog of projects containing ten experiences presented in fact sheet format. The systematized summary of these cases bears witness to the great diversity of interventions in Latin America and the Caribbean, and invites the reader to learn more through hyperlinks and additional literature.

► Part 3. Collaborative Governance Opportunities to integrate citizen-led urbanism into public policy

In this last part, we discuss innovative ways to include the tools and potential of citizen-led urbanism in public policy. We reflect about the potential of citizen-led urbanism for innovative urban governance. Then, we invite authors to describe various cases that illustrate the concept of collaborative urban governance. We have

also included international cases, as points of reference that may supplement and allow comparison with the experiences that already exist in the region.

The different book chapters and sections can be navigated using the hyperlinks provided in each table of contents and at the bottom of the pages.

This superbook ends with the [Charter for Citizen-Led Urbanism](#), a call to action by multiple voices so that cities in the future may be made with and for people.

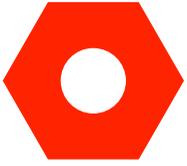
This publication is meant as an initial approach to reflect upon and discuss citizen-led urbanism in Latin America and the Caribbean. It does not purport to be a complete or exhaustive sample, but rather a snapshot of an effervescent movement. Due to the time span of some actions and their permanent evolution, some cases or organizations will have probably changed or become inactive by the time this book is published or consulted.

1. The notion of guerrilla urbanism is a useful concept to think about how certain insurgent activities, organized from the bottom up through collective agreements, transcend the typical places where protests are held, thus broadening the capacity for urban design and imagination (Hou, 2010). Retrieved from: Arboleda Correa (2018) Urbanismo desde abajo. Experimentando la ciudad y sus prácticas. Revista inmaterial No. 05

This publication is the product of a huge effort that took more than two years, during which the editorial team held weekly meetings. Seeing it finished fills us with excitement. We invite everyone to explore this picture of the citizen-led urbanism movement in Latin America and the Caribbean.

We hope it may inspire all of you to improve your communities, neighborhoods and cities!





Editorial Team

Published by the IDB Cities LAB in collaboration with Ocupa Tu Calle and Ciudades Comunes.



Lia Alarcón

She has a degree in Architecture from the Pontifical Catholic University of Peru (PUCP). Throughout her education, she has collaborated with various participatory projects and urban activism groups. This led her to focus her research on urban inequality, gender and public space. Since 2014, she has been co-director of the Construye Identidad initiative. She also works as a research assistant at the Research Center for Architecture and the City (*Centro de Investigación de la Arquitectura y la Ciudad*, CIAC-PUCP) and as a research and knowledge coordinator at Ocupa Tu Calle.

management, governance and public policies, environmental metropolitan planning, advocacy methodologies and participation mechanisms. She focuses on the generation, analysis and democratization of data and knowledge, as well as on advocacy processes for regenerative cities and territories. She is currently pursuing a master's degree in Territorial Planning and Environmental Management at the University of Barcelona. Since 2013, she has worked with human life quality indicators at the Lima Cómo Vamos citizen observatory and has helped co-construct this organization's projects to produce more human-centered cities.



Mariana Alegre

Holder of a master's degree in City Design and Social Science from the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE) and a Chevening scholar. She studied Law at PUCP and, while pursuing her master's degree in Human Rights, she discovered her passion for urban rights. Since 2010, she has been the executive director of the Lima Cómo Vamos citizen observatory and the founder of the Ocupa Tu Calle strategy. She is a professor at the School of Management and Senior Leadership, and in the Architecture, Urbanism and Sustainable Territorial Development master's program at PUCP.



Tamara Egger

Austrian architect and urbanist. Her work focuses on people-centered urbanism, collaborative practices and urban activism. Since 2014 she has worked and lived in numerous Latin American cities as part of the Inter-American Development Bank's Cities LAB team. Previously, she contributed to the Urban Design Lab, in collaboration with TU Vienna. Presently Tamara is a Ph.D. candidate at TU Delft's Faculty of Architecture and the Built Environment. Her research focuses on social and behavioral aspects of circularity.



Patricia Alata

Journalist (UPC). She holds diplomas with a specialization in Applied Statistics, from the National School of Statistics and Information Technology, and in Social Projects Design and Management, from PUCP. She has completed studies in territorial



Rosario Fassina

Master's student in Urban Social Policies at the Tres de Febrero University. She holds a degree in Sociology from the School of Social Science of the University of Buenos Aires (UBA). She coordinates the right to the city program at the Asociación Civil por la Igualdad y la Justicia, ACIJ (*Civil*

Association for Equality and Justice). She is also a researcher in urban studies at the School of Architecture, Design and Urbanism of the University of Buenos Aires. She is a professor at the National University of General Sarmiento, and a member of the Ciudades Comunes initiative.



Analía Hanono

Architect (UBA). Master of Urbanism (Paris School of Urbanism). Specialized in sociourban issues, with expertise in citizen participation tools and people-centered design. She has held university teaching positions and collaborated with various planning offices. From 2014 to 2021, she was a member of the Metropolitan Observatory of the Professional Council of Architecture and Urbanism (CPAU). She is part of work teams focused on collaborative urbanism projects, such as Urbanismo Vivo, CivicWise and Ciudades Comunes.



Carolina Huffmann

Architect dedicated to urbanism and specialized in walkability. She holds a master's degree from the 21st Century Housing Laboratory (*Laboratorio de la Vivienda del Siglo XXI*, Polytechnic University of Catalonia). In 2012, she founded Urbanismo Vivo. She has

been a professor of urbanism since 2021, and currently teaches at the University of Buenos Aires. She has been a representative of Jane's Walk in Buenos Aires since 2012, as well as a regional leader of the Placemaking X network and a member of Placemaking Latinoamerica. She is co-founder of Ciudades Comunes. Previously, she worked at the Buenos Aires Ministry of Transportation, in the Department of Pedestrian Interventions (2013–2016).



Lucía Nogales

Master of Architecture from the Polytechnic University of Madrid. She holds a diploma in Basic Habitability for Social Inclusion from UNI-Peru. Following her studies at the PUCP (2012), she decided to focus her career on urban issues. From then onwards, she has specialized in the development of public space analysis, production, occupation and evaluation processes. She is currently the general coordinator of Ocupa Tu Calle and a lecturer at the USAT, UPC and PUCP universities (Peru). She is a member of the CONURB Research Group on Urbanism, Governance and Social Housing.



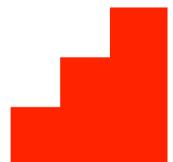
Carolina Piedrafita

Carolina Piedrafita is a Senior Urban Development and Housing Specialist at the Inter-American Development Bank. She has more than 20 years of experience leading and executing social and urban development projects in Latin America, specifically in the areas of social housing, local economic development, integral neighbourhood improvement and revitalization of degraded urban areas. She was Senior Advisor to the Executive Director for Argentina on the IDB Board of Directors between 2016-2019. She currently leads the Cities Lab of the Housing and Urban Development Division. She holds a master's degree in Public Administration with a specialization in urban development from Columbia University in New York, and a degree in Political Science from the University of San Andrés, Argentina.

The **Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) Cities Laboratory** is a platform within the bank's Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Division, which seeks to transform urban development in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) through novel ideas that are also scalable and replicable. It promotes urban innovation and co-design, as well as experimentation and the lessons to be learned from it. Over recent years, the IDB's strategies to engage with civil society have evolved, from consulting citizens, to partnering with them in development processes. In this regard, the IDB Cities LAB understands that citizen-led innovation has the potential to contribute to sustainable urban development in LAC.

Ocupa Tu Calle is a strategy aimed at improving the quality of urban life in public and common space by promoting citizen-led urbanism as an alternative model informed by initiatives emerging from society and knowledge about social dynamics. It was consolidated thanks to the Lima Cómo Vamos citizen observatory, and was promoted by UN-Habitat and Fundación Avina. Ocupa Tu Calle uses innovation, participation and collaboration tools to design and plan more equitable cities, conceived for and with people.

Ciudades Comunes is a collaborative project in which members of different organizations intend to rethink the co-construction of cities. Its goal is to make more equitable, solidarity-oriented and participatory cities through empathy, listening to others and experimentation with physical-digital tools. It seeks to support and generate proposals that focus on people's lives, in order to build a new common sense to rethink the cities of tomorrow from a perspective of greater justice for them and their social fabric.



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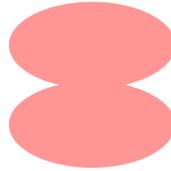
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This glossary contains concepts often used in citizen-led urbanism which cut across the entire book, appearing in both articles and cases of study. Their definitions, proposed by the editorial team, are based on or inspired by the content of the book. In addition, other expressions in the publication related to each term are shown as word families, with an indication of the articles where they are mentioned, so that they can be understood in detail and in their context. In this way, the glossary provides a map of the key concepts used throughout these pages, and thus a further alternative for reading this book.

B

Bottom-up urbanism or social urbanism

“Bottom-up” urban transformation processes driven by civil society. These terms refer to the self-management of small-scale, low-cost and incremental projects by citizens. It stands in direct contrast to “top-down” urban planning undertaken from a technical point of view which does not consider the needs of different territories. Bottom-up urban planning strategies capture and empower citizen-led urbanism processes to include them into bigger scale and longer-term

transformations. This form of urban planning understands urban projects as open, dynamic and constantly evolving projects.

[P.40 \(Ocupa Tu Calle\)](#)

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[P.502 \(Andrés G. Blanco B.\)](#)

C

Citizen participation

Citizens' right to have the capability to make decisions about public matters, through different mechanisms, so as to advance common interests. It may encompass from passive stages, such as having access to information, to situations that require the community's active involvement, such as the co-creation of ideas, cooperation for managing projects or the transfer of power.

[P.54 \(José Chong\)](#)

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[P.88 \(Ciudades Comunes\)](#)

[P.314 \(ACIJ and WINGU\)](#)

[P.422 \(Alessandra Richter\)](#)

[P.470 \(Roberto Madera-Arends, Ninike Celi-Atala\)](#)

Citizen-led innovation

Process that involves generating creative and important changes in order to improve the results of “traditional” territorial planning. These changes are made by the community in pursuit of its own well-being.

[P.330 \(Cities LAB, Ciudades Comunes\)](#)

innovation managed by citizens

[P.54 \(José Chong\)](#)

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urban innovation

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[P.432 \(Jota Samper\)](#)

Citizen-led urbanism

A new model informed by initiatives emerging from citizens and by knowledge about social dynamics, which uses innovation, participation and collaboration tools to design and plan more equitable cities, conceived for and with people, including them at all levels of decision-making.

Citizen-led urbanism is participatory, cross-disciplinary, collaborative and, especially, replicable. Communities put it into practice to implement urban changes based on their uses and needs. Beneath the diversity of issues, actors, places and ways of working, one common characteristic can be recognized: organized societies with the firm belief that they are the ones who know best the territory where they live and understand the potential of common goods as collective resources.

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[P.32 \(Mariana Alegre Escorza\)](#)

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[P.54 \(José Chong\)](#)

[P.416 \(Juan Pablo López Gross, Federica Volpe, Tamara Egger\)](#)

[P.506 Charter for Citizen-Led Urbanism](#)

Citymaking and citymakers

These terms refer to the processes involved in producing the city: services, habitability, landscape, progress and future, and to all those people who contribute to such processes with their abilities. The citymaking process is understood as a collective project in which all actors actively contribute their knowledge and skills, thus becoming *citymakers*.

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[P.180 \(Cities LAB, Ciudad de Bolsillo\)](#)

[P.330 \(Cities LAB, Ciudades Comunes\)](#)

[P.416 \(Juan Pablo López Gross, Federica Volpe, Tamara Egger\)](#)

Collaborative governance

This concept refers to giving the diverse stakeholders involved in urban governance (citizens, NGOs, academia and the public and private sector) a role in decision-making processes. It requires an open and flexible attitude, as well as the political will to depart from traditional planning dynamics, so that a participative decision-making strategy can be consolidated.

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local governance

[P.222 \(Verónica Adler, Espacio Lúdico\)](#)

[P.380 \(Nómada Lab\)](#)

[P.456 \(Ocupa Tu Calle\)](#)

innovative governance

[P.416 \(Juan Pablo López Gross, Federica Volpe, Tamara Egger\)](#)

Collaborative urbanism

Processes that create urban governance structures where several agents work together towards common goals, combining everyone's knowledge and resources. It leverages collective intelligence to

optimize urban processes, which result in synergistic projects that harness both technical and the community's knowledge. In order to strengthen these city co-creation processes, it is necessary to establish channels and spaces where collaborative designs can be generated. In addition, opportunities for translating this knowledge into concrete projects and urban strategies are also needed.

[P.60 \(Patricia Ramírez\)](#)

[P.470 \(Roberto Madera-Arends, Nínike Celi-Atala\)](#)

Collective intelligence

Knowledge generated by integrating technical understanding with citizens' everyday knowledge and experience. In this process, urban mediators—those professionals who act as intermediaries and translate what the different agents of urban transformation processes wish to convey—play a fundamental role, combining collective experience with the knowledge inherent in the diversity of stakeholders (including e.g., technical professionals, citizens or the public sector), in order to strengthen participative work and help residents and municipal entities increase their capability.

[P.122 \(Cities LAB, TransLAB.URB\)](#)

[P.330 \(Cities LAB, Ciudades Comunes\)](#)

[P.370 \(IAA Studio, Taller Arquitectónico, Mcrit, Iber Geo, IDB Cities LAB\)](#)

Common city

Conception of the city which raises the need to go from common sense to a sense of the common, as a framework for thought and action, and as an alternative to an individualistic society, in order to put sustainability and

the everyday maintenance of life as a whole at the center. The fact that well-being is an ever-growing demand by both individuals and communities, and that it is centered around everyday life and proximity spaces, involves, today more than ever, the redefinition of urbanism as a discipline that advances life in common.

[P.88 \(Ciudades Comunes\)](#)

F

Feminist and ecofeminist urbanism

Movement which works from a gender or intersectional perspective, highlighting the structural sources of inequality. Among its main contributions, it proposes to pluralize the everyday experience of people's diversity through communal participation. The feminist urban space must consider the design of facilities, public spaces, housing and mobility, so that the city can meet diverse needs. Eco-dependence reveals our necessary connection with nature and the impossibility of living without it. The ecofeminist perspective helps us understand how life works, and how it is sustained and maintained, as the joint responsibility of communities, institutions and people (Herrero, 2020).

[P.78 \(Ana Falú, Cintia Rizzo, Adriana Vaghi\)](#)

[P.88 \(Ciudades Comunes\)](#)

[P.264 \(Urbanismo Vivo\)](#)

I

Inclusive city

Conception of the city which understands people as having a leading role and puts them at the center of debates, prioritizing their everyday experience as inhabitants when ideating cities. It promotes humanized cities which are designed considering people's needs and desires.

[P.78 \(Ana Falú, Cintia Rizzo, Adriana Vaghi\)](#)

[P.88 \(Ciudades Comunes\)](#)

P

Placemaking and tactical urbanism

Placemaking is a practical process that transforms and revitalizes public life in a certain space. It strengthens the connection between people and the space that they share by reinventing and reimagining public spaces. It is a collaborative process that seeks to foster a sense of belonging, maximize the shared value of streets, well-being and social cohesion among citizens. Placemaking uses tactical urbanism—temporary, low-cost and fast turnaround urban transformations—in order to improve public spaces and local neighborhoods. It is also known as guerrilla urbanism, pop-up urbanism, city repair or DIY urbanism (Lydon & García, 2015), or as the “lighter, quicker, cheaper” concept.

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[P.416 \(Juan Pablo López Gross, Federica Volpe, Tamara Egger\)](#)

[P.470 \(Roberto Madera-Arends, Ninike Celi-Atala\)](#)

Public life

The aspects of social life which take place in the urban habitat. Through their study, it is possible to understand how people move or remain in public spaces. It is the opposite of private social interaction e.g., within families, private clubs or workplaces. This term was developed mainly by Jan Gehl.

[P.60 \(Patricia Ramírez\)](#)

[P.180 \(Cities LAB, Ciudad de Bolsillo\)](#)

[P.282 \(Cities LAB, Ciudad Emergente\)](#)

[P.330 \(Cities LAB, Ciudades Comunes\)](#)

R

Regenerative development

A paradigm based on systemic thinking, which reveals the interdependence between human beings and their environment and understands human communities as living systems, the same as ecological communities. Therefore, cities are also viewed as metabolisms or living systems that exchange matter, energy and information with their surroundings and which must tend to a healthy

equilibrium. The regenerative development paradigm claims that resiliency, adaptation, biodiversity and the circular economy are the great challenges to shape a more resilient future.

[P.88 \(Ciudades Comunes\)](#)

Right to the city

A city's inhabitants' individual and collective right to build, create and make decisions about the city, and which involves ensuring a fair distribution of a city's resources, services, goods and opportunities. This term was coined by Henri Lefebvre.

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[P.70 \(Pablo Vitale\)](#)

[P.78 \(Ana Falú, Cintia Rizzo, Adriana Vaghi\)](#)

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[P.170 \(Ocupa Tu calle\)](#)

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[P.432 \(Jota Samper\)](#)

[P.446 \(Jorge Martín Motta, Florencia Almansi, María Elisa Rocca, Tomás Reverter\)](#)

U

Urban activism

Actions performed to advance a common political or social cause, which arises from the demand to solve a problem in the city.

[P.34 \(Mariana Alegre\)](#)

community activism

[P.130 \(Carlos Escobar\)](#)

[P.432 \(Jota Samper\)](#)

**citizen-led activism
and digital activism**

[P.88 \(Ciudades Comunes\)](#)

Urban acupuncture

Urban design strategy through which a small, usually neglected or underutilized space, is transformed to revitalize its surroundings. Its name is inspired by the premise of traditional acupuncture, which seeks to create well-being for a greater whole by acting on certain specific points. It intends to reintroduce these spaces in the context of the city and generate small reactivations in diverse sectors. This term was coined by Jaime Lerner.

[P.9 Introduction. Concept](#)

Urban commons

They include common urban spaces located in cities, as well as a community's knowledge, creations and both tangible and intangible traditions. With regard to the public sphere, it refers to all those publicly accessible urban spaces which citizens can share, with their different everyday needs, and where they can interact. In general, they are the typical urban elements: streets, lanes, plazas, parks and environments of different sizes and purposes.

common space

[P.40 \(Ocupa Tu Calle\)](#)

[P.88 \(Ciudades Comunes\)](#)

[P.314 \(ACIJ and WINGU\)](#)

common good

[P.456 \(Ocupa Tu Calle\)](#)

Urban interventions

Strategic actions, usually performed in a specific time and space, that resort to participatory and collaborative strategies throughout their different development stages; they are

relatively simple and low budget, as compared with large urban projects. Many of them occur during a limited time span and use items that can be later replaced by more permanent infrastructure, whereas others have the goal of producing a significant and stable change and are meant to be permanent.

[P.34 \(Mariana Alegre\)](#)

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[P.60 \(Patricia Ramírez\)](#)

[P.88 \(Ciudades Comunes\)](#)

[P.130 \(Carlos Escobar\)](#)

Urban laboratories

Temporary or permanent, physical and virtual spaces and practices linked to experimentation and prototyping (developed through cross-disciplinary collaboration and encouraging participation by different sectors and organizations in a territory) and which place particular stress on the engagement and leading role of local communities. They are spaces that promote, activate and strengthen everything that is useful for those who reside in the same territory.

[P.416 \(Juan Pablo López Gross, Federica Volpe, Tamara Egger\)](#)

[P.422 \(Alessandra Richter\)](#)

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**citizen laboratories / labs
managed by citizens**

[P.88 \(Ciudades Comunes\)](#)

[P.122 \(Cities LAB, TransLAB.URB\)](#)

Urban self-management

Actions through which citizens organize and make decisions about urban transformation processes. Local communities take in their hands the management, implementation and maintenance of urban projects, in some cases self-building, not only their own dwellings, but also collective facilities, infrastructure and public spaces.

P.122 (Cities LAB, TransLAB.URB)

P.370 (Cities LAB, Arqui Urbano, IAA Studio)

collective self-management

P.70 (Pablo Vitale)

self-managed neighborhoods / informal neighborhoods / informal city

P.180 (Cities LAB, Ciudad de Bolsillo)

P.214 (Tomás Folch, Cristián Robertson, Tamara Egger)

P.314 (ACIJ and WINGU)



1.

Citizen-Led Urbanism in Latin America



Although citizen-led urbanism is a recent concept—which this publication seeks to position in the current debates and discussions about cities—diverse actors have been working and developing a number of reflections based on this approach in recent years. So, what has been done so far? How has the movement found ways to organize itself? What are some of the relevant debates? These are some of the questions that we considered as we thought about producing this superbook.

We decided to undertake two research efforts to better understand how experiences of citizen-led urbanism have developed in the region. The first one, entitled *The power of citizen-led urbanism in Latin America. An approach to the movement emerging in the region* (Ocupa Tu Calle, 2022), was meant to find out how the citizen-led movement has been growing, what opportunities for coordination have been created, which are the places where most initiatives are emerging and which perspectives underlie its proposals. The second one, *Experimentation in times of crisis for the co-construction of common cities. Digital tools during the COVID-19 pandemic* (Ciudades Comunes, 2022), focuses on how, as a consequence of COVID-19, innovative groups in the region had to think of new ways to generate connections and

actions in order to address everyday crises. This piece of research presents a collection of specific experiences to illustrate how opportunities were identified to keep relationships, networks and actions alive in times of physical distancing. These texts were motivated by our interest in discovering and making our contribution to the knowledge of the actions performed in Latin America, and we share them in the hope that they will help provide a fuller picture of these years, during which we are witnessing an explosion of experiences.

In addition, by its very nature, citizen-led urbanism cuts across diverse areas. It provides the opportunity to work on various issues and in different contexts, so it is an enriching experience to see the diversity of perspectives from which it can be put into practice. Thus, in order to provide a broader outlook about what is happening, and about what could emerge and be strengthened in our region, this section features guest authors who, from each of their diverse disciplines, areas of expertise and fields of action, have engaged in citizen-led urbanism initiatives or propose it as a strategy to address problems of Latin America and the Caribbean.

Let's get started!

1.1.

The Concept of Citizen-Led Urbanism

Citizen-led urbanism: The power of people for citymaking

Author
Mariana Alegre Escorza ¹



Collaborative work performed by the community-AMA Amancaes Project.
Photo: Arturo Diaz, 2020

In Latin America, people have built cities with their own hands.² Of course, their dwellings are the result of self-building and individual efforts, but also of collective ones, which have given rise to the so-called “informal city.”³ However, a city is more than its houses, and habitat has also been produced by the process of urban self-generation, whereby citizens make their houses and shape the area where they live by undertaking the construction of water and sewage networks, public space, sidewalks and streets, etc. Citizens have invested their time, their energy, their effort and their money, not only to build their own houses’ walls and roofs, but also their sidewalks—known in different Latin American countries as *aceras*, *veredas* or *andenes*—streets, plazas and parks. In the face of the lack of public urban policies and/or the unsuccessful attempts at urban development made by different national or local governments as time went by, it was citizens that proved capable of fulfilling their need to “have a city”. This situation is quite common in the region and still happens today, affecting especially those who live in the most precarious conditions. Thus, this practice, even though accepted as commonplace in our cities’ urbanization processes, reveals a structural problem and an issue that governments still fail to address, having been unable to provide alternatives to the fast and continuous growth and expansion of cities.

In the urban reality of Latin America, inequality⁴ is also evidenced by the quality of public space, and spatial injustice⁵ is such an everyday experience that large numbers of inhabitants do not consider that they have the right to a better urban environment. Thus, whereas the vast majority of people do not get involved in making the city, others have become—unintentionally, and sometimes unwillingly—community leaders who guide and inspire their neighbors, and who attain actual results.

This means that, in Latin America, the responsibility for “citymaking” has historically been taken by the men and women who did not just sit on their hands and wait for public funds to come, someday, to the areas where they live, but on the contrary, refused to remain content with what was offered to them. Through collective action, they started to generate more and more square meters of urban spaces that would cater for their various needs: they devoted time and energy to installing water and sewer connections



Comas residents demonstrating against the privatization of Manhattan Park

to gain access to public services and opened community centers and community kitchens; and of course, they went from creating plazas and playground games to constructing streets and sidewalks. In addition, in the context of the economic crisis caused by the pandemic, outdoor soup kitchens have reappeared in public space, more prominently than before.⁶

This means that there is no basis for claiming that it is the increasing use of tactical urbanism or place-making techniques in the cities of the region that has led to the reappropriation of public space by citizens when, historically, public space has been produced by neighborhood residents themselves. Public space has always been theirs, or at least, it should always have. However, it is a fact that importing these strategies has proven useful for putting on the public agenda the debate about the importance of public space and the need to advance public policies designed to generate more and better public spaces for citizens. This is precisely the value of consolidating the movement that—in this publication—we call citizen-led urbanism,⁷ in order to bolster residents’ efforts to improve their neighborhoods. This task is performed through the work of several groups of activists and promoters who serve as *facilitators* or *intermediaries* in urban transformation processes,



Aerial photographs of two districts in the city of Lima: Miraflores (right) and Chorrillos (left), separated by a fifteen-minute drive. Photo: Eugenio Gastelum

but never play the directive role. Thus, it is possible to identify two different but complementary groups:⁸ 1) citizens, who live in their neighborhoods and have the need, the interest and the drive to promote the transformation of public space and improve their quality of life and, 2) technicians and/or urban activists who specialize in strategies for public space generation through the techniques used by this movement.

In 2014, the *Ocupa Tu Calle* (“Occupy Your Street”) collective was created in Lima, Peru, as a strategy to generate public spaces from, for and with people. It started carrying out urban interventions as a symbolic exercise to spark a debate about sustainable cities, taking advantage of the fact that Lima was the host city of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP20).⁹ At the time, no one could imagine the extent to which this initiative would grow and become consolidated, or the tremendous possibility it has afforded to give visibility to interest in public space and to build the capacities of thousands of people in the region.¹⁰

The work conducted during these years has provided the possibility to learn first-hand about the activities of different stakeholders who belong to citizens’ movements, architecture studios and various organizations, acting in pursuit of individual or

collective interests. This is clearly evidenced by the response to the calls for submissions to events like the International Festival of Urban Interventions¹¹ (FIUU, by its acronym in Spanish), with 560 applications sent by those seeking to participate in its five editions, held between 2016 and 2020. As a consequence, we are now experiencing a still ongoing moment of emergence and consolidation of a citizen-led urbanism movement. This adds to what I have identified as the “new urban generation”, resulting from an effervescence of interest in cities, manifested by students, researchers, activists and representatives of the private and public sectors, whose participation and engagement have grown in recent years.

Citizen-led urbanism combines the technical domain with the actual experience of inhabiting a place, and this amalgam makes it possible to optimize results, so that more efficient investments can be made and people’s actual needs can be met without wasting already scarce resources. This means that it has the potential to provide benefits more quickly to those who need them, and prevents mistakes that could involve extremely high costs. Governments can use this model to solve the problems caused by the gap between them and their citizens, overcoming the latter’s usual mistrust. In addition, the tripartite work



People waiting in line at the Alto Progreso outdoor soup kitchen in the district of San Juan de Miraflores, Lima.

La República 37



SOCIEDAD

Parque de Comas se convertirá en supermercado al no ser 'rentable'

Enfrentados. El alcalde de Comas, Miguel Saldaña, avanza en su propósito de ceder en uso parte del parque Manhattan para convertirlo en un **Plaza Vea**. Los vecinos se resisten.

Mayor of Comas stating that the park is unproductive. News item in the La República newspaper.

of residents, *facilitators* and government makes it possible to assign clearer roles according to their different fields of specialization. It is true: it is necessary to break away from the business-as-usual approach of doing urbanism from the top-down or trying to implement unrealistic projects designed on a desk. This means that public management procedures need to be modernized to enable genuine and strong participation processes. However, this agenda of change must include giving power to citizens, truly acknowledging their right to the city, which “rises up from the streets, out from the neighborhoods, as a cry for help and sustenance by oppressed peoples in desperate times” (Harvey, 2012), instead of consolidating the *statu quo* or following intellectual fads (Harvey, 2012), or using urbanism for marketing purposes. The revolution of public space is not a physical one, but a revolution led by citizens, and it is expressed in the streets.

Urban activism experiences can be said to be a way of improving physical space in Latin American cities, but their impact goes far beyond that. It involves not only infrastructure, but also the transformative power of a segment of citizens who are, even if shyly, growing in size and strength, and are willing to fight to make the city with their own hands, not just because there is no choice, but because of the true and honest belief that they will be able —we will be able— to live better.

Citizen-led urbanism and public space generation strategies thereby contribute to collective organization and to the citizens’ capability to defend themselves from the privatization of public goods, helping them activate strategies to fight against it. In my view, this is perhaps the greatest advantage that justifies promoting these practices: the possibility of giving citizens a tool to fight, a tangible manifestation of the use of public spaces, an inescapable proof that they occupy their streets, their parks, their plazas, and that they deserve to be listened to and participate in the transformation of the very places where they live.

These are citizens’ screams, expressed as collective actions in the form of protests and physical urban interventions, which cannot go unnoticed by the authorities, who, at the very least, find them uncomfortable. However, these actions have a further impact, making it evident —to others, but also to their

participants themselves— that citizens have a central role to play in their territory, their city or their neighborhood. And this notion and awareness that they are the ones who make and deserve their own city is something that nobody will be able to take away from them, no matter how much they try.

A further element to consider is how the state, at the local or national government levels, has started to adopt citizen-led urbanism movement techniques and strategies, which aim at promoting participation and experimentation, in order to regenerate public spaces. However, such initiatives are often unsuccessful because the classical machinery of public administration does not usually include or enable true and effective participation processes in the development of public works, and is even less ready to accept that experiments and pilot projects can fail, or the consequences of such failures. This is why public opinion does not usually welcome such efforts, since they seem to choose the “easy way” instead of designing policies for public space that include investing in infrastructure and permanent facilities. This shows the great challenge that needs to be met to make change happen: finding a way of integrating concepts and procedures to enable a productive work relationship among residents, activists, technical experts and public officials.

The pandemic has done nothing but strengthen the discourse about the relevance of cities and their public spaces. This was even more apparent when the *#QuédateEnTuCasa* (*#StayAtHome*)¹² mandate was turned into a more realistic one, but just as difficult to fulfill: *#QuédateEnTuBarrio* (*#StayInYourNeighborhood*). How can we stay in our neighborhoods when they lack the essential public urban services? How can we use the street if it is non-existent?

I would like to return to the example of outdoor soup kitchens as an instance of appropriation of the street in order to collectively address social vulnerability, and of occupation of the street as a way to generate income through street trade, the installation of vending stalls, the implementation of urban facilities and the redistribution of public space. These are all valid formulas for appropriating and using streets, and in most cases, there has been no need of “facilitators” promoting the use of public space.

So, what is the contribution of those who are part of the citizen-led urbanism movement? It is to

understand that they have a valuable role to play by coordinating efforts, amplifying voices and screaming out what people need, securing resources, providing support, sharing, offering help and building bridges, always with a humble attitude, without arrogance and without feeling that they are indispensable. There is no such thing as citizen-led urbanism without residents. Without them, this would be nothing but a failed attempt at making cities on the basis of empty knowledge: an absurd and pointless endeavor. Their value also lies in improving the quality of integral processes and in taking advantage of actual and potential resources, even when this means overcoming the precarious conditions of infrastructure and of the existing, or non-existent, facilities.

The citizen-led urbanism movement will stay alive if, and only if, it understands that it urgently needs to acquire a new meaning. It must remain mindful that its efforts will be in vain if they have no influence on public policy, which provides the possibility of scaling up results so that more people can be reached. To attain this goal, it is important to work and build the city collectively and to share both successful and unsuccessful experiences, in order to shorten the path to transformation. ■

1. My special thanks to Héliida Quispe, who helped me with the checking of data and sources, and to Juan José Arrué, for his comments throughout the entire process.
2. In Latin America, cities are the outcome of various processes, such as state planning, real estate development, land occupation and self-building, among others, with different stakeholders involved, e.g., the state, real estate developers, land traffickers and organized residents.
3. Professor Julio Calderón Cockburn says that the main housing policy in Peru is *laissez faire, laissez passer* (“let do and let pass”).
4. According to the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (2016), Latin America is the most unequal continent in the world, due to its structural heterogeneity, with wealth concentrated in the hands of a few, i.e., a small number of companies which contribute to GDP growth but not to equality.
5. As stated by Fernando Carrión, the “cities of peasants” that used to characterize Latin America have now given way to “cities of the poor”.
6. This proves how public space, in addition to being a place where people can meet with each other, is also a setting for responding to the health emergency and for providing employment opportunities in the context of an informal and precarious reality.
7. We consider citizen-led urbanism as the model that involves active citizens in all decision-making levels and puts them at the center of city design and planning. Its actions are focused on improving the quality of shared space through the joint work of residents themselves and specialists.
8. It is also possible to recognize a further, though smaller group: those who approached the movement attracted by its novelty and by a conspicuous process which drew media attention, but who were more focused on making a profit for themselves than on working for a final outcome, and more interested in pictures and videos than in a true process of citizen involvement.
9. The COP 20 Summit was held in December 2014.
10. Ocupa Tu Calle has participated in the five editions of the International Festival of Urban Interventions, with a total of about eleven thousand participants.
11. For more information, see “The power of citizen-led urbanism in Latin America. An approach to the movement emerging in the region”, by Ocupa Tu Calle, in this book.
12. The phrase *#QuédateEnTuCasa* was one of the most widely used ones in government campaigns to stop the spread of COVID-19. However, the social immobilization policy brought about by the pandemic faced a great deal of criticism, mainly for not considering the extremely precarious situation of large numbers of people without decent housing conditions or, even worse, without a house.

The power of citizen-led urbanism in Latin America

An approach to the movement emerging in the region

Authors

Ocupa Tu Calle, Lucía Nogales, Lia Alarcón, Héliida Quispe



Reinicia tu Barrio Pamplona project

In Latin American cities, the great speed of massive rural-to-urban migration processes overwhelmed the state’s capability to plan and develop them. This, in addition to governmental disinterest in livability issues and lack of capacity to address them, led residents to fulfill their needs by self-managing and self-building their own habitat. This form of citymaking by individuals coexists with the modern urbanism originated in Europe and the United States, adopted as the chief benchmark in the world, and framed by the economic models, scientific advances and industrial revolution of the 18th century, the urban planning principles and architectural trends arising from the CIAM¹, and the post-war city of the early 20th century (Gehl, 2011; Fernández, 2017).

Presently, these two forms of citymaking evidence the inequality and urban and social fragmentation that cities face in the region. The vulnerability of self-managed territories, along with the already apparent negative effects of the modern urban project—like the separation of urban functions and the priority attached to the automobile to the detriment of individuals— results in insecure, poorly accessible and less inclusive cities. Public spaces, which are insufficient, are frequently degraded and neglected due to absence of public sector investment, or to the demand for land and housing by the sectors of the population that lack access to them through the formal markets, known as the “informal” sector. This situation has led to the pursuit of alternative models to build more equitable, inclusive, sustainable and resilient cities.

Consequently, it could be asserted that the modern project was challenged earlier in Latin America, due to people’s need to create cities to inhabit them, contrary to the present-day aspiration of creating “cities for people”². This Latin American culture of citymaking, together with the inclusion of notions like citizen participation in the international agenda, the incipient entry into the public sector of new technical experts and professionals and the growing dissemination of collaborative reference projects that instantly improve the quality of life of individuals, have spurred the conditions for the emergence of a citizen-led movement³, defined herein as *citizen-led urbanism*. This movement seeks to vindicate, by way of participatory actions and proposals, the improvement of daily life experience and the generation of a

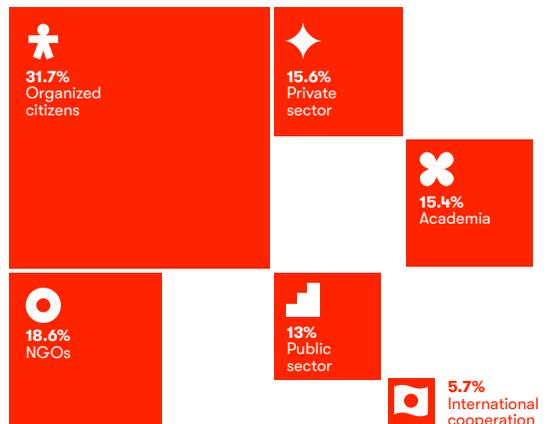
new urban model (Magro, Martínez & Roselló, 2016).⁴

This article is aimed at understanding the extent and potential attained by this movement over the last ten years. In doing so, it seeks to contribute to the transformation of the current urban model—in terms of public and common space— into a new model built on the basis of the initiatives and the knowledge of social dynamics, adopting innovative, participatory and collaborative tools to design and plan more equitable cities planned by, for and with people, including them at all decision-making levels. This is a more complex notion of urban planning, which considers the context and other dimensions, such as the social and environmental ones, and chiefly, the participation of inhabitants in the construction of the city (Magro, 2011).

Chart 1

Types of citizen-led urbanism promoters by sector.

Source: Own elaboration



Due to the scarcity of literature on this movement in the region, a database with over 630 organizations and stakeholders from 19 countries has been developed and used as a source of approximate quantitative information. It captures the participation of organizations, institutions and actors in the events spurred from different spaces connected with the citizen-led urbanism movement itself, like the Placemaking Latin America editions (Chile 2017, Mexico 2018, Lima 2019, Argentina 2020) and the five International Forums on Urban Interventions (*Foros Internacionales de Intervenciones Urbanas* or FIU, from 2016 to 2020, Peru). Likewise, other databases used include those of the organizations *Ocupa Tu Calle*⁵ (Peru), with

242 national and international organizations, and of TransLAB.URB⁶ (Brazil), containing 123 Brazilian organizations. Although this database does not cover the entire region, and numerous organizations have not been mapped yet, it serves as an initial input for the analysis of the subject.



5th International Forum on Urban Interventions, 2019

Citizen-led urbanism: actors and pillars

Latin American cities are faced with issues like access to quality housing and urban services, or vulnerability due to climate change. Additionally, their ongoing expansion and growth consume land and natural resources. This gives rise to congestion issues that impair urban productivity (IDB, 2019), as well as the daily life of their inhabitants, who endure restrictions on their liberties. Also, in many countries in the region, public administrations evidence discontinuous urban plans and no legal framework to ensure their permanence. This state of affairs poses a further hurdle to the implementation of large-scale urban transformation projects, which, in addition, normally involve long and complex bureaucratic and political processes, frequently used to pursue personal objectives and interests which are detached from the residents' common good. A city calls for comprehensive, small and large-scale projects which may be linked by different variables, such as transportation, public spaces or community services. Additionally, addressing the great complexity of the issues faced by cities requires including their inhabitants' knowledge in the decision-making process.

Nonetheless, it is important to recognize cities not only as the scenario and source of issues, but also as the spaces where solutions are conceived by the different sectors of the citizenry (Lehmann, 2020).

Consequently, Latin American cities rely on the experience of the mass of migrant population and of those who were unable to access the formal market, who were pushed to self-build their houses and neighborhoods, thereby becoming a point of reference—in terms of citizen participation—for the European alternative urban movement of the seventies (Magro, 2011).

This experience of Latin American cities, as well as government administrations' persistent inability and failure to respond to the abovementioned issues and the inadequacy of the present-day urban model to address the needs of individuals, promote the growth of the citizen-led urbanism movement through different citizens' groups that become organized to find solutions. First, these groups seek to contact government representatives and, in view of the authorities' disinterest or inaction, ultimately take action directly (Ziccardi, 2009, p. 68). This confirms the idea that, from time immemorial, community organization has served to fulfill citizens' needs and demands.

Since they are the main drivers of the projects, these individuals become *promoters* and assume, in turn, the role of coordinating and mediating between the other stakeholders involved. They put out calls for participants and have to manage all aspects of the project stages. Presently, this role is played by organized citizens, NGOs, international cooperation initiatives and academia, although the growing participation of local administrations is worth mentioning.

According to the information gathered and systematized for this article, the majority of promoters are organized citizens (31.7%), and organizations and associations (18.6%), both globally and in each of the countries under study. Quantitatively, international cooperation agencies account for the lowest share (5.7%). Notwithstanding, the latter frequently achieve greater outreach in different countries and become allies or promoters of numerous projects in the region. On the other hand, the public sector has failed to participate substantially in the events that were considered for this study; consequently, their share (13%) has not been representative among the public programs or policies being promoted.

Although citizen-led urbanism processes are based fundamentally on the organized efforts of residents, they also need different types of knowledge to come together and supplement each other. This

can be achieved by way of alliances that nurture such processes with technical knowledge, funding, institutional support and/or legal aid. Hence, the role of academia, NGOs, international cooperation and specialized technical enterprises consists of delivering the technical knowledge and/or institutional support required for developing the methodologies, technical tools and approaches to be adopted during the processes. In general, moreover, such processes are funded mainly by private enterprises, international cooperation and the public sector by way of different means, like direct donations, calls for bids, programs and cooperation funds.

The power of the Latin American citizen-led urbanism movement, which is considered as a non-organized phenomenon, becomes evident in four essential features or pillars of the way in which it deploys its projects. These pillars are listed hereunder in no particular order of priority or relevance.

The first pillar is *collaborative work*, which is part of the social dynamics and cultural traditions of Latin America. Some examples are community improvement strategies through collective action like the *minga*⁷, used chiefly in rural areas, or the *ayni*⁸ practiced in the Inca culture, consisting of reciprocal work among the members of the *ayllu*⁹. Such practices migrated to cities through the communal organization of work for improving neighborhoods, or through “soup kitchens”, which became popular as a result of the economic crisis of the thirties and have strongly reemerged in the context of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

The second pillar, closely tied to the first one, could be termed the *contagious effect*¹⁰, in reference to the fast replication and propagation of projects conducted under this approach in the region, which entail great complexity and diversity of actors, locations, themes and working methodologies, and a strong impact on the cities where they are implemented.

The actions arising from this movement are related, coexist and are connected through relatively new approaches, like urban acupuncture, tactical urbanism and placemaking. The latter two, both of which are processes conducted “from the bottom up”, also emerge as an alternative to the issues and opportunities posed by cities, and as a form of undertaking collaborative efforts and providing solutions to daily issues.

Chart 2
Historical data about FIUU attendees
Source: Ocupa Tu Calle, 2020

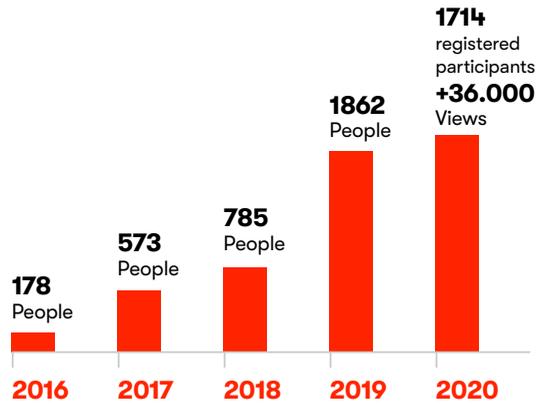
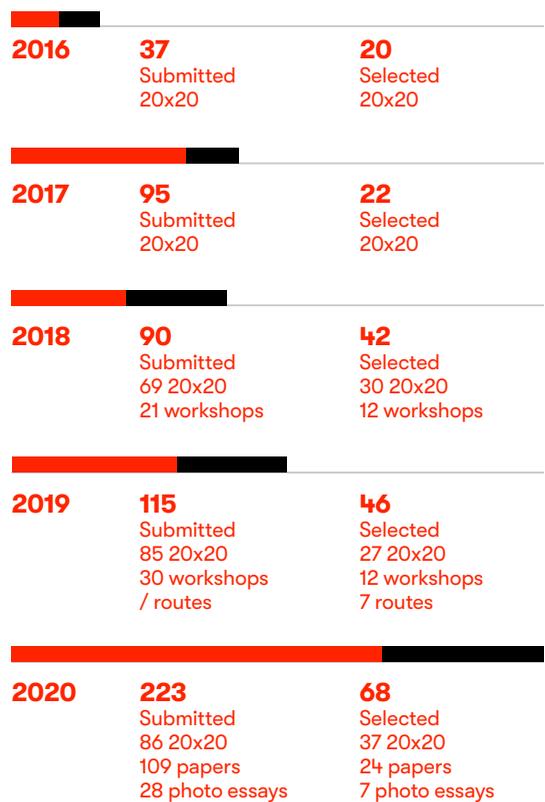


Chart 3
Historical data about submissions to FIUU
Source: Ocupa Tu Calle, 2020



The third one is *citizen participation*, inherent in citizen-led urbanism, since it is people themselves who, through their everyday experience of living in a certain space, hold the knowledge of its cultural, social, territorial and economic characteristics and dynamics, and are aware of its problems and resources. Likewise, direct user participation in the different processes contributes to project sustainability and to the cultivation of the sense of belonging, which results in the space being better maintained afterwards.

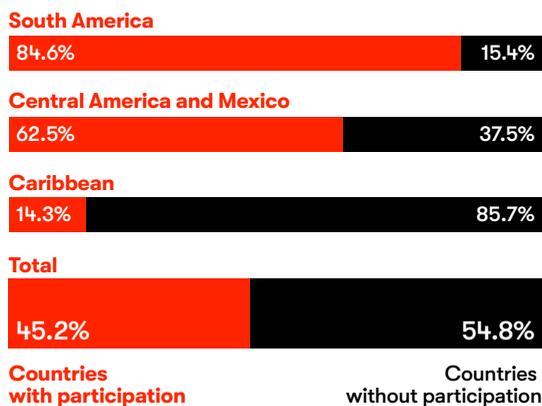
Moreover, the issues of the city are complex and impossible to approach from a single standpoint, since they involve different aspects (social, environmental, economic and legal ones, among others). Therefore, from the technical stance, such problems should be approached by different disciplines, experts and actors that help provide adequate responses to these variables. This is why, besides being collaborative, citizen-led urbanism has a *transdisciplinary* character, which is its fourth pillar, enabling different representatives from each discipline to make an equitable contribution to the project decision-making process, without any specific interest or contribution prevailing (Acero, Aguirre, Arévalo, Díaz, & Romero, 2014).

Citizen-led urbanism pursues not only tangible actions, but has also an intangible component, like the practical manifestations and knowledge of the social dynamics that arise from participation and observation processes. Hence, the project development process itself becomes a learning experience for all the stakeholders involved. On many occasions, tangible interventions are simply a means towards a greater goal, like social cohesion, awareness-raising about the importance of public spaces or training in theoretical and practical matters.

Regional outlook: events and networks

In recent years, the local and international events that have been organized have served as spaces which bring together and disseminate the work of individuals, organizations and institutions on what this book calls citizen-led urbanism. Such spaces have not only given visibility to practices and initiatives, but have also proven vital for coordinating efforts, for strengthening and promoting networks within territories and with neighboring countries, and have been chiefly a source of inspiration to communicate the enthusiasm for transforming the cities of Latin America.

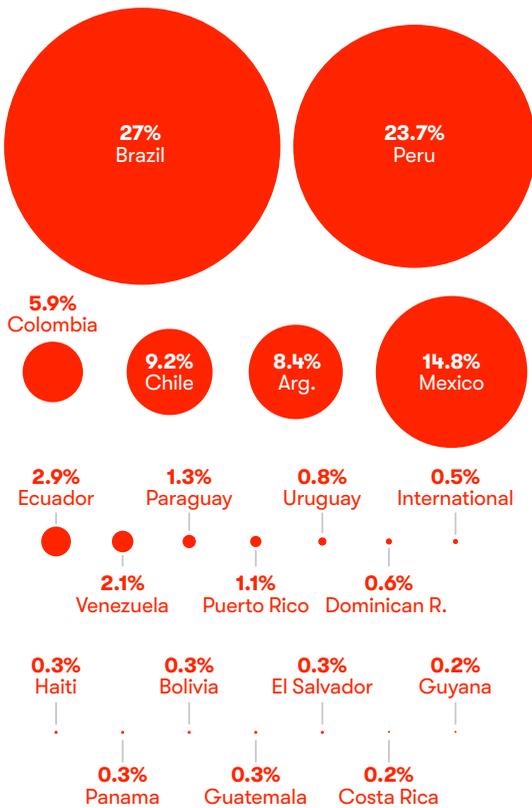
Chart 4.
Participation by countries
Source: Own elaboration



One of the most relevant events of the last few years, due to its history and local and international projection, has been the International Forum on Urban Interventions (FIU)¹¹, organized annually by Ocupa Tu Calle (Peru). Its reach has expanded since its first edition in 2016, which started with 178 participants, whereas the largest number of in-person attendance was recorded in 2019, with 1862 participants. It is worth highlighting that the 2020 edition was held virtually due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and registration totaled 1714 participants. Likewise, throughout the five years since the event was first held, more than 560¹² projects from different citizen groups have been submitted through the open invitations issued as a means of promotion. Out of those projects, 165 were selected and were allocated different types of spaces in the forum to showcase and disseminate the work done. Such spaces include workshops, conferences, panels, etc.

In addition, other important spaces are the Placemaking meetings in their different editions. Placemaking is the practice of performing actions to make small-scale improvements in public spaces, neighborhoods and urban surroundings with direct participation by the communities. It is also the name of the meetings originally promoted by the Project for Public Spaces (pps.org) in 2013, through the Placemaking Leadership Council¹³, which brings together different organizations and actors that carry out projects in line with the abovementioned goals, in order

Chart 5.
 Percentage of organizations by country
 Source: Own elaboration



to strengthen placemaking as part of an international network. Since then, a series of events have been held in countries around the world. This has gradually built a solid foundation and led to the emergence of leaders and actors who have forged networks and worked collectively and cross-sectionally for strengthening the movement in other countries. The Latin America Placemaking network was created in 2016 in the Placemaking Leadership Forum; and the conference ProWalk/ProBike/ProPlace (walkbikeplaces.org) in Vancouver, Canada (Lugares Públicos, 2018). Since then, four Placemaking Latin America conferences have been held with the aim of generating spaces to exchange knowledge and promote synergies among members in the region.

In turn, networks of activists were created and/or consolidated.¹⁴ They work voluntarily and

uninterruptedly performing numerous activities to promote change in their cities and are organized according to themes or working areas, like cycling, gender and feminism, recreational spaces and childhood or walkability, among others. In this case, digital platforms and social media constitute relevant spaces for their internal organization, for co-creation and for information sharing (Freire, 2009), as well as for the dissemination of their projects, events and activities.

According to the database and the information gathered for this article, out of the 46 countries that make up the Latin America and Caribbean region, 19 have participated in the different events (45.2%). South American countries feature significant participation (84.6%), although the lack of information regarding the actions undertaken in the Caribbean is worth highlighting, since only 14.3% of countries in this geographical area have participated. As to Central America and Mexico, more than half the countries that make up the region have taken part in the events organized, accounting for 62.5% of the total.

Upon analyzing the number of organizations mapped by country, there is a clear connection between the highest participation percentages and the countries that have hosted a Placemaking conference, like Peru, Mexico, Chile and Argentina. Except for Brazil, the number of organizations is directly linked to the local impact of such events, which means that broader regional data are not available. Peru and Brazil also rank first, as the countries which are home to the organizations whose databases were used as the main information input (Ocupa Tu Calle and TransLAB.URB, respectively). Additionally, other countries like Colombia, Ecuador and Venezuela have not hosted any international events but have been significantly represented, and equally served as sources for this article.

Another point worth highlighting is the *international* category, which refers to the international organizations and institutions that have achieved a more extended outreach in the region by participating as facilitators or allies in the projects mapped.

Urban interventions

Intervene. To participate in a matter. (Real Academia Española, no date, definition 10)

“Urban interventions are characterized by being strategic actions, usually performed in a specific time and space, that resort to participatory and collaborative strategies; they are relatively simple—in terms of their implementation—and low-budget—compared with large urban projects—.” (Ocupa Tu Calle, 2018)

Over the last decade, small-scale and human-centered design urban interventions have been replicated in the region rapidly and enthusiastically. Such experiences have been compiled and studied in different publications¹⁵, many of which are available for free on digital platforms, thereby becoming a key tool for the promotion of citizen-led urbanism. Due to their capacity to disseminate the outcomes, achievements and improvements generated by the experiences, these publications also fulfill a pedagogical purpose by providing urban transformation tools to the different stakeholders that are (or should be) involved in the governance of cities and urban centers (for example, citizenry, NGOs, academia, public and private sector).

The types of interventions performed as part of the citizen-led urbanism movement in the region are highly diverse: from temporary bicycle lanes and pedestrianized streets to the installation of parklets¹⁶, playgrounds for children, muralism, fairs and festivals, or urban orchards, among many others. Establishing a classification of such initiatives would mean constraining possibilities to a finite list of predefined actions (Ocupa Tu Calle, 2018), at the risk of excluding many of them, given their great diversity and constant evolution. Therefore, this article adopts the classification based on the use of public and common space, as applied in the *Manual de intervenciones urbanas hechas por ciudadanos* (or “Manual of citizen-led urban interventions”). This classification groups interventions into categories which are not mutually exclusive but complementary, and takes a broader view of their possibilities. These categories are as follows:

- ▶ **Citizens’ demonstrations.** They are ephemeral collective actions whose main purpose is to achieve change or social improvement with regard to some specific issue. They use public space as a means of expression. This group includes public demonstrations, flash mobs and protests, among others.
- ▶ **Social space innovations.** They transform the sense and meaning of public space or its resources by giving them a new purpose, on a one-off and/or regular basis. They may utilize only the existing space or supplement it with another element. This group includes open streets, bicycle lanes, urban orchards and artistic interventions, among others.
- ▶ **Design transformations.** They are spatial transformations that set forth new ways of understanding space through the use of physical elements. They normally have a greater degree of permanence than conceptual interventions and use public space as a raw material. This group includes parklets, playgrounds, public transportation stops, and pocket parks, among others (Ocupa Tu Calle, 2018, p. 67-68).

Additionally, these urban interventions may be differentiated according to certain features:

- ▶ **Temporariness.** This refers to the duration of the intervention. Interventions may be *ephemeral*, i.e., they may last a short time or have the capacity to move to a different location, or *temporary*, such as those that remain in a space for longer periods, like weeks or months, without being meant to become permanent. These categories apply to pilot interventions or low-cost prototypes which are quick to implement and evaluate, and which are used to experiment or learn in order to develop a permanent solution in the future, for example, the construction of a building, piece of equipment or infrastructure by incorporating improvements in their design and material components. Contrarily, *permanent* interventions seek to achieve a significant and stable change, in physical terms and in the forms of use and interaction, and they are meant to stay in place indefinitely (Ocupa Tu Calle, 2018, p. 85).



Community building process in Alto Perú, Chorrillos

- ▶ **Materiality.** It is determined not only by the design, but also by the purposes and temporariness of the project. Ephemeral interventions that seek activation may even require a small amount of materials, which are normally low-cost or reused, while temporary ones may involve a higher cost and a more significant use, similar to permanent interventions.
- ▶ **Human scale.** This characteristic refers to the design of the intervention and its direct relation with individuals in terms of their needs and demands. It involves considering the diversity of the people who will use the intervention, the specific characteristics of each one, and the form in which design can—and must—adjust to them. This may entail, for example, thinking of space in connection with children and their caregivers, senior adults and people with disabilities.
- ▶ **Small scale.** Due to the lack of continuity and the difficulty in measuring the impact of large-scale works based on the principles of traditional urbanism, interventions of this type constitute a proposal that is easy to implement and replicate, and contribute to making change visible. Sometimes, they even instantly improve people's quality of life. They may be part of a comprehensive or larger-scale project, which may be transformed and developed gradually over time, thereby prompting investments, as a result of the tangible visibility of the potential change.
- ▶ **Measurable impact.** The success of an urban intervention is measured in accordance with the fulfillment of its purposes, which inform the process and methodologies and, in turn, make it possible to define the temporariness, materiality and scale of the project. The fulfillment of the intervention purpose is verified by applying different quantitative tools, like surveys and counts, or qualitative ones, like observations and user interviews, which provide the possibility of visualizing and communicating the key changes and improvements, before and after the intervention.

The incidence

Breaking away from past citymaking and modern urbanism paradigms is part of the change process pursued by the citizen-led urbanism movement. Great changes start with small actions that, upon proving their impact, functionality and benefits, generate a growing and contagious interest in other actors in contributing to the project and/or replicating it in new contexts, sometimes with the intervention of the state and public institutions. An emblematic example of this *contagious effect* took place in Amsterdam, the Netherlands, in the sixties, with the playgrounds project developed by Aldo van Eyck¹⁷. After the implementation of the first playground in a public space, and as a result of its positive impact, a large number of residents started to request similar interventions in vacant, underutilized or poorly used areas in their neighborhoods. This eventually resulted in the promotion of a comprehensive public space program for the city and the creation of more than 736 playgrounds (Stutzin, 2015).

On the other hand, the incidence of citizen-led urbanism interventions is connected with their impact measurement. Nonetheless, this is one of the most difficult aspects to address, since the diversity of the projects developed makes impact measurements even more complex to quantify and compare. The broad variety of themes, scales and temporalities of the projects, as well as the capacities of their promoters, turn the quantitative measurement of outcomes into a complex process. In those projects for which variables and measurement tools could be established, the heterogeneity of their impact data makes it difficult to put them together in a general framework, or to use them as a sample in a global outlook. Additionally, in most cases, measurable impact is not immediate, but rather visible long after the project has been implemented. This entails the need for constant monitoring by promoters, which may pose a challenge due to the resources available. Therefore, further efforts are required to generate the relevant tools and variables for a more efficient and objective strategy to produce comparable data.

Another relevant point in connection with the difficulty in measuring the impact and incidence of urban interventions is that many of them face limitations to have an effect on the space of the city. This is chiefly because of the capacities, tools and resources

that the different organizations, collectives and initiatives have available to make an impact on the territory, and which also prevent the upscaling of projects, due to the restricted powers that these groups may exert over urban space. It is important to continue requiring and demanding that the public sector comply with its obligations, rather than attempting to replace it, and for grassroots organizations to collaborate with it through their contributions instead.

Certain recent achievements may be highlighted. They imply, firstly, the strengthening of the collaborative efforts that actors undertake in support of the processes, the consolidation of their grassroots membership, and the more active involvement of the public sector. The latter also promoted the creation of special programs in the municipalities or institutions of the central government, which seek to address the different issues in the city. For example, in 2017, in Lima, Peru, different residents' associations that had been promoting the protection of public space in their neighborhoods participated in the drafting of bills on the management and protection of public spaces¹⁸. In turn, coordination and collaboration among the different actors of these organizations and advocacy for these laws resulted in the creation of the *Manual de defensa de los espacios públicos* (or "Manual for the defense of public spaces", CADNEP & Huilca, 2018).

Other public sector initiatives have emerged in the region. They center their efforts on public space and adopt citizen-led urbanism tools. For example, in 2008, Mexico created the Authority for Public Space (AEP, by its acronym in Spanish), a decentralized body of the Secretariat for Urban Development and Housing of the Government of the City of Mexico, which was operational for ten years until it was closed in late 2018, under the new administration. Its purpose was to guarantee the comprehensive management of public space projects in the city. In Ecuador, the Urban Laboratories (*Laboratorios Urbanos*) project is currently being implemented. It is promoted by the Secretariat for Territory, Habitat and Housing (STHV, by its acronym in Spanish), which identifies and develops "public territorial programs and policies on the use of land, habitat, public space, built heritage and housing, under the principles of sustainability, social inclusion, environmental quality, universality and social cohesion". (Quito Informa, 2020).



Discussion of project proposals for the intervention in Manhattan Park, Lima



Children and residents evaluating the project proposals for the intervention in Manhattan Park, Lima



These initiatives constitute an advancement in the region and have a positive impact on cities. Nonetheless, citizen participation should not merely remain an intention or an empty narrative; rather, participatory processes should become integrated into the planning and design phases of projects, so that they can fulfill their purposes (Delgadillo, 2014). Citizen-led urbanism makes it possible to generate a series of processes which engage citizens and which must also be promoted by the public sector, to deliver accessible, inclusive and resilient public spaces for all.

Errors and lessons learned

The emerging citizen-led urbanism movement is presently an experimental field which, as already mentioned, encompasses a diversity of interventions and, in turn, is related to and associated with notions like placemaking and tactical urbanism. These terms are often used interchangeably, generating confusion and fragmentation of information. It is worth mentioning that one of the most common mistakes when it comes to executing an urban intervention is

failing to define a purpose and remaining aligned with it. The public and the private sector frequently misconstrue the low cost and rapid implementation of temporary interventions, and communicate their outcomes as permanent improvements on space, taking advantage of the circumstances and creating “a false image that urban conflicts are being addressed and solved”. (Araneda, 2018). They do not understand that, normally, the basis for such interventions is their experimental nature, in the form of pilot projects that suggest, promote and prompt mid- or long-term solutions. This is the reason for criticism by certain sectors of academia, which warn that these actions may be made use of due to their potentially high media impact, and that their sole purpose is “embellishing and concealing”, and also leads to doubts as to the actual participation of the community throughout the whole process.

There are organizations that carry out ephemeral activations, which are advantageous for their low costs compared with mid-scale infrastructure projects. Nonetheless, when they are introduced

in vulnerable contexts, they lose their justification, due to the lack of management models. The main issue, then, is that the intervention deteriorates and/or eventually disappears, as a consequence of poor planning and monitoring by promoters, with the community thereby being deprived of any tangible contribution. If the process is too brief and/or costly, it will be difficult to replicate without the investment of a promoter who has the same tools and resources available. Thus, if the intervention cannot be scaled up with the participation of the public sector, it will fail to be sustainable and will not produce any significant transformation or improvement of the urban space.

Therefore, it is essential to properly communicate and disseminate that urban interventions are specific actions aimed at addressing a larger-scale demand or change, which calls for the intervention of the public sector. They are processes that do not end with the material implementation of the intervention, but should rather foster their continuity, evolution and/or permanence through other strategies. Communication is an especially important factor and, on occasions, the key to project success. Paradoxically, one of the most common mistakes in this type of interventions is the way in which projects are communicated, creating perfectionistic images of the participation processes, with atmospheres in which citizens are displayed working enthusiastically and harmoniously. This idealizes such processes while stigmatizing conflicts as negative. Conflicts do not always arise in citizen participation projects and processes for the transformation of the urban environment, but they should be allowed for as part of the process. They normally stem from different factors, like political differences, disputes over the territory, or personal and conceptual differences on the priority and urgency of the population's needs and demands. In this sense, conflicts should be deemed an opportunity to spur dialogue and debate about an issue. This may become the first step towards solving it and understanding that the common good must prevail over individual benefits.

Conclusions

Although this article displays the growing power of the citizen-led urbanism movement in Latin America, and how it has been gaining experience and knowledge in the region over the years, there is a substantial

amount of data and information that still need to be recorded and systematized to be subsequently included in the evaluation and reflection processes, so that the movement can transcend its present stage towards the creation of a new urban model. The first step to that end is using tools that can reflect the impact that citizen-led urbanism is having on cities, analyzing success stories but also the unsuccessful cases. A more in-depth analysis of the processes led or promoted by the different sectors mentioned herein may help to gain a better understanding about the limits of their reach and impact.

Cities evolve faster than their urban principles, and this affects not only their size, but also their internal dynamics. Social changes are frequently not coupled with changes in material space, so the harmony of both dimensions becomes disrupted. This is reflected fundamentally in public space, where the logic of functions like mobility, leisure or security has been upset in comparison with the past (Matilla, 2014). The creation of a new urban model that meets the current demands of cities by including citizens in the pursuit of solutions is an imminent change. The assets generated by the citizen-led urbanism processes (coordination, commitment, knowledge, innovation and dynamism, among others) may and should be capitalized on by the makers of public policies that determine the development of our cities.

The present-day citizen-led urbanism movement could evolve towards the consolidation of a "mixed" model that integrates public servants' technical capacities with citizens' knowledge and initiatives. In order to fulfill this purpose, it is necessary to continue building a clear theoretical framework that enables the correct evaluation and subsequent upscaling of its different actions and processes. This article and this publication are a call to vindicate the power of our citizenry, by calling on more people and organizations that seek the structural transformation of our cities, with a view to reducing the urban inequality of the region. ■

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1. The *Congrès International d'Architecture Moderne* (also known as CIAM or International Congress of Modern Architecture), established in 1928 and dissolved in 1959, was the laboratory of the modern movement (or international style) ideas in architecture. The Congress featured an organizational structure and a series of conferences and meetings.
 2. In reference to the title of the book by Jan Gehl.
 3. Although the movement does not arise from a regional articulation or organization, the latter is achieved over time and through the networks created among the different promoters, which gives rise to a phenomenon that can be recognized at a regional scale in the present.
 4. The authors make their arguments based on their own practices in Spain. Although they refer to a different geographical and social context, similarities exist with the processes underway in Latin America, which are the subject matter of this article.
 5. ocupatucalle.com
 6. translaburb.cc
 7. Pre-Columbian tradition of the countries of the Andean region, where the population gathers to perform collective work that benefits the community or as a token of solidarity and reciprocity with a member thereof.
 8. System of work or practices of reciprocity or mutual aid among the individuals of the Andean communities or families.
 9. Unit of social organization.
 10. Although the term “contagious” refers to the spread and transmission of diseases, its use is also widespread in connection with the transmission of ideas, feelings and attitudes.
 11. For more information, visit ocupatucalle.com/fiiu.
 12. This figure does not include guests as part of conferences and/or panels.
 13. Placemaking Leadership Council. For more information, visit placemakingx.org/faq#5.
 14. Some of them are: *Ludantia*, World Bicycle Forums, 100in-1Day network, Jane’s Walk, City of Children network, *Anda: niñez y arquitectura en América Latina*, Ocara network.
 15. Some of the publications are: *Urbanismo táctico 3. Casos Latinoamericanos* (2013), *Intervenciones Urbanas hechas por Ciudadanos: Estrategias Hacia Mejores Espacios Públicos* (2018), *Micro Intervenciones urbanas: Espacio público y experiencia ciudadana en América Latina* (I FIIU, 2016), *Espacio público para ciudades sostenibles en el Perú y América Latina* (II FIIU, 2017), *Espacio público: De la acción ciudadana a la política urbana* (III FIIU, 2018), *Vulnerabilidad en el Espacio Público* (IV FIIU, 2019).
 16. Spaces originally meant to be parking lots are transformed to provide lounging areas for pedestrians.
 17. Aldo van Eyck was a Dutch architect renowned for his work to recover neglected spaces in the postwar era, and for his focus on the daily needs of previously ignored actors, like children.
 18. The bill was submitted in 2017 and passed in April 2021.

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The Latin- American Urban Context

The role of citizen-led urbanism in the implementation of global agendas for sustainable urban development

Author
José Chong



Photo: IDB Cities LAB, 2019

In recent years, the organized civil society has shown a growing interest in collaborative processes for creating and managing public spaces. Various kinds of institutions, such as foundations, academic institutions, non-government, private, and multilateral cooperation organizations have contributed to this growing trend. In several Latin American cities, civil society organizations have emerged with the purpose of appropriating¹ streets and public spaces to satisfy the increasing need of more accessible, safe, and quality spaces for all.

Latin America has experienced a twofold drive: global agendas focused on sustainable urban development and regional events about public space, which have contributed to promoting alliances among various local actors, encouraging cooperation through the exchange of knowledge and experiences derived from often similar realities. Besides, driven by different urban collectives, a regional movement has emerged which raises awareness about the important role of civil society in maintaining and managing urban public space. Local governments have also supported these claims and encouraged the participation of residents in the different processes involved in co-creating the city or town.

The present paper discusses the important role of citizens in creating, maintaining, managing, using, and monitoring public space. It examines recent developments, starting from the consolidation of the Placemaking network at the regional level, and places them within the framework of global agendas for sustainable urban development.

The importance of citizen-led urbanism for creating, managing, and maintaining public space

Traditional urbanistic practices have been dissociated from processes that include collaborative endeavors for designing and building the city. Despite recommendations from international agendas for sustainable urban development, the spirit of partnership and the idea of co-designing public space with local communities have not penetrated into all government levels. This is evident in cities that do not meet users' needs and are difficult to maintain and manage.

Among the consequences of current urban development practices, the most relevant are the following:

“high percentages of people living in slums²; expansion and dominance of the informal sector; inadequate urban basic services, especially water, sanitation and energy; unplanned peri-urban expansion; social and political conflict over land resources; high levels of vulnerability to natural disasters; and poor mobility systems” (ONU-Habitat, 2014). Given this prevalent situation, citizen-led urbanism may contribute to making our cities more sustainable.

There is not a single, authoritative, definition of citizen-led urbanism endorsed by everybody. In the present paper we define it as a practice that promotes collaboration among the different stakeholders involved in citymaking, within a framework that fosters community participation in co-designing urban environments.

Experience shows that successful practices for creating, managing, and maintaining public space involve partnership as a key feature of improvement plans (ONU-Habitat, 2019). The creation of accessible, safe, and inclusive public spaces is facilitated when the local community participates in co-generating strategies for their design, usage, and maintenance.

Some innovative methodologies, like placemaking and tactical urbanism, have proved their usefulness because they offer citizens opportunities for transforming their urban environments through low-cost, quick interventions. The same methodologies have been used by local authorities as a preliminary experiment for more decisive, long-term interventions. A paradigmatic example of such interventions is the Times Square pedestrian plaza in New York City, which started as a trial project disapproved by local businesses. As time went by, closing off this zone to vehicles in order to ease business activities and urban life in general proved a viable and successful measure (Times Square Alliance, 2020).

In other latitudes, the Nairobi Placemaking Week 1st edition, held in Kenya in 2016, consolidated the public space allies network in that city (GEF SUSTAN 2016). Subsequent similar events were organized, which resulted in the conversion of Luthuli Avenue, located in the central business district of Nairobi. Throughout these events, business owners have been involved in a participative process tending to prioritize pedestrian circulation and cut down motor-vehicle traffic in the district (C40 cities, 2020). Besides, the event itself is a starting point to mobilize

activists, professionals, and local authorities, and engage them in improving the quality of Nairobi public spaces.

These examples show how citizen-led urbanism has promoted escalating interventions that highlight the importance of public space policies at the city level in different contexts and realities.

The role of citizen-led urbanism in the implementation of global agendas for sustainable urban development

Traditional approaches to urbanism do not frequently encourage citizen engagement in the transformation of cities or towns. However, local governments have come to realize the importance of civil society in citymaking. A participatory agenda has been strongly promoted because civil society organizations demanded such an approach, and was therefore included in the Istanbul Declaration issued in 1996 at the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements - Habitat II (Pérez, 1999).

The New Urban Agenda – Habitat III³ reaffirms this approach and takes for granted that partnership is highly important for sustainable urban development. It also highlights the importance of public spaces for sustainable urban development and propounds cities that “are participatory, promote civic engagement, engender a sense of belonging and ownership among all their inhabitants, prioritize safe, inclusive, green and quality public spaces” (NUA, Habitat III, 2016).

The list of Sustainable Development Goals (SDG)⁴ included in the UN 2030 Agenda acknowledges the importance of public spaces in order to “make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable”, and further declares in Target 11.7 “By 2030, provide universal access to safe, inclusive and accessible, green and public spaces, in particular for women and children, older persons and persons with disabilities.” The support and activity of civil society—as represented by its different collectives—were critical for ensuring the inclusion of public spaces in the global agenda for sustainable development.

However, according to the 2020 Sustainable Development Goals Report (United Nations, 2020), city and town areas assigned to streets and open spaces amounted globally to an average of just 16% of each total urban area. Besides, inequality of access to public space is also evidenced by some figures: only an

average of 46.7% of the urban population may access open public spaces within walking distance⁵, while in Latin America and the Caribbean, this average is still worse, amounting to 56.7%. These figures indicate we need to improve the availability and accessibility of quality public spaces in Latin American cities. In addition, limited access to public space deepens current development gaps and socioeconomic inequalities in this region.

In 2011, in the 23rd Governing Council of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), member countries adopted the first resolution focused on public space, encouraging the development and promotion of public space policies, as well as knowledge dissemination and technical assistance to cities (Habitat III, 2015). As a result, the UN-Habitat Global Public Space Programme was created in 2012.

Over the years, this program has promoted and supported the improvement of urban public spaces around the world, helping to elaborate policies, develop capacities, and exchange knowledge and technical aid for creating, maintaining, and enjoying urban public spaces. The experience thus acquired in different realities is later assembled into technical tools for evaluating, co-creating, managing, and monitoring the public space system at the city level.

The regional outlook on citizen-led urbanism and public space

Latin America and the Caribbean are not newcomers in promoting community participation in urban development processes. By the later eighties, Porto Alegre started to encourage policies associated with joint management and direct democracy through a participatory budgeting initiative which has a distributive impact on expenditure and contributes to the generation of income; increases budget legitimacy and management transparency; contributes to social cohesion, and strengthens citizen networks and connections with the state (see Bloj, 2009). This experience soon spread to other Latin American countries and to other cities around the world.

A series of initiatives has been generated in recent years, which recover participatory traditions emphasizing the support of organized citizenship for activities aimed at public space improvement. Local governments, as well as international cooperation agencies have supported such actions in various



Conscious Street (Calle Consciente), Rionegro, Colombia. Photo: Rionegro, IDB Cities LAB, 2019

instances. Some regional events, such as Placemaking Week (Kent, 2019) and the International Forums on Urban Interventions (Plataforma Arquitectura, 2020), have helped to consolidate these processes by connecting experiences in various countries and establishing a regional network of allies interested in citizen-led innovation, urban interventions, and public spaces.

Among other efforts tending to consolidate this Latin American movement of citizen-led urbanism, UN-Habitat and its allies have supported these regional events; they suggested inspiring practices and generated helpful tools in order to translate the experience of citizens into local governments' public policies. A good example of such efforts is the guidebook *Intervenciones urbanas hechas por ciudadanos: Estrategias hacia mejores espacios públicos* (or "Citizen-led urban interventions: Strategies for improving public spaces")⁶ (Ocupa Tu Calle, ONU-Hábitat, Fundación Avina, 2018). It is meant for all citizens and offers a toolkit to improve public spaces. Other examples that deserve mentioning are the interventions performed to recover public spaces in Peru, Montevideo, Colombia, Brazil, and Mexico, all of them carried out in collaboration with Fundación Avina and the Ocupa Tu Calle initiative.

Lessons learned from the Global Public Space Programme

A well designed and maintained public space promotes social cohesion and public health, boosts the local economy, and increases the welfare of the whole body of citizens. From its very beginnings, the UN-Habitat Global Public Space Programme recognized the importance of community engagement for co-designing interventions on public spaces so as to ensure project sustainability. Therefore, a series of policy papers were written to promote citizen partnership in order to empower the local community and work jointly to improve the public space network at the local level. One of these documents, entitled *Global Public Space Toolkit* (UN-Habitat, 2015)⁷ offers policy principles and recommendations, as well as initiatives to develop public space.

Based on the experiences of the Programme and its network of allies, we describe in the following paragraphs some recommendations derived from the application of citizen-led urbanism in projects

designed to improve public spaces.

- ▶ **Engage local communities from the very beginning of the intervention.** Initiatives for improving public spaces which have been designed and implemented by the users themselves tend to be more sustainable over time. Unfortunately, the views of the local population are often consulted too late in the implementation process and consequently do not affect its final results.
- ▶ **Align the project with previously existent local-level plans.** Local governments frequently have a regulatory framework and previous plans aligned with the local outlook on the city. The results of an intervention may be boosted by coordination with such plans. Moreover, a joint action may ensure the socioeconomic sustainability of the project.
- ▶ **Use innovative technologies for evaluating and designing public spaces.** Care must be taken to use methodologies that encourage community participation and are focused on the users of the areas subject to intervention. The UN-Habitat program uses Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) and open-code tools for the participative analysis and design of public spaces. We mention here some examples of these tools: the Block by Block⁸ technology, centered on the game Minecraft (Block by Block Foundation, 2020), and KoBoToolbox, a free toolkit for assessing the quality of public spaces (UN-Habitat, 2020).
- ▶ **Consider the public space system at the city level.** Any intervention should take into account its relationship with the previous or potential public space network at the city level. There is a great interdependence among individual public spaces, and positive results are further strengthened by understanding and keeping in mind the environment and its relationships with the intervention to be conducted.

- **Include public space maintenance and management as a part of project implementation.** This is fundamental in order to ensure an adequate use of space in the long term. Adequate strategies that take into account the economic use of the space or tend to engage the community in its self-management may be considered.

Conclusions

Experience demonstrates the importance of engaging citizens in the task of improving the quality of urban public spaces. Their participation must be acknowledged as a key factor to achieve the goals established in local, regional, and global urban agendas. The organized citizens of Latin America and the Caribbean have proven they are committed to improving their different environments and have also shown how much they can contribute to interventions performed by traditional urban-development actors.

The Global Public Space Programme and the IDB Cities LAB have conducted a joint research effort to analyze the quality of public space in three cities of this region: Santo Domingo, Montevideo, and Montería. It was mainly centered on assessing the accessibility, greenness, inclusiveness, safety, and quality of the public space system.

This research concluded that institutional capabilities for managing public spaces should be strengthened, especially with regard to the promotion of scheduled activities that may attract vulnerable groups, such as elderly people and persons with disabilities. Where institutional capabilities are limited, de-centralized approaches that promote the engagement of organized citizens are recommended for managing and maintaining public space.

The regional movement for citizen-led urbanism must continue its efforts, consolidating the knowledge derived from actual experiences, documenting inspiring practices, interconnecting different actors, and establishing links between local authorities and international agencies in order to further advance the agenda for the achievement of safe, inclusive, accessible and quality public spaces. ■

1. The expression “appropriating” is used here in its symbolic meaning, in the sense of belonging to a certain space and acting in it. It does not refer to the illegal occupation of a public or private space.
2. UN-Habitat defines *slum* as housing that lacks one or more of the following: access to safe water, access to sanitation, sufficient living space, durable and firm material and security of tenure.
3. The New Urban Agenda (NUA) was adopted at the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III), held in 2016. Member countries and other participants in the Conference successfully concluded with the adoption of this Agenda for the following twenty years.
4. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is a plan of action for people, planet and prosperity. It also seeks to strengthen universal peace and access to justice. Approved by the UN Member States, the 2030 Agenda sets 17 goals and 169 integrated and indivisible targets in the economic, social and environmental spheres (United Nations, 2015).
5. Less than 400m from the starting point along a street network.
6. ocupatucalle.com/manual-intervenciones
7. unhabitat.org/global-public-space-toolkit-from-global-principles-to-local-policies-and-practice
8. See blockbyblock.org

Public space: Towards the reconstruction of shared places¹

Author

Patricia Ramírez Kuri



San Felipe street, Xoco, Benito Juárez District, Mexico City. Photo: Stephanie Brewster (January 2020)

The complexity of public space, where different people and social groups spend part of their life, is the result of diverse social, functional and ritualistic interactions which shape contemporary urban experience. These turn public space into an inherently conflicting field, where different people relate to the urban environment in various ways in terms of time and their daily life. Such interactions encompass forms of mobility, labor, trade, consumption and recreation that coexist not only with educational, sports, artistic, ludic, care, leisure and accommodation practices in open spaces, among others, but also with political and cultural expressions that reveal forms of organization and participation, and collective actions of celebration, resistance against abuse and deprivation, denunciation of arbitrariness, and citizen expressions in favor of urban and human rights. The diversity characterizing urban experience shows profound social and gender inequalities, as well as a segmented public life, which occurs in physical space and in the space of virtual information and communication flows. Passing through either visible or invisible networks, these flows are not necessarily constrained to the local level, but are articulated with global circuits. The experience of citizens in public space –and not only in it– is not the same for everyone, and involves managing health, social and environmental risks, facing security problems, and criminal and violent acts which occur in physical places and cyberspace, have an impact on daily routines and cause uncertainty and fear of the city.

This process, which involves the transformation and erosion of the public sphere, is influenced by social, political and institutional stakeholders – both local and global– with diverse and opposing interests, demands and needs. They use different and competing forms of communication and action to settle discrepancies and disputes over the use, appropriation and control of urban space, re-signifying the collective sense of what is public. In this context, the question of how we conceive of and experience the public realm as a space for citizenship guides the reflection of this text on the meaning and current status of public space and the potential role that it may play in the reconstruction of our cities.

The transformation of shared space in the neoliberal city

Public space can be understood as a common good and as the place where social relationships and bonds among different members of a group, collective, political community or people arise. Under this approach, Richard Sennett analyzes, for Western cities, the social and urban changes that have undermined the collective sense of public space as a common setting that is open and accessible to different people, who can create impersonal forms of “association and mutual commitment” (Sennett, 2011, p. 16). These forms arise outside the private, domestic and family space; they reflect the diversity of people who are strangers to one another, live in and share the urban world, and take part in matters of general interest. Studies conducted in Ibero-America concur on referring to the public domain as a common good, but associate it with political and cultural traditions other than those of Western capitals. In particular, on the one hand, they define the public sphere as all that is shared collectively: that which belongs to the people, community, citizens and society, as well as that which pertains to the authorities, government, institutions and the state (Guerra and Lempérière, 1998). On the other, when public space is conceived of as “that which belongs to all and is for all”, it is argued that it comprises the non-profit sector which develops in opposition to what is private and corporate, and to private consumption. This approach distinguishes the governmental public sphere and the non-governmental one, stressing the relevance of the latter as a space for participatory democracy and the protection of citizens’ rights (Bresser and Cunill, 1998, p. 31).

Public space and private space are interdependent dimensions of the social order that coexist in conflict with each other and that have suffered transformations through history, together with the society that produces them, uses them and assigns different meanings to them. We focus on public space because, perhaps like no other place, it shows the unprecedented urban changes and social and political realities that have undermined the sense of collective belonging and participation concerning what is common to different members of society. The plurality of voices and trajectories, a distinctive feature of the city, as well as unresolved urban inequalities and conflicts, currently turn the public realm into the center



San Felipe street, Xoco, Benito Juárez District, Mexico City. Photo: Stephanie Brewster (January 2020)

of attention, as they evidence the privatization of common goods and the convergent social impacts of neoliberal urbanism on citizens. Over the last century, changes have notably been driven, to put it in very broad terms, by factors such as processes of exclusionary modernization and accelerated urban growth, the transition from an industrial to a service economy, the various logics of urbanization, planning and social resources management, the emergence of the information society, and the impetus of social movements which, through different forms of organization and participation, have fought battles for the first and up to the fourth generation of human rights. Nevertheless, most of the unprecedented transformations of public space have occurred especially, perhaps, in the last three decades of the 20th century in Latin American cities and in various capitals of the Western world. These cities experience the remarkable drive of the neoliberal movement, which introduces structural changes in the economy, society, the state and territories. Such transformations respond to the demands of flexible capitalism: through policies, as well as planning, urban land use and management instruments, the logic of this economic order has transformed cities promoting the privatization of public goods and the commodification of social and urban rights. These

processes and realities modify the meaning of public space and of the categories used to express it and account for it, such as: private, city, citizenry, politics, society, community, people, culture, participation, government, democracy, communication and state, and introduce new ones, like conflict, domestic, gender, violence, environment and rights (Sennett, 2011; Rabotnikof, 2005; Borja and Muxi, 2000; Borja, 2014; Ramírez, 2015).

In this context, the issue of public space in the 21st century reemerges in the debate about the city of rights. It is argued that, as a physical, symbolic and political place where society expresses itself, public space is substantially important for urbanism, urban culture and citizens (Borja and Muxi, 2003, p. 7). In citizens' demands, it is associated with the new value placed on shared space, in the face of its fragmentation, weakening, neglect and even degradation. This situation is reflected in the urban experience of various cities where the concept of what is public departs from the meaning ascribed to it as a common good that is open and accessible to a complex and unequal society. In addition, the public sphere does not fulfill—or it does so in a fragmented manner—the integrating ideal or the attributes assigned to it by social and urban theory, which associate it with democracy,



San Felipe street, Xoco, Benito Juárez District, Mexico City. Photo: Stephanie Brewster (January 2020)

well-being, tolerance and social inclusion, urban articulation and multiple uses (Borja, 2014).

In this discussion, thinking of the ideal public space tells us more about how it should or could be, and less about what it is like in an actual city, which is experienced by different people, social classes and groups. We may argue, however, that the ideal of public space is useful, as it allows us to value it and recognize what is missing from reality and what needs to be created collectively as a space for citizens (Ramírez, 2009). In this line of reasoning, public space involves relationships among people, neighbors, inhabitants, which materialize in daily meeting places of collective use, ranging from streets, squares, parks, cafés, schools, councils and meeting forums, to spaces for consumption, mobility, or actual and virtual communication, all of which provide structure to the city. In these places, social and gender differences are resolved in one way or other, people fight for access to social resources, and social synergies, as well as forms of solidarity, cooperation and civility, arise or may arise. Therefore, recognizing the value of public space as a place for meeting and developing relationships among different and unequal people entails the challenge of understanding the processes and actors that have

influenced the transformations debilitating social bonds, the imbalances of power and the emerging conflicts over rights.

Three trends, by no means the only ones, which point to processes and relations that have shaped the transformation of public space are worth mentioning here: the first one is the prevalence of the private domain in the use of and access to public goods, reflected in the transfer of powers and functions from the governmental public sphere to various forms of private management and responsibility; this is the case of access to water, health, education, housing and care, among other rights supplied as commodities. The second one is reflected in the displacement of social practices and public activities to private spaces of collective use and consumption, and in the privatization of public places through capital investments on strategic projects and on the expansion of commercial activities. The third one is the intensive use of public spaces for vital functions, such as moving, working and living, which are performed by middle, middle/low-income individuals and social groups, and the urban poor. These are people in disadvantaged social conditions and without formal jobs, as well as individuals who lack adequate housing and urban rights.

In Latin American cities, these trends did not start with neoliberalism, but this economic model intensifies them in two ways: through the predominance of private and public-private urbanism projects in strategic places, and by reducing, and sometimes eliminating, governmental public investments and the allocation of resources to social inclusion and urban articulation programs in the city as a whole. Public space in neoliberal cities shows, on the one hand, the aforementioned trends, materialized in strategic actions that prioritize the construction of large and monumental financial and real-estate projects with an impact on the urban landscape, the built and inhabited environment, collective goods and nature. These are urban areas with high-rise multi-functional constructions, shopping malls and public parks defined by private criteria, with video-surveillance cameras and control closed circuits (Ramírez, 2021). On the other hand, public space shows two phenomena that tend to be pervasive in the city. One is the use of shared places for informal work, through highly diverse self-employment practices to generate basic or supplementary income, a situation that reflects the lack of formal waged employment and the symbolic importance of urban interactions and the social links that arise in the world of work (Cadena, 2021). The other one is the use of public space to live in. The situation of living in the street reflects deprivations suffered by people and social groups in poverty conditions, without a place of their own where to carry out personal practices, such as sleeping, bathing, developing their sexuality, urinating and defecating, among others. These practices respond to biological needs and bodily functions, assumed as intimate and private, which is why, when they are performed in public spaces, they provoke hostility and rejection in diverse sectors, since this does not follow the cultural codes as to what is considered appropriate public behavior (Kohn, 2004).

These social and urban phenomena show class perceptions about others who have a different social and cultural condition, and diverse conceptions about who is entitled or not to use public space and the city. They also reveal social effects of a development model which has emphasized segregation, exclusion and the undermining of rights, all of which are experienced by people and social groups that have remained on the periphery of the formal city.

Whereas the latter cannot disregard public space because they live or work in it, middle and high-income social groups have retreated to private and domestic spaces. In various cities, members of global elites, high and middle-high income sectors withdraw to private or semi-public spaces. This situation shows a tendency to abandon the historical public space and leave it to middle and low-income social groups. This reflects the intrinsic class-based character of public space, and the weakening of civic commitment ties among different people and groups (Sennett, 2011).

Against the backdrop of these trends and phenomena, two notable changes in the collective sense of public space can be distinguished, which have an impact on generations of inhabitants and show different social interactions and forms of citizenship. The first one is the segmentation of different uses, users and audiences, coupled with a greater presence of private interests in the conception and design of spaces and places. There has been a remarkable increase in the choice of places available for public uses associated with the culture of consumption of both local and global products, messages and symbols. Cases in point are large shopping malls and supermarket chains, as well as the expansion and segmentation of commercial, cultural and service options for various groups and social classes. At different scales, they go from private places to streets, squares and parks, especially in historical and modern centers, where public places are used mainly for passing by and mobility, rather than for leisure socialization.

The second change is the emergence and unprecedented expansion of the public cyberspace, which has become a sphere of information, communication, relationships, knowledge transfer, entertainment, trade and cultural consumption. Notably, a complex diversity of social networks and virtual platforms has been created which, for example, let people exert personal preferences for company or friendship, deal with topics related to gender, sexuality, labor, culture, government, health, education, trade and environment, and enable forms of organization, participation and calls for collective actions that materialize in public places. In addition, discrepancies and disputes are addressed, from different political approaches, through the massive spread of news and rumors which, whether reliable or not and true or false, influence people's perceptions, compete to



Junction of Real de Mayorazgo and San Felipe streets, Xoco, Benito Juárez District, Mexico City. Photo: Stephanie Brewster (February 2020)

have an impact on public opinion and contribute to its polarization.

A large part of the uses and interactions through public cyberspace takes place in private spaces, such as cafés and cybercafés, as well as in domestic ones, expressing the reproduction of relations that have occurred in physical places and have shifted to the virtual world. This virtual domain enables communication flows, in real time or not, with segmented audiences, sometimes generating social synergies and proximity or cooperation links among geographically distant people and groups. However, it also serves to spread stigmatizing, discriminatory, threatening and scaremongering discourses and images through verbal forms of harassment, aggression and violence, something that often requires visible or hidden human and economic resources, such as blogs. Finally, in other cases, people are called to gather in places in the city where face-to-face meetings take place, goods and services are exchanged, and citizens' mobilizations are held and disseminated at a local, regional and global scale.

Whose public space is it?

When considering the question of how we conceive of and experience space in our cities, we recall the

approach proposed by Doreen Massey (2005, p. 120), who reminds us that space *is not a surface*. As a product and a producer of relations, plural and open to the future, it is a place where discrepancies, disagreements and disputes arise. Hence, it is relevant not only to understand the social power, domination and subordination relations that define its content and the transformative possibility inherent in it, but also to recognize the need to create and recreate a “relational politics [...] exposing the maps of power through which identities are constructed” (Massey 2005, pp. 125-126). In this line of thought, public space acquires special relevance, not only for being the place where society expresses itself through the web of social, cultural and political interactions that shape daily experience in specific historical contexts, but, above all, because it plays an active role in the configuration of these interactions. It does so through the different degrees of well-being, collective access and openness that it provides, which reveal the unequal manner in which public places respond to the needs of users and dwellers.

Thinking of public space as a place shared by different individuals and social groups points to the essential role that it has had in the social and urban history of Latin American cities. As an urban element



Lázaro Cárdenas Avenue, Historic Downtown, Mexico City. Photo: Stephanie Brewster (2017)

that articulates space, it operates as a physical, social and symbolic place for passing by or for different people to meet with each other. In addition, it constitutes a point of reference for identity and collective memory that evidences how people relate to the city, and express liberties and needs of stakeholders and political subjects who wage battles to claim rights, addressing these demands to society, the government and the state. At present, public space makes visible the unequal and fragmented geography that is common to various capital cities in the Latin American region. As the arena where stress and conflict relations between citizens and institutions become manifest, it displays the social effects of neoliberal forms of urbanization, the differential distribution of urban resources, and the unequal conditions of accessibility, maintenance and preservation of common places for different users and audiences. Various cities lack enough places for meeting or passing-by, where people can lounge, walk and informally relate to one another in conditions of well-being and security. In these cities, public spaces tend to concentrate in historic and modern centers, coexisting with large shopping malls. This situation is evidenced by streets and sidewalks as, in some towns more than in others, they are in bad repair or non-existent, or else,

are physically deteriorated, risky and violent places for pedestrians walking during the day or night (Ramírez, 2015).

The current urban reality shows us that everyone uses public spaces, but not all people appropriate them, give meaning to them, access them or assume responsibility in the same way. The forms of organization and participation rooted in political and cultural traditions that differ among cities and regions show that what is public, as a space of places, reveals itself as a heterogeneous set of moments and interactions with great social, economic, political and cultural vitality. Nevertheless, its current physical, social and political fragmentation, as well as the unequal quality of and accessibility to common places, are key factors that broaden the gap between public space as it actually exists and the integrating and democratic idea of public space, which, in theory, is the space that belongs to everyone. This situation is evidenced in various forms, ranging from social and political voices and actions that express differences, denounce and make vigorous claims, to practices that, with legitimate indignation, resort to forms of aggression and violence, which some social groups use in order to denounce abuse, injustice and the violation of human and urban rights, make complaints and demand

responses from governmental institutions and the state. An emblematic example of the re-emergence of the political public space is the experience of feminist movements of various Latin American capital cities, which voice a discourse denouncing sex and gender-based inequalities and daily violence against women in domestic and public spaces, incorporating a plurality of voices and acquiring social legitimacy. Femicide, exposed and recognized as an extreme form of criminal violence, is the central complaint addressed to the state, given the limited scope of the policies and actions implemented for its eradication.

Juxtaposed with these public statements in streets, squares and central avenues in various capital cities, the COVID-19 city made its quiet and resistant appearance. Temporarily devoid of glances, steps, voices and activities, public space became inundated with the sounds of nature and the murmur of everyday life. The city's heartbeat went on in the private and domestic spaces of confinement. However, most people felt a growing need to flee to public space as the best option to be in touch with the city, but the main reasons were job insecurity, the lack of a place of their own, overcrowding and domestic violence. In the circumstances of the urban crisis triggered by the pandemic, public space shows its relevance and value in the city streets: they display the dramatic realities which cannot be quarantined, showing that the problem underlies the pandemic and goes beyond it. It has to do with the ways of thinking, using, urbanizing and living in the city and appropriating collective resources.

From neoliberal urbanism to collaborative urbanism

In various Latin American capital cities, the neoliberal urbanization logic can be seen to depart from democratic planning processes that strengthen the integrating potential of public space. This logic, which was prevalent in the passage from the 20th to the 21st century, is less embodied by plans and programs which consider how the city is inhabited by different people, and more by policies and strategies for the privatization of public goods, and by market criteria, which have contributed to undermining the sense of the common good and collective rights. These policies have been targeted mainly at facilitating the building of macro-projects in strategic places that

attract significant financial, real estate and commercial speculative investments, both local and global, generating a high surplus value (De Mattos, 2015). Given the ensuing social exclusion and segregation, there is an increase of discontent reactions and resistance actions, which underscore the importance of rethinking the city and public space with a different idea of urbanism and active citizenship when planning and organizing an inhabited environment. This idea could be materialized by designing and implementing urban policies and interventions with a gender perspective, and based on social inclusion and spatial articulation criteria, applying innovative participation methodologies and mechanisms with the common aim of reconstructing the city.

The idea of thinking about the city on the basis of the conception and design of urban interventions, relating the inhabited space to the built space, stems from considering the various collective needs at the local scale (Sennett, 2019). It involves a joint effort by institutions and citizens to design and introduce changes that may lead to conditions of well-being, social synergies and forms of spatial justice that can contribute to a democratic public space and the exercise of the right to the city (Borja, 2003; Carrión, 2016; Ramírez, 2021). May the city streets set patterns? It has been stated that streets do not fulfill the role of articulating one place with another, nor do they foster the emergence of civility relations through spatial organization and the social order (Holston, 2008). For this reason, it is important to see that the failure to recognize the value of the street, and its absence as a basic element in the design of public space, undermines the possibility of different members of urban society to meet with each other, and does not promote equality but a more explicit inequality (Caldeira, 2007, p. 376).

The street as a place for passing by, and a dangerous one, tends to become closed as a public space for daily encounters, especially in large urban projects prioritizing space for cars in fast lanes. By contrast, in old towns and neighborhoods, the street has not stopped being a point of reference for socialization, exchanges, ritual celebration and informal relations among neighbors. However, these streets are also arenas of dispute, risk and violence, which occur in low-income settlements and housing units inhabited by groups in situations of social disadvantage, marginality and poverty, both in peripheral and central



Above: Junction of República de Guatemala and De la Santísima streets, Historic Downtown, Mexico City. Photo: Stephanie Brewster (2016)

Below: International Women's Day (8M) rally, Juárez Avenue junction, Historic Downtown, Mexico City. Photo: Stephanie Brewster (March 2020)

areas, but not only there. There are experiences of different cities where the value of streets is restored through the pedestrianization of historical and modern downtown areas which have undergone urban interventions. However, these urban centers tend to witness the disappearance of traditional uses, and to expel old dwellers and users, serving new commercial and housing purposes, and becoming home to activities that attract affluent social groups.

Nowadays, city streets are a fragmented landscape: public spaces of citizens in conflict with each other due to the assertion and extension of urban rights, while their civic, political and urban potential, as well as their integrating and articulating attributes, remain almost hidden. In this debate, streets are places where the complexity of urban life is revealed, but, perhaps for that same reason, they represent the possibility of co-creating, together with citizens, a common civic culture that may be shared by everyone in spite of their differences. Putting new value on the street as a public space may afford the possibility to engage in the reconstruction of the city, enabling universal access to and articulation among different places, generating well-being for the people who use them and live in them.

The complexity of public space turns it into a privileged setting to rethink the city as a whole. If battles for rights converge there, then it may also

be the point of convergence of integrating policies and actions driven by forms of citizen-led urbanism that prioritize ideas and proposals derived from struggles for the right to the city (Carrión and Damert, 2019). Streets enable the public life of actual cities and represent the place, at a micro-geographic scale, to initiate changes from the local to the metropolitan level. Here, the gender approach becomes a key topic of the paradigm shift towards urbanism with spatial justice. An example is mobility: this new perspective could address the scarcity of free time due to the hours required for moving to and from domestic, housing and working spaces, a problem that affects everyone but, in particular and more severely, women and mothers. In this respect, it has been pointed out that the main goal of urbanism with a gender perspective is to look at reality from angles other than the usual ones, i.e., the male and patriarchal hierarchy perspective. Assessing and revealing women's experiences in using cities will allow us, considering different needs and difficulties, to raise different questions about the equation to be solved, posed by urban and architectural projects (Muxi, 2011).

Given the instability of present-day urban life, public space makes it possible to read and assess multiple aspects of the history and memory of the city and of the construction of citizenship. These aspects encompass great and monumental things, struggles for the extension of social rights and for the right to the city. This reading also reveals experiences that break the spirit and hopes of children, youngsters, adults and elderly people of varying gender, origin, class, age and worship, who face social facts that crush their confidence, and their desire for life and freedom. If, in the city of the 21st century, public space reveals itself as a fragmented setting that shows the convergence of the problems of the city and the social effects of exclusionary urban development affecting everyone, taking a new approach to urban policies and actions may contribute to the rearrangement of public space as a point of convergence for plural and democratic forms of social interaction and urban articulation.

In the 21st century, the debate on the right to the city and the right to public space reappears in different Latin American capital cities as a reaction against the realities which intensify the urbanization of

injustice and need to be reversed. In this context, the claim for the right to the city becomes part of political and academic debate, opening up the possibility to develop a public space policy that may recognize the physical, social, environmental, political, cultural and symbolic dimensions that define its significance as a common good for the capital city and its inhabitants, an endeavor that is not compatible with privatization. Reconstructing the city on the basis of public space poses the double challenge of considering complex and multiple social realities, and thus recognizing the need to take a new approach, both to management and planning, and to the forms of inhabiting and relating to the built environment and nature. Social, citizen-led and collaborative urbanism is a pending demand expressed by the convergence of different voices, needs, liberties and social struggles. It represents a democratic alternative that needs to be constructed with the aim of recovering the integrating and articulating potential of public space, so as to counter the effects of neoliberal policies. Conceiving of the co-creation of a public space policy as a relational politics may be one of the starting points that will bring us closer to a city of rights. ■

1. I appreciate Adrián Orozco's critical reading of a preliminary version of this text and thank Mayra Nayely Domínguez Avendaño for her support with editing.

Community action and self-management for improving public spaces in informal settlements

Author
Pablo Vitale



Barrio 31 neighborhood. Photo: IDB

Concerning Latin America, the notion “right to the city” becomes fully relevant when we take into account population density: only one person in ten lives in rural areas, whereas the remaining nine are concentrated in large urban agglomerations. Though conclusive *per se*, these figures become more eloquent when we consider that the earlier division-line between rural and urban areas collapses under the pressure of geographic expansion and the new urban morphologies (Neil Brenner, 2013). In this context, the so-called “place effect” is decisive; access to the city is essential for the vast majority of Latin Americans. The availability of the goods and services needed for population survival and development is enabled, restricted, or obstructed according to distances and location within the urban space, which thus determine the opportunities to use and enjoy health, educational, labor, and recreational facilities. In short, the full exercise of citizen rights is conditioned by access to the town or city.

Moreover, in our region “urbanization has occurred rather spontaneously, influenced by market forces, and urban areas have emerged with fragile economies, high levels of inequality and worrying levels of environmental degradation” (CEPAL, 2018). The consequent housing shortage leaps to the eye: 21% of the urban population lives in precarious settlements, a percentage which is an undeniable spatial expression of the social inequality characteristic of Latin America.

With our focus on the production of public spaces, we present in the following paragraphs some not fully systematic considerations about communal social actions carried out in Latin American informal settlements in order to address basic needs. We are interested in contextualizing such practices and identifying how they contribute to anticipating and co-creating structural responses to informal neighborhood problems, which are also useful lessons for the whole city. In this line, our aim is to reassess and analyze recurring experiences of self-managed communal work as a contribution to improve housing conditions in urban popular sectors.

Settlements as a problem

Informal settlements (shanty towns that have different regional names, such as *villas*, *favelas*, *barrios populares*, *pueblos jóvenes*, *callampas*, among many

others)^{1*} are a consequence both of market-imposed barriers to the access of lower income sectors to dignified housing, and of concomitant state omissions. As we all know, basic services and infrastructure, as well as housing and environmental conditions, are lacking or deficient in such settlements, so that their residents are overexposed to various risks.

Besides, informal settlements are intensively stigmatized in most cases, ignoring that their existence is intrinsically dependent on material conditions derived from displacements, segregation, and the various obstacles opposed to dignified housing which are typical of our cities. In turn, stigmas operate by homogenizing territorial and personal peculiarities, associating them to negative stereotypes and prejudices. This discriminatory treatment is reinforced because the substantive features of such settlements and their inhabitants are rendered invisible.

As a clear example of these attitudes, we may recall that settlement dwellers are generally mentioned in the media (or, at best, in the yellow, sensationalist media) in the context of news about violent deeds and crimes. Another example is the absence of shanty towns in official maps and other identity-defining cultural products of many cities: such is the case of *villas* in Buenos Aires, whereas *favelas* are everywhere present in Rio’s culture, though not always adequately portrayed.

Thus, material and symbolic human rights violations go paradoxically hand in hand with a widespread legal recognition of the right to adequate housing and a respectable habitat in the national and municipal law of many Latin American cities. Therefore, there is a glaring contradiction between the illegal status ascribed to settlements and an abundant legislation stipulating that inadequate conditions should be reverted and that access to a decent habitat should be granted. Concurrently, a wide gap dissociates what is formally established in normative frameworks and the accomplishment of according regulations (Vitale *et al*, 2019).

Settlements as a response

In this context, and also historically, popular neighborhoods are the response that a vast part of the population produces unaided in order to solve housing problems. Such *social production of habitat* has been naturalized, but it is a remarkable collective



Leticia neighborhood, Lima, 2019. Photo: Ocupa Tu Calle

self-management experience which —though far from being ideal— involves a huge potential. Residents do not just build their own dwellings; they also build a portion of the town, including collective facilities, infrastructure, and public spaces.

Unlike other inhabitants of their city, people living in informal settlements depend on community organization to access public and urban services. Communal organizations provide these services themselves or demand them from the state and private entities that should deliver them. The literature that deals on this subject is often focused on the different forms of collective action, strategies, and achievements, but it sometimes neglects the fact that there are complex and contradictory relationships between them, their recurrence and their institutionalization through state intervention. For example, electric cables or sewage pipelines are usually laid by the residents themselves and, at best, later maintained by public agencies; similarly, soup kitchens evolve into food programs or regular community kitchens. Likewise, various institutions and services are usually conceived and initially developed by settler organizations or groups. Public spaces are also a clear example of processes developed at the settlement level, insofar as a portion of a

scarce resource such as land is set aside for common use, and is often prioritized when it comes to upgrading the neighborhood through state interventions.

As a whole, self-managed initiatives are not merely reactive or sporadic, and may be better understood by also considering state actions and omissions, and taking into account the different scales of collective action involved in territorial processes. Although organizational activities are apparently spontaneous and lack regularity, some characteristic styles and recurrences may be identified and classified in the actions of the population, its leaders, and organizations. A key method for such identification requires considering the various scopes of self-managed practices, as well as the resources involved, and the territorial and institutional crystallizations generated by them.

Self-management in settlements: from urgency to prefiguration

Summing up, then, in popular neighborhoods, self-management and communal action are usually the only way to strive for and provide basic services, infrastructure, and public spaces. Unlike other sectors in the formal city, where neighbors' organization is quite an exception to come up against threats or

private initiatives, in informal settlements, communal direct work or the engagement of the whole family in group work is almost a must.

Such processes occur on different scales and have different territorial impacts, which will be classified here into three categories.² The most elementary forms of self-organization are prompted by urgent needs, such as public service outages, internal conflicts in the settlement or a looming threat that spurs an existing or a new, spontaneous, group into action. Such actions might seem irrelevant, but they are recurrent and involve a responsiveness which, in practice, entails learning and builds *habits* that may be (and are) replicated at some other times and on a larger scale.

The provision of services, such as sewage and sanitary pipelines, and the preparation of land for public spaces, involves a higher degree of self-organization. These plans—which might be called infrastructural—require an important amount of community resources: mutual aid, fundraising, stockpiling building materials, and dealing with operations, procedures, and formalities before third parties (private companies, institutions, government agencies, etc.) on behalf of the settlement as a whole. They are not necessarily collective actions in the strict sense of the word but they involve, at the least, some intermediate-level community coordination, as well as the implementation of a service on a scale larger than the home, and meant to last in the medium term.

The third group of self-organized interventions may be classified as part of socio-urban integration plans, which involve a wide range of collective actions, from traditional, contentious activities (street rallies, protests, etc.) to co-managed discussion groups, and the collaboration of communities and governments in co-designing laws and policies. The purpose of such participatory instances is to amend structural shortages in the settlements, and they involve a higher stage of collective action, both in terms of space and time.

Acting and co-creating common spaces and their representations

Anyone who has had even a slight contact with Latin American urban settlements may imagine the type and scale of the abovementioned interventions intended to meet elementary needs. Putting previously

violated rights into effect requires a huge creativity that goes beyond unreliable solutions and lays the foundations for replicating plans and experiences. Only three subjects will be discussed here, and some cases will be described as mere illustrations so as to clarify the idea of interventions in common spaces and their representations.

As we have remarked earlier, precarious settlements are rendered invisible in official and daily-use maps; a clear sign of discrimination from the rest of the town. In most Latin American cities, informal neighborhoods are represented in maps as areas colored in flat gray or green, where the texture of street grids is absent, as if they belonged to a state of nature previous to any urbanization, even though, in certain cases, such settlements are more than a century old. These representations have material and symbolic effects which have elicited among territorial collectives and organizations various participatory mapping projects. The community response to the omission of *favelas* in cartographical information about Rio de Janeiro was the platform *Ta no mapa*, launched by the organization *Afroreggae*³ to literally put *favelas* on the map. Later on, Google supported the project *Beyond the map*. Its aim was to include informal neighborhoods on maps by training residents to systematically cover these areas going around their neighborhoods with the company's trekkers in order to georeference streets. *Camino de la Villa*⁴ is a similar platform, promoted in Buenos Aires by the *Asociación Civil por la Igualdad y la Justicia* (ACIJ). Originally, it was meant as a denunciation and georeferencing tool to deal with basic service problems, but in order to comply with this goal, the creation of a map for each *villa* in collaboration with the local community was required. Thus, the inclusion of street grids into official maps was encouraged in Buenos Aires and, later on, a project similar to Google's for Rio de Janeiro was started. Now, several similar projects exist in different countries, many of them planned at community workshops, such as *TURBA*⁵, developed at the *Villa 31* neighborhood in Buenos Aires; or the experience of *La Carpio*⁶, carried out by the community and a team from Costa Rica University (Sandoval García et al, 2010). All of them are developing platforms that prefigure the inclusion of settlements on official and daily-use maps.

Recreational and cultural community centers are another good example of settlement action aimed at encouraging creative and powerful responses. They are mostly community-run centers for public use managed by neighborhood groups, civil-society or even state organizations, but they have distinctive territorial roots. These centers are built and implemented from scratch by their communities, sometimes associated —or not— with public, academic, or non-government organizations. They have different roles, from care services (e.g., daycare centers), to educational and cultural activities (learning support, the so-called *bachilleratos populares* [informal secondary schools], libraries, workshops, etc.), passing through recreation and sports. Generally, these experiences go beyond rendering services, and the centers become true icons of the small area where they are built, even of the settlement as a whole. Many such cases may be seen in Brazil, some of them most interesting because they show a huge potential. Only in Rio's Maré favela, we find the *Observatório de favelas*⁷, *Redes da Maré*⁸, and *Museu da Maré*⁹. The three combine direct action in support of the community with ambitious plans for shaping its territory and future development, which highlight the favela potential against stigmatizing outlooks. Considering more modest experiences, we may see how common spaces emerge and are later included in state structures (just as another example, we recall that the Family Action Centers or *Centros de Acción Familiar* at the *Villa 31* and *Villa 20* neighborhoods, in Buenos Aires City, were launched by local communities and later included in public administration departments).

Finally, public spaces in the literal sense of the word also follow the same pattern: they are born as totally self-managed entities; they later become an internal reference in the settlement and —when upgrading government interventions occur— they are transformed into core targets for socio-urban integration work. There is a vast literature about these processes associated to upgrading programs supported by the Inter-American Development Bank - IDB (Bakaratz, 2002; see also Magalhães, 2016; Libertun de Duren, 2020) and to different settlement upgrading policies, from Favela Bairro, in Rio de Janeiro, to interventions conducted in Medellín and Bogotá¹⁰, through recent urban upgrading projects developed in the Buenos Aires *villas*. Such policies very often base

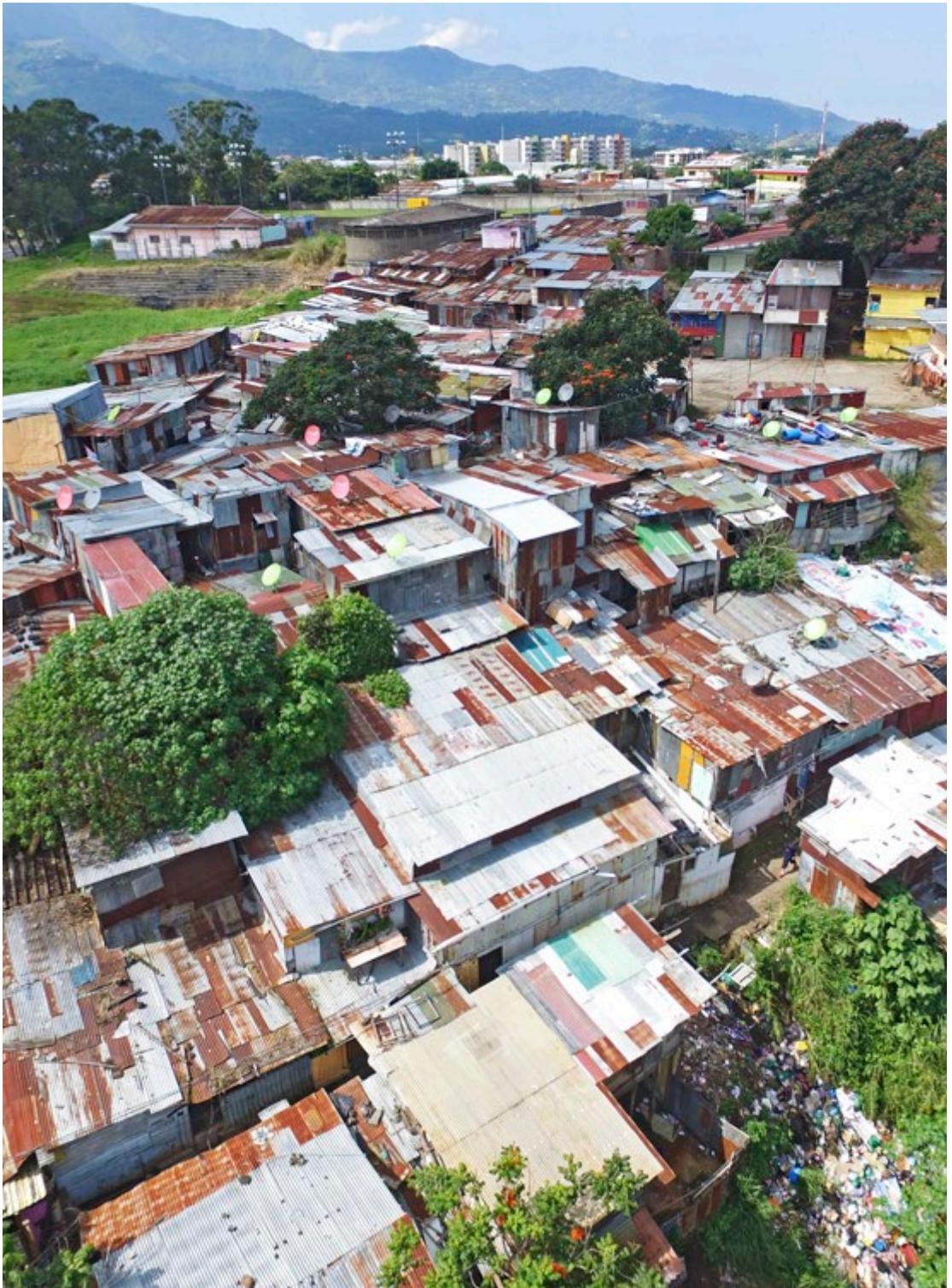
improvements on public spaces previously self-managed by local communities. Football fields, public squares and various kinds of yards are excluded from the generally intensive housing projects implemented in the territory, frequently at the expense of internal conflicts among different groups in each settlement. Precisely because of these difficulties, they are most significant spaces for the community, and become landmarks of territorial organization. Besides, they require voluntary work in order to adapt them for children or for sports and recreational activities. In some settlements, communal works make use of recycled, recovered, reused or upcycled materials (waste tires, pallets), or operations are carried out with scrap equipment discarded elsewhere. (For example, some cooperatives from *Villa 31*, Buenos Aires, have restored playground equipment that had been replaced by new items at formal city squares.)

As regards self-managed and collective actions in settlements, in recent years new networks of citizen-led urban practices have been sprouting (such as the International Forum on Urban Interventions, Placemaking, or *Ciudades Comunes*)¹¹. These networks incorporate experiences in settlements and synergistically boost and enlarge interventions at different scales, including an increasing number of social, civil, and communal organizations.¹²

Conclusions: A resourcefulness derived from actual experiences

The actions required to meet basic needs in popular neighborhoods follow a recurring pattern: identifying the problem; designing a collective response; conducting the (at least partly) self-organized activities involved; appealing to the state or other agencies in order to achieve an institutional materialization of the plan (including all the expectations, frustrated hopes and expropriations such co-management processes involve).

Recreational and sports grounds are especially important because they are also used by the community for political debates and for both tangible (murals, sculptures, altars) and intangible cultural expressions (festivals, artistic and musical events, patron saint's festivities, commemorative events) or trade fairs. They come to be regarded as real landmarks in the neighborhood since they contribute to organizing an often motley or irregular space



San José. Photo: IDB

(which is not identified in cartographic information, as remarked above). In this sense, self-managed and communal practices leave three substantive lessons that deserve being retrieved and highlighted.

- ▶ **Collective organization and commons.** Usually the relationship between ordinary citizens and public power is similar to that of isolated points in a circumference and its center, but it is evident that in an informal settlement, surroundings cannot be improved in isolation. Thus, commons may be thought of as collective resources that belong to anyone though they are not considered as exclusively possessed in ownership by someone. There is a huge potential in this notion, which does not emerge automatically from the practices we analyze, though the seed is there. It is just a question of expanding those practices and learning to apply them to the rest of the city.
- ▶ **Prefiguring what we aim at.** It is not just a question of demanding the observance of violated rights, but of anticipating their effective exercise through a collective response that suits local needs, makes the settlements and their potential visible, and/or suggests future state actions. In this context, networks are usually created which include territorial leaders and organizations as well as public, academic or civil society support, in order to promote communal actions and lay the base for scaling them up.
- ▶ **Citizen participation and co-creation.** The practice of participating in common projects is not as frequent in other urban sectors as it is in popular neighborhoods, precisely because they are self-managed. In the know-how and the experiences of the people that constitute such spaces there is a huge potential to develop improvement plans and any initiative tending to the full socio-urban integration of settlements. These practices do not only involve co-creating public spaces, infrastructures, and equipment, but also developing regulatory frameworks and master plans for the settlements.¹³

Informal settlements are a consequence of structural housing shortage and involve numerous violations of rights, all of them concentrated in a single space. However, settlements are also strong and powerful territories where communal action and organization are essential for communities. If the right to the city is to become effective in Latin America, the lessons drawn from this social production of habitat must be fully exploited and systematized. ■

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1. * Mainly used in Argentina, *villa* is a short for “*villa miseria*”, an expression in vogue after the Argentine writer Bernardo Verbitsky published in 1957 a book entitled *Villa Miseria también es América*. According to Euclides da Cunha in *Os sertões*, the term *favela* derives from the name of a common plant around the Canudos Village, where the popular uprising he describes was born; *barrios populares* means literally “popular neighborhoods”; the Peruvian term *pueblos jóvenes* means literally “young towns”; and *callampas*, meaning “mushrooms”, is the term applied to shanty towns in Chile because these settlements “proliferate like mushrooms”.
 2. Some of these ideas were discussed in Vitale (2016) with reference to the shanty towns located in the Autonomous City of Buenos Aires. For other self-management experiences in Latin America and some conceptual considerations, see Schteingart (1991).
 3. www.afroreggae.org
 4. caminosdelavilla.org
 5. www.vimeo.com/115102630
 6. <http://www.redcultura.com/php/Articulos469.htm>
 7. observatoriodefavelas.org.br
 8. redesdamare.org.br
 9. museudamare.org
 10. For information about public space self-management in Bogotá, see Hernández García, 2013.
 11. See also Ocupa Tu Calle, ONU-Habitat and Fundación Avina (2018). The Urban Housing Practitioners Hub – UHPH also mentions most interesting experiences in this region, with a focus on habitat and housing; see uhph.org/es.
 12. Activities carried out within the framework of the Block by Block project (blockbyblock.org), discussed in Cáceres (2019), are another example of such practices. Velarde Herz (2017) describes an experience developed in Lima.
 13. For example, in the Argentine case, an Agreement for the Upgrading of Shanty Towns (*Acuerdo por la Urbanización de Villas*) was concluded which synthesized the criteria to be considered in settlement integration processes (acuerdoporlaurbanizacion.org). Besides, in Argentina and other Latin American countries, there is an intense participation of local communities in promoting and writing laws to rule socio-urban integration processes (Almela et al, 2019).

Women's right to the city

From analytical categories and instruments
to the transformation of cities

Authors

Ana Falú, Cintia Rizzo, Adriana Vaghi



In response to the misogynistic views prevailing in the 15th century, Christine de Pizan wrote her most famous work, *The Book of the City of Ladies* (1405)¹¹, where she imagines a utopian town built and inhabited by women. Based on the evidence provided throughout history by the lives of women having full enjoyment of their rights, the author advocates women's resistance and their right to the city.²

Nowadays, in spite of many achievements and conquered rights, women continue to be omitted in city planning. It is a social debt that confirms they are undervalued by a part of society and its institutions. This omission has deleterious effects on the quality of women's everyday life: their autonomy is curtailed, as well as their participation in decision-making, so that they are conditioned in the use and enjoyment of cities. In response to this conditioning, female activists and academicians have battled in the last twenty-five years for the women's right to the city, thus contributing to the theoretical scaffolding of feminist urbanism. This movement questions the invisibilization of women, posits new concepts, and analyzes and reflects on the effective implementation of a whole set of rights associated with the use and enjoyment of cities. In other words, it invites us to rethink how to democratize urban spaces and public goods, the services and facilities they provide, so that women may safely move through the city both day and night, and therefore take full part in urban life. In this sense, feminist urbanism has made the concept of "everyday life" more complex and political, recovering and reframing the thought of some classics of urbanism (Lefebvre, 1968; Castells, 1976; Jacobs, 1961).

In the 21st century, the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic caused a situation of uncertainty that especially affected Latin American urban agglomerations, exposing the structural problems that thwart the right to the city of women and diversities in, at least, three different dimensions: that of the physical-material, the political and public one, and the symbolic dimension.

Therefore, we are interested in defining the women's right to the city as both a theoretical and political category. We define it as a theoretical category because we need to widen our arguments and analyses in order to practice a feminist pedagogy and persuade audiences unconcerned by the issues of

feminist urbanism, in order to strengthen our own activists, and finally, to persuade decision-makers. We also need to define it as a political category because argumentation is needed for this utopian transformation, which requires political action to have impact on the public sphere and change whatever should be changed to include women and diversities.

Relevant issues and lessons in the field of feminist urbanism

Doreen Massey (2001) has already shown to what extent the various symbolic meanings of space and places define life in cities, and to what extent these meanings are associated with gender, both in everyday experience and in the reproduction itself of urban spaces and its consequences for the life of women. Massey refers especially to the distinction between public and private space as it results from the configuration of modern cities³, and she highlights its impact on the ideas about what it means to be male or female, since gendered cultural notions are recreated precisely in space. According to this distinction, women are not taken into account in planning what cities should be like; they are relegated to the private sphere of the household. This attitude is embodied in a sharp sexual division of work, mostly though not exclusively evidenced in territorial use: men are associated to productive work —they are income providers— and women are regarded as the sole and exclusive figures in charge of domestic and reproductive work, i.e., tending the children and organizing the household.

All these changes are reflected in the everyday life of our cities. Mobility planning, for example, has been conceived from an androcentric viewpoint and defines the productive man —not every man, but the young, white, heterosexual man— according to the efficacious and effective mobility of the "male worker" who usually follows point-to-point routes from home to work, and generally does not do any other task on his way. Besides, public transport lines run more frequently in the hours people go to or return from work. Thus, social reproductive work is omitted, as well as the shorter, multifarious, and more circular routes followed by women to perform the tasks they assume. It is usually women who are in charge of taking the children to school or to the doctor; of accompanying dependent older people to collect their pensions or

of taking them to health services. Moreover, all the tasks needed to ensure reproduction, such as those associated with supplies, the household management, and many others, are also assumed by women, who are required to cover distances that often involve difficulties, unsafe places, and all the costs of spending more time and more money. Public transport planning does not take into account the errands associated with caregiving or gendered tasks: neither routes, nor schedules, or models are designed to relieve the burden of traveling to escort or transport any dependent.

We are fully aware that our reality is far from offering definite solutions for these needs which exceed categories. However, the decisive step consists of recognizing the sexual division of work and the roles assigned to women for no other reason that they are women. This is the only way to see that care and being cared for is a right. Besides, it also implies admitting that not only are women in charge of care functions but also that, in performing the invisible and devalued role of caregivers, they produce wealth and are productive agents that contribute to the public economy.

The patriarchal episteme, which in modern times has detached the productive sphere from the reproductive one, is the mainstream conception supporting how cities are planned, as well as current policies and programs. Thus, planning has been based on a bourgeois notion of the social relationships between men and women, derived from an individualistic conception of possible solutions: the family. This whole construct is based on approaches of pretended neutrality. Women have been diluted into presumed neutral concepts, such as “family” and “population”, and the city, the territory, has been considered as the product of a society free of differences and inequalities. However, this is not a case of neutrality but of omission, since women are invisibilized, concealed, and the resulting androcentric worldview prioritizes the white, heterosexual, bourgeois man, of boundless abilities and a stereotyped body that also conforms to a standard. This notion of manliness, by definition the universal, patriarchal, and heteronormative norm, leaves aside many other men, as well as women, and their manifold identities. It is an approach which, besides conditioning culture and social behaviors, is also expressed in territories, in the way they are ideated and designed, omitting diversity in their very

conception, materiality, and operation. Thus, patriarchy finds in the urban order another fertile ground for its reproduction, suitable to preserve inequalities derived from established power relationships, which have deepened during the COVID-19 pandemic (Soto Villagrán, 2014; Falú, 2019, 2020).

Women’s lives in the city bear the imprint of various inequalities and dichotomies (public/private; safe/unsafe; day/night; city/periphery; productive/reproductive). Such inequalities have been sharpened within the framework of globalization and neoliberalism, global financial investment and real-estate speculation, a fact which also becomes evident in urban design, currently impelled by a rationale of profitability defined as “urban extractivism” (Vázquez Duplat, 2017). This logic pushes the most vulnerable sectors to the most impoverished areas, intensifying gentrification and socio-spatial segregation. The lack of policies and actions that prioritize the collective and social good over private and individual interests causes and sharpens territorial injustice and fuels actions that injure women’s physical, economical, and political autonomy.⁴ All these processes result in more omission and more inequalities via the appropriation of goods, territories, and bodies, mostly those of women and the LGBTIQ+ population. Situated and diverse bodies in all their complexity —ethnic and age differences, disabilities, identities, etc.— are always forced to be on the lookout in order to move safely through the city and live there.

Victories obtained: from rhetoric to practice.

The basic concepts we start from

Although it is still a rhetorical expression even in the New Urban Agenda (NUA),⁵ the inclusion of the women’s right to the city is not a lesser decision: it expresses the continuous and tireless efforts of feminists to promote a powerful agenda, which has succeeded in bringing to the fore new issues that change the usual rationale, transform established imaginaries, and thus challenge patriarchal, racist, and homophobic epistemes. The Latin America and the Caribbean Women and Habitat Network (<https://www.redmujer.org.ar>) has emphasized that women’s demands should not be omitted or diluted in neutral concepts but, on the contrary, they should be re-framed in terms of their citizenship with its attendant rights, and public policies.



In her imagined city, Christine de Pizan described women as subjects who hold rights, protagonists of political issues. The resistance and innovative theoretical thought of the feminist movement proclaimed them as such in the late 20th century and embodied their rights in the European Charter for Women in the City (Brussels, 1995). Later on, by the turn of the century, their rights were stated in the World Charter for the Women’s Right to the City (World Urban Forum, Barcelona 2004), driven by the Latin America and the Caribbean Women and Habitat Network. Nowadays we may add, among many other initiatives, the Women’s Right to the City Manifesto adopted by the Women, Gender and Diversities Working Group from the Global Platform for the Right to the City.

All these documents challenge androcentric planning and reveal that cities and urban territories promote and reproduce the structural undervaluing of women. They also show the important implications of women fully enjoying their rights, and demonstrate their great individual and collective endurance, as well as the robustness of their demands in different contexts.

The analytical approach to the women’s right to the city retrieves various debates⁶, individual and collective works, and includes categories developed by feminist thought, such as the private and public spheres, the sexual division of work, and the use

of time, among others. A further category, which emerges from the field of architecture and urbanism, is the use of space. Thus, the approach we take as our starting point combines and interconnects fundamental themes in studies about the right to the city⁷ while also acknowledging the characteristic complexities of each one.

- ▶ **The management of the political sphere.** This dimension refers to decision-making in the public sphere, resource allocation, and the development of instruments for promoting equality policies in general —not only at the level of urban planning— in order to advance towards equal opportunities and rights. For example, gender-responsive budgeting, gender-sensitive land use planning, gender-equity plans, etc.
- ▶ **Materiality.** This dimension involves the city as it has been built —the physical city, embodied in urban goods and infrastructure, the housing stock and its location. A no less important category is urban land, the basis for speculation and extractivism. Other examples are multifunctional spaces, caregiving infrastructure and facilities, the value of proximity —so important for reproductive life and caregiving—, as well as the natural and urban environment as a whole, all of which

are so difficult to detect in the cluster of unequal fragments that constitute our cities.

- ▶ **The symbolic dimension.** It is associated with situated, diverse, historically constructed cultures and pertains to the field of intangibles. For example, concealed memories, names of streets or squares that ignore or assert women’s memories; a no less important aspect is also violence and its perceptions, the main sources of women’s fears in the symbolic construction of restrictions involving places and hours: moving across the miscellaneous areas of the city is not the same thing for women or dissident bodies as it is for men.

Perhaps the most difficult domain to transform is the symbolic sphere, the realm of ideas about “how things should be”, the set of constructed and naturalized traditions and cultures, which are also expressed in discrimination, in looks that despise otherness and prize what is similar rather than what is different (Byung-Chul Han, 2010, 2017). This is, precisely, what is felt as threatening, because in our region and our cities, diverse socio-cultural, racial, ethnical, and sexual identities are expressed in urban space.

The persistence of structural inequalities in territories and their increase during the COVID-19 pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic has increased the structural fragmentation and inequality of Latin American cities. These new circumstances have evidenced that territorial injustices had a differential impact on women and feminized bodies, on account of their conditions and the roles assigned to them. They inhabit territories of severe shortages, they are assembled in various types of family configurations, with heterogeneous interaction networks, and are mostly characterized by poverty: in a growing number of households —more than 30% according to ECLAC— a woman is the sole income producer, and the number of her dependents is also increasing. The whole situation requires sectoral policies that ensure gender mainstreaming and address women’s particular demands. Although all women deserve public attention, the focus should be on those who cannot satisfy everyday needs because of their current experiences and material conditions.

The intersection of territorial vulnerabilities with the everyday life conditions of women —who bear responsibility for social reproductive work— shows that, unlike the case of men, in order to understand some of the most relevant factors that condition women’s lives, it is necessary to identify, among other indicators, where and how they live, how many dependents they have, and which are their housing tenure conditions. In this line, feminist urbanism has come to politicize the category “everyday life” by challenging the division between the realms of productive work and reproductive work. For feminist urbanism, satisfying reproductive needs does not necessarily involve a new sexed sectorization of space: it demands thinking and furnishing spaces according to a new social contract that distributes tasks and power relations equitably in order to create fairer cities (Valdivia, 2018).

Based on previous developments, Ana Falú (2014) propounds to elaborate on the women’s right to the city by analyzing at least four territorial categories that determine women’s lives: the city, the neighborhood, the household, and the body itself they inhabit. Each category is pervaded by gender, ethnical, political, and religious diversities, intersected by multi- and inter-cultural features. They are the abode of self-identifying subjectivities that are also identified from the outside. At each territorial category, different kinds of unfairness may be detected, with particular complexities at every level, but none of these categories are static or detached from each other: they are intersectional, interdependent, and interrelated (Falú 2020).

- ▶ The level of the **body as a territory** to decide upon; bodies that are disputed, submitted to violence. Deciding about reproductive rights, gender identity, and a life free of violence. Violence against the bodies of women and femininities, its utmost expression being femicide. Bodies abused in private and public spaces by a patriarchal and sexist culture that reifies them. Bodies that have to move away from the course they are following because of fear; bodies that suffer concrete restrictions on the use and enjoyment of the neighborhood or the city.



► The level of the **house as a territory**. Overcrowded dwellings where nobody has a corner of one's own and the pandemic mantra "remain at home", as the fundamental health protection measure, is frequently impracticable. Dwellings where many women are imprisoned with their abusers, who ill-treat them⁸ or their children, older people, and dissident bodies. Most women and people with non-conforming identities live in overcrowded dwellings or houses of insecure tenure threatened by eviction; that is the case especially of trans and transvestite people, who live precariously in cheap boarding-houses without legal contracts and always under threat.

► The level of the **neighborhood as a territory**. Material conditions and the quality of urban infrastructure are more decayed in the so-called informal settlements of the periphery, in stark contrast with the wealth of gated neighborhoods, which have all kinds of services and security guards. Daily life poverty cannot be measured exclusively by the income level; there are other dimensions, such as the lack of rights, or the shortage or absence of public transport, and failing facilities. All this contributes to inequality and limits the autonomy and freedom of women, as well as their access to some rights, e.g., health, education, and recreation. These limitations are compounded by violence-driven insecurity in public spaces and transport. The neighborhood should also be considered from a feminine perspective; nowadays it is devalued, at the service of the productive city. In these neighborhoods, day-to-day relationships are forged and solidarity becomes stronger in emergencies: the poorer women are, the more caring they prove, more heedful of hygiene and nourishment under conditions of scarcity.⁹

► The level of the **city as a territory**. Though the city is frequently almost unknown for women, they must make their way through it using unsafe transport services, always difficult to access, and much more so in the context of the pandemic. At the city level, women have also served as caregivers and have taken the leading role in times of COVID-19. The pandemic evidenced that most

women are health-care staff or work in public or private services as supermarket cashiers, and drugstore or household employees.¹⁰ To ensure their income they usually travel long distances, mostly from the periphery to the alien and excluding city center. This is most evident in great cities and their large, complex metropolitan areas, but also in Latin American mid-sized cities.

The rhetoric of the right to city as a part of public policies

There is a long tradition of struggle in social movements, in the various feminist currents, in the movements for the right to decent housing and habitat, in antiracist and ethnical movements, among others. All such movements plus some groups engaged in academic and technical work, as well as what has already been done towards achieving women's full right to the city, bring us back to the issue of resistance and demands for justice. On the one hand, the presence of the state is demanded to guarantee actions, responsibilities, and change. On the other hand, community and social organizations themselves are pressed to embrace a practice of equal rights and opportunities for women. When we say that women are omitted or invisibilized in state policies and also in social organizations, which do not consider them in their agendas and organizational actions, we refer mainly to women of the low-income sector because they are the most deprived; they usually have more than twice as many children as wealthy women and, besides, they constitute the majority of the informal market. However, all women and all people relegated because of their ethnical origin, race, gender, age, or disabilities deserve public attention.

The gender perspective involves all omissions, not only those denounced in demands relative to women's everyday life. It includes the social fabric as a whole, since the patriarchal culture dictates some roles, and omits or undervalues others, which are mainly expressed in the symbolic sphere. In the field of urbanism there is still reluctance to recognize that including the gender perspective in city-planning is really important, and there are difficulties to grasp the convenience of redistributing services, infrastructures, and housing accordingly. Since women are not all equal, the state must prioritize those situations where greater everyday inequalities are evidenced.

Thus, some central questions arise: How to include the rhetoric of women's right to the city in the agenda of public policies? Which are the key factors we should address in the context we have just described?

Concerning inequalities and the top material challenge to deal with, the state has a fundamental regulating and powerful role in narrowing the gap between poverty and wealth¹¹ that mostly affects Latin American women. A gap that goes beyond economic conditions and includes deficits in citizen rights, services, transportation, safety, and habitat conditions.

Another urgent cultural situation that, as already said, must be transformed and demands political action, is the right of women to live free of violence, which persists in its different forms and became more complex during the pandemic.¹² It is necessary to develop a new social contract that contributes to a symbolic and cultural change by establishing zero tolerance for discriminations of any kind and condemning violence unreservedly. Besides, both men and women must be persuaded that productive and reproductive work are interrelated, and that the naturalized sexual division of labor should be challenged and fought. Such is the way to guarantee equal rights and opportunities for women in every sphere of life and to effectively empower them. Further work is needed to shed light on gendered inequalities and the discrimination they involve, and how they are part of a patriarchal society and cultural constructs that justify relationships of subordination, which undervalue and confiscate not only women's labor but also their bodies and, eventually, their lives.

Besides, women's work to support community and family life should be properly recognized and appreciated. Their efforts became more evident still in the pandemic emergency context, where women have risked their health at community meal sites, kindergartens, and clothes donation centers. The economic contribution of women should be recognized and made visible, and their work quantified in order to determine how much they contribute to the collective economy.

Finally, we should recognize women's contribution in several other areas: invisibilized housework, collective care tasks for the neighborhood, as well as the social production of habitat, and their fundamental participation in cooperatives, where they

have proved to be among the most committed and determined members in order to obtain housing for themselves and their dependents.

Therefore, it is necessary for the state to act as a key player, with political will and programs specifically designed for the city, its services and infrastructure, housing and urban facilities. The state approach should not be restricted to marginal actions; genuine resources must be assigned to develop a collective and inclusive policy with a comprehensive gender perspective. It is necessary for the state to commit itself to reconstructing the social fabric and strengthening community ties by prioritizing collective issues over individual ones, and assuring the quality, safety, and affordability of goods and services. However, if such inclusive policies do not involve a comprehensive gender perspective, they will be inoperative and will exclude over 50% of the population.

There is a pressing need for redistribution policies, which cannot be endorsed as such if they do not recognize that women's demands are specific and differ from those of men, that is, if they do not target women with their various diversities, identities, and subjectivities. A gender inclusive political will is not enough: government actions, policies, and budgets should progressively implement inclusionary measures that effectively repair old social and gender inequalities. Urban and housing policies should challenge and revert the purported neutrality of political action, and they should also have diagnostic tools to identify women, their property, where they live, and under which conditions. Since all this requires disaggregated statistical data that include the variety of sexual and gender identities, instruments such as maps of women in the city must be drawn (Falú, 2012). This is the only way to recognize the demands and needs of women, especially when they are the sole head of a household.

More than ever before, the COVID-19 pandemic and the health emergency context demand that material and habitat conditions should be considered, not only housing conditions but also infrastructure, population density, services, etc., because they also have an impact on health. It is not only a question of recognizing women and diversities: vulnerability conditions in the territory must also be acknowledged, especially, among other problems, proximity to services, the existing infrastructure, and transport

accessibility, thus making the attribute of proximity a central item in planning (Jacobs, 1961). There is nothing more consequential for women's autonomy than proximity; the location of their dwellings in the urban fabric is critical because it involves time and space, which are both central in their lives. The scarcest asset for them is time.¹³ Consequently, we may assert that, in order to further women's rights, it is necessary to create more instruments and also to put existent agreements into practice.

Although we recognize ongoing debates about the arguments and recommendations herein expressed, we maintain that the political, material, and symbolic dimension of the urban as a configuration must be recognized if we want to guarantee women's right to the city. This configuration must be analyzed from the feminist perspective, which denies the mainstream idea that functions and uses are separate, challenges inequalities, and places everyday life at the center of the urban agenda. Besides, we should understand that the administration of government or of an organized community demands recognizing women's differences and specific needs regarding the use of the city as it has been built, with its actual neighborhoods and dwelling units. In order to transform everyday life, legal instruments and budgets are also needed, as well as informative campaigns for the general population and continuous education for decision-makers and technicians, so that the symbolic and cultural dimensions can be transformed. Multiple and simultaneous actions and strategies must be undertaken in order to make steady progress towards more democratic societies with greater equality between women and men. ■

1. * Translator's note: This is the usual English translation of de Pizan's original work: *Le trésor de la cité des dames de degré en degré et de tous estatz*, Project Gutenberg, 2008 (BnF/Gallica, <http://gallica.bnf.fr>).

2. Her reflections and political thought are in-depth inquiries into three key concepts of the philosophical movement of her times: Law, Justice, and Power.

3. As the industrial revolution developed and ripened, the figure of the "factory worker" emerged: a person who left home and went to a production center. The domestic space became secondary because, in contrast to pre-industrial times, it lost its previous capacity of generating subsistence products which, from then onwards, had to be purchased in the market. In modern cities (from the late 19th century to 1929), therefore, spaces are specialized and a hierarchy is established among them according to the sexual division of activities.

4. These categories have been defined by ECLAC's Gender Equality Observatory for Latin America and the Caribbean in order to monitor the development of women's rights. For more information see: <https://oig.cepal.org/en>.

5. The New Urban Agenda was adopted at the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development that took place at Quito, Ecuador, in 2016. The purpose was to establish guidelines and collect the opinions of member countries about this issue.

6. For over twenty years, the Latin America and the Caribbean Women and Habitat Network has been working on these issues, which were later included in the agenda of the Women, Gender and Diversities Working Group of the Global Platform for the Right to the City.

7. For a deeper analysis of these topics, see the website of the Global Platform for the Right to the City (<https://www.right2city.org/es/>). The Platform is an international network of civil society organizations created in 2014 in order to promote the right to the city at the local and international level, and to define a new, more inclusive and democratic urban development paradigm.

8. According to the Ministry of Women, Genders and Diversity of Argentina, during the March 2020 lockdown, the telephone number 144—which receives emergency calls reporting gender-based violence—received 39% more calls than in the same period of 2019. In April 2020, with the lockdown already in place, this hotline received 1739 (23%) more calls than in the same period of 2019. In May 2020, the calls received were 2039 (+27%); in June, 1217 (+18%); in July, 1859 (+25%); in August, 1856 (+25%); in September 1048 (+16%); and in October 843 (+16%).

9. Women are the pillars of day-to-day life. In marginal territories, during the current pandemic or in times of economic crisis, they deal with emergencies, especially food shortages. In this sense, we may highlight that soup kitchens in Lima, Peru, as well as the large number of community meal sites in the Greater Buenos Aires area, Argentina, among other experiences, are all led by women.

10. The Inter-Ministerial Committee for Care Policies (*Mesa Interministerial de Cuidados*) in Argentina, reported in the third quarter of 2019 a difference of 29% between the average income of males and that of women. The committee attributes this salary gap in the labor market to the so-called "glass walls and ceiling", i.e., a gender bias that denies or reduces the opportunities to obtain certain jobs. Most men work in the industrial sector, which provides better-paid jobs, whereas the majority of women work in health-services, education, and household tasks, all of which are considered an extension of caregiving.

11. According to ECLAC (2020), the gap between poverty and extreme poverty in Latin America increased more swiftly than before in the pandemic context. By 2018, the regional poverty rate was 29.7%, but estimates for 2020 ascended to 34.7%. Besides, estimations also predicted a rise in the rate of extreme poverty, from 10.3% in 2018 to 13.5% in 2020. Data from INDEC for Argentina indicated that, in the second half of 2020, the percentage of households under the line of poverty was 31.6% (42% of the total population) and that, among them, 7.8% (10.5% of the population) were in conditions of extreme poverty.

12. The Argentine Femicide Observatory "Adriana Marisel Zambrano" reported that in 2021, from January 1 to January 31, 30 femicides and 1 transfemicide were recorded, a figure equivalent to one gender-based murder every 24 hours.

13. We intend to highlight the value of time for women who are primary caregivers, who perform social reproductive work and also go out in search of an income.

Experimentation in times of crisis for the co-construction of common cities

Digital tools during the COVID-19 pandemic

Authors

Ciudades Comunes, Cecilia Ciancio, Domenico Di Siena,
Rosario Fassina, Víctor Franco, Agustín Frizzera, Analía Hanono,
Carolina Huffmann, Matías Lastra, Melina Scioli



During 2020, cities were visibly impacted by the mandatory preventive social isolation measures experienced worldwide due to the COVID-19 pandemic. On the one hand, the domestic sphere became a place of confinement and mediation with the outside world; on the other, the deserted public space presented citizens with an empty and hostile urban landscape.

As the pandemic suddenly set in, compliance with public health measures was seen to prompt a leap in the population's use of telecommunication networks for the supply of goods, social connectivity and access to information (see CAF, 2020, p. 14). If "digital technologies emerge as tools to face the COVID-19 pandemic" (CAF & CEPAL, 2020, p. 14), the digital transformation provides new opportunities for the Latin American and Caribbean region to address the current crisis and mitigate inequalities in the longer term.¹

Internet access of households is essential to guarantee various rights in the lockdown context, since the digitization of life allows people to continue conducting certain day-to-day activities which used to require physical contact, at the same time as they enable social proximity and provide a tool to improve social cohesion (UCLG, Metropolis & UN-Habitat, 2020).

Indeed, this situation of structural collapse is an opportunity to challenge the conventional wisdom about cities and revisit the role —and accessibility— of technology as a means of advancing the right to the city in order to reduce urban inequality. Although the digital domain had already been the focus of urban studies (Castells, 1996; Parra, 2012; Sassen, 2016), the management of the COVID-19 pandemic provides evidence that confirms what so far had been ideas more or less accepted by society: the consolidation of technology and digitization as key tools to face economic, health, ecologic or social challenges (Yuste, 2020).

This article seeks to provide a new exploratory view about how to establish a relation between the urban and the digital dimension, considering urbanism "as a discipline that cannot be understood solely as the study of what is built and the field of what is visible, without taking into account intangible dynamics of both, resulting from the links and the layer created by the information sphere, which runs

at great speed through digital networks" (Diéguez, 2020). This perspective is part of a new way of thinking about and producing cities through a non-linear logic, which links thinking and doing in a virtuous circle, with no separation among technicians, civil society, academics and the public sector, and proposes a way of collectively combining research, experimentation, implementation and evaluation. This point of view has an echo in the paradigm of the common (Garcés, 2013; Laval & Dardot, 2014), which, even though proposed for some time as an alternative to transform relational and organizational logics, stands today more than ever as a possible response to the health crisis.

Thus, the goal of this article is to open a debate about the common as a possibility to rethink, give new meaning to and co-construct cities, and to put forward digital experimentation as an alternative to mitigate the COVID-19 crisis and its implications for urban life.

In this regard, we may start by asking: how does digital experimentation help to reduce the disruptive impact of the pandemic and to generate new dynamics of collective production? What new challenges does the health crisis pose to the construction of collective projects, and how can they be addressed linking the physical with the digital?

To answer these questions, this work will examine the new paradigms and challenges that have gained attention as a result of the crisis, on the basis of a collective research effort conducted from the multiple views and practices to be found in the Ciudades Comunes team.² In addition, it analyzes and tries to understand the impact and power of a number of digital tools which are currently helping to change cities according to the principle of the common.

Resignifying the urban: from common sense to the sense of the common

Cities in Latin America and the Caribbean all face similar challenges and common problems. The health emergency worsens some of the most critical situations of the cities in the region, which feature high levels of segregation, violence and inequality.³

The crisis evidenced the vulnerability of the population and the weakness of the infrastructure for public services, like water and sanitation or public health. Besides, in a socioeconomic context that is

heavily reliant on local and informal trade, which is more severely impacted by lockdown measures than other sectors, the most vulnerable population becomes even more impoverished. This situation is also coupled with a rise in domestic violence and gender inequality⁴ and with the worrying situation generated by the lockdown measures for children.⁵

In the new health crisis scenario, the fact that well-being is centered around everyday life and proximity spaces involves the redefinition of urbanism, today more than ever, as a discipline of mutual belonging (Diéguez, 2020).

Thus, it is key to build upon a new foundation, departing from the hegemonic thinking that underlies the socially normalized social relations, values, customs, perspectives and conceptions about the world, to redefine what is known as *common sense*. Common sense, based on power relations that create structural injustice, is the most powerful means through which the culture of capital ensures its dominance over the senses (see Torres, 2018, p. 9) and has become deeply rooted.

This is why it is necessary to go from *common sense* to a *sense of the common*. Since any human group can make and build communities (Paredes, 2010, p. 86), the common provides a framework for thought and collective action, as an alternative to an individualistic society (Franco López, 2016; Gutiérrez Aguilar, 2017). In addition, as stated by Diéguez (2020, p. 1), if the city is our common organism, why does it happen that what is known as urbanism is not part of its residents' everyday conversations? If cities are a collective matter, why did common sense turn them into a matter for specialists? This highlights the importance of promoting humanized cities, designed with people's needs and desires in mind, rather than only according to the technical perspective of those who work in urban planning, so that cities may be co-constructed *from the bottom up*, with, by and for people. The concept of citizen-led urbanism, which is the common thread running through this book, helps illustrate this idea.

In addition, the health and caregiving systems are the ones that were the most severely impacted and strained by the virus, with the issue of care turning into one of the most relevant debates in the context of the pandemic (Svampa, 2020). The so-called crisis of care (Ezquerro, 2012), which today, more than

ever, is reflected in the understanding that people are vulnerable and dependent, stands as one of the major challenges faced by society. It should be stressed that, although care-related jobs⁶ are essential for supporting human life, and for reproducing the labor force and societies, representing 20% of GDP in Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC, 2016), they still remain precarious and invisible.

Thus, generating new proposals that put life at the center seems to be the foundational basis to build a new common sense that may allow us to rethink the cities of tomorrow and their social fabric in more equitable terms. In this regard, this critical, ecofeminist⁷ and community-based perspective, which was already being advanced at a fast pace to prioritize sustainability and the everyday support of all forms of life, has been reinforced by the global health crisis and the crisis of care.

However, in the context of the global health crisis, there are a number of questions about the present and future of cities, which arise from revisiting the challenges and opportunities to generate a new urban paradigm geared towards the common, empathy and inclusion, and from exploring the role of digital tools to achieve this goal.

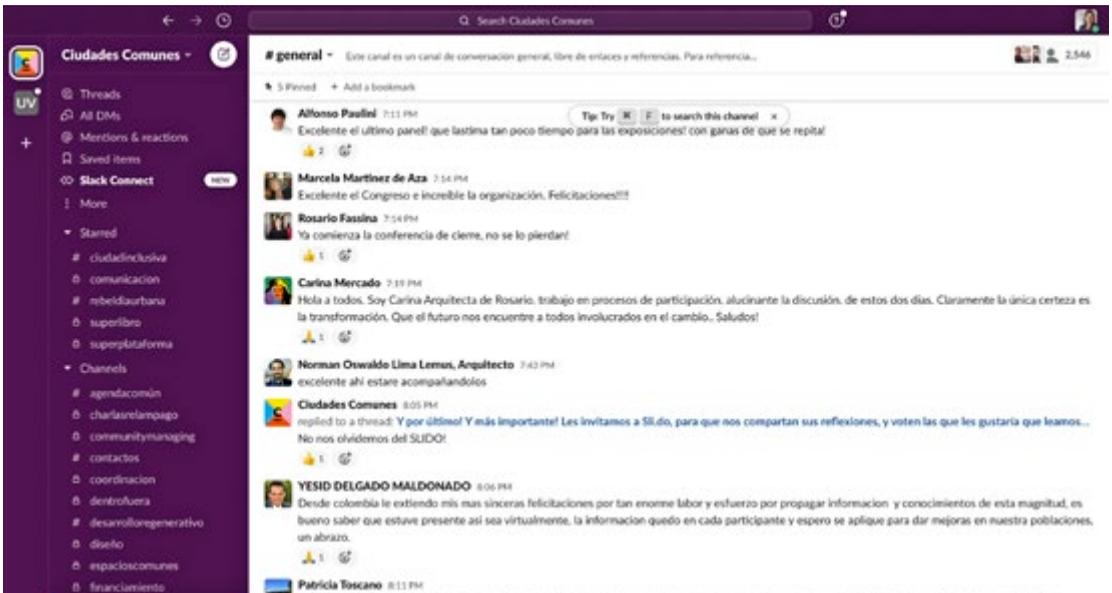
Challenges for common cities and the physical-digital hybridization

In April, 2020, the 4th Latin America - Argentina Place-making Meeting was held, with the name *Ciudades Comunes 2020*.⁸ Gatherings of this kind are attended every year by hundreds of people from the region who are experienced in urban innovation and experimentation, as well as interested in local democracy and in strengthening everyday life in public space.

Although this edition was severely constrained by the mandatory preventive social isolation measures issued as a result of COVID-19, which made it impossible to meet face to face, it was used as an opportunity to develop a fully digital event that could have a deeper impact on the region and constitute an experiment in itself, becoming a point of reference in this matter. Thus, *Ciudades Comunes 2020* became a digital meeting that was broadcast to the entire world, with the goals of rethinking the co-construction of Latin American cities amidst the COVID-19 global health crisis, reflecting upon the challenges faced by the Latin American territory in this context and envisioning



Ciudades Comunes in YouTube



Ciudades Comunes Slack account



Ciudad Inklusiva



Gobierno Abierto



Desarrollo Regenerativo



Laboratorios Cívicos



Hábitat y Justicia Social



Posdomesticidades

Icons of Ciudades Comunes 2020 main themes

Filtrar por

País

Todos

Temáticas

Todas

- Comunidad
- Desarrollo Económico
- Ambiente
- Salud
- Hábitat Popular
- Educación
- Infancias
- Cultura
- Sostenibilidad
- Movilidad y Transporte
- Género
- Inclusión
- Juego y Recreación

Seleccionar categoría

TODOS
DISPOSITIVO URBANO
APLICACIÓN DIGITAL
PROGRAMA DE ACTIVIDADES

Del Paseo Urbano al Micro Mercado.

Argentina

Feria Segura

Chile

Ciudades Recorribles

Argentina

Sistema de reglamento para espacios verdes

MoVi

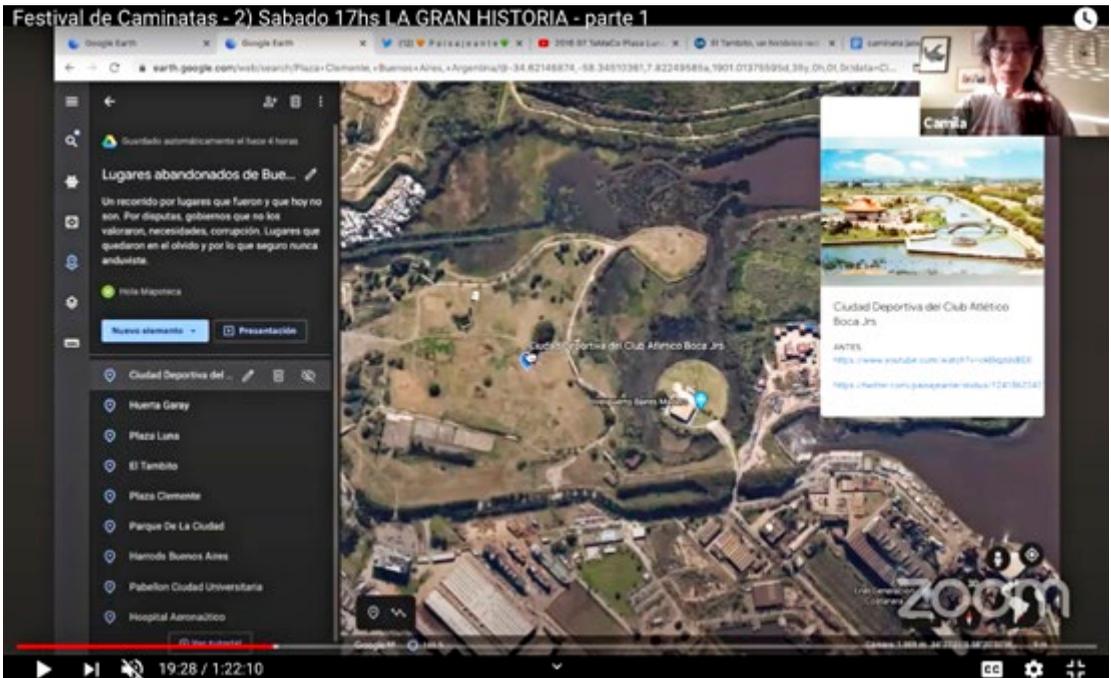
Ideathon: 100 Ideas for The Return to Public Life

new future scenarios focusing on the public sphere and the principle of the common. The purpose of this event was to facilitate the exchange of lessons learned, relying on the power of collective, decentralized and glocal knowledge.⁹ More than 7000 people registered for this meeting, which brought together over 80 specialists from the entire world and involved interaction with 48 countries, mostly in Latin America and the Caribbean. It should be noted that during the two-day, 24-hour live broadcast, the event had an on-line audience of over 36,000 people.¹⁰

With regard to its general modality, the event included keynote speeches, debate panels, short talks, workshops and cultural and informal exchange meetings. All of these formats were streamed uninterruptedly through YouTube from the *Ciudades Comunes* platform, as a single transmission. In line with the intent of building communities through digital means, and to meet the challenge that this involved, two possibilities of holding direct exchanges with participants were provided. On the one hand, the audience of conferences and panels interacted using *slido*¹¹ to vote for questions and ask their own; on the other, a *Slack*¹² account with different channels was created specifically for the meeting.

The outcome of the event has been the publication of *Ciudades Comunes, reflexiones para la acción colectiva*¹³ (“Common cities, reflections for collective action”), a document compiling the debates, challenges, possibilities and tools discussed during this digital event. In this regard, we provide below a summary of the new topics that are gaining strength in the agenda of cities and in public debate, and how they shift the citymaking paradigms and priorities in Latin America and the Caribbean. These topics revolve around six structural areas underpinning the co-construction of common cities: inclusive cities, regenerative development, postdomestic domains, citizen laboratories, habitat and social justice, and open government.

We also describe some methodologies and tools that make an intensive use of the physical-digital hybridization to address the areas mentioned above, as a mechanism to face the urban crisis caused by the pandemic during 2020. Considering that, at the moment when this research is being conducted, the future of the pandemic is still uncertain, the focus was placed on this time frame, in order to systematize various learnings that may constitute potential resources and inputs to face the coming years. It



Walking Festival in YouTube

should be stressed that some of these tools already existed before the crisis, but their use has a great potential given the new physical and social dynamics and global urban agenda; others are physical tools that were adapted to the digital domain, and others emerged during the pandemic. In sum, the following sections provide some examples of collective action and of the reactivation of urban life. They are emerging responses, solutions or adaptations to the global health crisis which have been designed with a view to co-constructing common cities.

Inclusive cities. Common practices to co-design and co-construct the public

The notion of an inclusive city is key to think of a city where people have a leading role; consequently, they must be at the center of the debate. It proposes to recognize the diversity of people and bodies, prioritizing their everyday experience when it comes to envisioning and inhabiting cities. The pandemic evidenced the key challenges faced by cities: safe and accessible public spaces, urban experimentation becoming an everyday practice, proximity as the desired urban model, citizen-led activism and the role of the community in co-constructing the city, among others.

The health crisis compounded the problem of scarcity of and access to green areas by making public space hostile and insecure. With regard to mobility, public transportation was recognized as one of the most dangerous places where people could contract the disease. As a result, there was an increased stress on the need both to promote mobility on foot, fostering walkable, kind and human-scale cities, and to provide more and improved public spaces.

In the cities of Latin America and the Caribbean, the boom of urban interventions as a tactical urbanism tool was one of the most recurrent ways to promote sustainable and pedestrian mobility. Another one consisted of enlarging and improving public spaces to facilitate harmonious relations and compliance with physical distancing and prevention measures, something evidenced by the large number of proposals generated as part of idea competitions that were launched to further the reactivation of public spaces in the region.¹⁴ Also, numerous global dissemination manuals compile and recommend experiences so that they can be implemented at the local level (Design for Distancing, 2020; Universidad Modelo, 2020). It should be noted that the



Urban projections on building walls: *Arde Córdoba* and *Proyectorazo*

new demands need to endure in time and be met, accordingly, by durable public policies. In addition, it is critical for interventions to be co-constructed and agreed upon by the community, to ensure effective appropriation and maintenance of these new spaces. Besides, in order to gear the urban paradigm towards empathy and inclusion, it is necessary to envision cities from a gender perspective. To turn this into a reality, it is indispensable, without exception, to gain a deeper understanding of the everyday reality of the diverse territories, listening to and engaging in dialogue with people in order to learn about their needs. In practical terms, this requires fostering public spaces where people can express themselves, share, co-create and experiment using the territory as a laboratory or, in other words, as a place to test, explore and also play.

Finally, community bonds and the role of active citizenship proved to be fundamental factors to make cities more inclusive. The challenge of ensuring the continuity of spaces for community-building and awareness-raising from home was addressed by using tools that could generate new, virtual forms of interaction. Considering that it was important for people to stay connected with each other and with the space where they lived, even if confined to the domestic space, the 2020 Walking Festival (*Festival de Caminatas 2020*) was held through digital means⁴⁵ and celebrated interaction among people



beyond face-to-face contact, providing them with the experience of walking around the city, but as a cultural and recreational activity.

Regenerative development. Regenerative thinking to defend the common

Regenerative development is a paradigm based on systemic thinking, which reveals the reliance of the human species on nature and understands that human communities are living systems, the same as ecological communities. The city is viewed as a metabolism, a living system that exchanges matter, energy and information with its surroundings and which must tend to a healthy equilibrium. The regenerative development paradigm puts forward resiliency, adaptation, biodiversity and the circular economy as the great challenges to shape a more resilient future.

Now, what is the meaning of the pandemic in the context of the ecologic and climate crisis that is affecting cities? The restrictions derived from the health crisis accelerated a paradigm change, with the consequence that certain local and responsible consumption strategies advocated by environmentalist and local development movements became the order of the day. Another effect was the return to the local and to short walkable distances —public transportation being feared as a major source of contagion to be avoided— and the ensuing revitalization of local stores.

The health crisis and its zoonotic origin, awareness of the intensive use of toxic agrochemicals by the food production model and the new relationship with food in the domestic sphere prompted a large part of the population to change their consumption habits and collectively centralize the shopping of agroecological or organic products right from producers, with no intermediation involved. This was accomplished by creating networks with new actors from the popular and solidarity economy which sell directly to consumers.

These networks were promoted through social media or WhatsApp, and partnered with stores to deliver goods at certain nodes, or took them directly to the customers' doorstep. These new forms of purchasing grew exponentially and persisted, laying solid foundations for healthier and more responsible consumption in cities.

In addition, during strict lockdown periods, certain neighborhood services had to close down. This context gave rise to various types of platforms, such as reparar.org, driven by the Repairers Club (*Club de Reparadores*) (reparadores.club) and designed to promote local repair services with or without a physical shop, platforms for making future purchases to help stores weather the crisis, or platforms that facilitated contact with local stores through WhatsApp.

In addition, the impossibility of meeting for public demonstrations has triggered numerous digital activism initiatives: in the face of the climate and ecological crisis, joint efforts are being made to carry out actions in different areas through digital means. Diverse platforms present urgent causes, provide validated information from leading figures and propose ephemeral, physical-digital hybrid actions that are visible in urban space, such as simultaneous film screenings on facades of buildings in different parts of the world, to make their demands heard.¹⁶

Postdomestic domains. Postdomestic fictions for life in common

During the global health crisis, domestic spaces have become places of confinement from where to mediate with the outside world. The pandemic made it evident that, in order to foster a healthy domestic life, it is necessary to conceive of diverse and adaptable domestic spaces that can meet everyone's needs and allow multiple cohabitation structures and plans for

the shared use of space, promoting proximity and everyday life. To reach this goal, it is urgent to place the issue of care at the heart of the debate, focusing on reproductive tasks and the transcalarity between the most intimate domestic spaces and the community support networks in the neighborhood.

The concept of a postdomestic domain intends to trigger an open, ongoing debate about conceivable, radical alternatives to present-day domestic scenes that may transcend them. In order to outline these new postdomestic domains, it is necessary to look beyond binary opposites such as public and private, interior and exterior or market and state, with a view to co-constructing more self-contained, healthy and resilient communities, taking a critical view of the inhabited space from an ecofeminist outlook, i.e., a perspective at once feminist and ecological. Common spaces are key for this, since they could turn a collective dwelling into an interface that would mediate among the different levels of the domestic sphere, with diverse spaces and gradients able to interact and foster solidarity networks.

In this context, new narratives came into play, in order to test scenarios that could help to rethink possibilities and reinvent the very idea of the domestic. For example, virtual workshops (Colectiva Habitaria, 2020; López, Kahanoff, Pego & Pellegrino, 2021) enabled the use of media that make it possible to design projects collaboratively (Figure 1), starting from speculative design as a mechanism to imagine future alternatives for urban housing. They also experiment with open responses that provide cohabitation possibilities by repoliticizing domestic space, by including inter- and eco-dependence networks in collective housing and by imagining other ways of inhabiting space that take into account the potential of common spaces.

In this regard, low-income collective housing with a design that in itself encourages life in common, such as the *departamentos de pasillo* (shared corridor apartments) in Argentina, the *cortiços* in Brazil or the *vecindades* in Mexico, as well as dwellings built by cooperatives¹⁷, cohousing or collaborative housing units¹⁸ or those based on the concept of microcommunities¹⁹ are more suitable to cope with the pandemic, as they provide intermediate spaces for production, leisure and collective care.

Habitat and social justice. Management by the community to look after the common

The global health crisis made it evident that risk is experienced differently in Latin American cities. The poor housing conditions of those who live in the most segregated areas constitute a material obstacle that prevents them from abiding by social isolation measures. In addition, the problems associated with population density and with several families living in overcrowded spaces are dramatically worsened by the deficient supply of drinking water and essential services, which hinders compliance with the measures recommended to avoid the spread of the disease.²⁰

Such clear proof of the importance of ensuring the right to housing represents a historic opportunity to develop policies and initiatives to eliminate these long-lasting inequalities. In this regard, digital tools for the detection and care of ill persons and for the adaptation of precaution measures in informal settlements became highly widespread and used. For example, a version of the *Caminos de la Villa* (or “Roads of Shanty Towns”) COVID-19 participatory map was released, where residents of low-income neighborhoods could report problems, identify useful places and share information related to the health crisis.

In addition, state-run detection and care operations to manage the pandemic concentrated in locations where people did not isolate themselves at home, as mandated for the general population, but at different community levels (Vera, 2020), which implied recognizing the value of neighborhoods and self-care networks (Alonso, 2020; Bozzano et al, 2020).

With regard to the necessary precaution measures, several organizations and collectives developed joint documents with special actions recommended to address the pandemic in shanty towns and informal settlements (Asociación Civil por la Igualdad y la Justicia, 2020). To this end, meetings were held with residents to gain an insight into what they viewed as the main difficulties in this area.

Citizen laboratories. Labs managed by citizens to activate common spaces

Citizen laboratories are spaces and practices linked to experimentation and prototyping. They are developed through cross-disciplinary collaboration,

encourage participation by different sectors and organizations within the territory and place particular stress on the engagement and leading role of local communities. They promote, activate and strengthen everything that is useful for those who reside in the same territory.

In such a delicate historical moment, experimentation, citizen laboratories and digital tools can help maintain the vitality of local communities and provide direct solutions through the testimony of those who conduct these practices themselves. One example of this type of articulation are collaborative platforms created by citizens, such as the well-known *Frena la curva*, meaning “stop the curve” (frenalacurva.net), a citizen-led project developed in the context of COVID-19 in which volunteers, entrepreneurs, activists, social organizations, makers²¹ and open and public innovation laboratories cooperate to channel and organize social energy and citizens’ resilience against the pandemic, supplementing government measures and essential public services with a response by civil society.

A further case in point is that of collaborative mappings for experimentation and production of innovative urban solutions in which citizens play a major role. Even if many of them are not new, these initiatives and the dissemination of this type of geo-located information become particularly valuable in this context. One of the most widespread projects of this nature is *CIVICs* (civics.cc), given its global scale and open-source code. It consists of a map developed collaboratively by citizens, which makes apparent how mapping itself can have a social impact on a territory.

Citizen laboratories, as well as citizen experimentation and innovation programs, are seizing the opportunity provided by the pandemic to move forward in three directions: improving their interaction and exchange with other global initiatives, revisiting their methodological approach and their model for connecting with the territory, and testing hybrid formats that combine in-person action with digital communication.

Open government. Governing the commons

The concept of open government changes the governance paradigm through innovations that facilitate and strengthen transparency, participation

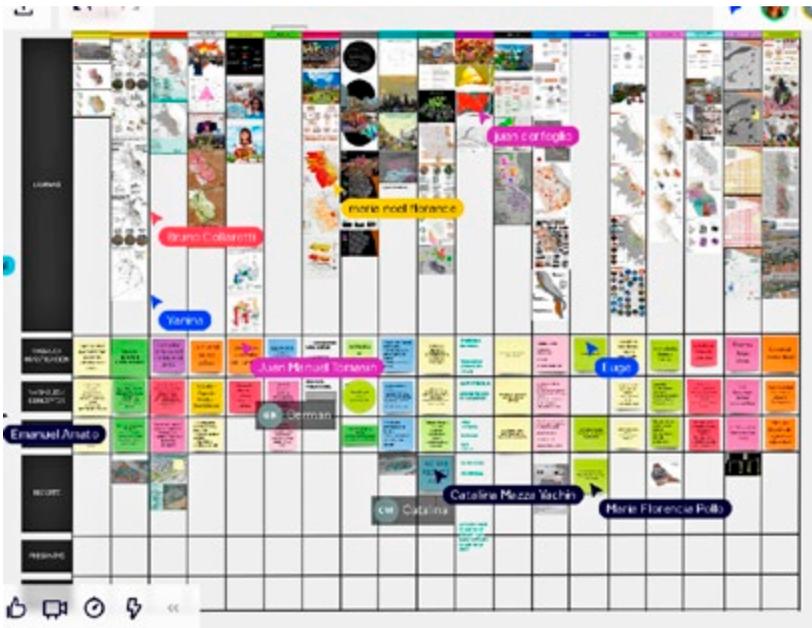


Figure 1: Image of a digital collaborative work dashboard, created as part of the (In) Context Workshop Final Degree Project subject at the School of Architecture, Planning and Design of the National University of Rosario



Home page of the *Frena la Curva* website



Presupuesto Participativo

Plataforma digital que permite la gestión integral de Presupuestos Participativos, generando instancias de diálogo entre la ciudadanía y los gobiernos.



Co-construcción de leyes

Plataforma digital de elaboración colaborativa de normas entre representantes y ciudadanía.



Consultas Digitales

Plataforma digital de consulta, diálogo y debate que conecta al gobierno con la comunidad.



Seguimiento de metas

Plataforma digital que permite la publicación de metas y compromisos de gobierno facilitando el seguimiento ciudadano.



[Democracy OS website](#)

and accountability. Open government actions involve the construction of a new public space where people do not depend on institutionalized politics, but on the collective action of citizens themselves, and create spheres in which all stakeholders involved can have a voice in identifying public problems, establishing priorities and designing and managing solutions.

During the health crisis, open government actions had to be based on, and oriented to, the online domain. In this process, the pandemic underscored the potential of digital technology as a tool that citizens can use to make public policies more feasible and enable cooperation among different social segments, promoting collective thinking.

Thus, different administrations used customizable, open source and easy to install digital tools for various goals. This is the case of citizen participation platforms for governments and institutions, which can be used to hold debate and discussion forums, submit queries, make ideas visible by prioritizing the users, and which also allow voting, making

surveys about ongoing issues, creating collaborative documents, initiating participatory budgeting processes, and monitoring, implementing and executing policies.²²

Other platforms are aimed more specifically at facilitating participatory democracy processes and collective decision-making among governments, institutions and organizations²³, enabling debate, discussion and voting.

It is essential to encourage collaboration between the public and the social, and to rethink legal tools that can facilitate the participation of new actors in addition to the usual ones. The role of citizens as active participants in projects is one of the keys to understanding the power of self-organization. However, the right to Internet access and use is yet to be fully guaranteed in Latin America. Some platforms are specifically oriented to evidencing the problems of Internet access that exist in some geographical areas.²⁴ In this regard, the health crisis is an opportunity to strengthen efforts towards bridging the digital gap and inequality in the region.

Digital experimentation for the cities of tomorrow

The abovementioned digital tools are some examples of ways in which the health crisis is being addressed. Localized tools which can be replicated, as well as non-localized tools which pursue global connections, have been described across different areas. In terms of their construction, the fact that they are open source and freely accessible was considered particularly valuable. As to their function, some of them provide direct solutions, whereas others are a means of enabling interactions to improve citizens' life. With regard to their origin, some of them have resulted from work conducted with citizens and joint efforts by different actors, while others emerged as citizen-led initiatives.

These technologies and their design systems are aimed at leveraging the value of social and cultural diversity, fostering urban inclusion, creating and/or reinforcing networks, community bonds and multi-scale articulations, increasing the possibility of ensuring the right to the city and facilitating participation, transparency, open government and citizen-centered technologies. All of them are part of a digital experimentation process which is bound to become a tool for the cooperative co-construction of new scenarios for improving life in cities through initiatives based on reciprocity, debate, participation, solidarity, sustainability and care.

This incipient digital transformation promotes disruptions that encourage innovation and new consumption models, helps improve access to public services and can facilitate governance and decision-making by placing citizens at the center of public policies (OECD, CAF, ECLAC & EU, 2020). It should be noted that the physical-digital hybridization is not a closed or predetermined process, but one that stresses experimentation as a means to act and to reflect upon, transform and conceive alternative scenarios that consider the principle of the common and promote an urban transformation designed, envisioned and constructed collectively by different stakeholders, including the communities themselves.

Conclusions

The COVID-19 global health crisis opened a field of urgent and necessary experimentation, which brought with it plenty of dilemmas and new opportunities.

This context is a lens through which to critically examine habitual urban, domestic and consumption practices. In an unsustainable production model, the micropolitics of the domestic sphere becomes relevant for a systemic transformation. This goal can only be attained with radical proposals for transforming the domestic domain with a view to a more equitable society.

Upon review of some of the initiatives that emerged, or were adapted or capitalized on to address the crisis, it seems that the challenges consist of harnessing the collective intelligence present in different geographical areas and channeling constructive actions that can foster empowerment processes that will lead to transformations over time. The tools implemented showed the importance of collectively imagining and desiring new urban and housing scenarios and of revisiting the boundaries of the domestic, beyond the opposition between public and private, rethinking common spaces and recognizing the true value of care, identity, the role of the community and proximity as components of a new city model.

In addition, new perspectives about the right to the city and the use of public space have arisen, through accessible and recreational dynamics. In this regard, one challenge is to think of spatiality beyond its merely physical sense in order to fight for a more equitable use, enjoyment of, and representation in digital space, since the conceptions of the urban to be found in the virtual world are becoming a second nature of cities.

Briefly expressed, the pandemic highlighted the potential of digital technology as a tool that citizens can use in order to make public policies more feasible, enable cooperation among different social segments, thus promoting collective thinking, and maintain physical distancing, which is essential to prevent the spread of the virus.

However, even though these tools help produce models of more active and participatory cities, it should be stressed that participation, in any form, has always been complex. The context of the online world poses new and specific dilemmas: if attaining equality was always difficult, now this is compounded by the digital gap. If prudence was always advisable to agree upon expectations, now new communication skills will be required.

In conclusion, digitization seems to be taking root in everyday life, thereby becoming the new common. In this regard, it is key to continue researching, experimenting and implementing innovative practices and policies to hybridize the physical and digital domains in the transition towards a life-centered city model and to bridge inequalities and the digital gap, as well as to promote the recognition of the true value of care, local development and community strengthening. ■

1. According to CAF & CEPAL (2020, p. 5), “the digital ecosystem of Latin America and the Caribbean is in an intermediate stage of development as compared to other regions. With an index of 49.92 (on a scale from 0 to 100), the region is more advanced than Africa (35.05) and Asia-Pacific (49.16). However, in spite of the significant development of its digital ecosystem over the last 15 years, Latin America and the Caribbean still lag behind Western Europe (71.06), North America (80.85), Eastern Europe (52.90) and the Arab States... (55.54)”.
2. Ciudades Comunes is a collaborative project in which members of different organizations intend to rethink the co-construction of cities. Its goal is to make more just, equitable, solidarity-oriented and participatory cities through empathy, listening to others and experimenting with physical-digital tools. For more information, visit ciudadescomunes.org
3. In Latin America and the Caribbean, 45% of the population —about 55 million households— lives in precarious housing conditions (Furlong, 2020). In the region, in 2015, only 65% of the population had access to safely managed drinking water services and 22% to safely managed sanitation services (UN Water, 2019). In 2020, poverty in Latin America was expected to increase at least by 4.4 percentage points (a further 28.7 million people) as compared to the previous year, totaling 214.7 million people, or 34.7% of the population in the region (ECLAC, 2020).
4. Violence against women, especially domestic violence, has intensified during the pandemic: in 2019, 243 million women and girls worldwide (ages 15 to 49) were victims of physical or sexual violence from their partners (UN Women, 2020).
5. By mid-May 2020, in Latin America and the Caribbean, the closure of schools has affected over 160 million children and adolescents at all levels of education, who stopped having face-to-face classes (ECLAC-UNESCO, 2020).
6. According to UN Women and ECLAC (2020, p. 2): “Care encompasses the activities that enhance, both on a day-to-day basis and over generations, the physical and mental wellbeing of individuals. It includes the daily tasks of managing and sustaining life, such as maintaining domestic goods and spaces, hygiene, educating and training people, maintaining social relationships and psychological support to family members. Therefore, it refers to a wide range of aspects covering healthcare, household care, care for dependent people and caregivers, and self-care”.
7. “The ecofeminist perspective helps us understand how life works, and how it is sustained and maintained. Ecologism has made us aware of ecodpendence, the necessary connection with nature and the impossibility of living without it. Feminism teaches us about interdependency and that sustaining life is the joint responsibility of communities, institutions and people”. (See Herrero, 2020, par. 3).
8. For more information, visit ciudadescomunes.org/congreso2020.
9. The term *glocal* is composed of the words *global* and *local*, and is defined as that which refers to both global and local factors or has characteristics from both realities (see Fundéu, 2019).
10. Ten months after it was held, the Congress was watched by over 53,000 people.
11. A platform that allows members of the audience to ask questions and vote for those that they find interesting, ranking them and showing the most popular ones so that they can be asked of the speaker.
12. *Slack* is a platform that allows people to hold exchanges through several chat channels. In this case, each of the main themes of the event was assigned to a different channel. For more information, visit slack.com/intl/es-ar
13. This publication is available online at ciudadescomunes.org/congreso/2020.
14. Some examples are the Return to Public Life ideathon and the “COVID-19: New Opportunities for Sustainable Cities” idea competition.
15. To learn more about the different editions of this event, visit festivaldecaminatas.com.ar
16. A very popular initiative was *Arde Córdoba* (Córdoba is burning) (linktr.ee/ardecordoba), organized to give visibility to the intentional fires in the province of Córdoba, Argentina. Another example is *Proyectorazo* (linktr.ee/Proyectorazo), which seeks to voice environmental demands in all of Latin America. In addition, the *Insostenible* (Unsustainable) platform (insostenible.net) gives visibility to the fights for environmental causes in Argentina.
17. There is a tradition of housing cooperatives in the region. Some relevant cases are FUCVAM in Uruguay (fucvam.org.uy) and the MOI in Argentina (moi.org.ar).
18. The distinctive feature of cohousing or collaborative housing is that it is collectively managed by its residents, and that the latter develop an active community life using its common spaces.
19. One example is the microcommunity residing in 4598 Quintana street, in Buenos Aires, Argentina, in a building designed by the iRarquitectura studio. For more information, visit irarquitectura.com/filter/construido/quintana-4598
20. Big Latin American cities are characterized by a high degree of inequality and segregation: 28.8% of their residents live below the poverty line, and 23.5% live in informal settlements. This is the clearest sign of socio-spatial segregation, which is evidenced both by barriers to gain access to public services and urban infrastructure and by severe shortcomings in their provision.
21. Maker culture is a present-day derivative of the “do it yourself” practice and is oriented to engineering-related activities (electronics, robotics, 3D printing) as well as to more traditional ones, such as metallurgy, carpentry and customary arts and crafts.
22. A well-known example is *democraciaOS* (democraciasos.org)
23. Some examples are *decidim* (decidim.org) and *kialo* (kialo.com)
24. One example is the website *Acá no hay internet*, meaning “there is no Internet here” (acanohayinternet.org).

2.

Civic Action



In Part I, we share the meaning of citizen-led urbanism in this superbook, and explore, from the perspective of diverse thematic areas, the processes that have unfolded in the region. But what practical experiences can be identified in it? In this chapter, we invite you to learn about the citizen-led urbanism experiences in Latin America and the Caribbean that we have collected for this publication.

We have organized the contents under six thematic areas, for consistency and to identify basic similarities, without proposing a limited or single characterization. These six areas are the following: cultural city, inclusive city, informal city, mobile city, resilient city and green city. Each section begins with a brief description of the topic and explains the relations among the thirteen projects classified under that category. The first three of those thirteen experiences are presented as cases of study, organized according to their geographic location, and are followed by ten projects with a catalog format. Projects from the region have been selected trying to keep a geographical balance.

Projects are classified, not only thematically, but also according to the type of intervention or action performed. This classification is included as part of the general data about the project:

- ▶ **Ephemeral.** Projects with a short duration, usually lasting a few hours. They are activated when the group of organizers or promoters makes initial use of a space and generates an action, which comes to an end when people deactivate the intervention. This is why they are performed with very light, easily transportable, recycled or very economical materials.
- ▶ **Temporary.** They may span from a few hours up to whole months or years. They are designed to last for a certain time. They usually involve the use of economical or easy to install materials, in order to facilitate experimentation or the implementation of solutions.
- ▶ **Permanent.** They are performed to last for a long period. They usually involve a more thorough diagnosis and design process, and require a bigger investment, since the resources used are long-lasting or permanent.

- ▶ **Urban devices.** Although, given their duration, they can be considered as part of ephemeral interventions, they also have a design that allows people to interact with their structure, and can sometimes be disassembled or transported to other places.

- ▶ **Digital solutions.** Not all solutions take place in physical spaces. The Internet and the public digital space have been used for holding debates, generating information and proposing actions that, just like physical interventions, are intended to give new meaning to the city.

- ▶ **Programs.** They are part of a number of activities planned for the long-term, regardless of the time span of a given action or task. They usually involve performing more than one intervention, with all of them being promoted by the same stakeholders in pursuit of the same objective.

- ▶ **Methodologies.** Some experiences involve proposing a way of doing things. Here, cases explain the lessons learned and how processes specific to those interventions were later implemented, so that others may perform their own.

- ▶ **Publications.** They consist of written or audiovisual media that share knowledge derived from the interventions performed. They explain what was done or how it can be done. They may be self-financed or funded by external sponsors, and their goal is to democratize knowledge about the performance of one or more types of intervention.

The categories we used to organize this chapter do not intend to encompass all of the issues that motivate interventions, or to reduce the actions or goals of interventions to a single thematic area. On the contrary, we recognize that interventions may address more than one issue and be characterized in various ways. This is why we encourage establishing new types of links among the actions presented by navigating this publication in different ways.

We invite you to read the cases and identify new connections.

 **Cultural**^{01.–13.}

 **Inclusive**^{14.–26.}

 **Informal**^{27.–38.}

 **Mobile**^{39.–51.}

 **Resilient**^{52.–63.}

 **Green**^{64.–76.}

City

Map of Cases



2.1.

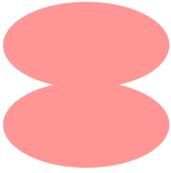
Cultural City

Cultural and educational activation of space

Projects targeted at displaying, giving new meaning to and raising the profile of art, culture and the local historical heritage. They include painting facilities or murals, projects involving neighborhood libraries, or the promotion of reading habits, film screenings, festivals and street banners.

Map of Cases





Cultural City

Cases of study

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Catalog of projects

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01.

Active Territory (*Territorio Activo*)

The co-existence of historic memory and contemporary identities

Authors: Tamara Egger, Pablo Fuentes, Dominique Mashini



Promoters

IDB Cities LAB, Municipality of Arica, Undersecretariat for Regional and Administrative Development, Ciudad de Bolsillo

City/country

Arica, Chile

Website

subdere.gov.cl/programas/división-municipalidades/programa-de-revitalización-de-barrios-e-infraestructura-patrimoni

Social media links

twitter.com/Prbipe_Arica
instagram.com/territorio_activo
facebook.com/TerritorioActivoArica

Year or period

2018-2020

Relevant actors

K-pop dancers, Arica Municipal Theater, residents and merchants of the area.

Project key quote/phrase

“I think it is right to listen to society, to the social body, to work with and for them, because, basically, people always think about the tourist side of Arica but not about the people (...). I never imagined that someone, that the Municipality or other social groups would be interested in us as the k-pop community, and that they

did, is sort of the beginning of a major change” (k-pop dancer).

Type of intervention

Temporary

Keywords

tactical urbanism, heritage, historic downtown, collaborative urbanism, neighborhood upgrading, citizen participation

The timing and scale of large urban projects are very often difficult to synchronize with the daily needs of citizens. The *Territorio Activo* intervention tests different aspects of how civil society can actively and decisively collaborate in these long-term projects, combining immediate citizen-led actions with long-term goals in order to revitalize the historic downtown of Arica, Chile. In recent decades, gentrification processes in the old quarter of Arica have led to high levels of deterioration, urban fragility and loss of recreational spaces. The significant concentration of archeological findings in the area currently hampers all urban transformation interventions, so the purpose of the project was to create a meeting place where historic memory would coexist in harmony with contemporary culture.

Public space was activated with tactical urbanism tools, following the methodology of pocket parks¹ and in collaboration with the local communities, particularly the k-pop dancers, who are the plaza's main users.

The intervention in neighborhoods of heritage value invites us to ponder how the social, cultural and identity layers of a territory are a canvas to think about the future. The city of Arica, in the far north of Chile, presents us with this challenge: the urban landscape and its identity must be part of any effort to model the new forms of appropriation and occupation of its public spaces.

In 2016, Arica was included in the Program of Revitalization of Neighborhoods and Emblematic Heritage Infrastructure (PRBIPE) of the Inter-American Development Bank, which was implemented by the Undersecretariat for Regional and Administrative Development and the Municipality of Arica². This program seeks to implement new management models for the long-term revitalization of neighborhoods and emblematic heritage infrastructure.

Initially, the northern city of Arica faced two new major challenges. One was that the revitalization of its historic downtown could not be limited to its infrastructure attributes, since this program considered that integrating local economic and cultural development, citizen participation and governance were of the utmost importance for this transformation process. The other was that, due to the high number of archaeological findings, it was necessary to think about new forms of intervention over time because, if there is a finding, works can take months and archaeological management plans have to be developed. The Undersecretary for Regional and Administrative Development described the challenges as follows:

“The main difficulties we had in Arica were the archaeological findings because then the projects take much longer and become more complicated and complex, as we know that we cannot intervene or excavate; if there is a finding we may have to stop for a long time.”

As large urban projects take a very long time, it is difficult to synchronize them with citizens' everyday needs because the contemporary social, economic and cultural transformations occur faster than many urban planning processes. The mismatch between execution time and citizens' expectations lead to complexities in communication and distrust in the effectiveness of urban regeneration processes.

How do we achieve active and decisive citizen participation in large urban projects when their execution time may be longer than planned? How can we anticipate transformations that meet people's needs? In Arica, the possibility of activating the historic downtown with experimental tools before intervening in permanent infrastructure became an opportunity to engage the community and raise the socio-spatial appropriation indices.

Challenges of neighborhoods with heritage value

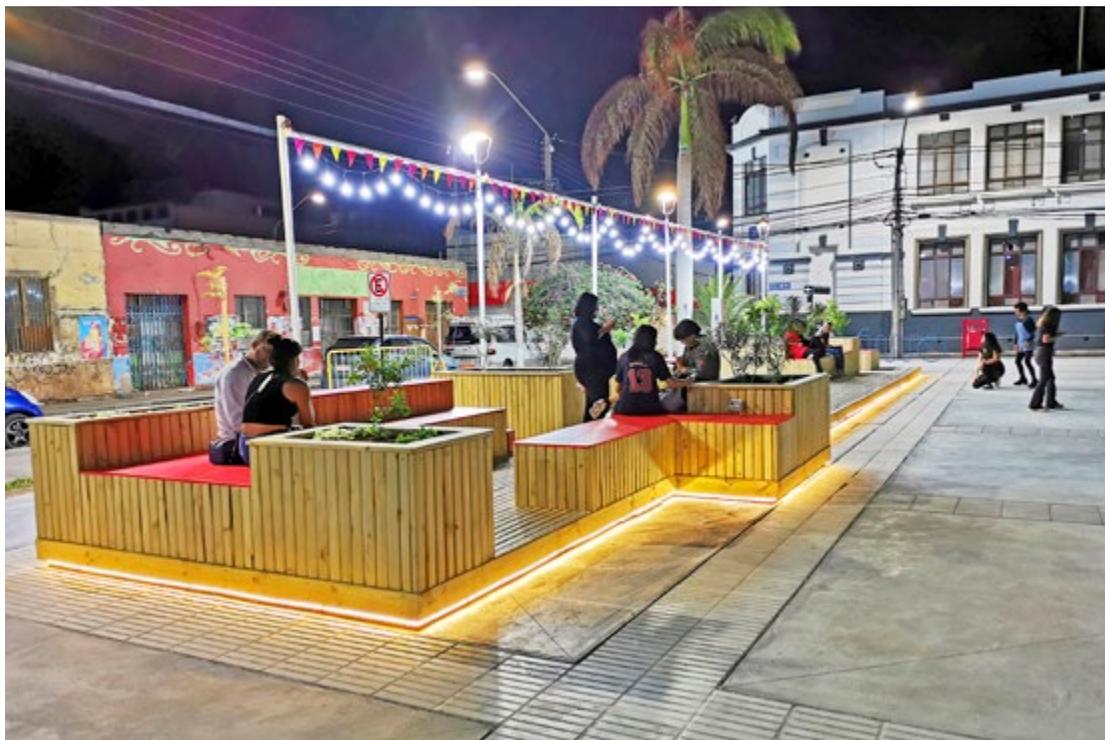
The City of Arica is only 18 km south of the border with Peru and is home to almost 94% of the population in the Arica and Parinacota region. This high urbanization entails complexities associated with expanding cities, where the older neighborhoods with heritage value, which developed historically as residential and commercial areas, have lost their traditional functions over time.

When determining the causes, we face a problem that requires a systemic approach in order to provide solutions that coordinate public and private efforts around a single vision for the neighborhood and generates synergies that can counteract the deterioration dynamics in the territory.

In the context of the Program of Revitalization of Neighborhoods and Emblematic Heritage Infrastructure (PRBIPE), Arica wanted to improve the surroundings of the community in areas with heritage sites by increasing real estate values, economic activity and developing the local culture. The scale of the intervention was the neighborhood and the goal was to establish a new management model that engaged the community in the revitalization of the neighborhood and its emblematic heritage infrastructure.

Arica's historic downtown is the northernmost in Chile and is built on the slopes of the *Morro de Arica* (Arica Hill), a geographical formation where the Coastal Range begins. Archeological findings over 6000 years old have been found in this territory and are part of the local heritage wealth. From this area, the city initially extended northwards and eastwards, where its geography allowed.

The study area included the sectors with the highest concentration of social and urban attributes, including heritage value, housing, public space, services and traditional commercial uses, such as markets and fairs. The neighborhood has been home



to different cultures throughout its history: Pre-hispanic cultures, like the *chinchorros*, indigenous peoples, like the Aymará, and tribes, like the Afro-descendants, which are part of the past and present history of this neighborhood. Likewise, the fact that it is a border city that used to be Peruvian but is now under the territorial administration of Chile —after the Assault and Taking of the *Morro de Arica* during the Pacific War— contributes to the ancestral mix. A resident of the neighborhood described it as follows:

“I would describe it as a neighborhood that is quite brave and has too much history, because there are three or four layers of history here in the neighborhood. I mean, it is a neighborhood that withstood part of the assault and taking of El Morro, it has chinchorro mummies (...) Of course the residents are very proud of their history.”

However, in the historic downtown there are also areas with the highest indices of urban deterioration and fragility. In recent decades, land use has changed: whereas it served multiple purposes in the past, today it is mainly commercial. This trend

contributed to the loss of spaces for recreational activities that strengthen the culture and identity of the city. As the owner of a coffee shop in the area said:

“(...) what I don’t like is losing the old houses. The old houses are protected and cannot be demolished; they are abandoned and much deteriorated, but they are still there. That history, the history of the area should not be lost.”

Motivating both the community and decision-makers to participate in the revitalization process required innovative methodological instruments and tools in order to reach a consensus and a common vision that ensured a correlation of short-term actions, though with a long-term view.

In this sense, the *Territorio Activo* project postulated the hypothesis that, by engaging different agents in the process of creating better public spaces, the historic downtown of Arica could be activated as a meeting, recreation and identity place for all its citizens and visitors.

Different uses for different users

By applying a strategy that seeks to achieve a variety of uses that meet the needs of local actors, accessible, inclusive and sustainable public spaces were created as territories with an identity that coexisted with the historic heritage of Arica. This strategy was tested in a pilot process to recover abandoned spaces with high activation potential through the use of tactical activation tools.

The tool used for *Territorio Activo* was the pocket park methodology, which is based on the experience in Santiago de Chile. This methodology proposes a temporary transformation of unused publicly owned plots intended for other investments in open space. As part of its itinerant nature, all the elements used in the experiment may be transferred to another site at the end of the intervention.

First, empty plots that are perceived by the community as unsafe places, waste dumps or indicators of real estate speculation are identified in the urban context. Following a collaborative design process, a temporary occupation of these spaces is proposed to measure the impact of an experimental activation. Finally, the measurement process is expected to provide the necessary information to implement long-term strategies in the framework of an urban revitalization plan.

At the selected site, the Theater Esplanade, groups of k-pop dancers that met daily in the plaza were identified as predetermining users, mainly because it was a free space with a reflecting facade that served as a mirror to practice dancing.

The term k-pop or Korean wave (*hallyu*) refers to the significant increase in popularity of South Korean entertainment and culture in Asia since the 1990's and, more recently, in other parts of the world (Jin, 2012). The rapper and Korean composer PSY is known for his humorous videos and theater performances, as well as his simple Gangnam Style, which is the most watched k-pop video on YouTube (Officialpsy, 2012).

Social media brought *hallyu* to Chile over ten years ago. According to K-Pop Radar (kpop-radar.com), between July 1st, 2019 and June 30th, 2020, 6.1 billion tweets about k-pop were posted in the world and Chile is one of the twenty countries in which it is most popular. Throughout the country, there are groups of young people that practice the dance in urban public spaces.

Furthermore, the historic downtown is the main civic space for all citizens. In addition to the dancers, other social groups, including residents, children, merchants and visitors, participated. As a k-pop dancer from the neighborhood said: "I must say that, apart from the neighbors, there were also children and for us that is kind of unusual, because normally activities are not organized with the children in mind."

From underutilized plots to active spaces

The intervention was structured in five successive stages, from the initial conceptualization to the final materialization and subsequent evaluation.

First, different plots with potential for an intervention were preselected based on the following six eligibility criteria: (1) access by public transport, (2) presence of significant pedestrian flows, (3) safety of the environment, (4) delimited space and (5) presence of blind dividing walls, preferably of public property.

On this basis, twelve underutilized plots in the historic downtown of Arica were evaluated; the site selected for the pilot intervention was the Theater Esplanade because it is in front of the Arica Theater and the Consistorial building, and is also easily accessible on foot and by public transport; but, mainly, because of the daily presence of dozens of young people practicing k-pop choreographies in front of the glazed facade of a building.

After the site was selected, two citizen participation workshops, mainly with young k-pop dancers from Arica between the ages of 13 and 18, were organized. In the first workshop they identified the positive and negative elements of the neighborhood and also prioritized different activities that they would like at the site. The output of this workshop defined the need to improve the cracked concrete floor that posed a risk for the dancers. They also proposed installing a shading cover to provide shelter from the sun during rehearsals, electrical connections to keep the music on, artificial lighting to lengthen the rehearsal time, and seats to rest during the breaks. Finally, the participants mentioned the lack of colors and vegetation that would make the site more pleasant.

Based on these inputs, the intervention was divided into two phases: first, the preliminary works, for which the Municipality of Arica was responsible, included improving the floor, installing street lighting and relocating the existing urban furniture. In the





second phase, tactical urbanism was put into practice, including the design of a planned pine wood deck and the installation of electrical outlets, seats, vegetation, artificial lighting and universal accessibility.

The first design proposal was presented at a validation workshop that was attended by approximately one hundred residents, who supplemented the opinion of the k-pop collectives. The participants most valued the presence of a food truck, the electrical outlets and the installation of the new mirror that increased the required reflecting surface to rehearse the choreographies. The residents valued the presence of seats and vegetation because they improved the quality of the environment in the city center.

The necessary works to initiate the project were carried out by the Municipality in 2019 and completed in December of that year. As the historic downtown of Arica is in an area of very high archaeological value

and remains of artifacts were found while the previous works were being performed, the original time frame had to be extended.

Between January and February 2020, the Ciudad de Bolsillo team completed the tactical urbanism works, which were inaugurated within the framework of the first, three-day tactical interventions festival known as *Placemaking Territorio Activo*.

One of the unfinished issues of this project is that it was not possible to install the shading cover due to the size of the area and the strong winds that blow in Arica. This cover required a more robust and durable architectural design than a tactical urbanism solution could provide, so recommendations for the design of a future, permanent solution were given. As a resident said: "The fact that until this day the mural is there, is very simple yet very significant, it really improves that corner, it looks very nice."

Impact

In March 2020, a total of sixty-eight people that walked the esplanade of the Municipal Theater of Arica were surveyed. Fifty-eight percent of the respondents were women, who are the main users of the esplanade. Four out of every five persons surveyed lived in the Historic Downtown and were in the 15-19 and 30-59 age groups. Additionally, pedestrian flows were measured before and after the intervention.

The survey results and *ex post* measurements confirmed an increase in pedestrian flow —mainly adolescents—, more hours of use, until late afternoon, and an increased perception of safety among the young women that occupy the space and who had stated that they had been subject to sexual harassment in public space.

Another effect of the intervention was the appearance of new activities that complemented urban dancing, such as gatherings at lunchtime and in the afternoon or before the start of the cultural activities at the theater, outdoor exhibits that were previously organized inside the theater, and the use of the space for entrepreneurship fairs on the wooden deck.

Conclusions

The “Evaluation study and reactivation strategy for the Historic Downtown of Arica” was conducted with remote digital tools on account of the lockdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic. First, the study describes the process of *Territorio Activo*, including the perceptions and evaluations of the residents and users, as well as the work among the institutions that participated in the different PRBIPE projects.

Second, it describes the perceptions and evaluation of the community regarding the Historic Downtown of Arica and the heritage or emblematic buildings in the area, as a basis for future projects of the program.

Of the people that used the Theater Esplanade and were included in the sample, 68% used it to rest, 22% as a gathering or meeting place, and 10% as a space to take a stroll, dance, wait for public transport or for other purposes, such as charging their cell phone or watching the young k-pop dancers that use the space.

The people’s assessment about the Esplanade intervention was quite positive: 76% graded it as a six or seven over ten, whereas 96% agreed with

implementing similar interventions in other parts of the city.

The technical advice offered to local stakeholders provided new methodologies for community work and enabled active participation by the community. These lessons permeated down to the municipal teams, which replicated these methodologies for other activities organized by the Municipality (Doering Urrutia and Fuentes Flores, 2020).

“The most important thing is that they planted vegetation, a few small trees, installed seats that are so important (...) It’s a place that before, when we saw it, we all said ‘why don’t they do something there? It’s a large space where something can be done, why don’t they do something?’ and then they did.” (Coffee shop owner).

“We notice the work they did, with so many details, so much love, the people that were working on this really cared, I mean preparing this beautiful event for us.” (A resident of the neighborhood).

Reflections and lessons learned

The experimental process that was used for *Territorio Activo* enabled the construction of new ways of inhabiting public space to revitalize the historic downtown of the city, not only with better infrastructure but also with the value of today’s social dynamics in contemporary urban space. Or, as Zygmunt Bauman (2005) said: “We are aware that ‘affiliation’ and ‘identity’ are not carved in stone, that they are not secured by lifelong guarantees, that they are highly subject to negotiation and can be revoked.”

Both traditionally and historically, Arica has been the Chilean city that dances most. The process prompted by *Territorio Activo* integrated k-pop dancing as a relevant practice in public space and is therefore an intervention that acknowledges one of the most typical aspects of Arica’s tradition under the gaze of young people and emerging cultural forms.

Undoubtedly, an inclusive and democratic space with a variety of uses, that fosters opportunities for gathering and interaction, was created: a pleasant place for children, youth, adults and senior citizens to coexist. This is reflected in the favorable evaluation of the different users.

Finally, this collaborative process established competencies in the neighborhood, the institutions and, especially, in those who were witnesses to these twenty months of work that placed people and future generations at the center of contemporary urban transformation.

The inclusion of the community in the process of thinking about public spaces and the co-creation of the city, listening to and working with and for the residents, is a work methodology that, it seems, has come to Arica to stay.

“Beyond the complexities of the work we have been doing, the historic downtown will continue seeing change and improvements. The residents notice it with these, mainly tactical urbanism activities. They also have a better disposition and this spills over to the rest of the city; now we will implement emergency bicycle lanes in other areas.” (Municipality of Arica). 🍷

1. See ciudaddebolsillo.com

2. For more information see <http://www.subdere.gov.cl/programas/división-municipalidades/programa-de-revitalización-de-barrios-e-infraestructura-patrimoni>



02. Lab SLZ

Ephemeral Urban Laboratory

Authors: Leonardo Brawl Márquez, Isadora Scopel Simon, Juan Pablo López Gross



Promoters

TransLAB.URB, IDB | Inter-American Development Bank, Municipality of São Luís

City/country

São Luís, Brazil

Website

translaburb.cc

Social media links

twitter.com/TransLabUrb

instagram.com/translab.urb/

facebook.com/TransLAB.URB/

Year or period

2018

Relevant actors

Neighborhood, universities, Urbanismo Vivo, Instituto Federal, basic and fundamental education schools, local government, art collectives, mobility collectives, folkloric groups, intellectuals, researchers, artists and activists.

Project key quote/phrase

To bring together urban experimentation and active

listening to collectively build the layers of the population's desires in pursuit of the future of their territory.

Type of intervention

Ephemeral

Keywords

participation, co-creation, citizen laboratory, collaboration, social innovation, collaborative urbanism, heritage, historic downtown

The *Laboratorio Urbano Efímero* of São Luís (São Luís Ephemeral Laboratory) was a temporary occupation of the *Galeria Trapiche* that is in the abandoned warehouses of the *Complexo Santo Ângelo* in the historic downtown of the City of São Luís, Maranhão, Brazil.

The Laboratory included twenty-one days of a cycle of urban social innovation activities. SLZ Lab proposed an experience, based on the principles of citizen laboratories, that brought the residents of the city —particularly those of the historic downtown and adjacent neighborhoods— closer to the decision-making process regarding the future use of the historic public buildings known as the *Complexo Santo Ângelo*.

Left: Festive event in the patio.

The *Galeria Trapiche* and the surroundings of the *Complexo Santo Ângelo* warehouses were temporarily occupied between August 27th and September 17th, 2018. The goal was to create a space to meet, exchange ideas, learn about and link existing projects, ideas or initiatives promoted by different collectives of São Luís, and thus help to jointly develop ideas about new uses for the warehouses.

As a result, São Luís experienced a cycle of urban social innovation activities in the context of the historic downtown. The goal of occupying the territory with an Ephemeral Urban Laboratory was to develop in residents a sense of belonging and recognition of their own place, making it possible to identify the collective wills and desires to co-design spaces and develop programs of public interest and common use. This process was applied for the co-creation of guidelines to develop the program for the warehouse repurposing project.

The SLZ Lab was configured as a collaborative space open to the entire community.

The basic concept was to promote daily meetings to exchange experiences about ongoing projects and initiatives in the city, as well as other ideas that could be implemented. It was a moment to strengthen and create new citizen networks in São Luís.

Social and spatial contextualization

São Luís, the capital city of the State of Maranhão, is in the north of the Northeast Region of Brazil, adjacent to the Amazon area. It is built on the Upaon-Açu Island and is the only city in Brazil founded by the French in 1612. Due to the sequence of its historic events, its urban and architectural settings are of heritage interest.

As in other Brazilian cities, especially in this region, the community is marked by significant social inequality. In this context, among other actions carried out in the district by the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), the IDB Cities LAB identified the opportunity to promote an intervention experience in line with social innovation principles and, to that end, invited the TransLAB.URB collective to develop an idea on how to attain this purpose. The collective proposed the implementation of an Ephemeral Urban Laboratory at the intervention site with a unique approach based on citizen laboratories, which are spaces — physical and/or virtual— where citizen participation processes are promoted in order to stimulate collaboration, experimentation and networking through open social innovation. These laboratories seek to solve daily problems of society by applying collective intelligence and a participative approach, strengthening and developing a sense of belonging and the recognition of the site itself.

The intervention area is of great historic interest, as it was declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO. However, from the heritage viewpoint, its current significant state of neglect has given rise to social vulnerability scenarios that affect the quality of life of the workers, students and visitors in the area.

An example of this problem is the 4800m² of the *Complexo Santo Ângelo* warehouses, which were significantly deteriorated, with some parts in ruins and others precariously occupied. In spite of being close to universities, schools and government buildings in the historic downtown of São Luís, their abandonment created very negative social dynamics, mainly due to the feeling that the place was insecure and dangerous for everyone.

The challenge was to propose a variety of open and attractive activities for the population that would draw attention to the complex and provide a new view of this territory: a place full of potential, particularly for human development through culture and the local economy.

A laboratory as a methodology

The SLZ Lab applied the methodology presented in the publication *Co-creation of Guidelines for Public Interest Territories* (TransLAB.URB, n.d.) to unveil, together with the population, a sensitive layer of information about the warehouses and



Above: Local Talk / Pecha Kucha

Below: Sensory exploration workshop - Walk organized by Urbanismo Vivo

identify collective wills, interests and desires in order to co-design spaces and programs for their use with a self-management logic. At the end of the process implemented by the Laboratory, the output included multiple results with different approaches and the intangible benefits of urban pedagogy¹ practices with the participants. The final report also served as a social innovation instrument for state administration routines, as the guidelines were included in the public tender process; this could modify existing operations or lead to new policies that take into account the sensitive layer of information developed with the population.

The approach was based on the use of tools that enable citizen participation.

First there is a stimulation stage with narratives and stories, followed by suggested activities to live the experience of open and friendly environments, and the last stage involves participation and co-creation of future scenarios.

The base methodology and all the tools used for the SLZ LAB were low cost and high impact; they relied on dynamics that required few materials and on a set of reproducible activities that made the Ephemeral Urban Laboratory a methodology in itself.

Throughout the twenty-one days that the warehouses were activated with the Ephemeral Laboratory, different tools were suggested to capture sensitive data, some of which were included in the scheduled co-creation weekly activities: *La Deriva* (the Drift) (a psycho-geographic walking exercise for a sensory exploration of a territory), *Exorcismo Urbano* (Urban Exorcism) (a nighttime exercise to explore a territory based on the creation of masks and a walk), *Habla Local | Pecha Kucha*² (Local Talk | Pecha Kucha) (a local network recognition exercise that required making seven minute “lightning” presentations on

existing projects in the territory), an invitation to submit proposals for workshops and patio uses, mappings, Thematic Groups (nights of conversation with local and external experts, with a focus on the problems of the territory), different workshops designed in advance, and Working Groups (an invitation to create a project team on a specific subject that would be developed by the Laboratory). Other tools, such as interactive maps and the Expectations Mural, were kept in the SLZ LAB space throughout the period of the Laboratory.

An important tool used in the Laboratory was the mapping of agents and local initiatives, which added different data from multiple platforms and the actions performed by Laboratory facilitators. Through visits to the different spaces used by local actors, open invitations and social media posts of the relevant projects and initiatives for the city, we were able to promote interaction and organize experiences among all of them, with the purpose of strengthening, increasing and creating new local networks.

One of the goals of this methodology was to promote specific guidelines, through listening and taking into account the citizens’ opinions, to design the public tender documents for the renovation of the *Complexo Santo Ângelo* warehouses, which the São Luis Municipality had to carry out with a loan from the Inter-American Development Bank.

Laboratory stages

The activities of the Ephemeral Urban Laboratory were organized into four stages.

🌀 **Week 00.** Reserved for pre-production, surveying the area and contacting the local support team. In this stage some actions to restore the infrastructure in place were performed, such as weeding and clearing, as well as installing outdoor lighting, an open Internet network and essential furniture. Furthermore, the first in-person meetings were held with members of the Special Projects Department of the Municipality of São Luis and other city agents involved in restoring the area of the warehouses. Simultaneously, the first presentations were delivered at higher education institutions in the region, to provide information on the activities that would be conducted and invite local students to actively participate.



Above: Exorcism, Ephemeral Architecture Working Group
Below left: Intervention by the Tactical Urbanism Working Group
Below right: Co-creation workshop

- **Week 01.** In this stage, the open program for the public was officially launched and communication about the twenty-one days of the Ephemeral Laboratory was further strengthened. It was a week focused on receiving all the people that had questions about the activities, mapping the agents and initiatives, and having countless conversations to invite the population. The first significant round to co-create the guidelines was also held.
- **Week 02.** This week was focused on implementing the entire Open Agenda, the name given to the schedule of activities, which included the structural proposals developed by the in-house team (such as Thematic Groups and workshops) and the proposals from local agents based on the open invitations. More people and related initiatives joined at this stage, supplementing the activities suggested by the Laboratory.
- **Week 03.** This week was dedicated to different activities, particularly festive actions with music, art and dancing. Furthermore, three Working Groups and local agents met to try and give continuity to the processes and activities of the previous weeks and define the next steps for the Laboratory. Throughout this stage the team's documentary producer provided comprehensive support.

The work was geared to showing people of all sectors of society —civil society, academia, private businesses and the public sector— a real possibility of having a participative and collaborative process that took into account the population and its desire to have a place for personal and cultural development that addressed issues such as generation of income, the preservation of traditional cultures, workshops for children and senior adults, creative and solidarity economy, education and training in art, technology tools and social technologies.

Throughout the entire Ephemeral Laboratory, all the activities were conducted in a transparent, inclusive and open manner, even during the first week of pre-production. In addition to keeping an office open twelve hours a day at the site of the intervention, information on all the activities was posted on different

social media and communication channels, always emphasizing that this was an open, collaborative process that excluded no one.

The twenty-one days of activities open to the public were known as the Standard Week and offered the possibility of participating in the structuring activities proposed by the TransLAB.URB team in the morning, afternoon or evening. These activities were supplemented with the local community's proposals that were received through invitations and open calls.

The schedule had no downtime, as the SLZ Lab was a space that was open to the public at all times, receiving visitors, curious citizens, groups from different organizations, schools, universities and businesses from all parts of the city.

Important to note is the participation of two guest urban planners, members of the Urbanismo Vivo collective, from Buenos Aires, Argentina, who joined the Laboratory and the TransLAB.URB team in the second week of the general schedule. They developed the mapping Working Group, proposed tools for the specific workshops on affective cartography and mapping and joined another Working Group that was created to daily follow-up and collect Laboratory data that would be later systematized for the subsequent evaluation stage and included in the final report with the results.

Impact and results

To better understand the impacts of implementing the São Luís Ephemeral Urban Laboratory, different quantitative and qualitative measurement tools were used throughout the process, including surveys, recounting, in-depth interviews, different types of mapping, photographs, videos and interactive dynamics, among others. During the twenty-one days of the SLZ Lab, approximately three thousand people fully participated in the activities. The Laboratory was present in all traditional communication media and there was also much interaction on social media.

The SLZ Lab was able to foster the reunion of a significant part of the population with the *Complexo Santo Ângelo* warehouses, mainly with the residents of the immediate surroundings of the historic downtown who, in addition, took advantage of the opportunity to participate in an open and collective process to develop proposals for possible future scenarios linked to the local reality. The experiences

created by the Laboratory also strengthened and created new networks among different social actors that continue to this day.

Conclusions

The main outcomes of the Ephemeral Urban Laboratory proved that the community had great interest in the future use of the *Complejo Santo Ángel* warehouses, including social, economic and cultural uses, with a focus on local development. Throughout the process, the interdisciplinary team of the TransLAB.URB collective was strategically positioned as an external agent so as not to have any preconceived interpretation of this territory and focus only on capturing pre-existing flows of information and those that arose from the triggers provided by the Laboratory. In addition to being observers, the team also functioned as the “orchestra conductor” of the process, projecting favorable situations to capture the sensitive layer of desires and volitions of the community and formulating hypotheses to validate or dismiss the proposed activities according to the population’s reactions.

Reflections and lessons learned

Working on the development of truly transparent and open collaborative urban planning proposals is a complex process. A strategic view is fundamental to implement tools for citizen mobilization and participation, and consultation and co-creation of guidelines, engaging different stakeholders of civil society, academia, businesses and the public sector.

Good communication is key to achieve a broader reach. Furthermore, the different characteristics of the population, as well as the culture and place, should be considered in order to develop communication that has greater possibilities of attracting the attention and interest of local actors.

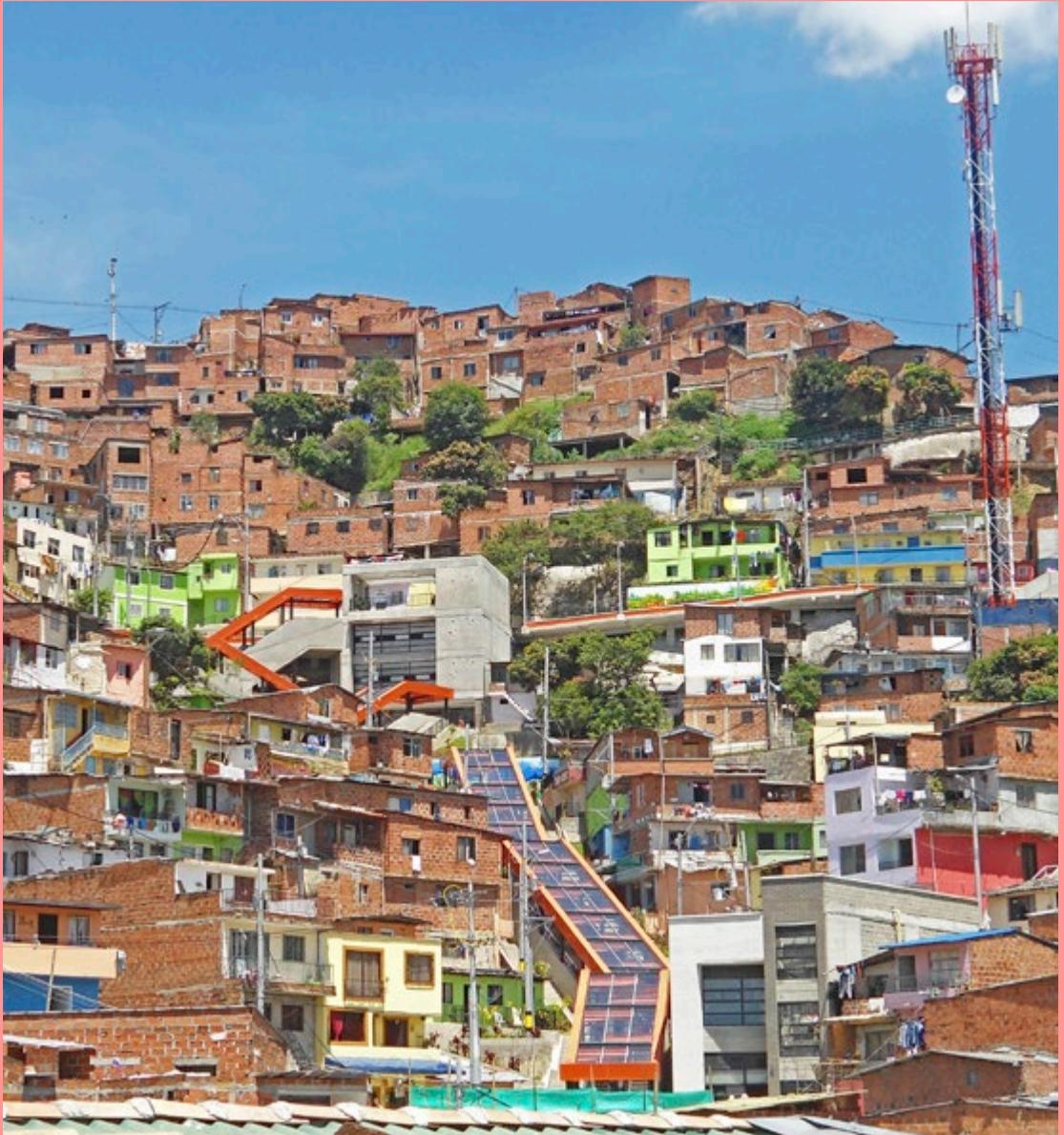
It is important to note that, although a longer process could have generated more possibilities to exchange ideas with the local population, ephemeral experiences are just agile pilot projects, able to generate the initial thoughts which may be translated into public policies that acknowledge the stages of participative processes as an essential part of urban transformation projects. 🍷

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1. In an educational city model, urban pedagogy consists of using the city as the learning content. For more information, see Páramo, P. (2009). *Pedagogía Urbana: elementos para su delimitación como campo de conocimiento*.
 2. Pecha Kucha is an event where simple and informal presentations are delivered about a topic, with twenty slides being displayed for twenty seconds each. The presenters are usually from the fields of design, architecture, photography and art, although now business and software development have also been included.

03. Commune 13

Popular art as a means of consolidating
competitive neighborhoods

Author: Carlos Escobar



Promoters

Medellín Mayor's Office, Urban Development Company (*Empresa de Desarrollo Urbano*) and Commune 13 residents

City/country

Medellín, Colombia

Year or period

2007-2013

Relevant actors

Medellín Mayor's Office, Urban Development Company, Commune 13 residents.

Project key quote/phrase

Projects designed to upgrade informal settlements, in addition to creating practical solutions by building infrastructure, can and should also create economic growth opportunities for the poor communities who reside in them.

Type of intervention

Program, Permanent

Keywords

neighborhood upgrading, competitive neighborhoods, community initiative, street art, urban innovation, poverty reduction

Despite the fact that programs and projects aimed at upgrading informal settlements have focused on improving quality of life for the most marginalized communities, they have not managed to reduce poverty indicators in Latin America and the Caribbean. However, the Integral Urban Project (*Proyecto Urbano Integral*, PUI) in Commune 13 in the city of Medellín, Colombia, exemplifies the power of civil society to transform infrastructure such as plazas, streets, pedestrian paths and facilities into authentic instruments of integration and economic development. Thanks to community initiatives and through urban and popular art, what at first resembled a traditional neighborhood upgrading project ended up becoming a paradigm for what can be a new generation of informal neighborhood upgrade projects, which in addition to improving physical surroundings create economic development opportunities for the region's poorest communities.

In Latin America and the Caribbean, projects to upgrade informal neighborhoods have focused on providing basic services, improving mobility and accessibility, expanding public spaces and facilities, and legalizing and regularizing these areas. To this end, the region's governments have allocated millions in resources for infrastructure projects and legal actions. However, in the city of Medellín, Colombia, the Integral Urban Project (PUI) in Commune 13 brought about not only physical and spatial transformations but also significant social, cultural and economic changes, which have made it possible to integrate this commune with the rest of the city.

The city of Medellín is divided into 16 communes, one of which, Commune 13, is located in the west of the city. Spanning an area of almost 450 hectares, divided into 23 neighborhoods that house close to 143,000 inhabitants (Departamento Administrativo Nacional de Estadística, 2010), 60% of this commune has developed through informal urbanization processes (Samper, 2020), giving rise to severe degradation of natural resources, poor mobility and accessibility, significant shortage of public spaces and facilities, and scarce implementation of public policies and programs. These conditions, in addition to the high levels of poverty experienced by these communities¹, led to people involved in criminal activity coming onto the scene to exploit the delicate economic situation, using the millions generated by their illicit activities to lure part of the commune's population to work with them. Eventually the commune became one of the most violent places in Colombia and the world, with 1,196 homicides recorded between 2003 and 2012 (Observatorio de Política Públicas, 2012). In the year 2010, the commune's homicide rate matched that of cities such as Kandahar and Ciudad Juárez, rated the two most violent cities in the world that year (Consejo Ciudadano para la Seguridad Pública y la Justicia Social, 2010).

As a result, informal settlements in this commune experienced multiple forms of segregation, from the physical and spatial, technical and legal, institutional, social, and economic perspective, and it was within this complex context that the PUI was developed. With its wide-ranging territorial scope and its scale, this urban intervention strategy has tackled many of these existing types of segregation.

In order to revert some of the aforementioned types of segregation, the PUI carried out *integration initiatives* that can be classified into the following three categories:

- 3 **Institutional integration.** These initiatives were implemented under the leadership of the mayor's office, which coordinated the municipal government entities involved in developing the city to work together on the ground in a cooperative fashion, in order to optimize use of economic and technical resources, make public administration more efficient and improve the image of the municipality in the eyes of citizens.
- 3 **Physical and spatial integration.** The design and implementation of high-quality infrastructure projects sought to create more public spaces, thereby enhancing social interaction and pedestrian and vehicular mobility, facilitating integration and unhindered access to the area. Furthermore, by incorporating more public service facilities or buildings, the aim was to increase the scope of public policies and programs, thus improving the relationship between society and the state.
- 3 **Social integration.** This was aimed at addressing communities' resistance to public initiatives by providing leadership training for members of community organizations, and fostering community participation in the design, development and implementation of infrastructure projects.

Coordinating all these activities was made possible by the methodology developed by the municipality and implemented by the Urban Development Company (EDU, by its Spanish acronym). This agency has all the local government's tools for urban development in a specific area, and applies them jointly with social organizations, natural leaders and the wider community.

This methodology was composed of three stages: in the first stage, that of diagnosis and formulation, a physical and social analysis of the area helped to identify the main problems on the ground, and policies and strategies to tackle these issues were formulated. In the second stage, related to development, these policies and strategies were prioritized



through a planning process, leading to a master plan that identified and defined the locations of strategic projects and interventions, which were designed in detail at a later stage. Finally, during the consolidation stage, urban proposals and designs became a reality, and were built for the community's use.

In addition to infrastructure projects, this methodology set forth a number of social initiatives to address critical issues, such as the community's distrust in the state and the lack of importance given to public spaces.

Three main priorities were identified: firstly, to *regain the trust of the community* through a process that allowed the community's residents to voice their main needs and to, in cooperation with institutions, put forward their own proposals and solutions. Secondly, to *promote community participation* through a shared work agenda between the community and the mayor's office. Thanks to this, contributions and data were captured that were key for the joint creation of the master plan, projects and interventions. The final priority was to *achieve adequate use and appropriation of interventions*, made possible by the community's participation in the social agenda, used to roll out projects that, in addition to providing functional solutions to their needs, also reflected their culture, tradition and way of life. These projects were successfully incorporated into the daily life of the commune's residents and as a consequence are being used appropriately.



Thanks to the implementation of the PUI, with an investment of 35 million dollars between 2007 and 2012, 8 parks, 4 public buildings, 2 sports units were created. Furthermore, 5 roads for motor vehicles and 2 pedestrian paths in Commune 13 were upgraded, one of which included a public escalator system. These works, which spanned an area of over 110,000m², were created thanks to the participation of 171,491 people in 13,965 social interventions and to the 2341 jobs that were generated (Empresa de Desarrollo Urbano, n.d).

Community art and new social dynamics

What at first appeared to be a neighborhood upgrading project focused exclusively on infrastructure and restoring community-institutional relations, took an unexpected turn thanks to a community initiative in which groups of young painters and graffiti artists from the commune suggested creating murals for the retaining walls and facade that formed part of the newly built infrastructures. At first, this seemed to oppose the “almost clinical and sterile” look of the newly constructed works, which is of such importance to planners, town planners and architects. However, the quality of the proposed murals and the idea of using them as a means for children and young people to learn an artistic technique, were sufficient arguments to garner support for these creative processes that would foster a sense of ownership in these communities. Over time, this initiative incorporated other artistic expressions such as music, dance and oral tradition, and has spread to other newly erected and pre-existing walls, facades, small plazas, paths and public stairways throughout the commune, giving rise to a cultural and artistic movement that has been key to ensuring the appropriation and vitality of the new infrastructures. In addition to providing technical and/or functional solutions, these infrastructures have also become the platform for displaying expressions of urban art deeply rooted in the tradition of these communities.

Therefore, infrastructures such as *reversaderos*², escalators, or the Viaduct,³ designed to improve mobility and accessibility for the approximately fifteen thousand people (Medellín Mayor’s Office, 2015) who live in highly mountainous neighborhoods with little vehicular access, such as Las Independencias neighborhoods,⁴ have enabled thousands of people

in the city and from the world to visit a large open-air exhibition of urban or popular art. These new visitors bring with them economic resources that are being captured by the communities that live in these neighborhoods, through a special tour package they themselves created, unique in the city, called *El Graffitour*. The package consists of tourist services offering guided tours that tell stories of poverty, violence, rebirth and change experienced by residents of this commune. Their stories are told through murals, music, dance, and other forms of popular art, which, since 2012, have been appropriating the spaces created by the PUI. To give an idea of the scope of this new dynamic, in the month of July 2019 alone, according to the Secretariat of Economic Development of the Medellín Mayor’s Office, more than forty-two thousand visitors from all over the world paid between twenty and thirty dollars for these tourist services, making this the most-visited area in the city. Naturally, as a complement to this customized tour, small shops selling products such as souvenirs, traditional food and drinks have been set up to meet the basic needs of these new visitors.

The unanticipated interchange between the residents of Commune 13 and people from other parts of the city and the world, as a result of community initiatives to encourage appropriation of the new infrastructures, has generated significant economic resources that are being translated into opportunities for growth and economic development for some of the poorest communities in the city of Medellín. These factors have been very influential in improving the quality of life index in this commune, which went from 79.35 in 2009 to 81.8 in 2014 and in reducing the homicide rate, from 172.5 per 100,000 inhabitants in 2010 to 45.9 in 2014.⁵

Final reflections

The transformation of Commune 13 brought about by the PUI enables us to dream about a new generation of informal neighborhood upgrades in Latin America and the Caribbean, which would not only provide infrastructure or legal certainty and security for inhabitants, but also opportunities for economic growth in order to reduce poverty indicators in these communities. According to ECLAC (2019), in 2017 alone, social investment in Latin America and the Caribbean accounted for 11.5% of the region’s GDP.⁶ However,



poverty indicators have been rising over the last six years, and with them informal settlements.⁷ For this reason, the economic dynamics of urban and popular culture that have gained traction in Commune 13 following infrastructure developments facilitated by the PUI, give us reason to believe that they are a means of making improvements at a physical, social and institutional level, and of generating economic development and integration.

This new generation of informal neighborhood upgrades focuses on the physical, social, institutional, legal and economic integration of informal settlements with the cities in which they are located. The aim is to consolidate what could be called *competitive neighborhoods*, which not only guarantee urban environmental quality, but also the social and economic sustainability of their residents. For this to happen, the following three principles should be put into practice:

- ❸ It is necessary to build a vision for the future for these areas that is born out of assets inherent in informal settlements and their inhabitants, which will create scenarios of economic competitiveness at the municipal, national and even regional level. Prospective planning processes make it possible to identify the strategic physical and spatial interventions that allow the desired future for each of these places to be attained, as well as the integration efforts necessary to make that future possible.
- ❸ To this end, it is necessary to generate processes of human interaction and social integration by boosting the positive image of these areas. Restoring and turning culture, landscape, environmental resources or tradition into value creating assets can convert these places into go-to destinations that attract visitors from all over, and can trigger processes of human and social integration.

- 3. Finally, since human interchange also means economic interchange, it is necessary to *foster value capture*. The new floating population brings with it resources that can and should be captured by local residents through a supply of goods and services developed in line with the community's skills and assets and the interventions performed within the framework of the neighborhood upgrading project. This will increase the community's economic capacity and the possibility of having the necessary resources to meet their most basic needs.

In conclusion, the functional, technical and legal interventions implemented to date in these areas have not lowered poverty indicators. It is therefore necessary to change the approach used by informal settlement upgrading projects so that their interventions and infrastructures go beyond improving the physical, spatial and urban conditions to actually generate a better economic situation for the poor communities who live there, thereby enabling them to have more dignified living conditions. 3

1. According to the 2013 Local Development Plan (*Plan de Desarrollo Local*) for Commune 13, developed by the Mayor's Office of Medellín, 65.34% of heads of households in this commune received no income from work, and 8 out of 10 heads of households in employment received a monthly income equal to or less than the statutory minimum wage for Colombia.

2. The few roads that allow vehicular access to the settlements located to the south of Commune 13 are known as *reversaderos*. The unique feature of these roads is that they only connect with pedestrian paths, not the urban vehicular network.

3. The Viaduct is the pedestrian pathway built by the PUI on the hillside located south of Commune 13, home to the Independencia I, II and III neighborhoods.

4. The neighborhood Las Independencias is divided into Independencia I, II and III.

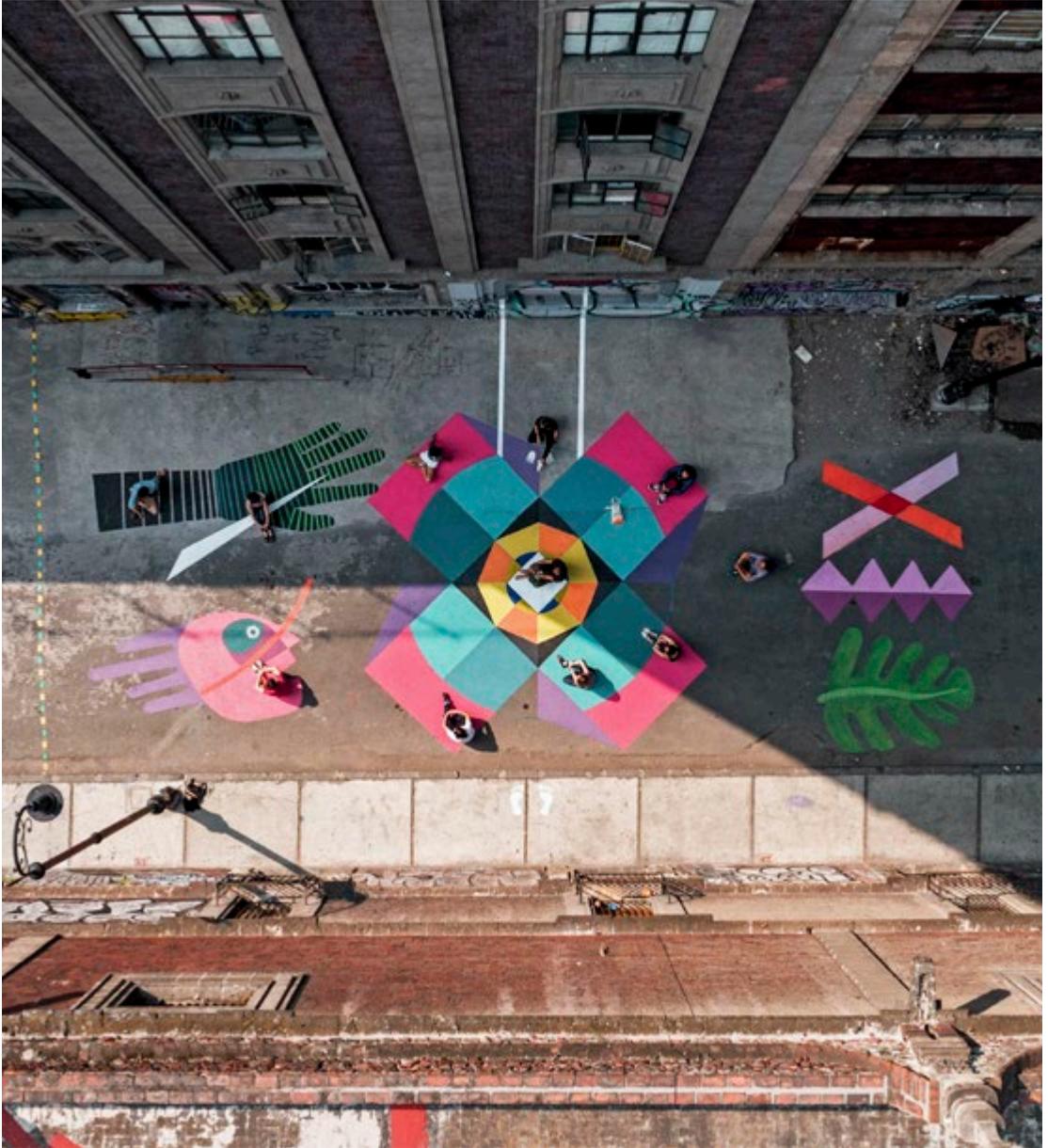
5. Source: Information Division of the Administrative Planning Department (DAP), Medellín Mayor's Office.

6. Source: Database of social investment in Latin America and the Caribbean, developed by the Social Development Division of ECLAC, in cooperation with countries of the region.

7. According to the Social Panorama of Latin America Report 2019, the number of people living in poverty and extreme poverty in Latin America, in millions of persons, is: 164 (2014), 174 (2015), 181 (2016), 184 (2017), 185 (2018) and 191 (2019).

04. Urban Kintsugi

Giving new meaning to the use of public space



Promoters

Urbanismo Vivo, Artículo 41, Atea, Barriopolis

City/country

Mexico City, Mexico

Website

<https://www.plataformaarquitectura.cl/909982/kintsugi-urbano-un-proyecto-de-transformacion-urbana-en-mexico>

Year or period

2018

Institutional partners

Inter-American Development Bank, Lugares Públicos.

Relevant actors

Bulique, Corrientes, Dr. Frutas, Enchulame la bici, Taller Pavón, La nave maker, TransLAB.URB, Lelo, Su-Yin-Wong Workshop, Pan y Rosas Textiles, Bici.on, Taller Naranjo, Pasaporte Cultural, Mana, Carolina Mesías.

Type of intervention

Ephemeral, Urban Devices

Description

The intervention took place in one of the most deteriorated areas of the historic downtown of Mexico City. It consisted of a public activation day which leveraged the neighborhood's social capital for fully reclaiming this space. Paying tribute to the philosophy of the Japanese *kintsugi* technique, the purpose of the activity was to improve the appearance and perception of the neighborhood in a recreational and participatory way, giving visibility to little-noticed aspects of the site through a temporary activity which involved repairing objects collectively, showing the true value of local crafts and various tactical interventions.

“A crack is an opportunity: kintsugi is a Japanese technique for restoring ceramics using gold, so that the crack itself becomes visible. Not only does this action change the object’s aspect, but it also adds value to it, since now the object also has a history. Urban Kintsugi extrapolates this concept to enoble, beautify and add value to a crack in the urban landscape.”



05.

Activa la Huaca, Santa Cruz

Archaeological spaces for exploration, enjoyment and learning

Promoter

Activa la Huaca

City/country

Lima, Peru

Website

facebook.com/activalahuaca

Year or period

2017-2019

Relevant actors

Municipality of San Isidro, Ministry of Culture, residents of the Residencial Santa Cruz housing complex, Pontifical Catholic University of Peru (PUCP) Architectural Heritage research group, students and volunteers.

Type of intervention

Ephemeral

Description

In Peru, pre-Hispanic archaeological sites are known as *huacas*. The *Activa la Huaca* project seeks to encourage critical reflection about the historical development of the city of Lima, the actors who shaped it and transformed it, and how *huacas* were part of this process. The project intends to reimagine the relationship among the *huaca*, the city and its citizens through cross-disciplinary interventions carried out in partnership with institutional and urban actors. Once the research stage was

completed, a tour was designed to offer a reflection about the relation between heritage, public space and citizens. Pictures and items that people could play with were used to share information and start a conversation with the attendees who came to the different workshops. Participants felt interested in and surprised at an activity that relates *huacas* to their everyday experience, and expressed their wish to learn more about them and visit other archaeological sites.

“Adults recounted their own experiences in *huacas*, generating or showing the link between citizens and their heritage, and how these spaces foster a sense of belonging and help people attach value to the place.”



Activa la Huaca for children. Photo: Daniel Flores, 2017

06.

FAV Pavilion | Valparaíso Arts Pavilion

Urban installation between the public and the sustainable

Promoter

República Portátil

City/country

Valparaíso, Chile

Website

republicaportatil.cl

Relevant actors

CNCA | National Council for Arts and Culture.

Year or period

2014

Type of intervention

Ephemeral, Temporary,
Urban Devices

Description

The FAV Pavilion was built as part of the 2014 Valparaíso Arts Festival. The project reclaimed and activated a plaza used for parking cars and turned it into a vertical urban garden full of cultural activities and events, such as tours, games, workshops and even a city observation point. In addition, the operators' living quarters were in the facility, so that it could be kept

operational 24/7. The project's distinctive feature was the constant transformation of its space and of the fabric lining that covered it. This had effects on the occupants and the spontaneous situations which took place inside during the fifteen days for which it was open. The facility received a huge number of visitors: over 5,000 people accessed the different levels of the building during the daily tours and had the chance to see many local artists who gathered in this place to show and develop their work.

“The scale of the project affected the way the plaza was used, making its activities three-dimensional, and prevented cars from using it as an illegal parking lot.”



Photos: Julio Suárez

07.

Cinema Paradiso at Loiza Street

Activating vacant lots with street furniture

Promoter

Taller Creando Sin Encargos

City/country

San Juan, Puerto Rico

Website

tallercreandosinencargos.tumblr.com

Year or period

2012

Relevant actors

Students at the Polytechnic University of Puerto Rico.

Type of intervention

Temporary, Urban Devices

Description

Cinema Paradiso at Loiza Street is a project for the design and construction of street furniture with recycled materials at a vacant lot in San Juan, Puerto Rico. The project was carried out with architecture students. Two filmmakers had

turned the lot into an open-air cinema which screened local and independent films one weekend per month. In order to support this community project, eight interventions were designed: a bench which marked the entrance, a tarpaulin threshold/roof, a floor/stage, a vertical garden with a painted screen and four types of seats, loose or anchored to the floor. This furniture made it possible to show a greater variety of movies and to include other cultural events.

“Street furniture rendered the project visible, bringing more people to screenings and stressing the need and the importance of reclaiming the city’s forgotten spaces.”



Photos: Omayra Rivera Crespo

08.

Ollantay Urban Park

Collective intelligence and creative capacity for urban rehabilitation



Promoter

Proyecto mARTadero

City/country

Cochabamba, Bolivia

Website

martadero.org

Year or period

2015-2019

Relevant actors

Groups of young people who belong to CCLAB | Laboratorio de Comunidades Creativas (Hip Hop Essential Roots, Break Dance Matarifes Villa Coronilla, Skateboarding Team Llajta Skate,

Parkour CEM, Jóvenes sie7e), Villa Coronilla residents, TAU | Taller de Acupuntura Urbana, Department of Tourism of the Autonomous Municipal Government of Cochabamba, Embassy of France, KUSKA mosaic tile art group, Fundación Imagen, Misereor.

Type of intervention

Permanent

Description

The citizens' imaginary perceives Villa Coronilla as a dangerous neighborhood, and the underused and degraded Ollantay street was an opportunity for revitalization. The project reclaimed public space

from the urban fabric, gave new meaning to the surroundings, increased the surface area for recreation, provided infrastructure and spatial conditions that recognize the value of urban disciplines practiced by young people and reduced the area for vehicles. The idea came up in the "Bloqueo de Ideas" (or Idea Blockage) meeting, which initiated a collaborative design process among young people who practice urban disciplines, neighborhood residents and the team of designers. The idea was later shared with the authorities, and funds for its construction were obtained.

“The presence of the project run by the mARTadero cultural space has enhanced the residents’ sense of belonging and commitment to neighborhood improvement.”



09. The Stories Traveler

Activating streets with a traveling device: the *emolientero**

Promoters

Josué Amaya (Estudio Ro.Am), Ana María Gómez

City/country

Lima, Peru

Website

[blogs.iadb.org/
ciudades-sostenibles/es/
placemaking-peru-corredor-
historias-activacion-centro-
historico-lima-innovacion-urbana](https://blogs.iadb.org/ciudades-sostenibles/es/placemaking-peru-corredor-historias-activacion-centro-historico-lima-innovacion-urbana)

Year or period

2019

Relevant actors

Aula, Detonador, Cities LAB (IDB), Ocupa Tu Calle, Lima Cómo Vamos, Intuy Lab, Municipality of Lima.

Type of intervention

Ephemeral, Urban Devices

Description

The Stories Traveler is an itinerant device, created as a result of the Municipal government's need to promote street activation as part of the city's historic downtown pedestrianization program called "Al Damera de Pizarro Sin Carro" (or "Along Pizarro's street grid without

motor cars"). After research was done about the different activities developed in the center of Lima, a device was created to combine them and, most importantly, to temporarily activate the places where it positioned itself, adapting to different conditions during the day and offering multiple activities for the public. Its most significant impact is evidenced by the increased number of people who walk along the street and who remain in that space. The Stories Traveler also helped to diversify the activities performed in its immediate surroundings.

“The constructive process is based on a step-by-step manual which can be hacked to replicate the same urban activation system, but adapting it to the different programmatic conditions of each context.”

* The *emolientero* is a stand that sells emoliente, a traditional beverage drunk mainly in Peru and considered to have medicinal properties.



Photos: Estudio Ro.Am

8 10.

LEA | Friends' Meeting Point

A lighter, quicker and cheaper outdoor meeting point

Promoter

Lugares Públicos A.C. (Fundación Placemaking México)

City/country

Mexico City, Mexico

Website

www.placemaking.mx

Year or period

2017-2018

Relevant actors

Lugares Públicos A.C., Southwest Airlines, Corazón de la Comunidad, Project for Public Spaces, District of Cuauhtémoc.

Type of intervention

Temporary

Description

Mexico Park's Lindbergh Forum, in Mexico City, is part of the city's cultural heritage. Although rehabilitated in 2015, this work was not enough to make it a safe place, so in 2016 the decision was made to close it. From then on, a participatory process was initiated to keep this public space open and make it safe for people of all ages to perform autonomous activities outdoors at no cost. In order to do this, consultations, workshops and interventions with

the community were conducted to identify the activities preferred by most residents. Based on the results, a testing stage was started. This involved, among other things, the activation of a traveling library, which was highly successful in the community. Using the *lighter, quicker and cheaper* approach, several initiatives were tried out in order to analyze their results before a long-term project was developed. Although several activities did not work as expected, those which proved most popular among the community were selected and implemented as long-term plans.

“Free outdoor activities during the day and night allowed people of all ages to enjoy the place playing, reading, talking to neighbors or strangers, or simply relaxing in the Forum, which thanks to these interventions became a safer place for the community.”



Photos: Iara Speyer

8 11.

There Are People Living Here (*Aquí Vive Gente*)

Community action to fight abandonment and gentrification

Promoter

Brigada PDT inc

City/country

San Juan, Puerto Rico

Website

facebook.com/BrigadaPDT

Year or period

2015-2020

Relevant actors

Brigada PDT, Puerta de Tierra community, Para la Naturaleza, Taller Creando sin Encargos.

Type of intervention

Permanent

Description

The *Aquí Vive Gente* (“There Are People Living Here”) project originated as a response against the abandonment and gentrification of the Puerta de Tierra community, a neighborhood located in the periphery of Old San

Juan’s urban historic downtown. To achieve this, residents’ efforts are organized so that they can defend their neighborhood, its history and its people. This is done by means of alternative education and using art and culture as tools for social empowerment, especially of young people and children, the future community leaders. Some of the initiatives developed for this goal are the recovery of abandoned buildings and the participation of young people in communication spaces as radio broadcasters and writers in local media.

“There has been a positive impact, and the community’s identity has been reaffirmed, with the reactivation of a cultural scene which had been neglected for many years.”



8 12.

Guacamayo Valdivia Fair

Street market for food security during COVID-19



Promoter

Activa Valdivia

City/country

Valdivia, Chile

Websiteactivavaldivia.cl**Year or period**

2020

Relevant actors

Municipality of Valdivia, Ministry of Economy, Development and Tourism, Feriantes Guacamayo, Digital Copy.

Type of intervention

Temporary

Description

In the context of the worldwide spread of COVID-19, strategies were developed to improve the operation of *ferias libres*,* a type

of food supply center, in order to reduce contagion and prevent the closure of these spaces, something that would affect people's food security. Three measures were taken to perform a short-term, easy to implement and cost-effective action: delimiting and organizing space to facilitate physical distancing; a hygiene point for hand-washing; communicating directly with fair workers, as well as with customers for information and consultation purposes.

“Apart from being places which supply food, street fairs are also meeting points and can become the setting of information, education and population health monitoring campaigns.”



* *A feria libre* is an outdoor market which operates in Chilean cities. Their activity is regulated.

8 13. G.A.M.E.

Scalable Modular Gabions* as temporary and resilient street furniture

Promoters

G.A.M.E. Team: Borja Menachom, Gian Franco Pedreschi, Kenneth Wilson

City/country

Lima, Peru

Website

<https://blogs.iadb.org/ciudades-sostenibles/es/paraderos-informales-soluciones-rimac-peru-innovacion-urbana-placemaking>

Year or period

2019

Relevant actors

Ocupa Tu Calle, INTUYLab, AULA, Cities LAB (IDB), Municipality of Rimac, Municipality of Lima.

Type of intervention

Temporary, Urban Devices

Description

The intervention took place in the context of the 3rd Citizen-Led Urban Innovation Contest, launched by the Inter-American Development Bank Cities LAB and held in June 2019, which called on participants to perform an intervention in Rimac and

another one in Lima's Historic Downtown. The proposal for the Rimac district was intended as a resilient intervention, even if temporary, which took into account the problem of crime in the area and was able to resist potential vandalism. An inclusive design was sought, so as to incentivize the existing uses of the surroundings or to generate new ones. The gabion modules were thus built as solid basic units which were easy to replicate and reconfigure. They served as benches and flowerbeds, and created a resting area.

“Since the site has become a meeting place for the area’s residents, the gabions are still there, even though they were meant to be temporary at first.”

* In engineering, a gabion is a prismatic rectangular box or basket made of wicker or with stainless steel or galvanized iron wirework and filled with stone or earth. It makes it possible to complete works in less time and with unskilled workers.



Photos: Kenneth Wilson

2.2.

Inclusive City

Inclusive spaces, children and feminisms

These projects involve social groups who have been traditionally disregarded in urban planning and face a number of inequities in the city. They include, among others, children, women and the LGTBIQ+ community. Such projects seek to highlight the social, economic and gender inequities experienced by these groups, so as to address their needs and demands. Projects may pursue this goal by partnering with schools for creating safe roads, inclusive spaces or sport activities for all ages, or by setting up protective or recreational areas and street furniture in public spaces.

Map of Cases





Inclusive City

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14. Batatalab

Urban furniture contest for citizens

Authors: Laura Sobral, Heloísa Sobral, Camila Pinto de Souza Sawaia¹



Promoter

A Cidade Precisa de Você

City/country

São Paulo, Brazil

Website

acidadeprecisa.org

Social media links

[instagram.com/](https://www.instagram.com/acidadeprecisadevoce)

[acidadeprecisadevoce](https://www.facebook.com/acidadeprecisadevoce)

[facebook.com/](https://www.facebook.com/acidadeprecisadevoce)

[acidadeprecisadevoce](https://www.facebook.com/acidadeprecisadevoce)

Year or period

2015 -2016

Relevant actors

Municipality of São Paulo, Batatas Constructoras, BijaRi, CADES-PI | Regional Council for the Environment, Sustainable Development and Peace Culture (Pinheiros), Erê Lab, Grupo Quasares, IPIU | Research Institute for Innovation in Urbanism, A Batata Precisa de Você movement, SMDU | Municipal Secretariat for Urban Development, Subprefeitura de Pinheiros (office of the Municipality of São Paulo in the neighborhood).

Project key quote/phrase

The goal of the Batatalab project was to develop urban furniture which was designed collectively with a specific procedure, and setting it up in the Largo da Batata, in São Paulo.

Type of intervention

Permanent

Keywords

right to the city, urban furniture, coproduction, São Paulo, Largo da Batata, public space, citizens' participation

The Batatalab project was intended to develop and install collectively designed urban furniture in the Largo da Batata, an important and busy pedestrian plaza in the district of Pinheiros, in São Paulo. The project considered the complexity of the territory and tried to include as many and diverse stakeholders as possible to build structures at a microscale, for improving the space quality and social dynamics. A public call was launched for the submission of urban furniture projects, and professionals were able to develop proposals that met the local needs, which had been revealed by research and consultations with users. The project gave citizens new possibilities for appropriating public space. It fostered a sense of belonging, as well as participation, the appropriation of public space and its democratic use. Many visitors of Largo da Batata volunteered to set up the new furniture and many others approached the place to become familiar with it and use it.

Left: Different uses of the Rematéria furniture.

The goal of the Batatalab project was the participatory construction of urban public spaces through a specific procedure: few projects in Brazil conduct a previous analysis of an area and how it is used. Batatalab started as an urban innovation project to test three important factors for citizens' inclusion: the promotion of harmonious relations among people, the effect of design from the population's perspective and its adaptive replicability in other public spaces of São Paulo.

The Largo² da Batata was chosen for several reasons: it is a disputed territory, it has experienced cultural activation and become emotionally significant for some time, and it is attended by a diverse public. Although it is a traditionally arid space, the furniture installed led to greater interaction and drew a more diverse range of visitors, including skaters, homeless individuals, young people and adults who use this space at different times during the day.

The process of citizens' participation through co-creation and co-production provided quite a few lessons, in addition to giving clear signs that the spaces of a city could be more inclusive, attractive and welcoming if they were produced collectively. It also confirmed the importance of urban furniture for the vitality of urban life, since it provides spaces that people can experience and enjoy, instead of simply walking across them.

The goal of this initiative was to generate greater urban inclusion by serving as inspiration for many people in other parts of the city, especially the peripheral areas, where there is a greater deficit of leisure spaces and equipment. There are good signs that these new citizens' practices have become widespread, since other urban collectives have turned to the Research Institute for Innovation in Urbanism (IPIU), the project sponsor, to understand the guidelines and requirements of the Batatalab process, which was supported by the Municipal Secretariat for Urban Development (SMDU) and the Subprefeitura de Pinheiros³, in order to replicate the initiative in other areas of the city.

Largo da Batata

The Largo da Batata, in São Paulo, is historically relevant due to the different ways in which it has been used. At the time when the project was developed, it could be seen that its potential was being realized

through new uses, even though this was a very arid space which did not seem to afford many possibilities.

Since its first settlement by the Guaiana people and the arrival of the Jesuits in 1560 until the beginning of its urbanization in the 20th century, the Largo da Batata always had a fundamental role in the Pinheiros neighborhood, in the west of São Paulo. The market, which became quite important upon the arrival of Japanese immigrants by the mid-20th century, turned into a meeting point for the sale of foodstuffs, thus being baptized *Largo da Batata* ("the potatoes plaza").

As part of its development, the tributaries of the Pinheiros river were canalized in 1927. As a consequence, middle-class houses were built on the alluvial plains which used to sit next to the Largo. This resulted in urbanistic improvements, such as new sidewalks and public transportation lines that connect different points in the neighborhood, a characteristic that lasts until today. The development of the area has been greatly determined by its relation with the Faria Lima avenue, a key commercial thoroughfare in the city of São Paulo which runs across the Largo.

The urban transformation of the Largo da Batata started in 1995, with the opening of a metro station and the removal of the popular market. When the twenty-nine thousand-square meter area was returned to the population in 2013, it had lost its once vibrant atmosphere. Empty, devoid of trees, benches, tables or any kind of urban furniture inviting social interaction, the Largo reemerged as a dry yard, where twenty-eight thousand people circulate on a daily basis. In addition to its vast dimensions and dryness, the physical space around it experienced dramatic changes, due to removals, displacements and real estate speculation.

In January 2014, a small group of neighbors living in the surroundings started to go to the Largo every Friday. This was the origin of *A Batata Precisa de Você* ("Batata needs you"), an appropriation⁴ movement based on the right to the city, which considers public space a key setting for people to meet and develop collective urban life. The benches, which movement members and sporadic participants had made with pallets, started to turn into a space for fun, culture, relaxation and, most of all, discussion.

A contest for improving space

The *A Batata Precisa de Você* movement became nationally and internationally renowned due the mobilization of about twelve thousand people who became involved in the social and gradual construction of the space. In 2015, some members of the movement founded the *A Cidade Precisa de Você* Institute, and their first project was the *Batatalab*, an urban furniture contest for the Largo. This project, which involved engaging in dialogue with civil society, public authorities and private organizations, made it possible to install vegetation and permanent furniture in the Largo da Batata.

Before the contest, four stages were completed:

- **01. Mapping the uses of the area.** Quantitative surveys were conducted at five points of the Largo da Batata to count pedestrians and identify the routes they took, where they spent time, how long, the activity they performed (talking, playing, eating at the bus stop), their gender and estimated age range. Bicycle and cargo vehicle traffic was also analyzed.
- **02. Analysis of temporary furniture.** This analysis was also conducted through quantitative research.
- **03. Information survey provided by the city of São Paulo.** The SMDU developed the Map of Motor Vehicle, Bicycle and Pedestrian Routes, and the Map for the Land Management and Use Program, which showed seven different areas across the Largo, according to the type of use. These maps showed spaces where immediate interventions could be conducted without entering into conflict with the mid-term plans developed for the city of São Paulo.
- **04. Habitual users' wishes and expectations.** In order to find out what the public missed the most about the Largo da Batata, several qualitative studies were conducted among groups of cyclists, skaters, families with children, couples, young people and senior adults, using semi-structured questionnaires, recreational drawing activities and gathering testimonies about what they would like to find in the Largo. Other placemaking

techniques, such as workshops for the collective assembly of models, were also applied.

The results of this qualitative research indicated that habitual users wanted comfortable furniture to sit, eat, talk with friends, go out, as well as shade, since the Largo was devoid of vegetation. They also suggested creating a children's play area.

This was the basis for a public call, disseminated through social media, websites and the paper press, inviting professionals to submit projects that addressed the themes of comfort, shade or play, so that the furniture design would include all of the users' needs and desires.

Forty projects were submitted and were then analyzed by a jury composed of representatives of the Subprefeitura de Pinheiros, the SMDU, CADES Pinheiros, agents of urban space use and members of the *A Cidade Precisa de Você* Institute.

Each winning project was awarded an approximately USD 2900 grant to construct and put in place the proposed pieces of furniture. Once set up, these would be donated to the Subprefeitura de Pinheiros, which would become responsible for maintaining them.

Ninety days after the implementation, an evaluation with habitual users was conducted using structured questionnaires. The results showed that the furniture had positively transformed the ways of using the space.

Construction of processes

However, since the *Batatalab* process was unprecedented, it was not easy from a bureaucratic perspective. There is no specific legal mechanism or defined procedure to implement an initiative by civil society to co-create the city on a permanent basis. As

a result, these procedures were designed in collaboration with the government as the process unfolded.

First, the Batatalab project proposal was submitted to the SMDU office, which provided support so that the project could continue with the Subprefeitura de Pinheiros. In the first meeting, attended by the deputy mayor and the coordinators involved, the contest was explained.

One month later, the Subprefeitura, in agreement with the SMDU, defined the initial procedure, which consisted of issuing a letter requesting authorization to launch the Batatalab contest. Thirty days later, the contest was authorized by the Subprefeitura de Pinheiros, and could be disseminated only once it was published in the Municipality's official gazette. Then, for each selected piece of furniture, a new authorization had to be requested —as if for an event— so that it could be installed on a temporary basis and later donated to the Subprefeitura de Pinheiros, thus becoming permanent.

After all the projects were received, two representatives of the SMDU and one from the Subprefeitura de Pinheiros were invited to be part of the jury. They analyzed the projects considering the safety requirements and materials permitted for urban furniture in the city, and indicated the location of each one across the Largo.

After this assessment, the following pieces of furniture were selected and installed:

▀ **Play furniture.** A play area developed by the Erê Lab company was created. This space for children not only enables free play, but also educates citizens so that they may view children as a fundamental and integral part of society. It consists of four pieces installed in the only green area of the Largo. They were inaugurated with a picnic which presented users with an island in the middle of the city and an opportunity for color and joy.

▀ **Shade furniture.** This preserved visual contact with the plaza and considered the incidence of wind. The iron structure with interwoven polyester strands also sought a light and shadow effect, as well as permeability, thereby ensuring the most efficient texture for the project. Eight internal metal benches are also attached to it.

▀ **Comfort furniture.** The Batatas Construtoras group, which had already built temporary furniture for the Largo, was invited to develop this item. This process was conducted with the members of the collective, but also with several collaborators, such as the Batata Jardineiras group and participants who volunteered to complete the installation of the furniture. It is worth mentioning that the collective structured the process experimentally and horizontally, ensuring citizens' participation at all times.

As intended since the beginning of the project, the conditions to donate the urban furniture to the Subprefeitura de Pinheiros were already in place. However, the process was changed and the donation was not possible: a cooperation agreement was proposed instead, which involved finding a sponsor that would take responsibility for maintaining each piece of furniture. A call for sponsors was published in the city's official gazette, but no responses were received, so the A Cidade Precisa de Você Institute and other volunteers started to maintain the furniture to the extent that this was possible.

One year later, the Subprefeitura de Pinheiros decided to remove the play and shade furniture, leaving only the comfort furniture. During this period, the SMDU implemented some of the improvements included in the Largo da Batata Urban Transformation project, by installing pergolas, benches and tables. The Batata Jardineiras collective and other volunteers continue planting trees and making flower beds in the place.

Impact

Once the project was completed, and even as it developed, other groups became organized to propose new furniture and uses for the Largo. The first step always consists of building temporary urban furniture and analyzing its use, while engaging in dialogue with the public and private sectors.

Soon after implementation, groups of skaters saw new possible uses for the comfort furniture, which became part of the Largo skating circuit. This opened a communication channel between skaters, designers and furniture builders, and thus, between skaters and public authorities.



Play urban furniture with four pieces which create an island of color and joy in the middle of the city. Photo: Rogério Canella

Rematéria: Urban furniture intended as permanent, built from a metal structure clad in wood. Photo: George Simas



According to the first survey conducted after the installation, some pieces of furniture are used by over twenty people at the same time. It should also be stressed that 80.8% of the four hundred respondents visit the Largo, and 34.3% do so on a daily basis. In addition, 82.5% of the individuals surveyed believe that the furniture is important for the city, and 81.8% think that more people have been using this space since the furniture was installed. For 81.3%, the furniture has led to better interaction among people.

The Batatalab project fostered a sense of belonging, as well as participation and the democratic use of public space. It helped not only increase the vocabulary used for urban furniture, but also stressed the importance of the process and of carrying it out collectively. “These are small projects that redefine a place, bring people together and

transform the relationship between society and the city”, said one of the respondents.

Based on this statement, we could imagine what would happen if the residents of a city could envision and participate in the co-creation and co-construction of their city in the same way as we think of our own home and if they could ask themselves “Which place will we use for resting?” or “Where will children play?”. Let us also imagine that these residents had technical, legal and economic support to build these public spaces, shaped after their wishes.

This was the idea behind the Batatalab process: returning to the roots of the neighborhood, where everyone can feel involved and help build the space where they live on the basis of their actual experiences in it. In the case of the Largo da Batata, this happened not only with those who reside around it, but also with all of the many and very diverse users of the space.



Trenzado (Intertwining), urban furniture designed to give shade and intended as permanent, made with a metal structure and polyester strands. Photo: Rogério Canella

Final reflections

The motivation behind Batatalab was creating spaces for life, helping foster a sense of community in the neighborhood and improving an urban space across which large amounts of people circulate on a daily basis. Turning this wish into a reality required creating totally new processes. We were willing to find new bureaucratic procedures with the authorities and to overcome fear, which can lead to the construction of spaces lacking in imagination. In a reality where control and exclusion prevail, it was necessary to be bold, so as to find new forms of urban inclusion. Although the process was not perfect, it was inspiring, even due to the lessons derived from trial and error.

The project gave citizens new possibilities for using public space, fostering their sense of belonging, as well as their participation and the democratic use of a shared place, highlighting the importance of taking processes and collective action into account when proposing interventions. It opened the possibility of engaging in dialogue with the municipality to address the co-management of public spaces and

the aspect of participation, avoiding also several slow bureaucratic processes.

It also helped broaden the possibilities of imagining what is possible to develop or enjoy when it comes to urban furniture. The process showed the importance of listening to and thinking together with the frequent users of a space, who provide new perspectives and voice actual day-to-day needs, helping design and construct alternative structures which are richer than the existing ones.

We intend to spread the idea that citizens can imagine and co-create public spaces by building both temporary and permanent urban furniture. The proposal consists of conducting action-research as part of a joint construction effort, creating a broader dialogue, mapping wishes and considering urban furniture as a catalyst for activities in public space.

The installation of furniture created opportunities for people to meet with each other, and also challenges, such as its constant follow-up and maintenance, which reveal the attitude of each public towards the intervention.

With regard to the process followed, it needs to be pointed out and acknowledged that implementation was feasible thanks to the development of a specific procedure, and that there is no way to predict how the entire space will be used, since this depends heavily on users and on the new possibilities created by the transformation.

To conclude, with a view to future adaptations, we would like to stress the complexity associated with engaging different stakeholders: this requires intense dialogue to consider everyone's ideas and wishes, but also provides an experience of democratic learning which is inherent in this practice. Dialogue is a necessary exercise; emerging conflicts can motivate interesting reflections and, ultimately, several agendas can supplement each other for the common good.

The result of the Batatalab project reveals complexities and challenges, but, most of all, it provides a glimpse of what a city can become if it is truly made for and by everyone. 🏡

1. The authors would like to thank Fabián Alonso and Julieta Regazzoni for their collaboration.

2. In Portuguese, a *largo* is an urban public space, similar to a plaza.

3. The *subprefeituras* are the Municipality of São Paulo local offices in different neighborhoods.

4. In urbanism, the term *appropriation* refers to the action through which citizens start to utilize a public space which is not being put to any use.

15. A Safe Road to School (*Camino Seguro al Cole*)

Children's right to the city

Author: Cynthia Shimabukuro



Promoter

Ocupa Tu Calle

City/country

Lima, Peru

Website

ocupatucalle.com

Social media links

facebook.com/ocupatucalle

instagram.com/ocupatucalle

Year or period

2018-2019

Relevant actors

AULA | Espacios para el aprendizaje, Ciudad de los Niños program - Municipality of Miraflores (2018), Ciudad de los Niños y las Niñas program - Metropolitan Municipality of Lima (2020), Rebeca Carrión educational institution (Miraflores), República de Venezuela educational institution (District of Lima), Pachatopías.

Project key quote/phrase

Camino Seguro al Cole (“a safe road to school”) advocates acknowledging children as citizens by improving the public spaces that they use every day.

Type of intervention

Temporary

Keywords

childhood, safe crossings, tactical urbanism, schools, children’s city

Camino Seguro al Cole was an urban intervention pilot project conducted in the Miraflores and Cercado de Lima districts of Lima (Lima, Peru). Its goal was to identify and improve the main routes used by children to walk to and from school. After these routes were determined with the participation of the school community, a design for each one was developed and a number of complementary actions were planned. Based on Francesco Tonucci’s philosophical insights, this intervention had the purpose of encouraging children’s autonomy and reducing the risks they face during their daily journeys. Two interventions were performed, one in each district (with the first intervention motivating the second one), but could not be completed: the first project remained unfinished due to the change of the local government, whereas the second one was interrupted by the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.



Camino Seguro al Cole is an initiative inspired by Francesco Tonucci's philosophy and applied through the Ciudad de los Niños ("children's city") program. The purpose of this project is to encourage children's autonomy as they go to school every day by improving security in public space and reducing the everyday risks that they face in it. In order to achieve this, several stakeholders of organized civil society, the school community and the local government are engaged in a participative process.

Since this project was the first pilot conducted in Lima, where society is still very overprotective, it was necessary to highlight the fact that children and childhood are subjects of rights, in a city that marginalizes them. The promotion of this project is a milestone to generate a more inclusive city for everyone.

Two neighborhoods and two school environments

In early 2018, the AULA and Ocupa Tu Calle teams were called on by the Ciudad de los Niños program of the Municipality of Miraflores to improve the route to school taken by the children of the Santa Cruz subdistrict, which is part of that municipality. Although this is considered to be a generally middle/

middle-high class district, Santa Cruz is home to the most disadvantaged citizens in the area, while also featuring new high-end food service establishments and office buildings which attract a significant pedestrian flow from the district and the rest of the city. There are also numerous public services, used mainly by the residents of the subdistrict, among which the Scipión Llona, Rebeca Carrión and Municipal Santa Cruz educational institutions are worth mentioning. These are located along the main streets of the neighborhood. In the road to and from the schools, eight problematic intersections were identified. Their design and complexity make crossing the road difficult for pedestrians, cyclists and drivers of other vehicles.

Conditions were different in the District of Lima. Like in the first experience in 2019, the same technical team was called on by the Ciudad de los Niños y Niñas municipal program. After the experience in Miraflores, program members wanted to scale it up to the entire Lima Metropolitan Area, starting with the most disadvantaged neighborhoods where children went to the local school on foot. Using these criteria, the neighborhood of Monserrate, in the District of Lima, was chosen for the pilot project. This place features



historical as well as cultural, commercial, religious and educational buildings, with the latter being used mainly by the neighborhood residents. Monserrate is within the scope of the Historic Downtown Master Plan, which seeks to renew and improve the way in which this area is managed. However, being outside the zone declared as heritage by UNESCO, it does not attract pedestrians in such large quantities. Its streets are used primarily by residents or workers. The diagnosis found some problems which directly affect children's mobility, such as vehicles running at high speed, narrow sidewalks, poor lighting and lack of facilities for them. Besides, residents identified dangerous areas, where some people drink in the streets or peddle drugs.

A replicable methodology

Although socioeconomic conditions in both neighborhoods are clearly not comparable and the problems found in each of them were different, the methodological approach for the diagnosis and the design of the pilot intervention followed a general structure which was developed during the process conducted in Miraflores and then adjusted when it was applied

to the District of Lima. First, the technical team made a field visit for the initial identification of possible issues (such as unsafe crossings, lack of signage, routes where children were seen to be alone or accompanied by other people or local shops near the schools). After this, three different types of workshops were proposed: collective mapping (differentiated for children, teaching staff and parents); participatory design (in which, based on the results of collective mapping and the issues identified during the field visit, potential places for a pilot intervention are chosen and children are invited to participate in their redesign) and, finally, a validation and commitment meeting with parents and the principal of the educational center.

After choosing the place for the potential intervention, the technical team designed evaluation tools (mainly surveys and sheets for quantifying pedestrians, flows and activities) so as to measure the use of space both before the intervention (baseline) and after it (impact). The purpose was to compare the results and adjust the design according to the positive and negative aspects found, with a view to consolidating the intervention. Once the final design and the previous evaluation were completed, permits



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for execution in the territory were requested and the logistics for implementation were coordinated (buying materials, hiring specialized labor and developing the final works schedule). In addition, specific activities with the participation of children and external volunteers interested in the process were considered for implementation.

Finally, at the same time, the organizations in charge of designing and executing the project (AULA and Ocupa Tu Calle) and of promoting it (Municipality of Miraflores, Municipality of Lima) took part in different spaces, such as meetings and academic or thematic events, which made it possible to disseminate the proposal and communicate its goals and evolution.

Safe spaces for children

For the first pilot intervention in the Santa Cruz sub-district, after the technical team finished gathering the information, the first workshops were held. They were attended by students of the Rebeca Carrión and Scipión Llona educational institutions. Students of different ages were selected. Priority was given to the children residing in the subdistrict who went to school on foot. The first workshop consisted of a collective mapping activity. Those people whom children considered representative, as well as elements that they liked, or which made them uncomfortable or scared, were identified together with them. This workshop made it possible to validate the information previously collected by the technical team: the existence of eight dangerous crossings which constantly put pedestrians at risk. Since this was an experimental project, one of the crossings was selected for the intervention.

The selected crossing was the one at the Mendi-buru, 8 de Octubre and Polo avenues, a commercial and high vehicular and pedestrian traffic area (there is a public transportation stop at this crossing). Once the area had been delimited, a participatory design workshop was held in two sessions: the purpose of the first one was to redesign the crossing; the second one was a joint visit with the Pachatopías organization to the Amano Museum in Santa Cruz, where textiles were used as an inspiration to define possible design patterns.

The resulting proposal was to improve the crossing through road design strategies aimed at widening

the sidewalk space using residual areas (shortening the distance of pedestrian crossings and forcing cars to slow down as they approached the corner), putting appropriate signs in the pedestrian crossings and placing urban furniture to delimit the new areas (such as benches, large planters and bollards), so as to make the space more comfortable for everyone. After the project was validated with different stakeholders (parents, the school community and the local government), it started to be implemented, with students, specialized workers and volunteers joining efforts during a number of days.

Regrettably, the project could not be finished, since it coincided with the city's municipal elections and the new local government did not continue implementing the project to completion.

The experience and lessons learned from the Miraflores project were leveraged for the pilot intervention in the District of Lima, which involved the school community of the República de Venezuela institute, in the neighborhood of Monserrate, where most students go to the school on foot. The technical team made a number of visits to survey the neighborhood and coordinate activities directly with the school principal. After that, a collective mapping workshop was held with the students. In contrast with the previous process, two additional mapping workshops took place in this case: one with the teaching staff and another one with parents. As a result, the team identified five potential spaces for an intervention, all of them in Callao street, where the school is located and which everyone must use to go to and from the school. Based on this, a participatory design workshop was held with students, and participants were divided into groups for each of the five potential spaces.

Finally, actions for the five spaces were designed, using strategies that could be complemented and implemented in stages. The action chosen as a priority was placing a children's play structure in a vacant area near Monserrate square. The technical team developed the design and validated the proposal with the school principal and the municipal team. The play structure was installed with the help of specialized technical labor. Once its operation was evaluated, it was removed for improving and adjusting its design so that it would last longer after being set up. However, the activity of putting back the children's play



structure and the execution of the other two stages of the proposal came to a standstill when the city was hit by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Outcomes

The intervention at the Santa Cruz subdistrict was first measured after the initial actions were implemented. The evaluation showed that, in contrast with the situation previous to the intervention, there was a slight increase in the number of children walking to school alone in the morning, but it also evidenced a rise in vehicular traffic, especially private cars and public transportation, at the same time of day. In addition to these observations, some opinions from pedestrians were gathered. It is worth mentioning that, at this point in the intervention, parents, unlike children, still considered the street to be unsafe. Most respondents argued that the street could become even safer if it were supervised by a parents' committee, although they did not necessarily want to be part of that committee.

Apart from the results related to this stage of the intervention, other outcomes are worth noting, such as the impact on local authorities⁴, who decided to replicate and eventually scale up this process in the rest of the Lima Metropolitan Area, incorporating

the lessons learned from this experience, both in terms of management and implementation. However, with the onset of the pandemic, the process was paralyzed and postponed until conditions become more favorable.

Conclusions

Fostering autonomy is a fundamental pillar in every person's education, for both individual growth and for relating with the rest of society. The *Camino Seguro al Cole* project seeks to encourage autonomy in a population that is usually ignored or overlooked in the design of the city and, even worse, neglected as a sector of citizens with the same right to enjoy it safely. A proposal like this one, which can be developed through quick and low-cost pilot interventions—as compared to other types of projects—makes it possible to give back to children their right to the city, and to turn the latter into a welcoming space for everyone else. However, as was rightly pointed out during the process, such an initiative cannot be carried out only through physical and/or individual actions. For a project of these characteristics to be sustainable over time, it is not only street design that needs to change, but also the way in which every one of us participates as an active agent of our



However, as was rightly pointed out during the process, such an initiative cannot be carried out only through physical and/or individual actions. For a project of these characteristics to be sustainable over time, it is not only street design that needs to change, but also the way in which every one of us participates as an active agent of our community. Articulation among a local government with political will, territorial organizations, technical professionals and, of course, children, is fundamental if a process of this kind is to be turned from a pilot into an established public policy through which it can be replicated and upscaled.

Aerial view of the area where the intervention was performed. Photo: Miguel Gomez Petti



community. Articulation among a local government with political will, territorial organizations, technical professionals and, of course, children, is fundamental if a process of this kind is to be turned from a pilot into an established public policy through which it can be replicated and upscaled.

Reflections and lessons learned

The implementation of a pilot intervention as *Camino Seguro al Cole* requires a strong commitment, not only from local authorities but also from the neighborhood and the community who will participate in the project. In the implementation of both pilot projects, there was poor participation by the community during the information gathering stage, with respondents being fewer than expected. As a result, the team suggested different strategies (sending surveys to people's houses, waiting for parents at the beginning and end of the school day), but this does not necessarily reinforce the commitment needed for the success of the project in all its dimensions. Not only is it necessary to think about improving the street's physical infrastructure, but adults must also get involved in the strategy and engage with it as active agents who can support and sustain children's safety.

Finally, other lessons learned have to do with the logistics of implementation as they relate to the design: it is essential to have a clear awareness of the time available and how this affects the possibilities of execution, considering the existing budget, so that results can be properly evaluated. 📌

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1. The local authorities of the district of Miraflores were elected as authorities of the Lima Metropolitan Area in that year's elections.

16.

Norma Estrella and La Gaviota parks

Local heroes activate key locations in the neighborhood

Authors: Tamara Egger, Pablo Fuentes



Promoters

IDB Cities LAB, Ciudad de Bolsillo, Superwien, Base Studio

City/country

Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic

Website

blogs.iadb.org/ciudades-sostenibles/es/experimentar-la-vida-publica-urbana-placemaking-santodomingoeste-republicadominicana/

Social media links

twitter.com/BID_Ciudades
twitter.com/cdbolsillo
instagram.com/BID_ciudades
instagram.com/ciudadebolsillo
instagram.com/base.studio

Relevant actors

Inter-American Development Bank, with MinPre | Ministry of the Presidency, ASDE | Municipality of Santo Domingo Este, DGODT | General Directorate for Land Management and Development, GCJB | Ciudad Juan Bosch Management Unit, the schools of Architecture of the following Dominican universities: UNPHU, UCE, UNIBE, PUCMM-CSTA, O&M, UCATECI, UASD and UTESA, and the Vienna University of Technology. Residents of the Nuevo Renacer neighborhood and of Ciudad Juan Bosch, artist Xaivier Ringer, Calqueao collective, students of the Pedro Henríquez Ureña University, workers of the Ministry for Public Works and Communication and of the Ciudad Juan Bosch Management Unit.

Year or period

2018-2019

Project key quote/phrase

“The quality of public space —how it is planned, how it is produced, who makes decisions, what is the community’s participation in it, how it is managed— involves many variables, and each one is different depending on the context. However, in general, it is the civic identity of public space that must be stressed. A collective voice must be generated from the interaction among social classes and different groups, with a perspective based on inclusion and diversity” (Shaney Peña, architect).

Type of intervention

Temporary

Keywords

tactical urbanism, large urban projects, pocket plazas, informal city, neighborhood upgrading, citizens’ participation

This process is carried out in two geographically close but highly contrasting areas. On the one hand, the Nuevo Renacer neighborhood was self-built by its residents and lacks public infrastructure. How can the quality of common spaces be improved for all citizens in informal neighborhoods? On the other hand, the brand-new Ciudad Juan Bosch is under construction and some of its buildings are already inhabited. Its so-called “pioneer residents” come from different parts of the country and do not know each other yet. How can a sense of community be created during the early stages of new urbanizations? Through a collaborative planning process, an agreement was reached by several stakeholders —citizens, academia, and the public and private sectors— for the long-term development of the work area. In order to test this shared vision in the short-term, in a cost-effective manner and with the help of citizens, two tactical urbanism pilot projects were conducted at the Norma Estrella and La Gaviota parks.



Residents playing dominoes in the Nuevo Renacer neighborhood

The Dominican culture of citymaking

Collaborative citymaking is an intrinsic characteristic of Dominican culture. It is natural for people to join efforts to intervene in their shared environment with simple tools: a domino table can turn the street into a playroom, a loudspeaker can transform a plaza into a dance floor, and a *yun-yun*¹ cart can become an outdoor ice cream parlor. In sum, Dominicans can be said to be natural placemakers.

In 2018, the Ciudad Juan Bosch (CJB) project was under construction, and 7800 houses were inhabited. While the so-called “pioneer residents” were already living in their new city, the rest of the buildings, urban equipment and meeting spaces were not being developed yet. Pioneers had come from different districts of the country and still did not know each other. How can a sense of community be created during the early stages of new urbanizations?

In contrast, the adjacent neighborhoods in the urban periphery of Santo Domingo had grown organically, built and managed by their own residents. These neighborhoods are devoid of urban equipment or infrastructure and lack safe places where children,

women and senior adults can get together and do activities of any kind. How can the quality of common spaces be improved for all citizens in informal neighborhoods?

Urbanism takes time: a new planned city and its informal surroundings

According to the National Bureau of Statistics, 51% of the Dominican population resides in 11.3% of the territory of the country, in the big cities of Santo Domingo, Santiago and San Cristóbal (Oficina Nacional de Estadística, 2010). In response to the rapid growth of these urban centers, the government of the Dominican Republic, together with the private sector, started to urbanize the peri-urban area of Santo Domingo, to reduce the housing deficit in the country.

The Ciudad Juan Bosch (CJB) project master plan envisions erecting a new city in a 360-hectare area, with affordable dwellings for one hundred thousand people, educational and health centers, public spaces, shopping malls and employment opportunities. The project includes 30 public space



Public Spaces in Ciudad Juan Bosch

areas covering 36 hectares altogether. In 2018, three of them were being built and three community parks were already finished (Unidad de Gerencia Ciudad Juan Bosch, 2018).

In contrast, the settlements around CJB emerged informally and are characterized by the lack of urban infrastructure. Both areas stand in stark contrast to each other: CJB has modern urban equipment and houses, whereas the settlement around it developed without basic services, such as potable water or sanitation, stands in need of enough educational centers, has dirt roads, low-quality housing and no public spaces for people to meet. In addition, the area is not well connected to the rest of the city, so many residents have a long and tiresome commute to work every day.

It should also be stressed that community life in these two contexts is quite different. The CJB pioneer residents still do not know each other, so they need meeting spaces, in order to create a sense of community and a new identity. No doubt, community life cannot be planned: it must happen naturally and takes time to develop.

On the other hand, the spontaneous settlements around CJB are home to empowered citizens who appropriate their common spaces. Given the often poor quality of housing, domestic life is taken to public space: children play in the street, neighbors get together in the park or play dominoes on the sidewalk. Clearly, public spaces in the neighborhood do not meet the minimum standards in terms of universal accessibility, social inclusion and safety.

According to forecasts developed by the Inter-American Development Bank (2020), this 2400-hectare work area has the potential to become a new city with a population of about four hundred thousand residents over the next thirty years. The urban development process takes time or, as stated by Markus Tomaselli, professor of Urban Design at the Vienna University of Technology: “Trees are still small now, but will be different in several years; urbanism takes time, time is essential”.



The collaborative process: from citizens' collaboration to municipal regulation

Through the Santo Domingo Este LAB process, innovative strategies were explored to create a network of community spaces that would connect the Ciudad Juan Bosch urban extension project with its surrounding area, in an inclusive, compact and sustainable manner. This exploration was conducted in three stages between May 2018 and December 2019, by means of iterative trial-and-error cycles.

During the first, exploratory stage, we applied the Urban Design Lab (UDL) methodology² of the Vienna University of Technology (TU Wien). A common vision for the development of the area was developed in a number of workshops which were attended by CJB pioneer residents, dwellers of the surrounding settlements, the public sector, academics and one hundred and twenty students from eight faculties of architecture and urbanism of the Dominican Republic³, as well as urban experts. By engaging in a horizontal dialogue, stakeholders defined a common vision at three levels: (1) the metropolitan level, which consists of a master plan, i.e., the *Plan Triángulo*, intended to integrate the area around Ciudad Juan Bosch; (2) the urban level, which involves the development of several neighborhood upgrading pilot projects at Nuevo Renacer; and (3) the neighborhood level, with the goal of activating public spaces.

Results were systematized in the comprehensive strategy of the *Plan Triángulo* by applying the fifteen-minute city model⁴ as a basic concept, to integrate the new city with the upgrading of the adjacent neighborhoods. The proposal is to develop a compact social and territorial fabric, with public life nodes located at a fifteen-minute walk (2.5 km) from each other. These microcentralities are, first and foremost, a meeting space for residents, which address several of their everyday needs, such as small shops, recreational places for children and adults, and some smaller-scale services. The *Plan Triángulo* combines immediate action tools with the long-term goal of a sustainable, inclusive and compact city.

In the second stage, two immediate action pilot projects were performed using tactical urbanism tools, so as to measure their impact. For the experiment, two different community nodes were chosen: the La Gaviota park in Ciudad Juan Bosch and the Norma Estrella park in the Nuevo Renacer neighborhood.

To ensure the continuity of the collaborative process, the pocket plaza methodology⁵ was applied together with the residents, academics and public agents. These plazas started in Santiago de Chile, as a form of putting vacant sites to a temporary use until they could be given a final purpose. This methodology creates spaces for temporary public use through tactical furniture, vegetation, urban art and food trucks. The term “pocket” is intended to mean that items can be moved anywhere else once the final project is implemented in a place.

In addition, the term “operating partner” was coined to designate organized groups (e.g., an association of food trucks) which assume responsibility for maintaining and taking care of the space. This ensures sustainability over time, with a cost that the operating partners can afford because they do not pay a rent for using the area. Through a process that involves close collaboration with several stakeholders, pocket plazas reduce by half the cost required by a traditional public space and can be completed in one quarter of the time.

With this methodology, the La Gaviota park and Norma Estrella park transformation initiatives were conceived from the beginning as ongoing creative collaboration processes.

Spaces were chosen, designed and inaugurated together with the local communities.

The last stage consisted of measuring the impact caused by the experiments. These results were fed back into the *Plan Triángulo* and turned into a municipal land management regulation, the Ordinance Proposal, which sets forth the requirements for the use of and settlement in the surroundings of Ciudad Juan Bosch.

Pocket parks: The collaborative creation of public life nodes

The transformation of the public spaces selected for the pilot projects began with ephemeral placemaking interventions performed with the local communities, in order to create trust, collect information and introduce the pocket parks process⁶. First, we engaged residents in participatory painting events, led



Satellite image of Ciudad Juan Bosch

by artist Xavier Ringer (The International Muralist), and organized neighborhood parties, big community meals or *comelonas comunitarias*⁷ and the screening of a family film, that we used to gather preliminary views about the selected green areas.

Afterwards, local communities were invited to diagnosis workshops to identify the main elements that would inform the design of the pocket parks.

In the case of the Norma Estrella park, located in an informal neighborhood with little public infrastructure, there was a large number of children who needed proper space for recreation. In addition, paths made of dry material were also necessary for better accessibility, especially on rainy days.

Residents also highlighted the need to protect the trees in the park, since they are recognized as the main attribute of the place. In general, residents sustained a strong ecological conservation culture, which translated into requests for gardens, medicinal plants and notices indicating the names of the existing plant species.

In turn, CJB pioneers mentioned the need to install a cover to protect people from the inclemencies of the weather in a tropical climate. They proposed fostering sports, and that activities for early childhood should be offered, since there are no alternatives for children of this age.

On the basis of these inputs, the two pilot parks were designed. The collaborative implementation process in the 800m² La Gaviota park started with the previous work which was conducted by the Ciudad Juan Bosch management unit for two months.

The tactical urbanism intervention took ten days and was led by architects from the Ciudad de Bolsillo studio, in collaboration with pioneer residents, local artists, twenty-five volunteer students, local teachers and teams of workers from the Ministry of Public Works. Floor paint was applied over a 300m² sports field, and two bamboo structures with a red saran netting cover, supported by steel cables, were built to provide shade. This constructive system, called “tensegrity”, was adapted by Base Studio, a Chilean experimental architecture office.

Finally, the project includes an area with rope-based play structures for preschoolers, a sector for local entrepreneurs, a lounging area with a terrace and domino tables, and a community garden with aromatic and medicinal plants.

The La Gaviota park is taken care of by an operating partner, as a result of a collaboration agreement between the Ciudad Juan Bosch management team and the Association of Entrepreneurs (*Asociación de Emprendedores*) of the place, which organizes different events where residents can socialize.

The second stage was carrying out the pilot project in the Norma Estrella park, a triangular, 1000m² public space featuring over twenty native trees which provide ample shade and shelter, but devoid of any other equipment, such as dustbins, pedestrian paths, lighting or benches. The park is named after one of the neighborhood leaders who took care of the trees for decades.

The intervention consisted of the creation of a central 115m² area with gravel, a 270m² green area with community gardens, a 270m² lounging area with four picnic tables and a 235m² area with swinging games for children.

The design was adapted to the distribution of the existing trees. In the games area, a black iron octagonal structure was placed within a 3-meter radius circumference, and different replaceable items were hung at the sides: two swings, two exercise bars, two hammocks, a swinging chair and a set of climbing ropes.

Finally, volunteers and students were given practical training to use methodologies for impact measurement. For one month, the way in which people used the place was observed and perception surveys were conducted.



Above left and right: Workshops
Below left and right: La Gaviota Park and Norma Estrella Park



Norma Estrella Park

Process impacts and results

An online survey was conducted to evaluate citizens' perceptions about both interventions.

For the La Gaviota park, 69.4% of respondents were women, with 72.2% between the ages of 30 and 59. Among the individuals surveyed, 38.9% feel that they are known in their neighborhood; in addition, their trust in their peers is extremely high: only one person reported feeling unsafe in the neighborhood and 58.3% feel very safe. With regard to the question about which place they frequented the most in their spare time, the supermarket ranked second (38.9%), coming after the new park (41.7%).

For the Norma Estrella park, 80% of respondents were women, with 70% between the ages of 30 and 59. It is worth mentioning that 67% consider their neighborhood a safe place to live, and 73% report that their main place for recreation is the park, whereas for the remaining 27% it is the church. No other leisure areas are recognized in the neighborhood. As regards places for children to play, the Norma Estrella park comes first (47%), followed by the street (33%) and the sports field (13%). Finally, the main neighborhood

attributes identified by respondents are public transportation (47%), with the park (20%) and the hospital (20%) coming next.

In addition, the predominant flows and stationary activities were measured in CJB for each of the points intervened. Total pedestrian flows during weekdays increased by 20%. The most striking piece of data was that, during weekends, pedestrian flows increased by 48%.

During the first year, the Association of Entrepreneurs, led by Jeniffer Morillo, managed to carry out several activities in the park. A particularly remarkable one was the Mothers' Bazaar, an event in which over thirty entrepreneurs offered different options to give mothers as presents, attended by over one hundred and seventy people.

One year later: pocket parks and their local heroes

One year later, the interventions reveal the importance of local communities that relate to and appropriate their common spaces: so-called "local heroes" (Appelboom, 2016), since it is them who make

transformations sustainable, maintain them and integrate them into their everyday life. No better place to find these heroes than the Dominican Republic, with its natural placemakers and its inherent culture of transforming and appropriating urban spaces.

In the case of Ciudad Juan Bosch, these heroes are the Association of Entrepreneurs, a veritable driving force for organizing activities which dynamize public space. They continue activating the La Gaviota park with initiatives such as community markets, culinary events, open-air cinemas, events for special dates like Christmas, Mother's Day or *habichuelas con dulce* (sweet cream of beans) contests, among others.

Through the participation of citizens, it was found that one of the main problems in CJB was the lack of small-scale retail establishments that were accessible on foot. As a result, an informal store for everyday shopping was set up within the apartment buildings. One year after the transformation, the pioneer residents continue using the La Gaviota pocket park as the main retailing spot in the area.

In turn, in the Nuevo Renacer neighborhood, local heroes are the residents themselves, especially children, who worked and participated to inform and adapt the design of this public space, making it possible to materialize a complex project with very limited resources. The motivation shown by the community prompted other actors to donate materials and their work.

In the transformation of public spaces in informal neighborhoods, the lack of economic resources can be replaced with the community's active work, donations from private companies, efficient management by professionals and neighborhood leaders and, most of all, with great creativity when building the project that was designed.

In conclusion, a city needs well-fitted meeting spaces with a distinctive identity for all citizens, and communities need time to consolidate.

There is no doubt that in both informal neighborhoods where government spending is insufficient and in housing projects where social cohesion is weak, there is enormous potential for improving living conditions through better meeting spaces, designed and managed by citizens themselves, the local heroes. 📌

1. In the Dominican Republic, a *yun-yun* or *frio-frio* is a beverage made with ice scraped from a block and mixed to give it a fruit or similar flavor. Generally, the *yunyuneros* (street vendors) ride the streets on a non-electric tricycle. In Colombia, this is known as *raspao*, and in Puerto Rico and New York, it is called *piragua*. The *yun-yun* is an essential part of Caribbean public life.

2. Urban Design Lab is a methodology created to include new participatory spaces in urban planning and socio-environmental interventions in neighborhoods. It is part of the IDB Emerging and Sustainable Cities Initiative (ESCI), which has the support of the Vienna University of Technology and is implemented in cities of Latin America and the Caribbean. For more information, see issuu.com/urban.design.lab.

3. The participating universities were UNPHU, UCE, UNIBE, PUCMM-CSTA, O&M, UCATECI, UASD and UTESA.

4. The *fifteen-minute city* is a model of a multicenter and multifunction city where distances are short, proposed by urban planner Carlos Moreno. It is a response to segmented functional urbanism, which results in social and spatial segregation, a source of discontent and major sociourban tensions. The mayor of Paris, Anne Hidalgo, adopted this model in 2020 for the urban development of the French capital.

5. For more information, see ciudaddebolsillo.com

6. In the Caribbean, the word "plaza" is associated with a commercial space, so the term "pocket park" was preferred instead.

7. In the Dominican Republic, a *comelona* is a very abundant meal with diverse delicacies. The term *comelona comunitaria* is an adaptation of the term and refers to an event that seeks to bring residents together and activate public spaces.

17.

Occupying the Street: for young women and girls' right to cities

School of Sports and Urban Arts for young women and girls



Promoter
Ciudad Feminista

City/country
Pedro Aguirre Cerda and Santiago,
Chile

Website
ciudadfeminista.cl

Year or period
2019

Relevant actors
Municipality of Pedro Aguirre Cerda, University of Chile, Pierre Dubois Park, Mujeres en Red Zona Sur feminist organization,

workshop professors, young women and girls from Pedro Aguirre Cerda.

Type of intervention
Temporary

Description
This intervention took place in the Pedro Aguirre Cerda commune, which has the worst urban quality of life indexes, with high rates of gender-based violence reports. This project was possible thanks to having been awarded the Valentín Letelier fund by the University of Chile. Its purpose was to provide girls between the ages of seven

and seventeen with artistic and sports tools in order to promote mechanisms for the prevention of gender-based violence in public space. The goal of the school was to reclaim cities for women from a gender and human rights approach. Between ages nine and thirteen, girls practically “disappear” from public space. This intervention involved a number of workshops which were attended by a total of fifty girls, who had the chance to reflect upon the barriers to mobility that the commune poses to them and to everyone who goes to the school, and to discuss the problem of their right to the city.

“The school sparked great interest in the commune, and all the workshops undertaken were completed. These workshops analyzed in depth each girl’s experience of the city and how what they were learning (whether skating, parkour, cycling or serigraphy) could have a positive effect on their development as women and girls in the urban setting.”



18. Tamaulipas

Tlatelolco's children architects

Promoter

MACIA Estudio

City/country

Mexico City, Mexico

Website

maciaestudio.com

Year or period

2019-2020

Relevant actors

Watershed, Creative Producers International, Arts Council England, UWE Bristol, Municipality of Cuauhtémoc, girls, boys, women and men residents of Tlatelolco, Peralvillo and San Simón Tolnahuac.

Type of intervention

Permanent

Description

The project is located in Tlatelolco, a modern and mostly pedestrian housing complex, where children can walk freely across courtyards between buildings, but where a culture of fear prevails and most adults do not allow their children to go very far. The situation of most courtyards could be described in terms of the broken window theory^{*}, so an intervention was necessary. In this context, the goal was to transform an abandoned garden between the Tamaulipas and Campeche buildings, deemed to be dangerous and thus only

used as a walking passageway, into a space for recreation and leisure, with the participation of boys, girls and residents, thus materializing the concept of urban play on a permanent basis and using a replicable methodology. The place was designed through co-creation workshops held with children, so as to include their opinions about their surroundings. At the same time, a weekly free play program was implemented for one year, in order to create trust and a sense of belonging. As a result, not only do children use the structures, but also senior adults feel safer, especially at night, and less garbage is seen in this space.

“A space created from a play and urban childhood perspective. Children, who did not usually interact very much, showed that they could be urban play architects and now spend their afternoons playing together.”

* The broken window theory was proposed by George L. Kelling and James Q. Wilson and was later developed by the former and Catherine Coles in the book *Fixing Broken Windows* (Free Press, 1998). As a strategy to prevent urban degradation, the authors propose to fix problems when they are still small.



Photos: MACIA Estudio - Leticia Lozano



20.

Activation of the Sexual Diversity Square and Policía Vieja Walk

Reclaiming public space for integrating minorities



Promoters

Ciudad de Bolsillo Planificación,
Diseño Urbano y Gestión
Inmobiliaria SpA

City/country

Montevideo, Uruguay

Website

ciudaddebolsillo.com

Year or period

2018- 2019

Relevant actors

Inter-American Development
Bank, Municipality of Montevideo,
Montevideo’s Municipio B,
La Boutique, Luxtory Visuals,

Estación Salvaje Paisajismo, Dueto
Restaurant, Hotel Palacio, Cultural
Center of Spain in Montevideo,
Migration Museum (*Museo de
las Migraciones*), Paseo Cultural
Ciudad Vieja, Montevideo’s
LGBTIQ+ groups, Municipality
of Montevideo’s Secretariat for
Diversity.

Type of intervention

Temporary

Description

The Sexual Diversity Square is the
first public space in Latin America
dedicated to the integration of
sexual minorities. The original
square was opened in 2005 and,

one decade later, it had become
both a physically and socially
degraded area, affecting the lives
of Montevideo’s Old City residents
and merchants. The main goal
was to develop a tactical urbanism
proposal that would promote new
activities in the square and attract
those people who walk every
day along the adjoining streets,
while giving a leading role to the
neighborhood residents. After a
workshop where two proposals
were assessed and validated, it was
decided to set up a literary café
and a public table where citizens
could meet.

“The main outcome was the emergence of new spontaneous activities: office employees would come bringing their own meals, urban dances were rehearsed and the space was used as a school playground. In addition, there was a considerable increase in pedestrian flows and a greater appropriation of the space by both residents and visitors.”



21.

Anti-Harassment Brigade

Methodology for safe spaces

Promoter

Centro para la Sostenibilidad Urbana

City/country

San José, Costa Rica

Website

cpsurbana.org

Year or period

2018-2019

Relevant actors

Municipality of Curridabat, Municipality of San José, Anti-Harassment Brigade volunteers.

Type of intervention

Temporary

Description

Street harassment is one of the gender-based violence forms that most affects how women relate to space and their incorporation to city dynamics.

The Anti-Harassment Brigade trains volunteers and events staff, so that they can disseminate information, and gives visibility to the existing ways of reporting harassment, in addition to providing support during various events. The Brigade's participation in four mass festivals, articulating different strategies to reduce street harassment, made it possible for all people to enjoy the activities.

“Over one hundred people, both staff and Anti-Harassment Brigade men and women volunteers, have been trained, and information has been shared with over five hundred people.”

“Being involved in a city's cultural life is part of citymaking.”



22. Okuplaza San Diego

The collective construction of cities



Left and right: Before and after the intervention

Promoter

Ciudad Emergente

City/country

Santiago, Chile

Website

ciudademergente.org

Year or period

2013

Relevant actors

Municipality of Santiago,
University for Development School
of Architecture, PlantaBanda,
Tecnología Sustentable,
commercial tenants and residents
of the area.

Type of intervention

Temporary

Description

This intervention took place at a convergence of opportunities: the closing of the Bandera and San Diego streets due to the extension of the subway lines, and a workshop, hosted by the University for Development School of Architecture, which sought to bring students closer to actual urban problems. The purpose of the pilot experience was to implement new tactical urbanism practices in Chile, starting a discussion about other forms of prioritizing street space for the

benefit of pedestrians. The goal was the *light, quick and cheap* repurposing of a paved lot for cars as a plaza for people, and the process involved three stages: building, measuring and learning. The pilot project was co-designed with architecture students. Later, light street furniture was built and installed, and spaces for people were delimited. The pilot project was adjusted according to the measurements taken, and lessons for future interventions were learned.

“The Okuplaza triggers a discussion about tactical urbanism at the municipal and regional level, as a nimble and participatory way of city planning. In addition, it presents a public space model which gives rise to pocket parks*, a kind of intervention that was hitherto unknown in Chile.”

* A pocket park is a small public access park created in an urban vacant lot.

23. Parklet Locals Only CB

Public microplaza

Promoter

TransLAB.URB

City/country

Porto Alegre, Brazil

Website

translaburb.cc

Year or period

2018-2019

Relevant actors

Locals Only Bar, Cerveceria Salva, residents, local shops, providers and customers.

Type of intervention

Permanent

Description

This intervention was performed in a location of a bohemian neighborhood of the city with diverse local circulation dynamics, in order to turn it into an outdoor public space for collective use. The place was 7.70m long, 2m wide

and was located in front of a bar. The methodology proposed in *Co-creation of Guidelines for Public Interest Territories*¹ (developed by TransLAB.URB) was used, and this time it was applied in stages: first with the bar staff, and then with customers, providers and neighbors. By means of physical and digital questionnaires, and an activity performed with some of the stakeholders, the guidelines were developed, through a process that tried to create a sense of belonging to the place.

“The goal was also to generate a debate about the space allocated to cars and the places intended for people.”

“There was an impact on bonds among residents, which were strengthened before the parklet was installed, and on participation during the last stage, when a number of activities and workshops for activating the parklet were proposed.”

* TransLAB.URB. *Cocriação de diretrizes para territórios de interesse público*. Porto Alegre, Brazil. Available at https://files.cargocollective.com/c27553/cocriac-a-o-de_diretrizes-metodologia_oficina-com-pactado.pdf



Above: Photo by Denison Fagundes

24. aUPA Project

A child-rearing friendly pop-up public space



Photos: Verónica Mansilla

Promoters

1319. TreceDiecinueve, National University of Tucumán School of Architecture and Urbanism

City/country

San Miguel de Tucumán, Argentina

Website

facebook.com/aUPA.Proyecto

Year or period

2017

Relevant actors

Bernard van Leer Foundation, Link Inversiones, Ministry of Social Development of Tucumán,

Municipality of San Miguel de Tucumán, Primeros Años Program, Tucumán’s Women Observatory, SACRA | Argentine Republic Housewives Union, UTN | National Technological University, São Paulo-T University, INTI | National Institute for Industrial Technology.

Type of intervention

Temporary

Description

Tucumán lacks quality public spaces for families with small children. However, it has about 1200 vacant urban spaces in the form of abandoned buildings and

lots on which nothing has been built that could be transformed, at least temporarily, into those necessary spaces. The goal of the project was to facilitate and improve children’s upbringing beyond the domestic environment and personal networks, developing a new type of outdoor installation designed to involve boys, girls and their caregivers in quality experiences in public spaces. As a result, over five-hundred public and private urban vacant spaces were mapped as potential places for interventions and eleven prototypes of *pop-up* street furniture were designed.

“Over eight thousand people were reached, from families to professionals, students, community leaders, businessmen, government officials and several NGOs.”

“Vacant lots were not intended for any profitable short-term use. The project designed a flexible and temporary alternative that added value to them, creating instant benefits for citizens.”



25.

Wawa Pukllay Book

Planning and construction of play equipment for children

Promoter

Wawa Pukllay

City/country

Arequipa, Peru

Website

issuu.com/comiteeditorialtsl/docs/taller_social_latinoamericano_-_waw

Year or period

2013

Relevant actors

Latin American Coordinating Body of Architecture Students, 10th Latin American Social Workshop 2013, Catholic University of Santa María.

Type of intervention

Publication

Description

In spite of being Peru's second tourist destination, the Colca Valley in Arequipa is beset by poverty, with the most affected victims being children, since the current public policies do not intend to develop their skills according to their cultural context, which is the reason for many of the country's

problems. The project sought to generate a play equipment model that would be easy and quick to implement, in order to complement traditional educational activities and foster the creativity of Andean children through play-based learning. The starting point was the knowledge of the cultural context and of the users themselves: children. The solution was jointly conceived through a workshop, followed by the design, construction and result stages. This was possible thanks to the support of over two hundred Latin American students and professionals. The process was systematized in a book titled *Wawa Pukllay*.

“The three pieces of equipment implemented provided an alternative for boys and girls, since their levels of attendance strengthened and generated new centralities in villages, proving that it is possible to create low-cost collective solutions which can have, at the same time, a high sociocultural impact.”

26.

Los Silos Climbing Park

The mountain in the city

Promoter

Fundación Deportelibre

City/country

Santiago, Chile

Website

deportelibre.cl

Year or period

2014

Relevant actors

Lippi, 20 de Abril Sport and Social Club.

Type of intervention

Permanent

Description

In Chile there are serious social problems, for example, that residual spaces become crime-riddled areas, that the country has the highest rates of obesity and sedentary life in Latin America and

that children aged six or less have the worst levels of mental health in the world, suffering from anxiety, violence and depression disorders. In this context, the goals of the project were to reclaim a residual space which was the epicenter of crimes with extensive social repercussions in the Santiago commune and to empower the local community of the new public sports space in order to improve the residents' security, inclusion and health.

“The structure of an old cement factory which had been abandoned for over seventy years was turned into a first-class, public and free-of-charge sport climbing gym, which benefited a total of one thousand five hundred families and five hundred boys and girls. In addition to the new use of the infrastructure, introductory workshops, training sessions and competitive and recreational events are organized for users.”



Above: Before. Below: After

2.3.

Informal * City

Interventions in the self-built parts of the city

To a great extent, cities in Latin America have been built by their own residents, who have organized themselves in order to meet their needs. This is the nature of the actions included under this thematic area, which involve the participatory construction of community spaces and interventions in public spaces for mitigating risks, among other initiatives.

Map of Cases





Informal City

Cases of study

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★ 27. Informal Design

Livability strategies in low-income neighborhoods

Authors: Tomás Folch, Cristián Robertson, Tamara Egger



Promoters

IDB Cities LAB with Ecología Informal, SECISYU | Secretariat for Social and Urban Integration, Adolfo Ibáñez University (UAI), University of Buenos Aires (UBA).

City/country

Barrio 31 (Cristo Obrero sector), Buenos Aires, Argentina.

Website

blogs.iadb.org/ciudades-sostenibles/es/estrategias-de-habitabilidad-en-barrios-populares-prototipos-de-diseño-informal/

Social media links

twitter.com/BID_Ciudades
twitter.com/basecisyu

Year or period

2018-2019

Relevant actors

Barrio 31 residents, professional teachers from Barrio 31, architecture and design students and university professors from UAI and UBA, public officials from the Secretariat for Social and Urban Integration (DGMV-General Directorate for Housing Upgrading and DGIE-General Directorate for Economic Integration).

Project key quotes/phrases

“Recognizing the other as an equal leads to mutual trust and cooperation, in addition to and beyond the object actually designed, creating a new framework that will underpin new and unimagined processes.” (Ecología de lo Informal)

Type of intervention

Temporary

Keywords

informal city, livability, self-construction, neighborhood upgrading, collaborative urbanism, citizen participation

Informal Design is a project that explores informality as the main development method of contemporary Latin American cities. It combines academic research with applied action on the ground in a week-long collaborative workshop aimed at gaining insight into the inside knowledge of informality in order to be able to introduce design or urban planning interventions.

Barrio 31 is an informal settlement with a long tradition and history in Buenos Aires. The proposed methodology brings together cross-functional teams in order to understand the knowledge and construction cultures of its members. Five groups of international students, local teachers and residents build a small-scale, low-cost and fast turnaround prototype as an answer to a construction problem. These are replicable solutions to frequent, construction-related livability challenges in the neighborhood. This exercise serves as a bridge to building relationships that could potentially lead to new and better ideas through the exchange of knowledge by different stakeholders, who lack enough spaces for such interaction.

Informality as a contemporary process of urban development

In a regional context in which more than 80% of its population lives in cities, 27% of which reside in informal settlements (IDB, 2018), the way in which informality has been addressed needs to be urgently revisited. Over time, informal settlements have become an established way of having access to the city's benefits, land and housing, a phenomenon that has transcended national contexts, but these settlements are also susceptible to multiple challenges, such as evictions, relocations, lack of services and stigmatization (Fernandes, 2011). For a long time, informality was considered to be outside of the academic field of planning and urbanism. The view was that it should be acknowledged in order to work on it, but not necessarily to learn from it. Informality understood as a contemporary process of urban development would indicate that modern cities are built and mutate from generation to generation, through their own know-how. Its unique essence must be studied, all work explored through its rules, and its internal intelligence optimized.

The process of Informal Design raises the question of how to incorporate the knowledge and cultures of construction inherent in informal neighborhoods—which are inhabitants' responses to everyday challenges—to a major neighborhood upgrade project. Design is viewed as a pedagogy to understand and respond to processes that often exceed form as an objective; processes as systems in which diverse social, natural and constructive stakeholders and forces interact.

Shanty towns as areas of opportunity

The oldest and largest informal settlement in the City of Buenos Aires is *Barrio Padre Carlos Mugica*, or *Barrio 31*, located in the north of the city.

Compared to international standards regarding the minimum number of private square meters per inhabitant (14m²), *Barrio 31* falls short with only 7m² per inhabitant. This situation has led to overcrowding in 22% of homes—much higher than the 1.8% overcrowding experienced in formal Buenos Aires neighborhoods. Public spaces are equally inadequate, with just 0.3m² per inhabitant, in contrast to the 6m² per inhabitant available in the rest of the city. Informal and precarious installations mean that

electricity, water and sanitation utilities are of poor quality and frequency.

The organic growth of the informal city, made up of a series of unplanned streets and narrow passageways, has made it difficult to move around the area by any means other than foot or motorcycle. The first floors of houses, self-built by their inhabitants, are used as a variety of shops and services, giving the street a very lively feel. Furthermore, the narrow indoor areas and the basic livability conditions of dwellings compel residents to turn to the street for community life and neighborhood recreation.

The central location of the neighborhood provides nearby job opportunities for its residents, which is why, since the 1930s, *Villa 31*, as it was previously known, has hosted immigrants who came to Buenos Aires to work in the port and the railways (Rojas, 2017). After decades of uncertainty about the future of this neighborhood, two evictions took place—one in 1980 and the other in 1996. The threat of evictions persisted until 2010, but, in 2016, the Government of the City of Buenos Aires made a commitment to urbanize and integrate the neighborhood into the city.

To this end, the Secretariat for Social and Urban Integration was created, with the exclusive mandate of “transforming shanty towns into neighborhoods” through a Comprehensive Urban Plan that would provide basic infrastructure, urban connectivity and improvements to the livability of homes and businesses. It would also make investments to support social, educational and economic efforts designed to integrate the neighborhood to the city and the city to the neighborhood. The implementation of the Plan is supported by the IDB Group and the World Bank.

In light of this immense challenge, in which multiple stakeholders seek to join forces in a comprehensive approach, the Informal Design project seeks to recognize that the community and knowledge therein are instrumental to carrying out this process. The community's human capital must be identified and developed, with the aim of using multiple perspectives to create systematic solutions to everyday challenges in order to bring about comprehensive improvements to the neighborhood.

Co-creating diagnoses and solutions

The Informal Design project was conducted during 2018 and 2019 by IDB Cities LAB and Ecología



Informal, bringing together students and professors from the Design LAB of the Adolfo Ibáñez University (UAI) and the University of Buenos Aires (UBA), public officials from the Secretariat for Social and Urban Integration (SECISYU) and neighborhood residents.

The methodology, based on the logic of *thinking and doing*, consists of both research and action applied on the ground. The aim is for local experts, the community and international students to work together for the co-creation, design, construction, implementation and testing of livability prototypes that are innovative, sustainable, scalable and replicable, and will bring about significant improvements to existing conditions in *Barrio 31*.

To this end, five working groups were set up, consisting of a family group member, a local neighborhood expert, two Chilean students, two Argentine students and a professional from the Secretariat. They were given five days to design, prototype and build five low-cost, high-impact solutions aimed at improving livability conditions in the chosen areas.

In this first edition, the problems the teams aimed to solve revolved around storage and display of

merchandise for shops, and the management, collection and reuse of rainwater. The problems were chosen based on their relevance and the potential of the solutions found to create synergies with other initiatives being run in the area, in order to enable greater scalability.

The work week was structured into three key stages: (i) immersion in the area and project diagnosis (one day); (ii) design (one day); and (iii) construction, assembly, and testing (two and a half days). Each stage had a specific assignment, with predefined delivery objectives and formats.

Each of the days was divided into two key parts: an initial period of work in the neighborhood between 8a.m. and 5p.m., including specific mentoring sessions by the teaching team; and a second work period between 6p.m. and 9:30p.m. for the collection, evaluation, and synthesis of key information gathered during the day.

The aforementioned structure of the intensive workday enabled us to systematize quickly and concretely many of the day-to-day processes and reflections in each project. The true value of the

workshop was not only found in the specific prototype built but also in the processes of co-design and joint work. These powerful and beneficial processes gave different stakeholders a voice, creating a unique opportunity for them to co-create analyses and solutions together.

Prototyping as a collaborative exercise

The surprising thing about prototyping exercises is that their real value does not lie in the prototypes themselves, but rather in the connections they make around them; prototypes are bridges to building relationships that could potentially lead to new and better ideas. There is an argument behind building a prototype that links manual labor with collaborative work and the idea that city upgrades can be born out of concrete actions. Finally, by bringing together the knowledge of different stakeholders, low-cost, fast turnaround and highly replicable prototypes were developed, customized to respond to the daily challenges faced in the neighborhood, using techniques and materials commonly found there.

Five prototypes were designed based on this methodology, as detailed below:

- ▶ **01. Multipurpose hook.** This was created to respond to merchants' need for more display areas in shops given the lack of indoor space. Shop door grills were used as the supporting element for this hook, which was made by bending two 10mm-thick and 80cm-long steel bars, capable of supporting up to 100kg. The prototype stands out because of how quickly it can be built and assembled, and it is currently being scaled up to be used for multiple purposes across the city.



- ▶ **02. Expandable display structure.** This was designed in light of the observation that many shops use stacked crates to display products at different levels. The minimum dimensions of crates were used to design the structure, which was based on square metal tubes with sides of 20mm width. This prototype stands out because of its quick assembly process (five minutes per unit), its stand-alone structure, unconnected to the wall or floor, and its ability to maximize display areas by up to five levels.



- ▶ **03. Rainwater collector.** This prototype seeks to provide a solution to pressing problems in these contexts: scarce supply of water for uses other than the community's consumption; negative consequences caused by rain that spills over from buildings onto streets; the large number of built-up areas compared with the few open spaces in which water is drained through natural filtration. This design, similar to a rainwater funnel, is weighed down by recycled paint buckets at the base, which are used for storing the water. The weight of the buckets gives the "flower" stability, allowing the rainwater catchment area to be



multiplied by twenty-four. This design could potentially be improved by giving it added functionality, such as using it to provide shade in public spaces throughout the year.

- ▶ **04. Water filter.** This device can work with the buildings' rainwater drainage system, preventing wastewater from being discharged onto the street and providing an innovative way of thinking about surface water drainage systems and sumps. Designed to be assembled from materials found in the neighborhood, the water filter has a 40mm corner profile frame structure with two levels: an upper level, consisting of a sand filter made from milk crates, and a lower level, consisting of a 300-liter storage tank. The urban plan to replicate this in each drainpipe provides an opportunity to revamp the neighborhood's urban image.



- ▶ **05. Stackable shelf.** This prototype provides a solution to the pervasive need for display and storage. It was built by replicating a single, modular component, enabling it to grow vertically when stacked upon, and it has the flexibility to adapt to the horizontal dimensions of the spaces in which it will be used. The stackable shelf was



built using a triangle of 2" width, made of planed pine, and 50mm square steel tube joints fastened with wooden dowels. The adjustable steel wire legs make it possible to bridge differences in floor levels.

Reflections and lessons learned

When evaluating this process, we identified seven lessons learned from spending time in the neighborhood and with its residents.

- ▶ **01. The multiscale challenge**

Any analysis of an informal settlement must consider both the scale of the city and the object. This process questions the idea of a modern, large-scale upgrade project to convert a shanty town into a neighborhood through a Comprehensive Urban Plan, which has been thought up and designed outside of the settlement, to be implemented in the settlement. The Informal Design process understands urban ecology accepting that emerging and changing conditions are part of its nature, and result from minimal interventions that are performed based on their suitability to reach the emerging urban scale. As Andrea Branzi (2015) argues, the city must be analyzed and intervened in through systems that, far from being rigid and permanent, are reversible, incomplete and imperfect. This allows interventions to be adapted, to evolve, for new uses to be given to them, and for new activities to arise, using temporary and light infrastructures where the urban scale of transformations is the product of domestic interventions rather than external ones, and where the operational dichotomy between public and private spaces is eliminated.

- ▶ **02. The neighborhood as a process**

Informality is not the subject of a debate about what we consider to be regular/irregular or formal/informal. Rather, it is an active, unstoppable, metabolic process that eliminates these distinctions. *Barrio 31* is the outcome of a process that has found organic solutions to its own needs over the years. Its housing units are designed according to the specific use given to them and reflect their residents, adapting to the arrival of new members or programs. The ecology of informality challenges us to understand and operate in urban settings that are dynamic, progressive, emerging and resilient.

► 03. Teaching and learning through informality

The fact that informality is a process, and not a form, does not mean that lessons cannot be taught by and learned from it. The solutions to its problems continue to lie in the field of design, which is responsible for transforming its internal logic.

Design is viewed as a pedagogy to understand and respond to processes that often exceed form as an objective; processes as systems in which diverse social, natural and constructive stakeholders and forces interact.

► 04. Common livability factors

The ethnographic and analytical work conducted in the neighborhood helped to establish tactical strategies for creating a guide to improving livability, and to define which areas should be taken on board and prioritized for collaborative work. Although informality is distinctly unique and unrepeatable, many neighborhoods experience similar situations, realities and challenges in terms of livability, allowing for typological groupings and making it possible to create replicable strategies.

In this regard, issues that have been partially addressed in housing units can be adopted as a set of interventions that were dealt with independently at first, then implemented jointly and finally multiplied on an urban scale.

► 05. Local knowledge

In order for a solution to be found, it is necessary to identify human capital in the local area. The designer brings together the diverse and rich skills, passions and expertise of different people. Facilitating communication between those who have a problem and those who have a solution requires designing interaction tools and processes. On the other hand, recognizing local ways of doing things and identifying the local experts who have built a city over the years allows for solutions to be validated and safe implementation to be planned. Who better to find solutions than those who are familiar with the problems and have been solving them for years? Designing also involves creating suitable conditions and trust in order to build bridges of communication and encourage interaction.

► 06. Cross-learnings

In each project everyone has something to teach and something to learn. Each person has relevant know-how. The dynamics need to be orchestrated but not structured. Although the concept of effective participation is widely used, experiences such as this one show that when faced with a common challenge, different perspectives come together, and each individual naturally adopts a different role, either a leading or supporting one, at different times.

Recognizing the other as an equal leads to mutual trust and cooperation, in addition to and beyond the object actually designed, creating a new framework that will underpin new and unimagined processes.

► 07. Measuring the impact of objectives

Measuring helps us to understand what was achieved and how it could be done better – not just for a target outcome, but for the greatest possible number of variables on which the project could have had an impact.

It is necessary to find strategies for listening, and to devote the necessary time and attention to understanding the reality of informality, leaving prejudices and stereotypes aside.

Today few could fail to recognize the intelligence inherent in informality, and how valid and pragmatic it has proven to be as a process for building a contemporary habitat. This type of experience goes beyond a mere analysis of informality, to trigger a discussion about how its know-how can compound the tools needed to build “the other city,” the one we thought was its polar opposite, robust and formal, but which today could actually be enriched by the benefits *Barrio 31* has to offer.

Conclusions

In this process, prototyping was carried out collaboratively. Each team had to be open to different ideas and willing to listen to others, who might not represent the majority but whose contributions, combined with the rest, generate a more valuable whole. Prototyping, therefore, allows us to gain experience through new ideas, to grow in humility by integrating what we believe to be a good solution with what others think is a better one, through empathy and communication. ✨



★ 28.

Ludobarrio La Paloma

A process of public space co-creation

Authors: Carolina Carrasco, Verónica Adler



Promoters

Inter-American Development Bank, Espacio Lúdico (NGO)

City/country

Montevideo, Uruguay

Website

espacioludico.org

Social media links

facebook.com/ongespacioludico

instagram.com/espacioludico

Year or period

2018

Relevant actors

Inter-American Development Bank, Municipal Government of Montevideo, Espacio Lúdico, La Paloma residents

Project key quote/phrase

“... play is used to stimulate imagination and emotions by challenging people to cope with new realities that go beyond

the conventional rationality. Participants may therefore set aside traditional canons and create ‘outside the box’.”

Type of intervention

Permanent, Program

Keywords

urban innovation, co-creation, public space, local governance, urban experimentation

The project was a five-month process jointly conducted with the community of La Paloma, in the city of Montevideo (Uruguay). The aim was to arouse interest in public spaces and organize collaboration among neighbors in order to transform a vacant area into a space pervaded by the sense of community. Based on ludic methodologies to attain a socio-spatial transformation of the neighborhood, this process applied play and creative urban activities as a means to increase participation, thus promoting local creativity and giving rise to new territorial meanings that fostered social collaboration. The process was apportioned into five phases, which had different purposes and intensities, and involved different urban interventions or play-based activities, to increase togetherness in a community. Besides, it is an empirical contribution to theories about the relevance of play in society (Huinziga, 1938 and Cailloise, 1961) and also to later research works on the importance of playing for people and for cities (Stevens, 2007 and Nishholf, 2017). The whole experience implies that play is an appealing methodology to co-build collective imaginaries through transversal urban-design processes at the local level.



The production of urban social capital demands building up collective meanings, one of the most challenging tasks for city-governance in current times. Since 1960, urban planning processes have been disputed by many thinkers, such as Jacobs (1961), Whyte (2018), and Gehl (2010), among others. They maintained that traditional urban planning did not emphasize the construction of social capital involved in the processes of designing and shaping public space, something that continues to be a matter for debate. Thus, Friedmann (2010) says that “the very concept of ‘city’ has become diluted and vague” and highlights the relevance of re-signifying public spaces, underscoring they are essential elements in the city, as opposed to placelessness. Nowadays, it has been widely accepted that, in order to achieve a high and effective participation in neighborhood-related issues, territories should be developed together with their inhabitants in order to increase their appropriation of the intervention site, their ability to self-manage and maintain the place over time, and that all these actions should take place at the neighborhood level, where strategies at the base have attained a special

interest for public space (Padilla, 2020). Play has become the main figure in this urban design project meant to cope with the challenge of promoting and generating active, relevant and creative participative strategies through play-based actions.

Socio-spatial contextualization

The intervention area is located on the northwest of Montevideo, in a peri-urban district whose population has increased significantly in recent times. Population growth is predominantly associated with industries and, to a lesser degree, with expanding informal settlements. Currently, such settlements are on the way of being upgraded through the social housing plans promoted by the Municipal Government of Montevideo within the framework of the IDB’s neighborhood recovery project. This project defines an all-embracing territorial development plan, where housing, public spaces, and infrastructure are placed on the same level. It is within this framework that the IDB includes the Ludobarrio Project, designed by the Espacio Lúdico organization, in order to carry out the socio-spatial transformation of the area, emphasizing

the development of public spaces for residents and enabling the co-construction of a common idea. The area used to lack spaces with collective meaning and content, public infrastructure was poor and almost non-existent, and there were few safe areas for leisure and play near the houses.

Collaborative-action methodology

The project is based on research-action and design-thinking methodologies, and has been thought up as an iterative, permanent learning process materialized in the territorial intervention. The process is focused on implementing play-based urban tactics in order to promote participation in issues of collective interest and encourage transversal approaches, so that children, young people and adults may develop solid and deep ties with the territory. This kind of process is called Collaborative Urban Design (CUD).

The CUD method can be used to design urban projects of any scale guided by one or several professionals whose specific decisions derive from community-based knowledge, and centered on the inhabitants themselves, who should be considered the main experts in matters related to the area where they reside (Sanoff, 2000). Hence, links between the group of designers / implementers and the community may be steadily established, and local dynamics, as well as difficulties, problems, and wishes may be pointed out by the inhabitants. Thus, the potential of the neighborhood may be seen from the residents' perspective.

According to Marc Augé (1992), *places* are spaces filled with memories, as opposed to transition spaces, which are generic, *non places*. The CUD methodology has its roots in this notion and implies creating a neighborhood characterized by a sense of what is common in public space. It is a people-centered approach to planning and designing which requires neighbors to engage actively through placemaking (Project for Public Spaces, 2008). Thus, not only does the space undergo a physical change, but it is also re-signified and transformed into a *place*, according to Augé's terminology, with the added benefit of sustainability, since participants take care of it. In this line, individual responsibilities and rights acquired during the whole citizen-centered process are emphasized, which means that social, political, and legal responsibilities on the territory are also involved

(Velascos, 2005). It is also important to note that interventions at the local scale and the bottom-up approach to creation and knowledge are key factors to understanding, ideating, and planning a place, and include the possibility of the project being later undertaken and transformed by the residents, to better appropriate it and increase their sense of place, even after the process and the participation of the designer / implementer group have come to an end (Friedmann, 2010).

Consequently, the collaborative action methodology is focused primarily on developing a sense of place based on the sum total of spatial transformation activities which create a sense of what is common, generate a collective symbolism associated to positive experiences, and re-signify the area by including new emotional relationships between the people and the space (Berroeta & Rodríguez, 2010; Sen, 2000). Moreover, the physical transformation associated to the aesthetic improvement of the space has positive effects on the inhabitant's perceptions (Lynch, 1960). Thus, this urban design project is based on tactical urbanism strategies aimed at developing short-term, high-impact interventions in order to transform the space and give it a collective meaning in the long-term (Bishop & Williams, 2012; Brenner, 2015; Lydon & García, 2015), thus paving the way for its symbolic appropriation by citizens. Within this framework, play becomes a relevant strategy since, by definition, it enables unprejudiced community participation and contributes to changing the very conception of the space, resorting to humor and providing a positive perception of the place.

Play as a relevant activity in placemaking

According to Johan Huizinga (1972), from the remotest times, play has been important for people as an intrinsic element of culture; he considers it is a universal drive, essential for any culture. His writings demonstrate that playing is inherent in human beings, and extend the concept of play to various activities associated with amusement and the development of relationships among groups of different ages. For him, play is a basic activity for civilization. By the same token, he also criticizes modern cities, where play activities have almost disappeared.

In the context of Ludobarrio, play is used to stimulate imagination and emotions by challenging

people to cope with new realities that go beyond the conventional rationality. Participants may therefore set aside traditional canons and create “outside the box”. In this sense, play-based activities engender new meanings: they transform what is ordinary into extra-ordinary, and change established roles, creating empathy among participants. Moreover, ludic activities demand spending significant time in urban space. The underuse of urban spaces has been criticized as an important weakness in contemporary cities (Soja, Hendel & Cifuentes, 2008), and this criticism reinforces the idea of breaking the *statu quo* in spatial experience. Previously considered global ideas to solve space problems may be therefore left aside, because the differential features of the territory are surveyed to find specific solutions. Positive concerns may be shared through play among different groups that participate in a certain activity at the very place where it is performed. Thus, highly stigmatized areas may be re-signified.

The aim of the Ludobarrio intervention was to restore relationships among neighbors, and re-enchant the neighborhood for its inhabitants using play-based activities to extend the spaces dedicated to collective gatherings. Activities were carried out together with the community in the form of urban play, which appealed to residents and promoted transverse inter-connections between them.

The process was designed to test and measure, among other items, how social stakeholders related to the territory, the interaction among them, local creativity and its growth to conceive possible futures and the spatial transformation. The following four steps were defined (Figure 1):

- ▶ 1. Diagnosis of opportunities for improving quality of life.
- ▶ 2. Ideation of the necessary changes that can be deployed in the territory.
- ▶ 3. Testing the proposed infrastructure projects in order to transfer knowledge about them to the people, being receptive to their ideas and doubts.
- ▶ 4. Creation and construction of a common project relying on local citizens’ creativity.

Figure 1.

Design Process. Ludobarrio Program.

The five-step process and evolution of the Ludobarrio design project, based on the design thinking methodology. Source: Espacio Lúdico (NGO).



All four stages engaged the residents with the future development of the neighborhood, and they also transformed the social experience. The stages were named “Action # X” and each one was focused on transforming a different sphere: the social sphere, space itself, communication, and also on exploring the possible evidence of change, always trying to keep in view the main dimensions targeted by the CUD method.

► **Stage 2: Dreams.** Different possibilities were explored, as well as the inhabitants' dreams for the neighborhood improvement and transformation. Residents were required to answer a letter containing some questions. Each letter was later inserted into a white balloon, so that each idea contributed to build a sort of playground filled with balloons that changed the space as it was traditionally known. Questions were intended to delve more deeply into some ideas: whether the transformation of the neighborhood was locally accepted, or which were the changes that might improve the residents' sense of well-being. The goal was to gather the whole community in a playful collective activity, and awaken in residents the ability to project a different future territory built in common.



Play-based interventions in the street to use it as a place for recreation



The street becomes a playground, covered with balloons containing the residents' dreams inside

► **Stage 3. Testing.** New ideas were identified and prototypes were made, but the challenge was to convey clear, accurate, and specialized information to the community about the project intended to provide the neighborhood with equipment and infrastructure, to be executed by the Municipal Government of Montevideo. Besides, the goal of the pilot intervention was to test the feasibility of transforming Lautaro Street—which connects two different sections of the neighborhood with the main access roads from the city—into a space available for collective use and social encounter. Gamification¹ tactics applied to the use of space were employed at the intervention site, so that citizens might envisage the possible future of the neighborhood.

► **Stage 4. Co-design.** This stage tried to encourage direct interaction between neighbors and the design team for the collective development of the public space project, so as to promote the creative experience at the local level: to the extent that decision-making about the area becomes more closely bound to the community, interaction catalyzes innovative ideas. The tactical method consisted of designing a creative collective action in which objects and abstract elements were reproduced to scale in order to encourage residents to use their imagination and test ideas about the use and livability of the area, to visualize these ideas, establish priorities among them, and to detect their unifying thread and possible interrelations, among other aspects. Twenty-three ideas of use and activities emerged from this process. They were discussed and tested in the ludic activities, and agreements were achieved about how to use the place. Life-size testing of new ideas makes it possible to make decisions based on real possibilities, to implement and rectify such ideas at the intervention field itself, and to coordinate all possible ideas emerging from the group. In this stage, new feasible uses and ideas arose when associations and mutations were suggested for some proposals. Creation was thus fostered, pre-conceived or cliché proposals decreased and, more important still, the active engagement



Above: Testing ideas for the use of the future plaza
Below: Activity to prepare for the co-design work with the residents

of participants was enabled, so that almost all age-groups were included at some time or other.

- **Stage 5. Transformation.** Starting from community workshops held in the public space, i.e., from play-based activities that made use of abstract at-scale models of the twenty-three proposals of appropriation and use, thirteen were tested and selected as realistic possibilities. Full-scale testing makes it possible to foresee the implementation results with some certitude and collective agreement. Team-members, neighbors, and users-to-be worked together through seven days and seven nights, while celebrating the forthcoming change. The co-construction task generated deep and significant ties between the community, the design team, and the municipal government representatives.



Members of the community building their plaza

Impact and results

When evaluating participation along the five stages, the earlier results indicated the diversity of people contributing to the activities and, later on, it was evident that the younger age-group took part more actively as time went by. What is more, when activities became more concrete and were focused on elaborating an idea —e.g., in the final stages— the participation of young people increased. Besides, when the number of new participants decreased (when passing from stage 4 to 5, for example) the number of people who had taken part in previous activities increased (an indicator of permanence and persistence in participation). Even though activity indicators cannot be easily compared since

the activities had different goals, were performed in specific areas of the neighborhood, and had different appealing power, all stages showed a high degree of participation in terms of numbers and also in terms of diversity.

The connection with the territory was also evidenced by participation in the final construction stage of the project and its maintenance. Young people took part actively in the execution phase and felt therefore committed to the place once the project was completed and even months after implementation. The area has not been vandalized; it only displays one slogan, which shows its symbolic appropriation by the younger groups. However, the project has been conceived as a temporary intervention, which means that it requires a greater investment in maintenance and demands the implementation of the final project.

In quantitative terms, the mural activity involved a high spontaneous participation of passers-by: 166 direct participants in a two-hour period. The overall activity engaged 142 citizens, and this is the base for the future process. In activity #2, dedicated to ideation, a high number (187) of suggestions were received, representing 24% of the attendees. In the third activity, out of 245 visitors, 75 direct participants completed the play circuit dedicated to information transfer at a rate of 1 person every 15 minutes. The fourth activity involved 36 active participants, quite a low number as compared to other activities, but it was focused on a more limited area and its target was a specific group of neighbors. Activity #5 involved 39 participants throughout the 7 days taken up by the activity. Although the number is low, it shows their commitment along the period, as well as a relevant and meaningful participation in the final project.

Conclusions

The Ludobarrio project shows that a process conducted together with neighbors gives rise to long-term alliances and creates emotional bonds with the place and among people. It evidences the importance a space may have when it involves stories shared in the community and therefore entails an enduring appropriation of the territory. We may say such processes are not difficult to implement: they only require creativity, and the will to work together with neighborhood residents for the future transformation of their habitat.



Above and below left: Young residents participating actively in the process

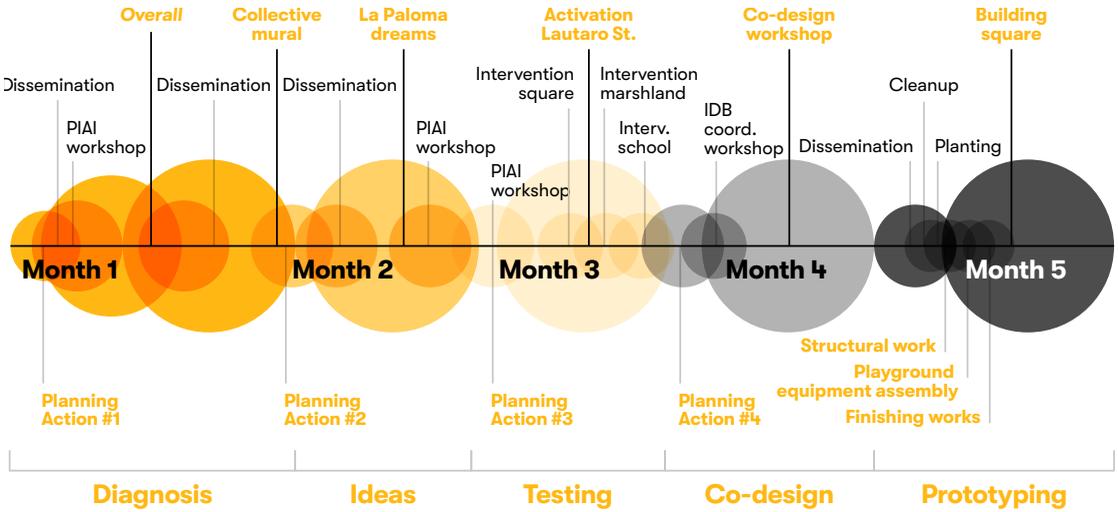
Right: Survey panel for residents to express how they feel in the plaza



AMISTAD

JUGAR

Figure 4.
Collaborative Urban Design Process.
 Timeline of the Ludobarrio project stages and processes, with milestones and relevant actions highlighted.



Play is an essential part of the strategy selected to forge a friendly, appealing, transversal, and closer relationship with neighbors because it engages them actively in intervention processes. Ludobarrio has been implemented in four neighborhoods, located in different Latin American cities. Other collaborative ideas, such as *Activadores Barriales* (neighborhood activators) and *Ciudad Colaborativa* (collaborative city) have derived from it. ✨

1. *Gamification* is an educational approach to motivate learning which introduces game elements into the professional educational environment.

★ 29. The Little Plaza (La Placita) (Re)building community spaces

Authors: Lia Alarcón, Franklin Velarde, Lucía Nogales



Promoter

Ocupa Tu Calle

City/country

Lima, Peru

Website

ocupatucalle.com

Year or period

2019

Relevant actors

Alto Peru Project, Alto Peru residents, students of the Urban Interventions-OTC summer workshop, UN-Habitat

Project key quote/phrase

On-site work during all the project stages was key to success: collaborating with a firmly established local organization and developing the project in the neighborhood itself enabled

participants to understand its dynamics and brought them closer to the residents.

Type of intervention

Permanent

Keywords

public space, childhood, neighborhood, community, space recovery, urban intervention

As part of the first Urban Interventions Open Workshop hosted by Ocupa Tu Calle in partnership with the Alto Peru Project, the *La Placita* (or “little plaza”) initiative was implemented in the Alto Peru neighborhood, in the district of Chorrillos. The goal of the course was to help train agents of change and of process innovation with relation to participatory, community and human-scale urbanism. These goals were aligned with the objectives of the Alto Peru Project, which had been under way in the area for over ten years in order to make children and young people stay away from threats affecting the neighborhood, such as violence and drug trafficking. The intervention sought to turn an unused public space into a place where residents of all ages could meet and enjoy various leisure activities during their spare time.

This intervention was part of the Urban Interventions Workshop held by the Alto Peru Project and Ocupa Tu Calle, which intended to train students as agents of change by inviting them to participate in the process of diagnosing, designing and building two small-scale urban interventions in collaboration with the Alto Peru community.

After a first urban diagnosis of the neighborhood, the Alto Peru “plaza” was identified as a place with a great potential for an intervention. It was recognized as the heart of the community. However, over the years, it had become a segregated space with an infrastructure that made it insecure, so children had been pushed to play in the street.

This is why the intervention focused on recovering a space for children by transforming public space through participatory processes which were also meant to reinforce the neighborhood’s social cohesion, encouraging all residents to recognize the plaza as a safe place for children to play and for all other members of the community.

The neighborhood

Alto Peru is a neighborhood in the district of Chorrillos, in the south of the city of Lima, with a population of about 1800 people. The neighborhood borders the Morro Solar hills and the historic downtown of the district. Among the most severe issues affecting this area are violence, crime and drug trafficking, which hamper the development of this community’s young people. It was in this context that the Alto Peru Project started in 2008. This initiative sought to have children and young people stay away from this environment through sport activities like surfing and muay thai. Over the last few years, the project has increased its activities and is currently organized around three fundamental themes: sports for development, human support and community urbanism. This last goal consists of joining efforts with the residents to transform and improve the community’s public spaces.

This residential neighborhood has characteristics that enable the development of a number of social dynamics: first, most residents choose to walk to perform their everyday activities, or take motorbike-taxis to cover longer distances quickly when going to neighborhood buildings, such as schools, markets or public transportation stops. Since vehicular traffic is low, streets are spaces used by family and friends

to gather in small groups of five or six people, place paddling pools in summer or mix building materials. Here, public areas are used by residents for their own activities as an extension of households’ private space, thus becoming a private but collectively used space for the nearby community.



Learning and action spaces

The intervention was designed in the context of an open training workshop targeted at students and professionals of different areas, held from January 15th to March 15th of 2019. It was attended by twelve people, who participated in a number of theoretical-methodological sessions conducted in the neighborhood itself. The goal was to train them in making diagnoses of public space and designing innovative urban interventions from a participatory approach.

The working area was centered in the Alto Peru “plaza”, an old piece of land intended for dwellings, which the residents fought to preserve and activate as a public space. As a consequence, it took root in the residents’ memory as a very meaningful place in the neighborhood. However, it had become a segregated space where infrastructure promoted insecurity, so the neighborhood children had stopped going to the plaza and would now play in the street. The space, which was recognized as the heart of the neighborhood, became one of the most dangerous places of Alto Peru. This is why the main goal was to increase the permanent presence of children, as well



as the number of adults and senior citizens frequenting the area, by improving the zone's equipment and removing physical barriers and residual spaces.

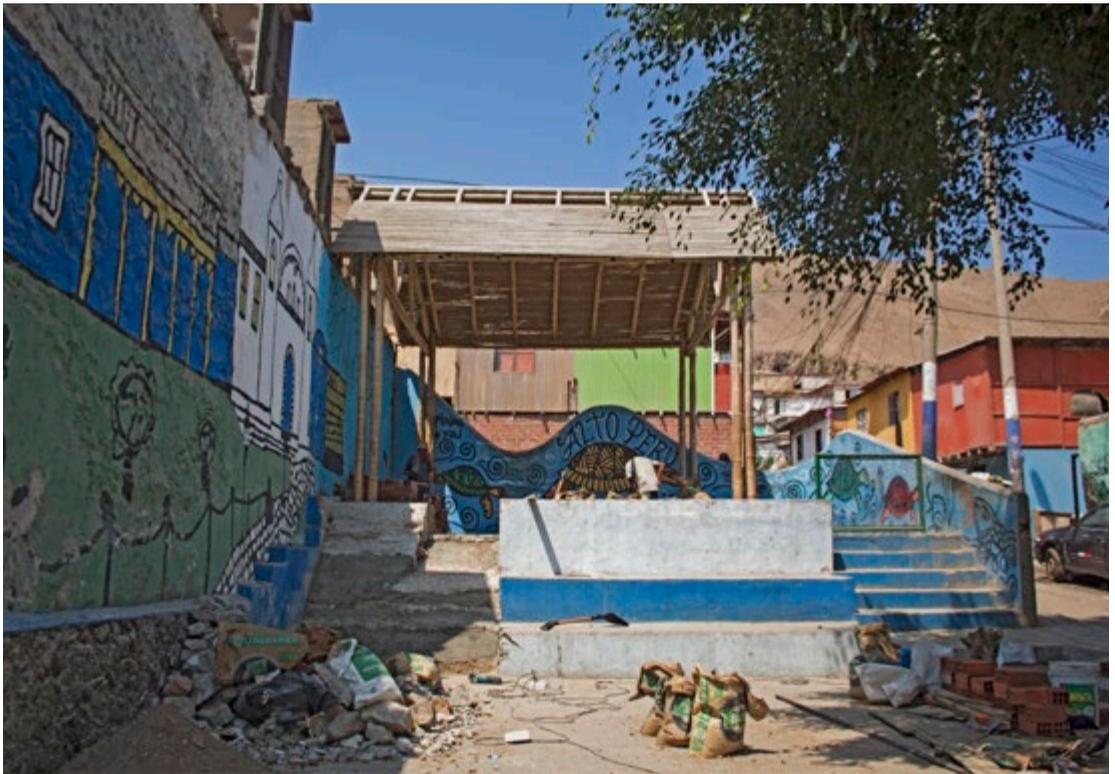
In addition, during the first month of the workshop, information was collected to diagnose the place and the population dynamics. This was done by gathering quantitative data, such as the number of users by sex and age, as well as qualitative data, like the types of activities performed in the area of the intervention and other specific aspects of the way it was used. Data were obtained at different times during the day and the week, in order to gain knowledge of various scenarios and understand the place dynamics. Once the data were collected, it was found, for example, that although the plaza was not being actively used, people would spend time in adjoining areas, like their house's doorsteps, where they would talk to their neighbors at different times and stay on the sidewalk. The sale of food on nearby streets and drug peddling were also identified as other relevant activities.

From design to construction

As part of the participatory process, the workshop included several meetings with the residents to find out their opinions about the work area, and their views

and wishes for the future. On the one hand, a special workshop was held for working with children. It was attended by twenty-six boys and girls between the ages of seven and fourteen who lived near the area, and it was conducted using Minecraft, a virtual entertainment software. Using this game to manipulate a character and transform the place according to their criteria, children provided their key ideas for renewing the plaza. In this way, their wishes and needs were taken into account.





The residents' opinions, the data collected and the children's designs led to the conclusion that it was necessary to increase the number of benches and vegetation, and that the area's furniture could be designed as a game circuit which could also enable other activities in the neighborhood.

Two areas were delimited in the plaza, which was already divided into two different levels. However, the design tried to remove physical barriers and remedy the fragmentation of the space caused by elements such as the walls bordering the plaza, which had been built to protect the children's play area. The proposed strategies sought to create a visual and a physical connection between both areas. On the top level, play structures were installed, creating a stimulating and attractive environment for the children who used to play in the street. Climbing holds, a bench with different levels along the perimeter wall—suitable for both rest and play—and a concrete slide connecting the top and bottom levels were put in place. In this way, the top level, which used to be concealed, became a dynamic, innovative and visible space, where it was now possible to do activities which used to be conducted in the adjoining streets. A light bamboo roof was used to shelter this new space from the sun. The new steps, walls and floors were painted with the neighborhood's children and young people in a number of working sessions.

In the bottom level, a tree was planted to create shadow spaces. The wall that used to separate both areas was removed in order to generate a single platform that would provide better visibility and make it possible to perform different activities, like games, fairs, concerts, film screenings or relaxing. Apart from this, the intention was also to ensure the presence of children and of the "eyes watching over them".

The construction process was conducted with local specialized labor. This had a positive impact on the neighborhood's economy. The neighborhood children, the workshop students and Ocupa Tu Calle volunteers also helped with the work. Altogether, it took five days to create the space. The design used low-cost and affordable materials, like sandpaper, nails, bolts, nuts, prepared soil, flowers, cement, bricks, paint, wood and bamboo.



Recovering meeting spaces

It is calculated that the project benefited 2225 people altogether. Once the intervention was completed, measurements were carried out in the place again to determine the impact on the population dynamics, and it was found that the removal of the physical barriers on the top level of the plaza was positive for the surroundings. Users of different ages were seen to increase in number. Children stopped playing in the street, as they used to before the intervention, and took their games to the transformed space. This evidenced the success of the intervention. In addition, in contrast with the time previous to the intervention, the maps used for recording activities showed a considerable increase in the number of girls playing in the *Placita*, as well as in the quantity of adults who would spend time there talking among themselves while standing or seated.



Given all of the above, it can be said that the project met the goal of increasing the permanent presence of children, as well as the number of adults and senior citizens frequenting the area, by improving the zone's equipment and removing physical barriers and residual spaces. However, there are still factors associated with drug peddling, which put children's integrity at risk and constrain the dynamism of activities in the space of the intervention.

In addition, the project increased the value of the area and led the authorities to develop other activities, since the new municipal government started a walkability program.

Conclusions

Interventions in vulnerable areas have the potential of generating positive transformations in the neighborhood. The intervention at *La Placita* improved a symbolic public space for the community, reusing existing infrastructure and generating new spaces for play and relaxation, enhancing security and accessibility.

The project used a number of innovative diagnosis, monitoring, design and planning methods, applied through a cross-disciplinary and participatory process. The professionals and students who attended the workshop were trained in the use of these tools and gained the necessary knowledge to replicate these projects in other areas of the city.

Joining efforts with the Alto Peru Project was vital for this initiative, since, thanks to the project's ongoing work in the neighborhood, the intervention can continue evolving and it can be managed with the residents' active support even after the workshop has finished. It is thus expected that people will continue performing activities at *La Placita* and that the place will become established as a point of reference in the neighborhood.

Reflections and lessons learned

The workshop sessions were conducted in the neighborhood itself, which made it easier to collect data, observe the neighborhood's dynamics at different times during the day and communicate quickly with its dwellers. The context and the constant field work required by the workshop exposed participants—who did not live in the neighborhood—to some dangerous situations, but these could be prevented with key support from the residents and local actors.

As the process developed, it was interesting to see that many design proposals, such as removing the wall that split the plaza in two, clashed with inhabitants' preconceived notions about the space. These were discussed in the meetings before the design. For example, residents would point out that the wall was necessary, since it made the children's play space safe and served as protection against the shoot-outs that sometimes took place in the area. This provided valuable information that was taken into consideration for the design.

Finally, the project confirmed the importance of collaborative work with other organizations to develop projects in which all participants can contribute their knowledge and experience. The relationship of the Alto Peru Project with the neighborhood and its horizontal ties with the residents were vital for the development of the proposal, whereas *Ocupa Tu Calle* was in charge of managing resources and provided the technical knowledge for the design of the intervention. ✨

★ 30. Residents' Parliament

Set of residents' terraces and cultural stage

Promoter

PICO Collective | Proyectos de Interés Comunal (Aparatos Contingentes)

City/country

Caracas, Venezuela

Website

picocolectivo.org.ve

Year or period

2015-2017

Relevant actors

Los Frailes de Catia neighborhood self-building cooperative, La Ceiba Community Council, Aparatos Contingentes, Inparques | National Parks Institute, Venezuela's Territorial Vice President's Office, Federal Government Council.

Type of intervention

Permanent

Description

The intervention gives rise to a comprehensive restructuring process through a system that interconnects common spaces

within the neighborhood. In addition to equipment, the initiative includes the design of a territorial management protocol, strategies for sustainable relations with the natural ecosystem and agreements for living together. This operation makes it possible to reshape an underused 750m² area at the heart of the neighborhood by integrating different plazas into one point which has the characteristics of multiple rooftops, improving precarious service infrastructures, access paths leading to houses and roads deteriorated by permanent use.

“The community’s representatives suggested the concept of an open parliament rather than a community house, promoting the more political and democratic character of the space, which is viewed as a participatory platform to discuss and exchange views about public issues.”



Photos: José Alberto Bastidas - Marcos Coronel

★ 31.

Villa Clorinda Park

History of a park without railings

Promoter

CCC | Coordinadora de la Ciudad en Construcción

City/country

Lima, Peru

Website

redocara.com/post-de-noticias-1/iv9mwlos37pe07EntrelazosLimaVilla-Clorinda

Year or period

2016-2017

Relevant actors

Municipality of Comas, Sumbi, ANIA, Ocupa Tu Calle, Villa Clorinda Málaga de Prado leaders.

Type of intervention

Temporary, Permanent

Description

Within the framework of the ANIA NGO “Tierra de Niños” (Children’s Land) or TiNi program and of the SUMBI NGO “Entrelazos” program, the Villa Clorinda park was planned as the basis of an integral urban project for the entire neighborhood. The goal was to turn an abandoned space used as a parking lot into a safe and healthy play park that would be open to all residents, especially children, by means of a participatory process in which private institutions and the public

municipal administration would work together in a pilot project for reclaiming neighborhood public spaces. A number of assessment and shared vision workshops were held with residents and children, who did exercises involving urban imaginaries. With the removal of the railings from the park, together with strategies for opening the space and the introduction of play structures, the goals were achieved and the way was paved for fully reclaiming the space. However, after a few months, the new leaders disassembled the installation.

“The lesson learned is that the appropriation of space is previous to its construction and that any public space production process implies a strong social conflict which can be positively understood and managed.”



Photos: Javier Vera

★ 33.

Soup kitchen interventions

Transformation of space as an opportunity for integral development

Promoter

IncurSIONES | Incubadora de ideas para la ciudad

City/country

Caracas, Venezuela

Website

incurSIONES-ve.com

Year or period

2018-2019

Relevant actors

Mothers of the soup kitchens where interventions took place, ALS | Alimenta La Solidaridad, Caracas Mi Convive, Embassy of the United States in Venezuela, Embassy of Switzerland in Venezuela, Smith Falchetti.

Type of intervention

Permanent

Description

In Venezuela, 50% of children under the age of five suffer from malnutrition. Alimenta La Solidaridad (ALS) is an organization that addresses this problem with soup kitchens which provide one daily meal to children in underprivileged areas, relying on a community participation model

led by mothers. In partnership with ALS, these spaces were reimagined as opportunities for integral development. A model based on microinterventions was proposed, given its useful process design and results, in order to promote development opportunities through community cohesion and the consolidation of local leaders. This transformation involved three soup kitchens: Nuevo Horizonte, San Miguel and Macarao. The benefits reached a total of two hundred sixty children and ninety-six mother leaders. In these soup kitchens various topics were addressed, such as safe spaces for children, WASH* principles, meeting spaces, female leadership and growth opportunities.

“A logic based on the economy of movement made it possible to address urgent issues with specific activities and to deal with important questions, such as the role of space in the development of children and in mothers’ leadership.”

* WASH (Water, Sanitation and Hygiene) is a number of Unicef programs with activities that focus on providing water, sanitation and hygiene to communities, ensuring the right of children to health.



★ 34.

El Trébol: A place for everyone

A residents' self-managed space for urban arts



Promoter

Arquitectura Expandida

City/country

Bogotá, Colombia

Website

arquitecturaexpandida.org

Year or period

2014

Relevant actors

Members of the Ciudad de Cali neighborhood residents' community (Patio Bonito, district

of Kennedy, Bogotá), Territorios Luchas, Biciterritorializando, Golpe de Barrio, la Francia Skateboarding, Dast, Monstruación, Cultural Council of the Embassy of Spain in Colombia, Sodimac Colombia.

Type of intervention

Permanent

Description

The project was conducted in a community which was determined to reclaim an abandoned neighborhood space associated with fear and conflict. Relying

again on the self-management and self-building structure which had originally characterized this neighborhood's community, the goal was to help explore a similar organizational mechanism to create a community space, with a focus on the dynamics of urban arts such as rap or skating, pre-university education of low-income sectors and affective community spaces. Currently, a skate park, a collective garden and a bicycle museum are being developed.

“Today, five years after the self-building initiative, spaces attended by young people with diverse profiles coexist and are autonomously managed with support from different sources.”



Photos: Ana López Ortega

★ 35. Children's playground in Manhattan Park

Urban intervention as a tool to make
problems visible in the community

Promoter

Ocupa Tu Calle

City/country

Lima, Peru

Website

ocupatucalle.com

Relevant actors

Manhattan Park Committee,
FUNDES, Fundación Avina,
community residents, volunteers.

Year or period

2016

Type of intervention

Temporary

Description

The intervention was performed in Manhattan Park, located in Universitaria Avenue, in the district of Comas. The park was threatened by a commercial project which intended to privatize it and turn it into a supermarket. A workshop was held with residents to identify the needs of this space, and on

the basis of this information, a contest was launched to design a playground in an underused sector of the park, in order to activate and encourage more activities. The selected design was created by Diego Vivas, Gabriel Cerna, Sofía Tokumura and Ofelia Viloche, and the proposal was implemented with the neighborhood residents. The contest made it possible to halt the privatization of the park and led to media coverage of the issue, thus motivating other residents to denounce these problems in their own communities.

“The need for a law aimed at the protection of public spaces was set on the agenda, as a result of which several lawmakers became committed to this and advanced a bill on public spaces in Congress.”



Photos: Diego Vivas

★ 36. Mirador 70

Structure for community activities and watching local landscapes

Promoters

MAAN, Grupo Talca

City/country

Caracas, Venezuela

Website

[bienalesdearquitectura.es/
index.php/es/propuestas-por-
paises/6448-venezuela-mirador-70](http://bienalesdearquitectura.es/index.php/es/propuestas-por-paises/6448-venezuela-mirador-70)

Year or period

2015

Relevant actors

Comunidad El 70, El Valle
district, PICO collective,
Already Happening, Presidential

Commission for Peace and
Life, Construpatria, Fundación
MUSARQ, Gran Misión Saber y
Trabajo Program, Frente Francisco
de Miranda Movimiento por la Paz
y la Vida.

Type of intervention

Permanent

Description

The project was built in the
neighborhood called “El 70”, in
the district of El Valle, located in
the city of Caracas, Venezuela.
In addition to being one of the
most vibrant neighborhoods of
the Venezuelan capital, showing

strong self-determination, it is
also one of the city’s biggest
informal settlements. The goal of
the project was to transform a plot
that contained a building with a
preexisting self-managed structure
into a public space that would meet
the programmatic requirements
proposed by the community.
These requirements were that it
should be a place for collective use
with multiple functions, so as to
consolidate a flexible public space
that citizens could use as a meeting
point and that could in turn be
used as a market or park at the
same time.

“The greatest impact was the community members’ involvement in project management, since they had a key role in each of the processes, from design to decision-making and the construction of the building, together with the team of specialists associated with the project. Some of the community’s requirements were a scenic observation point, a small dancing room for the community’s girls that could also be used at other times as a game room for senior citizens or as a space for workshops and small service and storage areas.”



Photos: Above, Diego González; below, MAAN - GRUPO TALCA - Maximillian Nowotka

★ 37.

Caranguejo Brincante Park

Public space as a tool for active citizenship

Promoter

Coletivo Massapé

City/country

Recife, Brazil

Website

massapecoletivo.org

Year or period

2019

Relevant actors

Coletivo Massapé, Livroteca Brincante do Pina, volunteers.

Type of intervention

Temporary

Description

Sitting on a riverbank, the Bode community is a symbol of resistance against the real estate speculation that goes on in the adjoining neighborhoods. This is where the Livroteca Brincante do Pina has been promoting education and culture for twenty years. It was its own members that asked to build, in front of the Livroteca, a community parklet¹ that could be used as a space for socialization, recreation and celebration. A co-

creation workshop was organized, where people could engage in conversation, listen to each other, do space perception exercises and suggest models, so that ideas about this space could be combined into a synthesis. Later, self-managed *mingas*² were held to build this intervention, and finally there was a celebration. The construction of the parklet has had an impact on the relationship of community members with public spaces, and the place has become a point of reference, due to its democratic and flexible character.

“The construction process can be an opportunity for learning; it showed those involved an alternative way to think about a more participatory city.”

1. A parklet is an extension of the sidewalk which provides more space and comfort to people who use the street. They are generally installed in parking spaces.

2. A *minga* is a community solidarity meeting during which work of social utility is carried out.



★ 38.

Activation of Cable Railway Post in Gualey

Territorial revitalization of the Sociocultural Program for Line 1 of the Santo Domingo Cable Railway

Promoter

Estudio ELE SIETE

City/country

Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic

Website

elesiete.wixsite.com/elesiete

Year or period

2018

Relevant actors

DIGEPEP | General Department of Special Programs of the Dominican Republic President's Office, URBE | Implementing Unit for the Reconditioning of Neighborhoods and Environments,

Centro de Innovación Atabey, AGRUCUDEGUA | Asociación de Grupos Culturales y Deportivos de Gualey, Gualey residents' committees, artists and creatives, non-government organizations, Central Government.

Type of intervention

Temporary

Description

Gualey is a low-income, slums neighborhood located on the west bank of the Ozama river, and home to the only station connecting the Santo Domingo subway and its cable railway. Efforts were made to take a more integral approach towards the transportation system and to show the opportunity of

using the spaces of the thirty-six posts standing along the 5-km route of the Santo Domingo cable railway —connecting three neighborhoods— to create a network of public spaces. This network, conceived under the concept of *creative territories*, fosters community innovation and creativity. To put this idea into practice, participatory design and activation meetings were held with the community, and were later followed by cleaning days, children's games, flower bed planting activities, sensory videogames, artistic workshops with recycled materials, and public art, music and urban dance events.

“The intervention helped remove the dumping site and debris from the place through the educational program and a game-based process, and allowed the community to learn about the importance of preserving the Santo Domingo Cable Railway posts, showing the need to turn this place into a new public space.”



★ 39. The Las Tres Marías Plaza

A place for meeting and leisure



Before and after the intervention. Photos: César Figueroa

Promoter

Oficina Lúdica

City/country

Caracas, Venezuela

Websiteoficialudicablog.wordpress.com**Year or period**

2014

Relevant actors

PKMN [pac-man] Arquitectura, PICO Estudio, KALAKA, Oficina Lúdica, Ministry for Peace and Life, Fundación Francisco de Miranda, Gran Misión Saber y Trabajo Program, Gran Misión Barrio Nuevo Barrio Tricolor Program, Municipality of Caracas.

Type of intervention

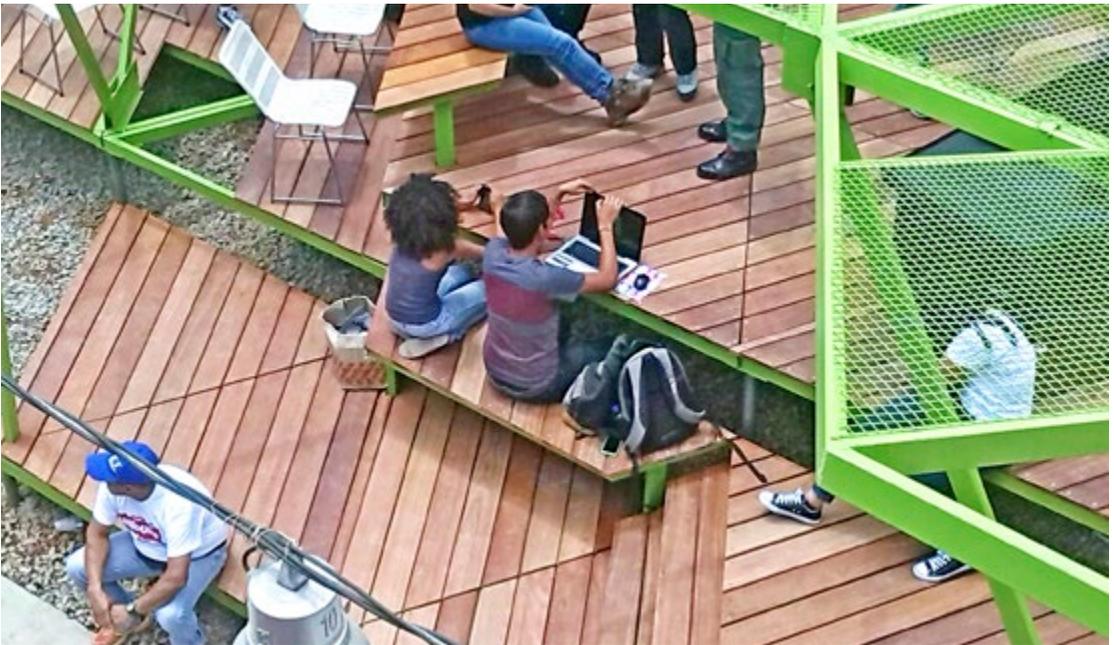
Permanent

Description

The Las Tres Marías Plaza project was developed in the Pinto Salinas

community, in Caracas, within the framework of the 2014 Spaces for Peace program, a participatory design strategy that would carry out five projects in high-risk communities across the country. The goal was to use this strategy to build an architectonic device in a six-week record time, with a simple method that the community could easily acquire and that could meet its needs with regard to public space. A place for everything and for nothing, which the community could appropriate to generate its own gathering and leisure spaces.

“The Las Tres Marías project did not escape the complex political situation and the huge difficulties experienced by Venezuelan low-income sectors, so it must not be idealized. It was an initial struggle, subject to day-to-day ups and downs, for which there was no predetermined course.”



2.4.

Mobile City

Walkability and sustainable mobility

These projects seek to improve the allocation of space in public roads, so that they may be fit for different types of mobility and users. Projects range from implementing temporary bicycle paths, pedestrianizing streets or assessing and redesigning street furniture, to promoting walkable cities and restructuring space for vehicles.

Map of Cases





Mobile City

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39. Walking Festival

Walking is political. A form of rebellion
to connect with people and the city

Authors: Cecilia Ciancio, Analía Hanono, Carolina Huffmann, Milagros Hurtig



Promoter

Urbanismo Vivo

City/country

Autonomous City of Buenos Aires and its surroundings, Argentina

Website

urbanismovivo.com.ar
festivaldecaminatas.com.ar

Year or period

2012-present day

Relevant actors

Leaders, volunteers, collaborators, coordinators, walkers.

Project key quote/phrase

Citizen-led walks with the goal of exploring the city in a more human way, listening to stories and providing visibility to civic transformations and initiatives for a more livable, active and walkable city.

Type of intervention

Ephemeral, Urban Devices, Programs

Key words

walks, intangible cultural heritage, active citizenry, humanized cities, walkability, Jane Jacobs, Jane's Walk, kind cities

The Walking Festival (*Festival de Caminatas*) is a cultural event which provides the opportunity to take walking tours of the city, organized and guided by local people from each area with extensive knowledge about it. The richness of the festival lies in that it allows participants to connect with the city through the diverse ways of looking at the urban which are proposed by the themes of the tours, the knowledge shared by those who lead them and the conversations and contributions of the walkers taking part in the experience. Thus, the project focuses on people, recognizing them as drivers of change, giving them a voice and highlighting the value of each place's intangible cultural heritage. The event is intended as an instrument to promote more human, active and walking-friendly cities. A walkable city creates a great virtuous cycle, allowing for more pedestrian movement in the streets, better personal health, more vital public spaces and greater urban security.

The streets of a city are its primary meeting place. They are the scene of the infinite combinations that result from a society's complex cultural, political and economic fabric. Since 2012, as part of the Jane's Walk international festival, Urbanismo Vivo¹ has organized the Buenos Aires Walking Festival, celebrating life in the streets.

Nobody exists in the city in isolation. Society is necessarily a web of interpersonal relationships and networks providing support and care. Our habits reflect the culture in which we recognize ourselves and which propels us to build ties with others and with the context.

The shared experience of walking is intended to transform our perception, our ideas and, consequently, the way in which we interact with our surroundings.

This event is motivated by the desire to revitalize relationships among people and to recognize them as the city's key actors. It is an invitation to shift between the individual and the collective, looking out for diversity while becoming aware of, and recognizing, everything that we have in common. We believe that this festival is political in nature, being primarily a means for inviting reflection on how to live as a community.

New ways of ideating the city

Nowadays, more than half the world's population resides in urban areas, and that number is even larger in Latin American countries. The dynamics of everyday life in the city makes large numbers of people lead passive habits and become detached from their surroundings and disconnected from urban social issues. This situation is made even worse by the use of private vehicles as the preferred option for mobility. As a result, citizens lose sight of their key role in constructing the city as a common good. This is attested by the large number of public and meeting spaces which tend to become neglected and depersonalized. In addressing these problems, city planning does not

take into account the residents' views but continues to remain in the hands of experts.

However, over the last few years, urban planning has undergone a paradigm shift with regard to the way of ideating and projecting cities. Jane Jacobs (1916-2006) was one of the first, most resounding voices driving this change. As a woman, self-taught urban planner, writer, researcher and activist, she advocated giving citizens a voice in neighborhood planning. A pioneer of the humanized cities movement—for, by and with people—, Jacobs explains that “cities have the capability of providing something for everybody, only because, and only when, they are created by everybody” (1961, p. 238)².

Currently, theories about feminist urbanism and inclusive cities build upon the echo of Jacobs's ideas. Their leaders uphold the importance of reordering priorities in ideating cities, putting people's lives at the heart of urban decisions. Viewing cities from a gender perspective entails understanding that urban space is inextricably linked to everyday life. To be desired, sustainable and safe for its residents, a city must be based on a conception of the territory that considers proximity as a quality of an urban area. In other words, it has to be a city that makes walking possible and desirable.

To complete this point, the contemporary notion of walkability illustrates the idea that a city should be kind and safe towards pedestrians and for their benefit, and that walking should be a viable choice, both due to its functionality and as a source of well-being.

Walking as a tool

The Walking Festival is celebrated within the global framework of the Jane's Walk international festival, currently held in four hundred cities worldwide during the first weekend of May. Since 2007, when it first took place in Toronto, its goal has been to remember Jane Jacobs and to keep her legacy alive. Each city organizes the festival according to its own logic, style and distinctive characteristics. However, three essential conditions are required everywhere: it has to be free, non-partisan and people should be able to go out for a walk together.

Urbanismo Vivo is responsible for the general curatorship of the local event. It invites, guides and supports local leaders in designing walking experiences. It also manages the dissemination,



communication and financing of the event. In addition, it provides an active connection with the Jane's Walk regional and international network, helping and advising other city organizers, so that they can share knowledge and experiences in order to help this movement grow by including other voices.

Urbanismo Vivo addresses problems from the territory, which is where both the physical and social space converge. This is done by using methodologies that turn public space into an urban laboratory and a place for experimentation. Walking is understood as a tool, since it is a habitual action—carried out on an everyday basis by those who can walk—but it is used disruptively in different ways, such as walking around unknown areas or where we can feel in danger as individuals, walking from the perspective of another person or walking while sharing stories about the place told by those who lived those experiences, etc.

In this way, walking becomes a means of exploring the city with different goals: to bring to light hidden stories which constitute an intangible cultural heritage; to connect people with each other and the

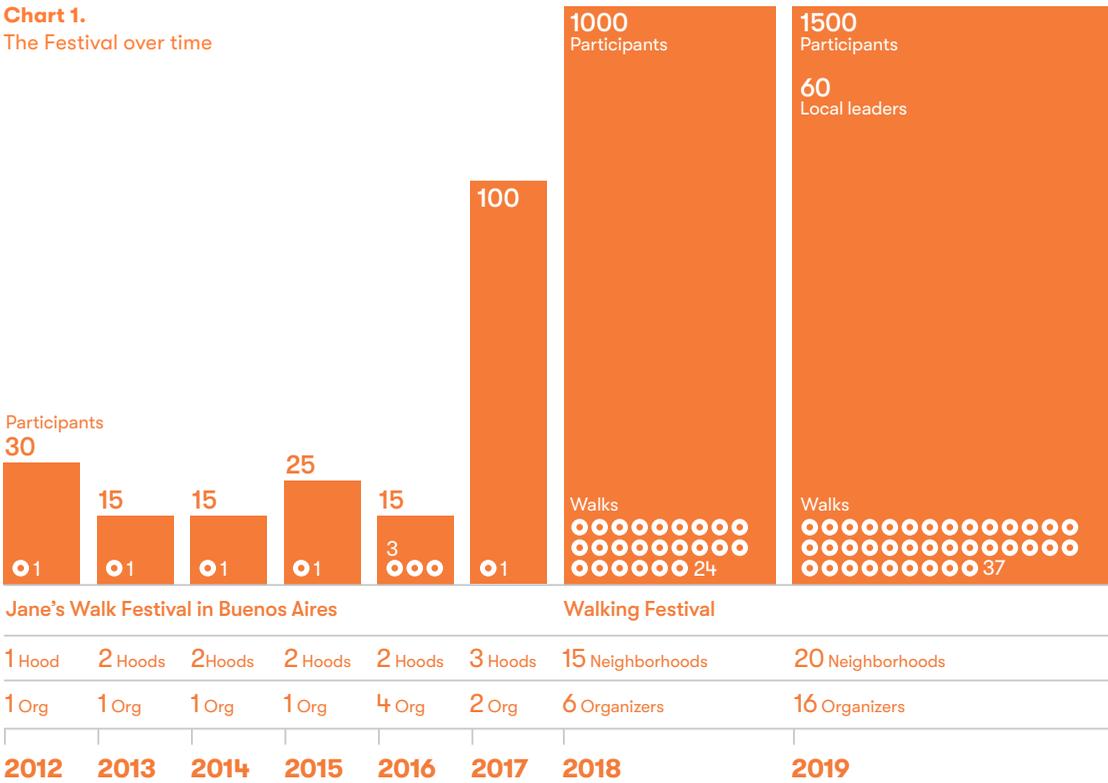
city by meeting in the streets; to learn from others by broadening our mind and giving space to play, and to keep on fighting, to demand rights and to make inequalities visible.

Development of the intervention

Urbanismo Vivo has organized Jane's Walk in the city of Buenos Aires since 2012. In 2018, after being selected to attend the Jane's Walks city organizers global meeting held in Toronto, and thanks to a *Creación* grant awarded by the National Arts Fund³, it decided to scale up the event in comparison with previous editions and to host a walking festival that would provide more alternatives, more walks and a greater diversity of topics. What is more, it was understood that the experience needed to be adapted to the local context, so the name "Jane's Walk" was changed to another one in Spanish. This resulted in an accessible and inclusive cultural event, open to a larger audience.

Below is the experience of the eighth edition of the Walking Festival, held in 2019. In contrast with

Chart 1.
The Festival over time



previous editions, this time the festival did not receive any institutional support or financing. As a consequence, it was through collaborative work that the challenge of organizing 37 walks in only one weekend could be met. The impressive result is the product of teamwork by people who felt excited about this challenge and decided to get involved. Thus, over 100 people participated in the organization collectively. As a positive impact of this, a contact network including 60 leaders, 12 collaborators and 10 volunteers was created to maximize their efforts and inspiration.

Collaboration being the cornerstone of the event, citizens were also part of this effort. The expenses associated with merchandising, media coverage, signage for the walks and communication flyers were met through a crowdfunding campaign, a form of collective financing by people who support other people's projects.

The different walking experiences took place in the rain, under the sun, doing yoga, listening to music, eating tasty snacks served by the residents themselves, collecting fruits, chatting with people

that we got to know on the spot, side by side with friends and strangers... Over sixty leaders from different disciplines—such as architecture, law, urbanism, environmental sciences, sociology, photography, music, journalism, art, among others—volunteered to guide the walks locally.

There was a varied offer of themes and approaches. Experiences included an auditory fiction performance-walk using an audio-guide; a game-based urban exploration for children, with exercises and activities that proposed to understand the city as a space of play and which consisted of making drawings on the street and visiting monuments in the neighborhood; a night walk with a discussion about astrology and astronomy for reflecting about the vision of the night sky in the city; two walks around shanty towns, guided by their residents, who invited participants to get to know their neighborhoods and their typical food; a walk designed for those with special abilities, in order to live the experience of people who cannot walk or can only do so with difficulty; visits to urban art areas to see the neighborhood



Chart 2.
Festival schedule

FRIDAY 7:00 PM

1. Let's get the festival started!
by Urbanismo Vivo

SATURDAY 11:00 AM

2. The city that resists: towards feminist urbanism, by La ciudad que resiste
3. A walk to the future, by Artículo 41

4. Instawalk San Telmo, by Instagramers Buenos Aires
5. The city south of the city, by Rosario Fassina and Agustín Frizzera
6. Unremarkable places: giving value to urban stories, by Daniela Andrea Dini
7. Commune 8: its streets and Villa 20, by Elisa Rocca
8. Buenos Aires and the river, by Sudestada
9. A new walk along the borders: in search of Paradigm

Park, by Investigaciones del Futuro, Leonello Zambón
10. Treading on realities: the history of Barrio 31, by Lucie Van Der Meulen, Laura Sánchez Freyre, Nicolás Balzarini, Joaquín Lavelli + 2 residents

SATURDAY 4:00 PM

11. Sensory awareness walk for children, by Carolina Huffman
12. The evolution of public landscape: the case of Balvanera, by Rocío Di Corrado
13. Wandering around cobblestones, by Divagando entre adoquines
14. Modern Buenos Aires, by Moderna Buenos Aires
15. Plazas in Balvanera: their stories and their History with its tangible and intangible marks, by Fabio Márquez
16. Imaginaries of urban change, by Deriva Arq
17. Discovering Colegiales. Past, present and future of the neighborhood, by Commune 13 Advisory Council

SATURDAY 8:00 PM

18. "Choose your own adventure" in Villa Urquiza, by Giovanni Pérez
19. Astrology and astronomy: the sky in cities, by Compañía Astral (Martín M. Wollmann)

SATURDAY 11:00 PM

20. The city that we never see, by Fredy Garay

SUNDAY 11:00 AM

21. Urban laboratories, by Urbano Humano

22. Heard on the street, by Ezequiel Mandelbaum
23. Bodies and urban microsituations, by Habitaria
24. Garbage? by Blonda Verde
25. Scenes in the margins, by Natali Brzoza
26. From Olaya to Ortega, alleys and avenues: what do you see when you see me? by Martah Edith Yajnes
27. Geocaching Parque Patricios, by Camila Narbaitz Sarsur

SUNDAY 4:00 PM

28. Trees and "weeds" in the city: food and medicine, by Ludmila Nahir Medina
29. The beauty of an imperfect city, by Emiliano Espasandín ("the Archi")
30. Yoga and biking in the river, by Sabrina Doracheto
31. Have you listened to the city? by Aire Líquido Ensemble
32. Aristocratic Buenos Aires, by Analia Weiss
33. Urban art tour in Villa Urquiza-Coghlan, by Turistearte Buenos Aires
34. Creative exploration, by Dan Lande
35. Graffitimundo tour, by Graffiti Mundo

INTERVENTIONS

SUNDAY 5:00-9:00 PM

OFF THE RECORD
FLUXLIAN
HOLA DOMO / NANA SANCHEZ
ORBITANDO COLLECTIVE
PRIMITIVE INK
URBANISMO VIVO
ARTÍCULO 41

murals, stencils, wall posters and galleries, and a musical experience in which participants walked with eyes closed in order to listen to the music of the city, among many others.

The last event was a temporary intervention in public space with the participation of other seven collectives, in order to gather and share the experiences lived during the entire weekend. This activity included ephemeral architecture actions, dance performances, artisanal graphic prints, music, lighting, food, drink, urban living rooms, screenings, etc. And the oil that allowed the machine to work and made all of its components run smoothly was the participation of an active citizenry with a strong desire to walk.

Walking the city

The 2019 edition offered more walks and was attended by more people than the 2018 festival, which involved 25 walks and 1000 participants, and as compared to its previous years' versions as Jane's Walk Buenos Aires.

Below are some figures which evidence the festival's quantitative impact. In two weekends, 98 km were covered by 37 walks, which were guided by 67 leaders and attended by a total of 1500 people. The walks took place around 20 neighborhoods of the city of Buenos Aires and its surroundings. Over 300 people came to celebrate and occupy the streets, together with 7 collectives.



At the end of each walk, participants were briefly interviewed to obtain qualitative data about the experience. The most frequent impressions of the festival's impact can be summarized as follows:

- It made it possible to get to know places we would not normally go to;
- It transformed the way of looking at the streets and the City of Buenos Aires.
- It enhanced the feeling of belonging to the city;
- It fostered the appropriation of public spaces and streets;
- It made room for play and discovery;
- It encouraged people to choose walking as a form of mobility;
- It made it possible to contemplate the urban;
- It allowed people to meet with each other and have a pleasant time;
- It included surprises;
- It made it possible to rediscover what used to be hidden;
- It stimulated love for the city.



Conclusions

With regard to the aforementioned urban problems, such as isolation, individualism, the loss of common spaces and of cities' human scale, this event uses the experience of walking to bring us closer to rediscovering, or learning about, unknown aspects of our cities together with others.

Prioritizing walking over other forms of mobility has several benefits: it allows us to connect directly with our surroundings and with other people; it causes a lower environmental impact than other means of mobility, and it fosters the local economy, since it is pedestrians that make the greatest contribution to local consumption.

A walkable city also improves the perception of urban security. Jacobs argues that a busy street is a safe street, since the fact that other eyes are watching makes people feel that they are not alone. This premise involves a model of a city that looks after its inhabitants.

One of the festival's fundamental principles is scalability. The Jane's Walk global organization team provides advice, communication material and tools to those who wish to organize this experience in their city in order to promote this movement and help it grow.

Reflections and lessons learned

Certain aspects that could be improved, current limitations, and learnings related to the project's design and its potential for future editions are worth mentioning.

The main aspect to improve involves increasing participation. One way to do this would be using even more diverse dissemination strategies that consider the digital divide and organizing more than one event during the year.

With regard to limitations, lack of financing is an obstacle for scaling up the event, since coordination is hard work which requires intensive dedication by a group of people.





One important lesson learned is the publication of the 2019 edition⁴, which documents the lived experience, so that the community can apprehend it. We ask ourselves which other formats —such as podcasts, maps, audio guides, etc.— could make this experiential and ephemeral human encounter permanently visible.

In addition, given the context of the global health crisis, the 2020 edition was held as a virtual event. This paves the way for future editions, for which the key question will be how to turn the festival into more than an exclusively in-person experience, combining the online and offline worlds. ●

1. Urbanismo Vivo is a dynamic team that seeks to connect people with the environment where they live: we believe that an active citizenry improves and promotes the quality of urban life, helping to create kind and inclusive cities.

2. Her book *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* is a foundational manifesto in favor of social life in the streets.

3. fnartes.gob.ar

4. This material is available at festivaldecaminatas.com.ar in the publicación tab.

040.

Making crossings safe: *Montería Pasos Seguros*

Strengthening the urban and social fabric

Authors: Tamara Egger, Manuela Palacio, Iván Acevedo



Promoters

IDB Cities LAB with IAA Studio, Mcrit and Iber Geo (Colombia, Spain), Fundación Pintuco, Municipality of Montería

City/country

Montería, District of Córdoba, Colombia.

Website

blogs.iadb.org/ciudades-sostenibles/es/monteria-pasos-seguros-fortaleciendo-de-forma-colaborativa-el-tejido-urbano-y-social-con-herramientas-del-urbanismo-tactico/

Social media links

twitter.com/mtrpasosseguros
instagram.com/monteria_pasosseguros
facebook.com/Monteria.pasos.seguros

Year or period

2019

Relevant actors

Municipality of Montería, Montería Amable, Fundación Pintuco, University of Sinú, Pontifical Bolivarian University at Montería, Colombian Association of Architects-Córdoba Chapter, Esteban de Levi School of Art and community groups (shopkeepers, artisans, formal and informal vendors, bootblacks, neighbors, Amigos de la Ronda del Sinú), Inter-American Development Bank.

Project key quote/phrase

“It is an ephemeral action that will become engraved in our memories. Rather than the visual impact of the transformation, it will be its educational legacy and the dedication to our city that will remain” (university professor). “We must become empowered to own our street as if it were our house” (university student).

Type of intervention

Temporary

Keywords

tactical urbanism, sustainable mobility, safe crossings, collaborative urbanism, human scale, road safety, co-urbanism, social urbanism

Over the last two decades, the city of Montería, has created synergies by combining public and inter-institutional efforts, driving urban innovation and sustainable mobility projects, reshaping its urban landscape, reclaiming public space and prioritizing pedestrians again over vehicles. However, the urban pedestrian grid and bicycle tracks linking the two main public spaces in the city, the historic downtown and the Ronda del Río Sinú Park, are split by the Primera (or “first”) Avenue. Several attempts have been made to transform this thoroughfare into a safe and agreeable environment for pedestrians, though unsuccessfully.

The tactical urbanism pilot project *Montería Pasos Seguros. Fortaleciendo el tejido urbano y social* (“Safe Crossings for Montería, Strengthening the Social and Urban Fabric”) intends to implement experimental and innovative solutions in three crossings along the Primera Avenue, in order to foster road safety, road behavior education with urban inclusion, and transform these spots through civic capital.

In recent debates in Latin America and the Caribbean, tactical urbanism has gone from being considered a stopgap (Sánchez, 2018), through telethons¹ (Arañeda, 2018) and short-lasting intentions (Zambrano Benavides, 2020), to finding its golden moment (The New York Times, 2020) as a tool to provide a fast response to the new urban challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic (Foster, 2019).

The global health crisis evidences once again that urban spaces are never finished. Cities are constantly changing to react to emerging challenges. Health crises have left significant historical traces in our urban fabrics (López Lamia, 2020).

Considering that public spaces are a common good that belongs to all citizens, their transformation must involve collaborative thinking.

As Jane Jacobs wrote (1992), cities provide something for everybody when they are created by everybody. Tactical urbanism provides tools for experimental processes of collaborative urban transformation. Engaging in horizontal dialogue with multiple stakeholders, ephemeral interventions are implemented on site: urban space becomes a laboratory, with citizens as experimenters. Interventions are temporary, low-cost and reversible, and the impact of their different components is measured. These are experimental, trial-and-error processes. Their outcomes are key for properly designing and allocating resources to permanent interventions.

In 2019, the city of Montería, in Colombia, with the support of the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) Cities Lab, decided to implement its first tactical urbanism pilot project to strengthen its urban and social fabric, creating safer crossings in one of its major avenues, to promote safe and active mobility between its most representative public spaces.

Challenges and the city's project

Montería is a medium-sized city with a population of about 505,334 (DANE, 2018). It was part of the

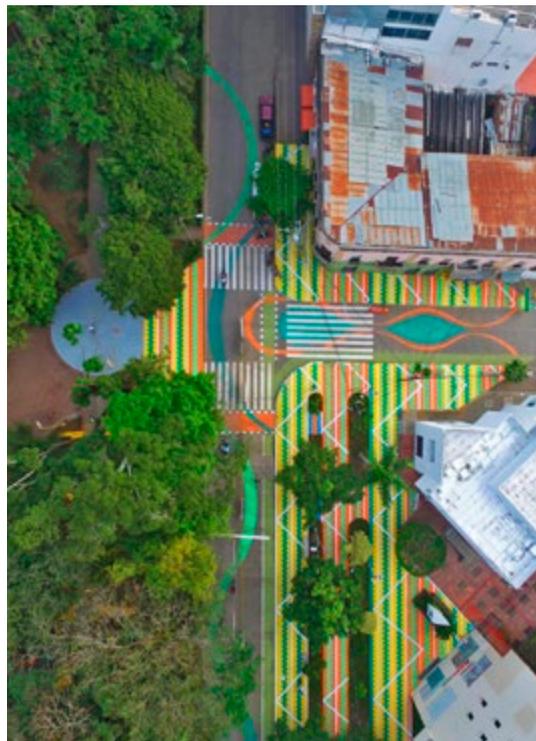
Emerging and Sustainable Cities Initiative (ESCI) and is eligible within the IDB Fiscal and Public Investment Expenditure Strengthening Program.

Sitting on the shores of the Sinú river, the city has made considerable progress creating public spaces and infrastructure for non-motorized vehicles, reaching 3m² of public space per inhabitant (Alcaldía de Montería, 2019). Among its most emblematic spaces are the main park of the historic downtown and the Ronda del Sinú linear park, which reflects the region's biodiversity and allows for the use of several transportation modalities: walking, cycling, the mass public transportation system and even boats that carry people across the river every day (Alcaldía de Montería, 2018).

However, the city still faces challenges that threaten active mobility and safety in public space, such as motor vehicles running at high speed, lack of safe crossings and little respect for pedestrians and cyclists. This is particularly evident in the city's traditional downtown, where the sustainable mobility routes leading to the Ronda Park are divided by the Primera Avenue, where battles are waged among pedestrians, cyclists, street stall vendors and motor vehicles, with the latter usually imposing their rule. Montería's digital inventory of public spaces (IDB, ONU Habitat and Acenta, 2019) shows that there are, on average, ten road accidents per week near the city's public spaces, and highlights, among others, those that happen in the city's traditional downtown and the Primera Avenue.

Considering that 29% of the population in Montería chooses to walk (20%) and cycle (9%), the city provides a great opportunity to enhance mobility conditions in public space, improve its urban fabric and encourage more citizens to use active, safe and sustainable forms of transportation (Corporación Andina de Fomento, 2018). In the past, the Municipality of Montería implemented conventional initiatives and put in place speed bumps for cars, zebra crossings and traffic lights. However, since the results fell short of expectations, the city decided to take the opportunity to experiment using innovative tactical urbanism tools with the support of the IDB Cities LAB, in order to address the challenge from a comprehensive perspective and a social approach.

This collaboration gave rise to *Montería Pasos Seguros*, an experimental pilot project to link the city's



Before and after the intervention

downtown area with the Ronda del Sinú Park in a pedestrian and cyclist-friendly way, while helping improve and consolidate the network of existing public spaces and strengthen road safety culture. The pilot project also intends to serve as guidance for mid- and long-term, and permanent decisions and investments in the city.

An experimental tool for urban innovation

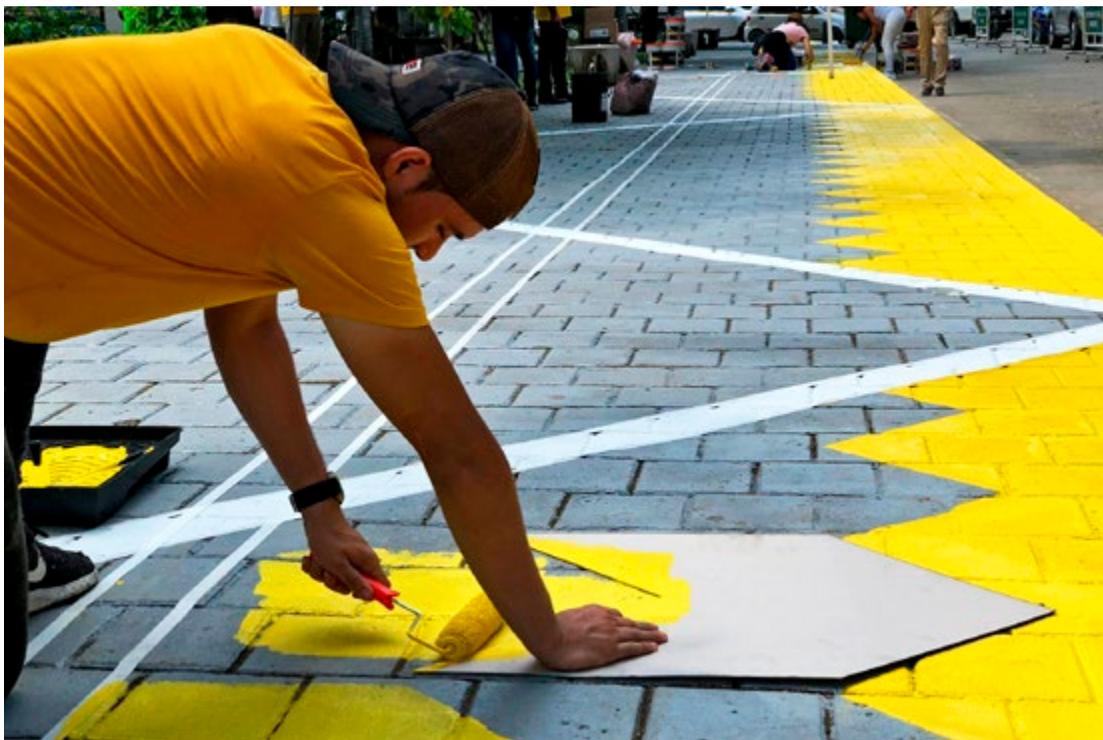
The *Montería Pasos Seguros* pilot project was designed and implemented through collaboration among the Municipality of Montería, *Montería Amable*², the Pintuco foundation, the University of Sinú, the Pontifical Bolivarian University at Montería, collectives of artists, merchants, and the IDB Cities LAB together with IAA Studio, Mcrit and Iber Geo.

The experimental process used tactical urbanism as a low-cost, quick to implement temporary tool which makes it possible to test the functionality and acceptance of solutions on site before they are turned into longer-term permanent works. Together with the Municipality, three crossings along the Primera Avenue in the traditional downtown of the city

were identified as fully representative of challenges to mobility:

- **Calle 27** (27th street): A street of institutional significance that leads from the park to the town hall;
- **Calle 29** (29th street): A street that runs across the city from West to East and meets with the road leading to the interior of the country;
- **Calle 32** (32nd street): Here, there is a wider pedestrian crossing with high flows of passers-by coming and going from the children's area of the Ronda Park, the Municipal Public Market and informal street vendors stalls.

The three pilot projects for the crossings were designed through a collaborative process, taking advantage of the opportunity to test different solutions for each one of them, with the following goals:



- To enhance respectful road sharing and street safety, prioritizing space for pedestrians and cyclists and making motor vehicles slow down;
- To improve accessibility and connectivity among public spaces and buildings at both sides of the Ronda Park, creating safe crossings and ensuring the continuity of active mobility networks;
- To generate attractive and comfortable spaces for sustainable mobility by improving the microclimate with native plant species, creating the opportunity to turn these paths into green corridors;
- To strengthen physical interventions through signage and other cultural programs, so as to educate and raise awareness among street users.

Finally, it was decided to implement the pilot project in *Calle 32* and to provide the city with the capabilities for implementing the solutions in the other crossings.

The methodology for this process was developed in five stages:

- **01. Awareness-raising and inclusion of the local population.** A number of events were prepared and held to create the experience of a human-scale street and of the community's appropriation of public space. Together with social workers and with municipal support, activities were conducted in three stages: before Parking Day³, with information points on site; during the celebration of the day itself on Primera Avenue, and finally, with a *malón urbano*⁴ (urban dinner meeting), also on the street.
- **02. Training of volunteer actors.** Through information spreading activities and co-creation workshops, students, professors, artists and government officials were brought together and empowered for a common goal. During the implementation, experts from the Pintuco foundation trained the teams in the technical aspects of mixing and applying paint; in addition, the consultancy firms and universities guided the



students on how to take audiovisual records and qualitative measurements.

- **03. Proposal co-design and execution.** In unity there is strength: during all the stages of the experiment (ideation, validation, execution and operation), priority was given to the collective construction of the city, seeking to enhance the appropriation of space, strengthen local capabilities for future projects and foster participation by citizens' collectives that can follow-up the sustainability of interventions over time.
- **04. Project communication and dissemination.** Notices in the place and communication campaigns in social media with graphic and audiovisual material in everyday language, created by university students and professors, pursued the goal of creating a citizen culture for more respectful sharing of public space and inviting all of Montería's residents to be part of the experiment.

- **05. Evaluation and monitoring of the experiment.** Any experiment requires evaluating if the goals were attained and if there is room for improvement. University students helped prepare twelve-question surveys, structured around four variables: accessibility, uses and activities, safety and comfort of the new space. Respondents had to choose a score from one to five, representing the following: absolutely inadequate, inadequate, adequate, very adequate and highly adequate, with this last option being the most frequent response. In addition, videos were recorded to monitor vehicle speed, as well as pedestrian and cyclist behavior at the crossings.

Implementation of *Montería Pasos Seguros*

Between August and December 2019, the interventions for the three crossings of Primera Avenue were co-designed, and a pilot project was implemented at the *Calle 32* crossing. For this project, a floor mural was designed according to local visual language codes and using urban art as a tool to communicate with people, their identities and customs.

As an outcome of people's participation, the geometric design was inspired on the fabric of the *vueltaio*⁵ hat, the swinging skirts of the *porro* typical dance, the winding shape of the Sinú river and the colors of the city's brand.

The mural on the street and sidewalks was intended to mark a continuous area for pedestrians, as well as to draw the attention of motor vehicle drivers and invite them to slow down. The technical design made this intention more evident by narrowing the lanes, shortening the distances between crossings, delineating turning radiuses and opening space for cyclists with separate, one-way infrastructure. In addition, the communication strategy included signage and activated the space with cultural programs aimed at improving driver, pedestrian and cyclist behavior.



The implementation involved 167 volunteers who relied on the assistance of technical experts. First, borders and zebra crossings were marked manually to test vehicle turns. Once the design was validated as functional, the geometrical shapes were traced and then painted with the help of volunteers, under the technical support of the Pintuco foundation. Later, painted areas were supplemented with high, conspicuous elements that could be clearly seen by drivers, such as structures made with *chinchorro*⁶ fabric and recycled materials. Street furniture such as planters, vegetation and large signs were also installed. This collaborative work ended with a *malón urbano* among the participants, with local food prepared by the street stall vendors of the place.

A qualitative evaluation of the pilot project was carried out through surveys and observation during three days of the week at different times, so as to record variations in the periods analyzed.

Results of the experience

According to the qualitative evaluations conducted during the pilot project implementation stage, 84.5% of respondents expressed a positive evaluation of the new conditions of public space, including the crossings and active mobility networks. Among the individuals surveyed, 96.4% and 78.2% had favorable opinions about the convenience of the spaces and the universal access possibilities that they provide, respectively.

However, the most remarkable outcomes of the first tactical urbanism experiment in Montería have to do with the citizens' participation process, which developed from as early as the design stage until implementation and evaluation, thus helping citizens appropriate the project. One aspect worth mentioning is the case of students and professors from the University of Sinú and the Pontifical Bolivarian University, who left their classrooms to work with different actors in order to materialize a city project, learning new skills and expressing their interest in making an ongoing contribution to the city's urban development.

It must not be forgotten that these projects are temporary and their goal is to test solutions to determine if they can be scaled up, turned into a permanent project or translated into guidelines for local public policy. The future stages of this pilot project provide opportunities to improve measurement and

evaluation by incorporating quantitative indicators. The project dissemination and promotion could also be taken to a new level if conducted at other information points along the Primera Avenue, which are more visible for drivers of motor vehicles.

Finally, after this pilot project was implemented, some colors faded earlier than expected due to the poor original conditions of the pavement. There is no doubt that solid foundations have been set for future partnerships, and local stakeholder capabilities have been reinforced, so that the methodology can be scaled up and adapted to other urban areas, capitalizing on the lessons learned.

Tactical urbanism processes empower citizens and yield lessons for the specific design of common spaces, making it possible to invest resources much more precisely in permanent interventions. ○

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1. The word *telethon* (a portmanteau of *television* and *marathon*) designates a broadcast event, performed to raise funds for different social causes.
 2. Entity in charge of the Strategic System for Public Transportation (*Sistema Estratégico de Transporte Público*).
 3. Parking Day is an annual worldwide celebration where artists, designers, and citizens collaborate to temporarily transform parking lots into public green areas.
 4. The *malones urbanos* are a civic participation tactic in which community members are invited to sit at a large table and share a collaborative meal, so that they can engage in conversation, create trust and build social capital.
 5. The *vueltiao* hat is a garment typically worn in the Colombian Caribbean savannahs.
 6. Translator's note: The *chinchorro* is a kind of fishnet.

041.

Panama Walks (*Panama Camina*)

Sharing the Central Avenue

Authors: Javier Vergara, Mayra Madriz, Juan Pablo López Gross



Promoters

Ciudad Emergente, Gehl Architects, IDB Cities LAB

Website

ciudademergente.org/aprender/2019/5/13/reporte-completo-panam-camina

Social media links

[instagram.com/CiudadEmergente](https://www.instagram.com/CiudadEmergente)
[facebook.com/CiudadEmergente](https://www.facebook.com/CiudadEmergente)
[instagram.com/bid_ciudades/](https://www.instagram.com/bid_ciudades/)
[instagram.com/gehl_citiesforpeople/](https://www.instagram.com/gehl_citiesforpeople/)
[instagram.com/municipiodepanama/](https://www.instagram.com/municipiodepanama/)

Year or period

2018

Relevant actors

Municipality of Panama, Inter-American Development Bank, Via Plural organization, University of Panama

Type of intervention

Temporary

Keywords

tactical urbanism, sustainable mobility, coexistence, quality of life

Over the last few years, the City of Panama has experienced an accelerated population growth, together with a rapid increase in the motorized vehicle fleet. This has caused several negative externalities, such as traffic congestion, environmental pollution, car accidents and collisions with pedestrians.

Panama Camina (“Panama walks”) is a tactical urbanism experience that seeks to open a debate about the car-centered mobility model through interventions aimed at generating urban space for citizens to meet with each other, sustainable mobility and the recovery of the city’s heritage. This temporary intervention proved that streets and public spaces can be rethought, putting people at the heart of development, given that access to more orderly, safe and agreeable streets improves the residents’ quality of life and connects them with their surroundings.

The goal of *Panama Camina* was to implement a temporary pilot project for the pedestrianization and reactivation of public spaces by using different urban solutions in combination with measurement tools, so as to collect hard data that would be useful in developing a design guide for permanent urban interventions around the Plaza 5 de Mayo, a central and especially significant place in the city.

In this regard, the specific goals were the following:

- **01.** To perform a brief intervention in the Española and Central avenues, as an urban tactic, in order to demonstrate the potential for the long-term recovery of heritage in the neighborhood around them.
- **02.** To gather qualitative data, such as users' perceptions, feelings and ideas about the initiatives implemented, and quantitative data through the implementation of internationally validated social innovation and citizen science tools.
- **03.** To strengthen the capabilities of local teams, as well as bonds of trust and collaboration networks among the different stakeholders and agents of the sector, so as to promote a cultural urban transformation associated with the respectful shared use of roads and the prioritization of pedestrians in streets.

The City of Panama and the predominance of cars

Over the last few decades, the City of Panama has experienced a rapid population growth. The number of inhabitants has doubled since 1990 until the present (Municipality of Panama, 2016), reaching 1.7 million in a country with a population of 4 million (INE, 2018). Population growth has come hand in hand with an increase in the motorized vehicle fleet, dependency on private vehicles and a high flow of motor vehicles towards the city's downtown area. This results in several negative externalities, such as traffic congestion, environmental pollution, accidents and collisions with pedestrians. These problems are worsened by the lack of people-centered urban planning, which has a negative impact on road sharing behavior, the

availability of public spaces, social integration and, ultimately, the residents' quality of life.

Although in the last few years there have been changes that point towards a new way of planning the city—such as the creation of the Municipality of Panama Urban Planning Department and the development of projects like the Metro Line 1 (2014), the Action Plan for Panama's Metropolitan Area (2016), the Comprehensive Plan for Sustainable Urban Mobility (2017), the Downtown Area Plan (2017), the Panama District Plan (2018), to name a few—much still remains to be done.

Some challenges faced today by cities in Panama have to do with promoting modal integration systems to narrow the gap between the larger share of street space assigned to cars and that for non-motor vehicles, fostering non-motorized mobility and encouraging the creation of public spaces for lounging.

The Plaza 5 de Mayo and its surroundings are a busy area of great cultural value for the City of Panama. The high flows of pedestrian and motor vehicles, the practice of formal and informal trade, the existence of unused spaces such as the Reina Torres de Arauz Museum of Anthropology (MARTA, by its Spanish acronym) and the development of uncivilized activities result in a complex context of urban and social problems. It is due to this complexity that the Plaza 5 de Mayo area is appropriate for the implementation of different urban solutions.

Constructing, measuring and learning

The methodology used for this project, led by Ciudad Emergente with the support of the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) Cities LAB, comprised three stages: (1) analysis, design and construction, (2) measurement and (3) learnings. The challenge is to





Above: Before. Below: After

Before and after the intervention

minimize the time required for each stage, taking an approach that consists of quickly designing prototypes for using them in public space, with a view to drawing lessons that can be transformed into robust inputs for planning and decision-making processes.

This cycle involves four work strategies:

- **01. Tactical strategy.** This included three components: (1) conveying knowledge about tactical urbanism, with the support of GEHL Architects, to volunteers and collaborators, who participated actively in designing and building the tactic; (2) building the furniture, for which a design contest was launched among the architecture students of the University of Panama, who submitted proposals that were later put into practice according to the context and usage needs, and (3) analyzing and developing the proposed street intervention with the support of the IDB Transport Division, as a result of which the pavement was painted with a design inspired by the MARTA museum exhibition, thus adding cultural and identity value to this tactic.
- **02. Cultural activation strategy.** Its goal was drawing people to public space. With the advice of the IDB Creativity and Culture Division, the *Via Plural* local organization, which proposes turning streets into a stage and meeting point for artists

and citizens, gathered 327 artists and created with them the *Panama Camina* thirty-day program.

- **03. Measurement strategy.** A number of tools were selected for collecting qualitative and quantitative indicators that would provide relevant information to diagnose and measure the effects of the intervention. These tools were the following:

A. Idea trees: An artifact for citizens' participation designed by Ciudad Emergente, which makes it possible to actively publish, collect and disseminate information, and to do the same with people's thoughts by adding ideas taken down in freehand.

B. Citizen perception surveys: A tool for collecting comparable information to measure changes in people's perceptions after the activation of mobility and public spaces.

C. Public life study: Adaptation of the methodology developed by GEHL Architects for studying life in public spaces, which provides insights about how people move and remain in public spaces.

- **04. Communication strategy.** The communication plan was structured around two lines of action: the first one consisted of inviting volunteers and



artists to participate in the tactic; the second one was providing information and disseminating the project through clear and attractive messages that increasingly encouraged people to become involved with public space and attend the different activities scheduled for the month when the activation would happen. This strategy was deployed through several platforms, such as social networks, as well as national and international media.

Transformation and appropriation

Activities were completed at different moments during the intervention, which started when Ciudad Emergente first visited the City of Panama between October 1st and 4th, 2018, in order to build the local team and hold meetings with strategic actors in the city, so as to gain an in-depth understanding of the different problems associated with mobility and find out their causes, socio-environmental effects and possible solutions, with a view to adjusting the preliminary proposal accordingly.

In addition, with the support of GEHL Architects, virtual activities were organized to train the Municipality of Panama's technical team and other partners. The goal was to provide them with a theoretical and methodological framework, context information regarding the regional and global importance and impact of this type of interventions, and practical recommendations about the intervention design and tools.



Then, on the basis of the plan of activities, coordination meetings were held regularly to conduct a joint progress review focusing on design, urban tactics, measurement tools and the cultural program, and to make any changes to ensure the necessary consistency and synergy among all project components.

In order to promote active participation by citizens, different strategies were developed to provide information about the project and encourage people to join the different activities. From the beginning, information was provided to the street vendors and shopkeepers in the area, to let them know about the upcoming intervention and its potential impacts on flows of visitors and local trade. At the same time, concerns were raised and doubts were clarified. In addition, an incremental communication strategy was designed (with the support of the Municipality and as part of the Panama 500 years campaign) to disseminate and communicate the initiative to the population of the city at large, and to invite volunteers and artists to participate in this urban experiment.

Simultaneously, students of Architecture at the University of Panama were invited to be part of this tactical urbanism experience. The Ciudad Emergente team trained students on tactical urbanism and measurement tools. This knowledge was applied to build the furniture, paint the streets and use data measurement and systematization tools during the implementation stage.

Between November 16th and December 17th, 2018, an intervention was performed in the Central, España and Mexico avenues: the streets were painted, and hammocks, canopy chairs, benches, information totems and planters were set up. This transformed the streets by redistributing spaces and turning pedestrians into the main priority, inviting them to establish a different relationship with public space.

Cultural activation was managed by the Vía Plural organization, which proposed to turn the street into a stage and a meeting point for artists and citizens. Thus, with the goal of bringing culture to public spaces and low-income sectors, several artistic events, like performances and exhibitions, were scheduled for the month when the project was implemented, so that passers-by were able to enjoy various activities for free, such as circus shows, drama, dance, music, painting, graphic art and yoga, at three strategically located spots designated for artistic expressions.

Reclaiming spaces for people

The tactical intervention changed the distribution of space, from 53.6% being allocated to cars and 46.4% to people, to 80.4% for pedestrians and 19.6% for automobiles.

In addition, the road marks and circulation areas for each user were simplified, reducing previous conflicts, strengthening road safety and improving road sharing between transportation modes. Making pedestrian crossings visible with vibrant colors and shapes made it easier for pedestrians and drivers to understand how to behave at these conflictual spots. It was also possible to narrow the streets and the turning radiuses for cars to make them reduce their speed without causing a negative impact on traffic in the area.

With regard to the effects on residents, according to a survey that covered 295 people, 47% agree that the activation helped reduce car speed, and 70% think that it helped make public space a more inclusive place for children and senior adults. Among respondents, 75% stated that the initiative promoted the free circulation of pedestrians and 45% said that it contributed to improving road safety in this sector. In addition, 49% consider that the activation boosted local trade, and 55% that it helped reduce garbage in the streets. Finally, 85% said that they would like the street to remain pedestrianized on a permanent basis.

All of these outcomes and learnings were considered for developing the design guide and the report containing the final results.

Conclusions

The *Panama Camina* project was an invitation to rethink the car-centered mobility model, on the basis of the experience of a people-centered city that reintroduces the value of public space and promotes more sustainable modes of mobility.

In addition, the project opened a space for debating about tactical urbanism as an agile, creative and participatory, evidence-based form of addressing urban problems, generating sound data and timely information that facilitates decision-making and urban planning processes. The methodology used by Ciudad Emergente, with its three-stage cycle—building, measuring and learning—has in its DNA the potential for adapting initiatives, facilitating their replication and escalation to other cities and contexts.

Reflections and lessons learned

Central America has a unique, sometimes unpredictable, climate. Knowing and understanding it is key for developing tactical urbanism projects, since it has an



influence both in the choice of materials for the intervention and in the process of planning the activities with volunteers and collaborators.

One of the challenges posed by the street painting tactic is that it requires stopping car and pedestrian traffic. Since no authorization for this was available, the strategy used was closing the streets and painting them by sectors, which delayed the process and made cleaning more difficult. A quick and safe intervention requires an explicit commitment from institutions to restrict circulation, as well as the development of a clear strategy with regard to what to paint and when, to provide collaborators with better information and training.

Although a strategy for communicating and disseminating the project was developed, 23.3% of attendees learned about it on the spot. In this regard, it is necessary to diversify the means for information spreading. ●

42. CAMINA Kit

A tactical urbanism manual

Promoter

CAMINA | Centro de Estudios de Movilidad Peatonal

City/country

Mexico City, Mexico

Website

camina.mx

Year or period

2016

Relevant actors

CAMINA | Centro de Estudios de Movilidad Peatonal, Institute for Transport and Development Policy (Mexico), National Fine Arts Institute, Secretariat for Culture and the 2016 Venice Architecture Biennale.

Type of intervention

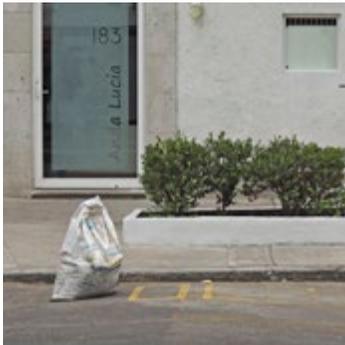
Diagnosis, Ephemeral, Publication

Description

For the 2016 Venice Architecture Biennale, the CAMINA organization

was invited to compile the methodology and experience of the interventions that it has carried out during its history into a tactical urbanism manual titled “CAMINA Kit”. This manual intends to encourage people to change unsafe street crossings in their cities by actively participating in their own streets and using the tools provided by the manual itself. The text explains the procedure for redesigning streets with low-cost materials.

“In addition to the manual produced for the 2016 Venice Architecture Biennale, the methodology is also publicly available on the website.”



Photos: Luz Yazmin Viramontes

43. Paulista Aberta

Turning avenues into democratic public spaces for people

Promoter
SampaPé!

City/country
São Paulo, Brazil

Website
sampa.org

Year or period
2014

Relevant actors
SampaPé! NGO, Minha Sampa
NGO, Municipality of São Paulo,
Cidade Ativa, Bike Anjo.

Type of intervention
Programs

Description
The goal was to give new meaning to the use of streets in the city as public spaces, through a recreational experience and the improvement of the quality of life, advancing new imaginaries and encouraging more people to promote more walkable, active, sustainable, human and equitable cities. To reach this goal, and with the help of other urban collectives, citizens were invited to join the civic mobilization that occupied the

Paulista Avenue every Sunday to do recreational activities and play games. This process demanded persistence and resilience, and required a strong coordination and support network, advocacy learning, maintaining relations with the government, generating information and conducting program tests. After one year, the program managed to open up Paulista Avenue for people, and was later extended and implemented in other parts of the city.

“The way of thinking about the city and leisure possibilities in public spaces has been changed.”

“The facades on the avenue were changed and improved, artists and small entrepreneurs were promoted and a more inclusive and democratic space was generated. In addition, the program was implemented across the entire city, which resulted in better air quality and noise pollution levels.”



Photos: Leticia Sabino

044.

Delgado Street: Tactical urbanism intervention

Imagining a city from the perspective of its streets' residents and workers

Promoter

Glasswing International Foundation

City/country

San Salvador, El Salvador

Website

glasswing.org/es

Year or period

2020

Relevant actors

Municipality of San Salvador, USAID | US Agency for International Development, Office of the Deputy Minister of Transportation, National Civil Traffic Police, Body of Metropolitan Police Officers, self-employed vendor organizations,

Centro Cultural Cultura Pipil, Asociación Cultural El Azoro, Centro Cultural Nave Metro.

Type of intervention

Temporary

Description

The place selected for the project was an area of the San Salvador Historic Downtown that is considered to be degraded from the urban point of view, with residents living in conditions of social, cultural, economic and environmental exclusion. The street where the intervention was performed bustles with a large number of self-employed and street vendors, as well as

being home to cultural spaces. Its physical environment, though deteriorated, still preserves several heritage buildings. This is why the goal was to improve the conditions of the area with the participation of the street residents and workers themselves. Under a Historic Downtown improvement plan, zones and circuits with physical and sociocultural potential were identified, and an intervention was carried out along two hundred linear meters by painting an urban art mural on the street floor, all the way between the new cultural center (where the Metro cinema used to stand) and the market (former military barracks).

“Although the project is still being monitored and evaluated, the intervention can be said to have raised the self-esteem of the people living and working in the area, who are the ones in need of a greater boost to overcome the pandemic crisis.”



045. Full streets: Tactical urbanism in El Vado

A pilot project as a design tool

Promoter

LLACTALAB | Ciudades Sustentables

City/country

Cuenca, Ecuador

Website

lactalab.ucuenca.edu.ec

Year or period

2009

Relevant actors

Grupo Kaleidos, Cuenca's Department of Mobility Management, Public Mobility Company, Public Municipal

Cleaning Company, Public Municipal Economic Development Company, Cuenca University School of Architecture and Urbanism, GIZ | German Society for International Cooperation, residents of the El Vado neighborhood, Municipality of Cuenca.

Type of intervention

Temporary

Description

El Vado is one of the most conflictive points of Cuenca, with over seventeen thousand

pedestrians and thirty-three thousand vehicles circulating on a daily basis. It is also on the way that leads to the city's historic downtown and is well-known as a traffic jam area that poses many dangers to pedestrians and cyclists. The main goal of the intervention was to test a design that could improve the infrastructure conditions used by the thousands of people who move around El Vado every day on foot, by bicycle and by public transportation. The purpose was to develop guidelines for a future permanent project.

“The project started with the development of a methodology that would use tactical urbanism as a tool for testing mobility solutions. Next, the work was organized in five stages: assessment, design, logistics, implementation and monitoring. The changes implemented through the intervention made it safer and easier for people to move across the area.”



Photos: Matías Cardoso Suter

46. Monument

Ephemeral observation tower as a form of celebration

Promoter

Dérive LAB

City/country

Querétaro, Mexico

Website

derivelab.org

Year or period

2018

Relevant actors

Tourism Secretariat of the
Municipality of Querétaro, Multitud
A.C., Andamios Atlas.

Type of intervention

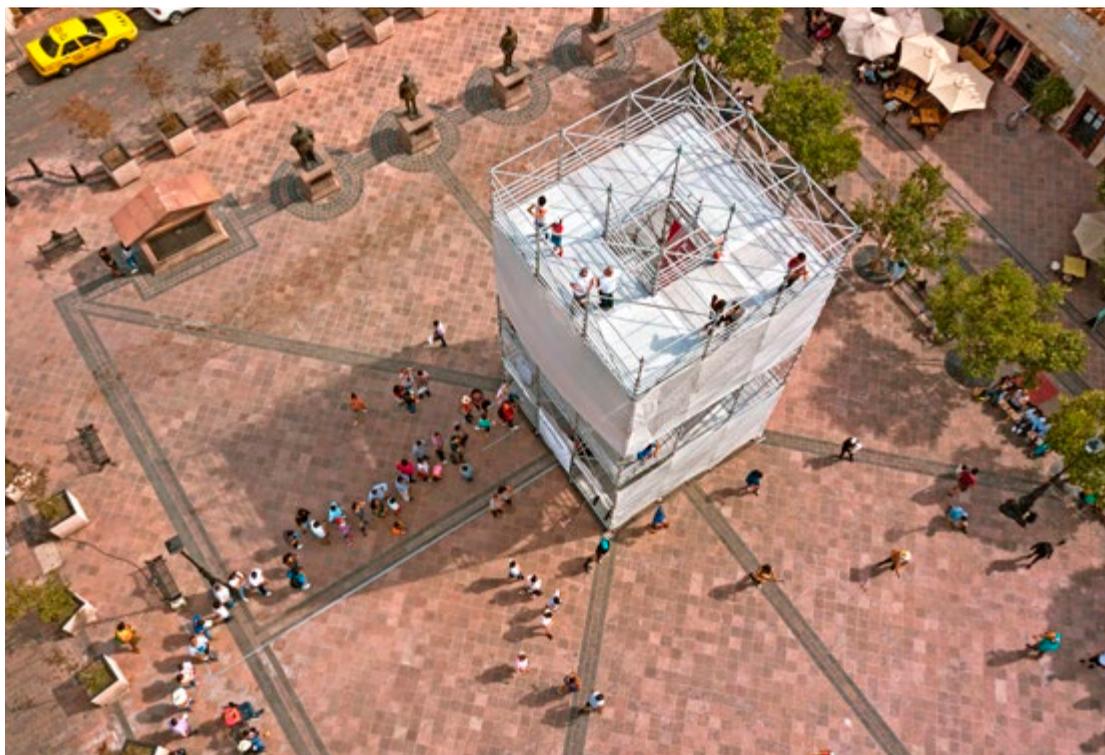
Temporary

Description

The anniversary of the city of Querétaro is usually celebrated with concerts, festivals and formal events. However, this time, the government made an invitation to make a proposal that would allow residents to participate and get directly involved, watching and admiring their city but, most of all, interacting with it. The Monument used architecture to transform public space and to propose new uses and users, as well as to

generate discussions about the city for a brief period of time. A total of 1312 people participated at no cost, watching their city from different perspectives. They could see the urban sprawl, the peripheral areas, the disappearing green areas, and were able to reflect upon topics such as urban expansion, contamination, etc.

“A unique view of the city was obtained and shown to as many people as possible, no matter their age, gender or socioeconomic condition, under the motto of ‘being a tourist in your own city’.”



Photos: Ximena Ocampo Aguilar

47. Mapping travel experiences

Accessibility and inclusion of public transportation in Latin America



Photo: Camilo Urbano.

Promoter

Despacio

City/country

Bogotá, Colombia

Website

despacio.org

Year or period

2019

Relevant actors

TransMilenio SA, Metro de

Medellín, Fundación Teletón Chile, Corporación Cultural Vitacura's Vitaintegracion Program, Fundación Incluye 360, Fundación Descúbreme.

Type of intervention

Diagnosis, Methodology

Description

A study and a methodology were developed at the request of the Inter-American Development Bank in order to propose policies for

improving universal accessibility to Latin America's public transport systems. The goal was to inquire into the travel experience of people with permanent or temporary disabilities, as well as of those who make trips for caregiving purposes. To this end, gaps and barriers to universal accessibility to public transport were identified in three Latin American cities: Bogotá, Medellín and Santiago de Chile.

“The analysis considered aspects related to transport systems’ planning, design and operation, but it also stressed and took as a starting point the users’ experience, considering their emotions and perceptions, to highlight the different difficulties that they face in accessing the city’s goods and services by public transport.”



Photo: Claudio Olivares.

048.

A more humane São Miguel

Urban redesign for road safety

Promoter

Bloomberg Philanthropies Initiative for Global Road Safety

City/country

São Paulo, Brazil

Website

bloomberg.org/program/public-health/road-safety/#progress

Year or period

2016-2020

Relevant actors

Municipality of São Paulo, Bloomberg Philanthropies, Vital Strategies, World Resources Institute, GDCI | Global Designing Cities Initiative (NACTO | National Association of City Transportation Officials), ITDP | Institute for Transportation & Development

Policy, Citi Foundation, Escola de Administração de Empresas de São Paulo (Fundação Getúlio Vargas), Urb-i: Urban Ideas, Red Ocara, Cidade Ativa, Scipopulis, Bijari Studio, MobiLab (Prefeitura do Município de São Paulo), Associação Comercial de São Paulo.

Type of intervention

Ephemeral, Permanent

Description

São Miguel Mais Humana is a project rooted in São Paulo's commitment to reducing traffic accidents. Shops and services concentrate in the neighborhood of São Miguel, which is an important connection point with the downtown area. Regrettably, the neighborhood's road infrastructure

is unsafe, with the number of pedestrians run over by vehicles being ten times higher than in the rest of the city. The São Miguel downtown area redesign project focused on reducing traffic injuries and deaths by implementing twenty moderation measures, such as sidewalk extensions, safety islands, pedestrian overpasses and elevated crossings, passageways and a new plaza, distributed across an area of half a square kilometer. The area for pedestrians was extended by a total of 850m². This had a positive impact on their perceived safety: before the intervention, over half of them felt very unsafe, but during the implementation, 50% reported a change in this perception.

“The project’s development involved several local and third sector stakeholders, and implied carrying out activities with citizens’ participation.”



Photos: Hannah Machado.

49. LIUT

Itinerant Laboratories of Tactical Urbanism

Promoters

Central University of Ecuador,
Youthab

City/country

Quito, Ecuador

Website

facebook.com/youthab.conference

Year or period

2016-2019

Relevant actors

Central University of Ecuador
School of Architecture and
Urbanism, Municipality of Quito,
residents' committees of the
Pisulí, Santa Clara, Toctiuco, San

Juan, Lucha de los Pobres and Los
Anglicanos neighborhoods.

Type of intervention

Temporary, Permanent

Description

The first LIUT intervention took place in 2016 within the framework of the Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development Habitat III, as a parallel event organized by the Youthab collective with the support of academia and the local authorities. The following edition proposed to continue with the project and to extend the methodology to other neighborhoods of Quito, seeking

to coordinate citizen participation processes and to reclaim and appropriate public spaces collaboratively, while integrating people of all age ranges. First, a territorial management stage was undertaken, which consisted of identifying organized neighborhoods in need of technical support. After that, walks, mappings and workshops were conducted together with residents, students and other actors in order to select potential spaces and actions to be implemented. Finally, improvements were made through a *minga* and its inherently collaborative work.

“The outcome was that hundreds of citizens understood and adopted the methodology to replicate it in other public spaces of their surroundings. As a result, several spaces between parks and plazas were activated, and sidewalks and pedestrian crossings were rehabilitated too.”

“In some neighborhoods, there are structural social problems which, without open dialogue and committed participation, might not allow the implemented works to last long.”



Photos: Maria Jose Freire Silva.

50.

The Road to the School (Caminito de la Escuela)

Participatory pacification of the school environment

Promoter

Liga Peatonal

City/country

Mexico City, Mexico

Website

caminitodelaescuela.org

Year or period

2019

Relevant actors

Mexico City's Secretariat for Culture, Municipality of Azcapotzalco, volunteer and

social service programs of UNAM | National Autonomous University of Mexico, UAM | Mexican Autonomous University and UADY | Yucatán Autonomous University, residents and social promoters.

Type of intervention

Diagnosis

Description

The first implementation of the Road to School methodology (CDLE, by its Spanish acronym), developed by *Liga Peatonal* (or Pedestrians League) in 2018, was

aimed at giving visibility to road safety problems in the school environment, improving boys' and girls' walkability conditions and empowering the community to transform its public space. The project started as an initiative of a residents' organization of the San Pablo Xalpa Housing Unit and received support from Mexico City's Secretariat for Culture. With a total of 25 activities, 175 people mobilized and 425 volunteer service hours, the project impacted on 7707 people.

“The project was structured in four stages: it started by calling informational meetings and organizing twelve assessment tours. Later, over thirty tactical urbanism interventions were performed and managed jointly with the public works authorities, in order to consolidate the transformations in each location.”



51. Rio + Pedestre

Large-scale tactical urbanism intervention in Rio de Janeiro

Promoters

PCRJ | Prefeitura da Cidade do Rio de Janeiro, ITDP | Institute for Transportation & Development Policy (Brazil)

City/country

Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

Website

itdpbrasil.org/intervencao-urbana-temporaria-rio-pedestre-sao-francisco-xavier/

Year or period

2018

Relevant actors

Laboratório de Intervenções Temporárias e Urbanismo Tático | LabIT (PROURB/UFRJ), Secretaria Municipal de Urbanismo, Companhia de Engenharia de

Tráfego, Secretaria Municipal de Conservação e Meio Ambiente, Superintendencia Regional Tijuca, Citi Foundation, Núcleo de Planejamento Estratégico de Transportes e Turismo, LABMOB (PROURB/UFRJ), Rio Ônibus, Metrô Rio, Tembici, Companhia de Dança Contemporânea (EEFD/UFRJ), Comlurb, Teatro Municipal Ziembinski, Escola Municipal Orsina da Fonseca, Fundação Parques e Jardins, volunteers and residents.

Type of intervention

Temporary

Description

The goal of this action was to improve road safety and reduce vehicle speed in a transport hub characterized by a great flow

of people, a high accident rate, insufficient signaling, narrow sidewalks, idle traffic areas and poorly preserved heritage. The goal was to propose long-term changes through collaborative, ephemeral and low-cost actions intended to increase space for pedestrians. The intervention consisted of redesigning the boundaries between the vehicle and pedestrian areas, and removing parking spaces and residual vehicle circulation areas. The new pedestrian areas were delimited using cones and painting the pavement with washable chalk. In addition, municipality technicians were trained for the development of design proposals. Later, a work plan including pre-production, communication, assembly and disassembly stages was designed.

“A proportion of 87.5% of interviewees said that the intervention should be permanent. The number of passers-by using pedestrian crossings increased by 58.4%, the speed of buses was reduced by 14.5% and the pedestrian area was increased by 20%. After this action, a group was set up to study those pedestrian crossings where there are no traffic lights.”



Photos: Above, João Pedro Rocha - ITDP Brazil - Adriana Sansão. Below: Ila Ruana -ITDP Brazil - Adriana Sansão

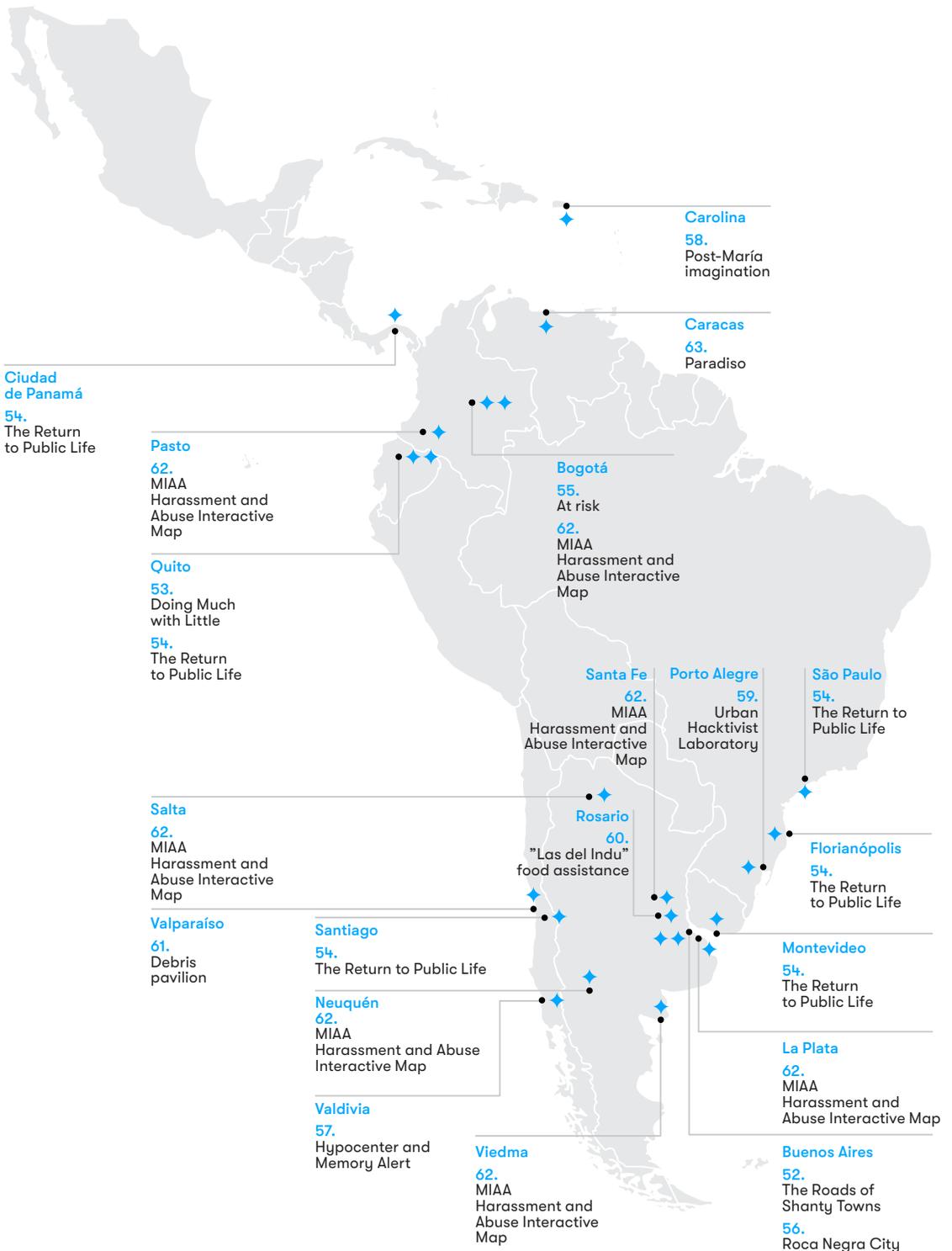
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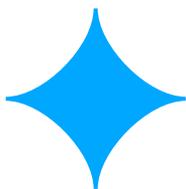
Resilient City

Resistance and response to crises

These projects focus on and address the crises experienced by cities, or suffered by local communities at some point of their history. Some of them involve the painting of murals as part of acts of remembrance, the self-organization of a community to address local needs or experimentation with the use of space, among many other examples.

Map of Cases





Resilient City

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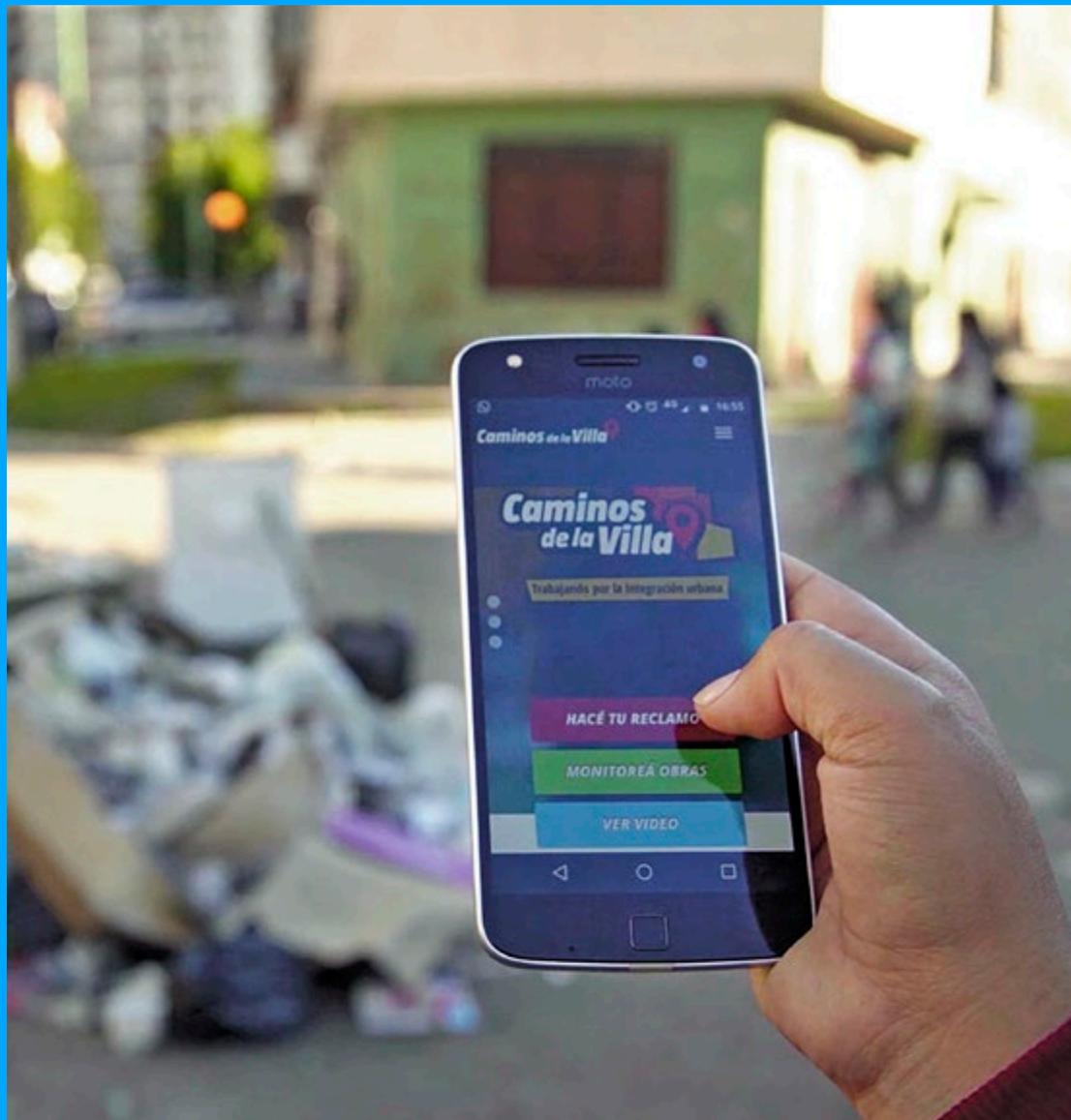
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The Roads of Shanty Towns (*Caminos de la Villa*)

Social mapping and technology for
integrating informal settlements

Authors: Rosario Fassina, Laura Lacayo



Promoters

Asociación Civil por la Igualdad y la Justicia (ACIJ) and WINGU

City/country

Autonomous City of Buenos Aires, Argentina

Website

caminosdelavilla.org

Year or period

2014-2020

Relevant actors

Residents and grassroots organizations of informal settlements in the city of Buenos Aires, City of Buenos Aires Housing Institute (IVC) and Secretariat for Social and Urban Integration of the Ministry of Habitat and Human Development - Government of the City of Buenos Aires.

Project key quote/phrase

Before the development of *Caminos de la Villa*, official city maps represented shanty towns

and informal settlements as spots or vacant spaces. As a result, these places, their residents and the rights violations that they suffer were rendered invisible.

Type of intervention

Digital Solutions, Methodologies

Keywords

informal settlements, social mapping, community monitoring, citizens' participation, urban integration, civil society

The *Caminos de la Villa* (which means “roads of shanty towns”) initiative started as a response to the exclusion of informal settlements (*villas*) from the city of Buenos Aires. These territories, characterized by numerous human rights violations, were not shown by official maps, were neglected by urban policies, and the public works that were built in them by the local government evidenced serious transparency issues. The use of a digital platform made it possible to map the city’s shanty towns and informal settlements, to give visibility to the rights violations committed in these territories and to advance community participation and monitoring strategies for social and urban integration. Thus, the co-creation of civil society initiatives with the residents’ active participation has had an impact on the design of maps, public policies and more inclusive cities.

Caminos de la Villa is a digital platform¹ for citizens' participation and community monitoring of the shanty towns and informal settlements of the city of Buenos Aires. It was started in 2014 by two civil society organizations (ACIJ and WINGU), with the goal of developing digital maps of the city's shanty towns in order to georeference public works, public services and the issues affecting these areas or the improvements made in each of them. In 2016, the city government announced that it would start upgrading four shanty towns. This involved a change in the public policy towards these territories. Considering the new challenges, we adapted the platform so that it would make it easier to participate and verify if the social and urban integration processes in the *Villa 31*, *Villa 20*, *Rodrigo Bueno* and *Playón de Chacarita* neighborhoods were aligned with the Agreement for the Upgrading of Shanty Towns (*Acuerdo por la Urbanización de Villas*)².

This article describes the process, results and lessons learned after almost seven years since the inception of this project, which consists of using digital solutions and social mapping to render shanty towns visible and to promote community participation and monitoring strategies for social and urban integration.

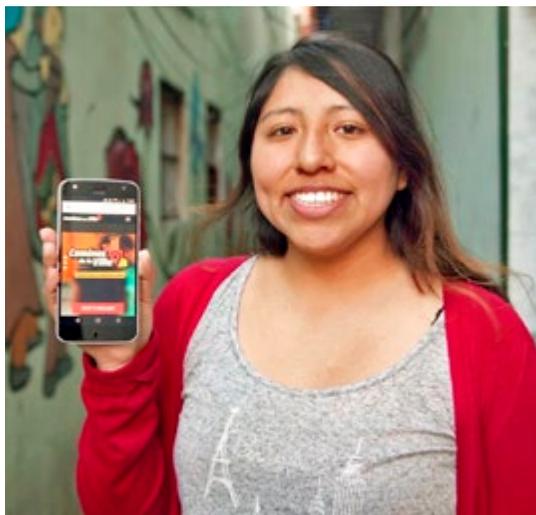
Shanty towns in the City of Buenos Aires

Shanty towns and informal settlements are evidence of our society's inequalities. These territories are characterized by numerous violations of economic, cultural and social rights. One out of ten people in the Autonomous City of Buenos Aires lives in shanty towns and informal settlements. In other words, about three hundred thousand residents of the city lack safe and adequate housing due to the risk of eviction,

the material conditions of their houses, overcrowding and environmental conditions (water, air and soil pollution); they face a deficit in access to basic public services like drinking water, sanitation, electricity, natural gas, telephony, Internet connectivity, waste collection and management, and have unequal access to public spaces, to the transport system and to educational and health facilities, as compared to the standards of the rest of the city.

Since the 1930s, unequal access to urban land has caused the emergence of shanty towns and informal settlements. Local and national housing policies, as well as internal and external migrations, are two key factors to understand the evolution of the growing number of people living in shanty towns and informal settlements in the city (Dadamia, 2019). During the mid-1990s, "when the availability of urban land in shanty towns began to decline, a progressive densification process started. First, people occupied vacant lands and places under highways, and then started to build multi-story houses" (see Mazzeo, 2013, p. 74). The people in these territories built their own houses, secured public services and arranged urban layouts themselves, without any regulation or state intervention that would guarantee their right to the city. As a result, among the most distinctive urban characteristics of shanty towns are their irregularly shaped blocks and narrow passageways, which do not comply with urban regulations.

At present, there are fifteen shanty towns and eighteen informal settlements in Buenos Aires, most of which are in the south of the city. Before the social and urban integration processes started by the city government in 2015, public policies towards shanty towns had consisted of a combination of neglect, sporadic actions that did not match the size of the problem and forced displacements (Arqueiros et al, 2016). Another relevant problem is that the public works which are started in shanty towns are often not completed, take longer than intended and do not meet the urban standards of the rest of the city, which enable true inclusion. In addition, details of quotes are not disclosed and disaggregated information is not publicly available. On the other hand, the population of shanty towns has a long history of fighting to defend their right to live in the city, so communities are well organized and feature a high degree of participation.



Before the development of *Caminos de la Villa*, official city maps represented shanty towns and informal settlements as spots or vacant spaces. As a result, these places, their residents and the rights violations that they suffer were rendered invisible. This concealment has symbolic and material consequences. Among the most evident and dramatic ones are difficulties to provide public services and infrastructure, and the lack of a formal address.

Social mapping and digital solutions

Social mapping seeks to deconstruct maps' neutrality and objectivity (Harley, 2005) and points out that what they choose to show or not is the product of deliberate decisions (Lois, 2000). Official maps represent the dominant power's institutional vision of the territory and contribute to creating realities and social imaginaries about a certain space. Excluding shanty towns and informal settlements from the official representation of Buenos Aires generates the illusion that they are not part of the city. This omission, then, is no coincidence, but happens in the context of policies and discourses of neglect or *eradication* of shanty towns, which promote social stigma against their residents.

The *Caminos de la Villa* project emerged as a response to this exclusion, due to the need to recognize these territories as part of the city and to evidence the serious shortcomings in the provision of public services and urban infrastructure. We use social mapping, a methodology closely linked to critical

mapping, to develop maps through a collective and participatory process which enables shanty town and informal settlement residents to represent their own territory.

In addition to developing maps, we designed a collaborative web platform with the residents' active involvement, so that its design and features would respond to their demands. Taking advantage of the increased use and appropriation of new technologies, this digital solution allows communities to use their cell phones and Internet connection to access and produce information. It also makes it possible to extend the reach of the information generated, for dissemination and impact.

The process of developing the *Caminos de la Villa* platform can be divided into six main stages: planning, mapping, publication, implementation, evaluation and adaptation. The platform was evaluated with the residents, so that it could be adjusted for new contexts. In the versions that came after the original one, the last four stages have been conducted as a cycle.

Walking the roads of shanty towns

The first stage consisted of planning the project together with all the people who took part in it. In order to coordinate efforts, meetings were held with leaders of the shanty towns and informal settlements involved so as to design, present and validate the tool. We subsequently had information meetings with the residents to present the project to them. Very

often, we had to organize two or more meetings, so that everyone interested in the proposal could learn about it. At this stage, we used maps developed in other neighborhoods to provide graphic examples of what these places looked like on maps in the past and now, contrasting them with Google Maps, a *Guía T*³ or the city's official map.

The second stage was mapping the shanty towns and informal settlements of the city of Buenos Aires. Using GPS software, we walked down all the internal passageways with members of the Residents' Boards (*Juntas Vecinales*), neighborhood leaders, a team of volunteers and geographers. During the mapping, we manually traced our journey on a satellite image, or a previously developed map of the neighborhood showing its main roads. On that map, we marked dead-end streets, places where the ground was not level or the direction in which the walk was being recorded. This drawing turned out to be particularly useful when the resulting lines in the GPS were not clear, or for those places with a poor signal.

After walking around the neighborhoods, we used the *Open Street Map* cartographic databases, which are open source, so we could adjust the streets already shown in the maps and add the new information about streets, alleys and passageways generated with the GPS (using the gpx file that resulted from our walk). After developing the maps, we validated them in meetings with residents to verify that we had not made any mistakes when entering the data, and to avoid disclosing information that they might consider sensitive. In the map, we also included the points of interest (soup kitchens, schools, community centers, sports fields, health centers, etc.). Marking these points of reference made it easier for residents to use the map and was also essential for them to appropriate it. The maps created during this stage were the basis of the subsequent versions of *Caminos de la Villa*.

The third stage consisted of posting the maps on an interactive web platform which was meant to give visibility to, and enable citizens to monitor, the situation of shanty towns in the city of Buenos Aires. It should be pointed out that, given that all decisions about the platform design were made together with residents' working groups, it was the latter that debated the project's name, the webpage aesthetics, its features, modifications and suggestions to make

it more user-friendly.

The fourth stage of the process was the implementation of the digital tool. In order to foster the use of the platform and its appropriation by dwellers of shanty towns and informal settlements, we organized workshops to provide an overview of the tool and to show how to monitor and create reports about particular issues (e.g., water, Internet, electric risk). To update the platform data, we constantly reviewed official information and contacted all the secretariats, ministries and companies building public works in the neighborhood to request access to public information. In addition, in the second version of *Caminos de la Villa*, we supplemented public information with the data obtained by social organizations which, like ACIJ, are involved in the participatory management of the shanty towns upgrading process.

The last stages of this process are the evaluation and adaptation of *Caminos de la Villa* to new contexts and challenges. We conduct evaluations considering both quantitative data about the use of the platform and feedback provided by community leaders, including their perceptions, ideas and proposals to strengthen the reach of the project. To date, as a result of these evaluations, we have put in place two new versions of *Caminos de la Villa*. The first adaptation is the currently active platform, which makes it possible to compare the degree of development of the upgrading processes and to analyze how much progress has been made in each aspect. In addition, users can raise complaints about problems with public services, as well as add public and community spaces generated by the residents of shanty towns and informal settlements. In addition, the second adaptation is a new *Caminos de la Villa* platform⁴, where it is possible to identify issues and useful places in the context of the health emergency and add them to each of the neighborhood maps. This version also facilitates finding relevant data about the evolution of COVID-19 cases in the city's shanty towns.

Outcomes

The *Caminos de la Villa* project managed to develop maps of sixteen shanty towns and informal settlements of the city of Buenos Aires. After launching the first version, we performed different impact-oriented actions that led to the inclusion of shanty towns and informal settlements in the city's official maps. This

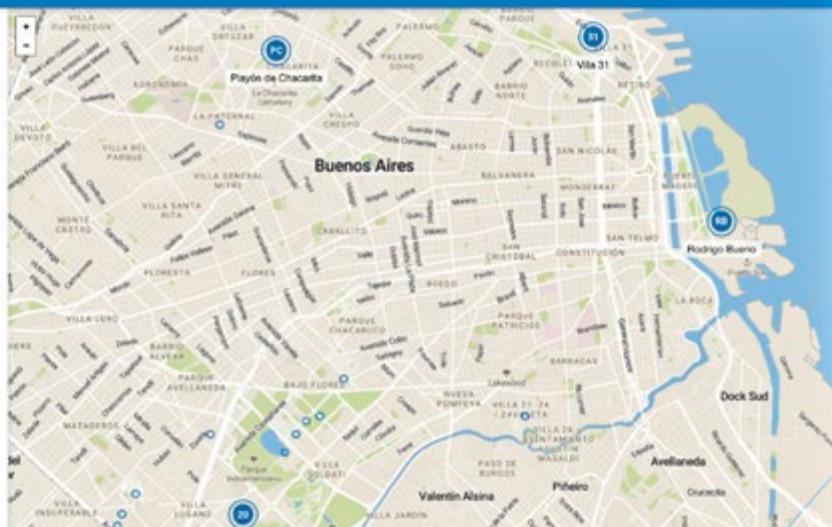
Elegí tu barrio

BARRIOS EN PROCESO DE URBANIZACIÓN

PC	Playón de Chacarita Proceso de urbanización	53%
BU	Rodrigo Bueno Proceso de urbanización	50%
20	Villa 20 Proceso de urbanización	56%
31	Villa 31 Proceso de urbanización	56%

OTROS BARRIOS

Asentamiento Scapino	Bajo Flores - 1.11.14
Ciudad - 6	Ciudad scouts - 15
INTA - 19	La Carbonilla
La veredita	Los piloncillos
Los pinos	Pirilli - 17
Villa 21-24 - Zavelta	Villa Filina - 3



Villa 31 +

Obss Indicadores de Impacto Reportes El barrio Puntos de interés

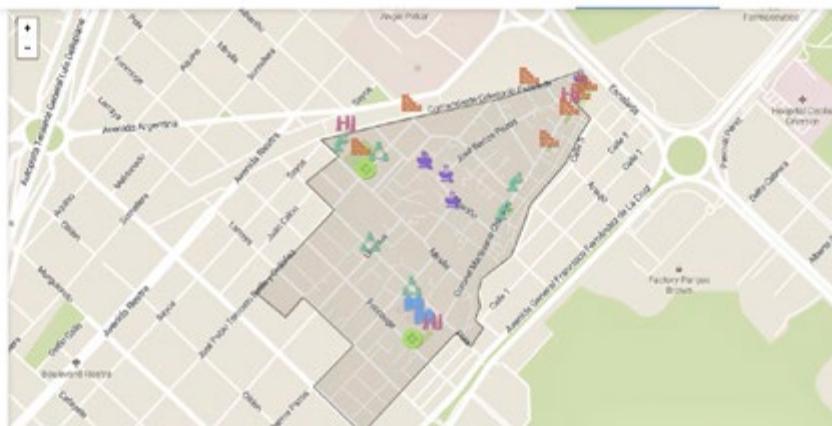
Todas	Finalizada	Vencida
En progreso	Proyectada	
+ Electricidad y Alumbrado		1
+ Salud		3
+ Vivienda		10
+ Equipamiento		15
+ Calles y Plazas		25
+ Cloacas y Pluviales		3
- Escuelas		0
+ Agua		2



Villa 20 +

Obras Indicadores de Impacto Reportes El barrio Puntos de interés

+ Centros comunitarios	3
+ Ocas	3
+ Educación	2
+ Comedores	5
+ Salud	2
+ Equipamiento	7
+ Organismos Públicos	3
+ Espacios Recreativos	0





remedied decades of symbolic omissions which had severe consequences for these communities' everyday life. The inclusion of shanty towns in the maps of Buenos Aires is an important step towards public policies that may reverse urban segregation and improve the citizens' quality of life.

Moreover, this project helped democratize new tools for citizens' participation (mapping, technological platforms, public information access requests) and their appropriation by low-income neighborhood residents. *Caminos de la Villa* thus became a platform that enables access to information about, and citizens' monitoring of, public works in the shanty towns of Buenos Aires, evidencing rights violations, the key places that the neighborhood can rely on to address such violations, investments in public works and the quality of the upgrading processes in these territories.

Finally, the maps of the shanty towns of Buenos Aires can be freely downloaded from *Caminos de la Villa*, being available to residents, institutions and social organizations. This contributes to the use of mapping for different social initiatives which benefit the neighborhood: collaborative research through collective mapping, identification of key places, definition of routes to visit different houses in the neighborhood, etc.

The outcomes of *Caminos de la Villa* were recognized in 2018, when it received the Fundación Vidanta Award for its contribution to reducing poverty and inequality in Latin America, and in 2017, by the Fundación Banco do Brasil, which chose it as the best social technology in Latin America.

Conclusions

The participatory creation of maps with residents who are “non experts” in cartography democratizes knowledge. Furthermore, these maps helped evidence the livability and urban segregation conditions of the shanty towns and informal settlements of Buenos Aires, which have been historically excluded by local policies. The fact that these territories were included in official maps due to the impact generated by citizens themselves is a significant achievement in the residents' struggle for being acknowledged as part of the city.

The urban problems of shanty towns and settlements require transparent and highly participatory social and urban integration processes led by state institutions. To reach this goal, civil society can provide digital solutions —such as *Caminos de la Villa*— that foster access to public information and community monitoring of processes, as a fundamental basis for citizens' participation.

Lessons learned

Caminos de la Villa is a project that has taught us several lessons about the use of digital solutions and social mapping in segregated urban areas. One of our main conclusions is that visibility alone is not always enough to motivate shanty town dwellers to use the platform on a regular basis. This is why it is necessary to invest time and resources in generating strategic partnerships with organizations that echo residents' complaints; to develop reports containing the most relevant data and disseminate them in social networks and local media; to host workshops permanently so as to link the residents' specific concerns with the use and appropriation of the platform.

In spite of the widespread use of technological devices and the Internet, there is still a digital gap in the most excluded places, like shanty towns and informal settlements. Although this posed the challenge of finding alternatives to secure Internet access during the workshops organized to describe the platform and explain how to use it, we have shown that projects like *Caminos de la Villa* make it possible to narrow the digital divide by encouraging the use of the Internet and digital solutions to access public information.

In order to develop similar experiences, the starting point must be a strong link with the local stakeholders. It is key that any digital solution should be developed collaboratively, so that it can be integrated and articulated with the neighborhood that will use it.

In the case of *Caminos de la Villa*, the link with grassroots organizations, neighborhood leaders, diverse residents' groups, residents' boards and the different forms of association that exist in the neighborhood was essential throughout the process, from the inception of the idea to the name and implementation of the project. Participation in the processes and the appropriation of the tool by its main intended users will determine the project's success or failure. ♦

1. caminosdelavilla.org

2. The Agreement for the Upgrading of Shanty Towns is a document developed and presented by a large group of territorial, social and academic organizations and public agencies in October 2016. Its main goal is to achieve a broad consensus about ten points that must be guaranteed during the urbanization processes of the city of Buenos Aires in order to reverse any form of segregation, making effective the city's full integration.

3. The *Guía T* was a widespread city street printed guide, which showed the streets and means of transportation of the city of Buenos Aires.

4. covid-19.caminosdelavilla.org

◆ 53. Doing Much with Little (*Hacer Mucho con Poco*)

A way of moving forward

Authors: David Barragán, Pascual Gangotena, Marialuisa Borja, Esteban Benavides



Kusy Kawsay. Photo: ©JAG Studio

Promoter

Al Borde (At the edge)

City/country

Quito, Guayaquil and Cuenca,
Ecuador

Website

albordearq.com

Social media link

[instagram.com/albordearq](https://www.instagram.com/albordearq)

Year or period

2017

Project key quote/phrase

“Doing something extraordinary is what enables you to do a little more, and when you can read that extraordinary thing you did, emotion appears as a reward” (Solano Benítez).

Type of intervention

Publication

In 2000, Ecuador had one of the most serious economic crises in its history and an unstable political climate that marked the development of the country in the following years. In the midst of this situation, young architects that faced hurdles, such as limited resources and budgets to carry out their projects, realized that they could do things with what they had, and found their own material identity in the territory. With this they created their own management models to materialize the projects, and these models became the underpinning philosophy of their offices today. The idea of making the documentary *Hacer mucho con poco* (Doing Much with Little), that was produced in 2017 by filmmakers Mario Novas and Katerina Kliwadenko, arose from the idea of showing the professional work of these new, young offices. This text addresses the conditions that led Al Borde and other architectural offices in the country to find a unique way of developing their professional practice and the process that led to making the documentary.



House of the Flying Beds. Photo: ©JAG Studio

One of the most remembered Ecuadorian economic and political crises reached its height in January 2000. We received the millennium with a drastic change of currency: the US dollar was adopted and replaced the sucre –that had been in use since 1884 and was named in honor of Marshal Antonio José de Sucre–. To support the change in currency, the banking system froze their customers’ savings for many years and, overnight, many Ecuadorians were left with only the money they had in their pocket or under the mattress. This part of Ecuadorian history is known as the Bank Holiday.

Some banks went out of business, and the ones that survived converted the devalued money into US dollars and returned it to their clients after a very long time. Many people saw their life’s savings vanish, and some left the country to work in the United States or Europe in whatever they could find. For others, the shock of being left with nothing killed them. And those of us who were just starting college did not know what world we would face in the near future.

To understand the crisis that the country underwent, it suffices to know that between 1996 and 2007, fourteen presidents lived in the Carondelet

Palace, the seat of the Ecuadorian Government and residence of the President of the Republic. Throughout those eleven years, inevitably, the country had to change, an entire generation was affected, and the next generation had no other alternative but to reinvent itself. In this scenario we trained as architects, and when things seemed to improve, we began our professional path. We entered a different world, or maybe it was the same world, but there was something that made it look different, because in the scenario we faced, there was everything to do.

More doubts than certainties

After graduation we simply started doing things. We each began our personal search with the freedom of not really knowing where we were heading. There was a desire to experiment, even to leap into the void. The search was not to build a future and walk towards a very structured goal but rather to live day-to-day and see what options arose, what new doors would open. What mattered was to walk: just moving and developing ideas was enough to cause an individual emotion that was also felt in the collective.



Post-earthquake rural house prototype. Photo: JAG Studio

Without caring if we each took different paths, there was a common denominator in starting to do things: all of us were also beginning to make mistakes. Errors would become a very direct form of learning. Correcting the mistakes implied learning extremely fast, almost like learning the hard way, and in that learning we found that there was always someone we could ask.

Our paths began to meet, or better still, reconnect, because we all studied at the same school (all members of *Al Borde* graduated as architects from the School of Architecture, Design and Arts of the Pontifical Catholic University of Ecuador). We began working together and, organically, the architectural office that after some time we named *Al Borde*, came into being. We began walking a path where personal and project discovery were found in the doing and, even more importantly, in the ways of doing. Each project would find its own form of materializing: its management model, architectural expression and construction system.

Dogmas eventually faded, evolved, or even changed from one project to another because we reached the conclusion that the final solution was in

our capacity to respond to the problem as efficiently and directly as possible: continuously we faced project development conditions that presented innumerable limitations and very high expectations.

It is in this context that working with local resources and knowledge becomes relevant.

To face the projects that often seem impossible, one must start with what is available and fade out the boundaries of the profession, move towards interdisciplinary work and create hybrid models of action and thought.

Somehow the processes became structured so that the architectural practice would reach spaces that it usually did not.

Eventually, we noticed that this willingness to find new work paths and scenarios was not exclusive to Al Borde, and realized that it manifested itself in many emerging offices throughout the country.

A documentary in the first person

In 2016, with filmmakers Mario Novas and Katerina Kliwadenko, we had the idea of making a documentary to show the professional work of the new offices that saw a way of producing with the resources that were locally available, that found their own material identity in the territory and that developed their own management models to make the projects a reality. The name of the documentary is *Hacer mucho con poco* and it includes several projects that are explained through different voices: the customers, the workers that built them, university students and faculty members, guest critics and the architects themselves. All these voices help to understand the multiple layers that structure a project, beyond discipline itself. The making of the documentary was possible with the financing provided by the 2016-2017 Competitive Funds of the Ministry of Culture and Heritage of the Government of Ecuador.

To structure the script of the documentary, different critics were selected to reflect upon the current situation of architecture and, in that context, how the projects of young Ecuadorian architects were relevant. One of them was Wilfried Wang, a highly regarded critic and theoretician from the University of Texas, Austin, who specializes in researching contemporary architecture in Latin America. The documentary also features Solano Benítez, a leading Paraguayan architect who is an influential voice for young architect generations in Ecuador and the entire world; and Carlos Espinosa, a Cuenca architect whose vision, from the viewpoint of teaching and practice, helps to understand the dimension of practicing architecture in the country. Lastly, José María Sáez, an unquestionable major figure of contemporary architecture in Ecuador and Latin America, also features in the documentary speaking about his academic and professional work.

The phrase that gives name to the documentary, “doing much with little”, is a way of doing that responds to a specific time and space.

Although the members of the group studied at different schools, grew with different references and come from diverse regions of the country, it is possible to identify a similar way of addressing problems, of understanding that resources include far more than money, of valuing the knowledge and materials of each territory.

In essence, it could be said that we are quite similar. And it is precisely this same way of doing that gives rise to such diverse and heterogeneous results that are impossible to categorize as the same.

These projects cannot be replicated by just following a recipe. However, they may be replicated and are all the same because the attitude of the brains behind the project is no different. An attitude of willingness to do things, to solve the problems at hand in spite of uncertainty, because of the fragility of the realities in which they occur.

After the project finished, the exhibition phase began and, in addition to the official spaces in film festivals, it was important for us that the project should become an academic tool, that it be shown at universities and triggered debate. Two years after the documentary was released (the first viewing was in 2017 at the National Architecture Congress in Ecuador), at the end of a public screening, María Augusta Hermida, an architect and the first woman to be appointed President of the University of Cuenca in its 153 years of existence, questioned the fact that there were few women’s voices in the film. This was a major call to attention for the entire team behind the project. Realizing that there were very few women working in the offices that were interviewed showed us that architecture is still a male-dominated domain and that there is much work to do if what we seek is a more equitable society. Furthermore, we realized



House of the Flying Beds.
Photo: JAG Studio



Top to bottom, left to right: Doing Much with Little poster, The Three Hopes, Kusy Kawsay. Source: ©JAG Studio

that we were directly responsible because we had selected the voices that articulate the discourse of the documentary.

We usually tend to think that the problems of humanity are always beyond us and we clearly saw that this is not the case. *Hacer mucho con poco* speaks about the impact our actions can have on our environment, but also how these actions, and reflecting on them, can make us better persons.

We will always be in a crisis

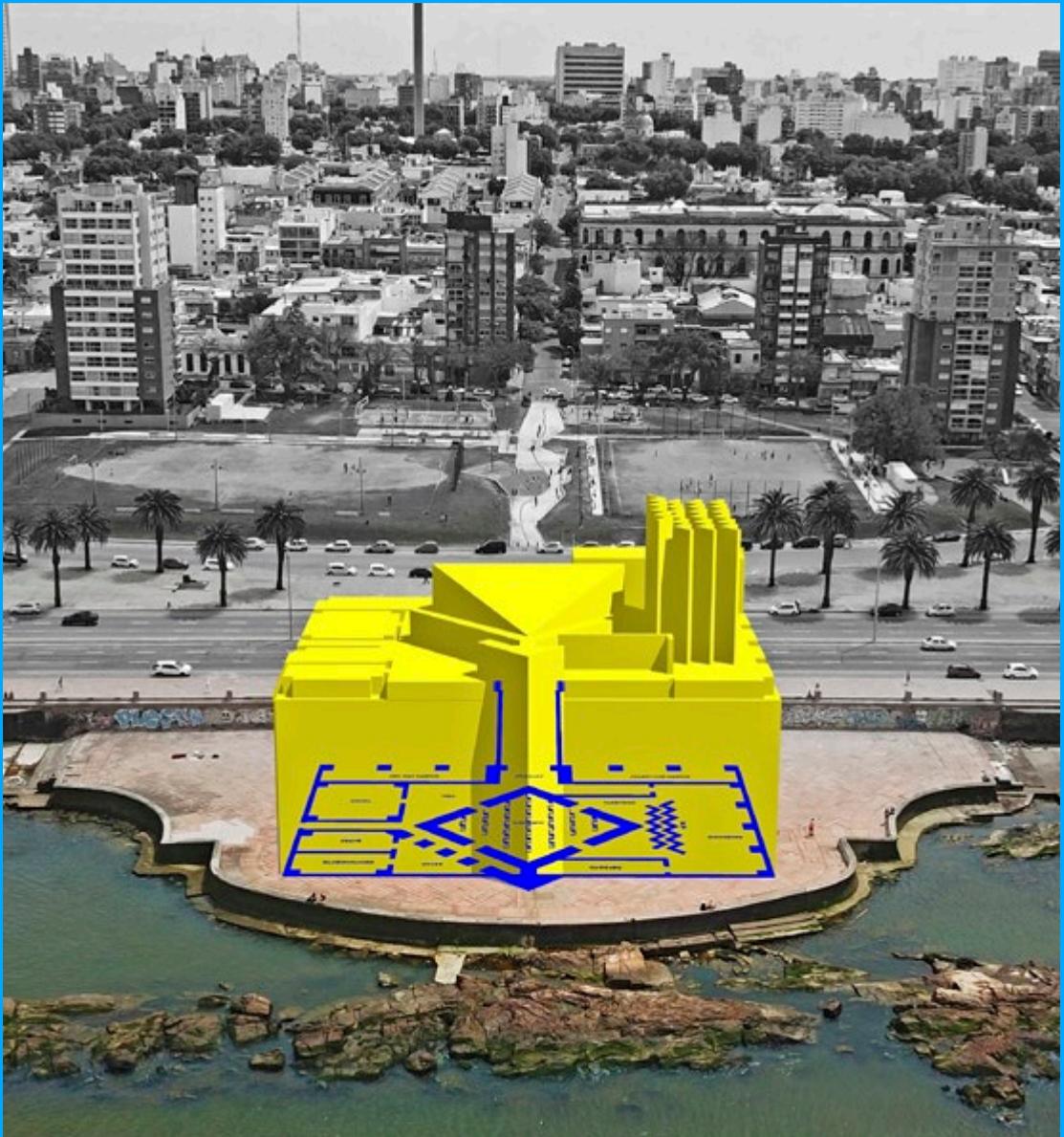
When we face a project, invariably we first try to establish its parameters or variables. Speaking about a country or about architecture can always be very broad. For this reason, in the documentary we use the Bank Holiday as a turning point in the memory and life of our country. The before and after give us an age range and focuses on a specific generation that we can delve into. This does not mean that the country did not have a crisis before, or that it was not later overcome. Those of us who live in this country know that being in a crisis is our natural state, whether it be of a mainly economic, environmental, social, political or even ethical nature, and that even if it sounds commonplace, a crisis is an opportunity to think in a new way, because it disrupts our comfort zone and we suddenly realize that we are standing on the brink, that we need to do something, and think intelligently about our next step. ✦

◆ 54.

The Return to Public Life

Incubator of civic innovation processes for reactivating public spaces during COVID-19

Authors: Domenico Di Sienna, Cecilia Ciancio, Víctor Franco, Tamara Egger, Hallel Elnir



Promoters

Ciudades Comunes, IDB Cities LAB

City/country

Puebla (Ecuador), Florianópolis (Brazil), São Paulo (Brazil), Montevideo (Uruguay), Santiago (Chile) and City of Panama (Panama)

Website

volveralacalle.com
ciudadescomunes.org/incubadora

Social media links

twitter.com/ciudadescomunes
instagram.com/ciudadescomunes
twitter.com/BID_Ciudades
instagram.com/bid_ciudades

Year or period

2020

Relevant actors

Winning teams of the Return to Public Life contest, guest experts.

Project key quote/phrase

“With the goal of reestablishing the lost confidence in urban life, the network of citymakers, as well as civil society at large in Latin America and the Caribbean, were called upon to propose innovative replicable solutions that are high impact, low cost and can be quickly executed for the re-activation of public spaces with physical distancing measures.”

Type of intervention

Urban Devices, Program, Methodologies

Keywords

ideathon, urban innovation, incubator, co-learning, digital tools, public space, COVID-19

In July 2020, amidst the health emergency, the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) Cities LAB, together with Ciudades Comunes, launched the Return to Public Life ideathon¹ with the goal of finding innovative solutions for a more sustainable, inclusive and resilient urban common in Latin America and the Caribbean. Almost five hundred proposals were submitted. The six selected winners received an economic award and access to the incubation program coordinated by the Ciudades Comunes team, which supported the development of a prototype to be implemented and replicated in the region. This program was developed through videoconferencing sessions which had four main goals: to learn about co-design methodologies and tools, to engage in dialogue with international experts on six topics related to collaborative and participatory ways of working, to practice using collaboration and co-design tools and to provide advice to the teams during the proposal development process.

A crisis context

The COVID-19 pandemic and restrictions on mobility have changed the relationship between citizens and their streets, public areas and public facilities. In this context, we can see how prolonged physical isolation can affect citizens' behavior and create uncertainty about returning to the streets or, in other words, to the city itself, since public space is seen as the agent that exposes us to potential infection.

Cities in Latin America and the Caribbean face similar challenges and have shared problems for which solutions have not been found yet. The health emergency worsens some of the most critical conditions leading to the high levels of segregation, violence and inequality that characterize cities in the region.

It is at this moment that the vulnerability of the population² and the weakness of the infrastructure for public services like water and sanitation³ or public health becomes still more evident. Besides, in a socioeconomic context that is heavily reliant on local and informal trade, which is more severely impacted by lockdown measures than other sectors, the most vulnerable population becomes even more impoverished⁴. This situation also brings along a rise in domestic violence and gender inequality⁵, as well as the worrying situation of children, who have been forced into confinement, and forgotten⁶.

However, public space also plays a key role in solving these problems. As part of the response to the virus, it can contain its spread and provide ways for people to relax or earn their livelihood.

It is essential to think about how to address these transition moments with gradual solutions in order to return to public life, taking stock of the current problems and opportunities.

Even more, several actors are promoting a transformation and adaptation process that may acknowledge the changes resulting from the new way of inhabiting spaces, with a view to creating more human, resilient and sustainable communities.

To help alleviate this situation, the Ideathon and the Incubator⁷ were created, in order to find and promote innovative and replicable solutions that would make people regain their trust in public life and feel comfortable in it under physical distancing measures. In other words, solutions that would take an inclusive, resilient and sustainable approach to accelerate changes in people's behavior in public space.

Idea acceleration process

With the goal of re-establishing the lost confidence in urban life, the network of citymakers, as well as civil society at large in Latin America and the Caribbean, were called upon to propose innovative replicable solutions that were high impact, low cost and that could be quickly executed for the re-activation of public spaces with physical distancing measures.

The call involved two essential actions. The first one was the design and launch of a call for ideas, communicated under the name of The Return to Public Life Ideathon, and the second one was the project support and incubation program, which was called Incubator.

A total of 485 proposals were received, and six ideas were selected to go through the incubation process. The selection took place in four stages and was conducted by a mixed jury comprised of nine experts from the IDB team and seven members of the Ciudades Comunes team. This process made it possible to generate a classification into three categories (Urban Devices, Program and App) and six themes (Community, Economic Development, Environment and Health, Low-Income Habitat, Education and Childhood, and Culture), to ensure that the winning proposals would be different among each other.

The great diversity of solutions for a better quality of life evidenced the enormous potential and willingness of civil society to collaboratively create better urban spaces for the citizenry at large. This proves the strength of civic innovation towards a new urban common in Latin America and the Caribbean.



Above: *Brincando com confiança* (or "Playing with Confidence") project. Below: *Teatro Aumentado* (or "Augmented Theater") project



Above: *La Parada Sana* (or “Healthy Bus Stop”) project. Below: *Anudando la Red* (or “Knitting the Net”) project

Methodology, tools and multidisciplinary approach

The two-month, Civic Innovation Projects Incubator program was developed fully online with two sessions per week: a more theoretical one, broadcast live, and a more practical one.

Also, three extraordinary sessions lasting three to four hours, or *marathon*, were held, making it possible to expedite the development of projects and strengthen communications among teams, in addition to creating a closer human connection, which is essential for promoting synergy and co-learning.

The general structure of the methodology is directly based on the model used by Urbanismo Vivo in their professional practice, which consists of five actions: understanding, defining, ideating, prototyping and testing.

The program is structured into three phases:

- 1) **Analysis and context;**
- 2) **Involvement and co-design;**
- 3) **Prototyping and measurement.**

During phase 1, the methodological framework was introduced and participants initiated the process of understanding. Reflections were complemented by a discussion on the topics of public space, experimentation and public policies.

Phase 2 involved defining and ideating, and was complemented with a discussion about inclusive cities, democracy and new technologies.

Phase 3 consisted of prototyping and testing, and was complemented with a reflection about community management and co-construction.

In addition, throughout the process, tools and references were presented to be applied in each phase, and teams could try them directly online, using different digital platforms. Among them, the citizen design posters developed by Domenico Di Siena and Cecilia Ciancio are worth mentioning. Some of the most important ones are the following:

- ◆ **Territory analysis.** Research about the context for which the proposal is made.
- ◆ **Collective mapping.** An empathetic approach to the territory for collecting information and sensitive data in order to take advantage of unique local knowledge.
- ◆ **Stakeholders diagram.** Construction of a collective narrative by those who participate in the proposal in some way.
- ◆ **Collective intelligence.** Reflection about the main elements, characteristics, connections and situations that can facilitate the activation of a collective intelligence process.
- ◆ **Action plan.** Reflection focused on defining the different phases of a co-design process.
- ◆ **Structuring.** Co-design of a work schedule adapted to the communities and the work team.
- ◆ **Prototyping.** Temporary tests in the territory.
- ◆ **Measurement.** Prototype validation with users in order to understand how the collaborative project has worked and verify if it meets the need initially identified.

Incubation process

All the teams that went through the proposals' incubation process completed a number of activities and tasks which led them to intensively adapt, adjust, change and deepen their projects. The outcome of this process is compiled in a published implementation manual for each project.

The main characteristic of the incubation of proposals was that projects were understood as processes, rather than as defined objects to be implemented without the community's involvement. In this regard, adjustments were made to reinforce coordination among stakeholders, collective decision-making and the use of a co-creation approach for defining the prototypes to be implemented. All proposals were supplemented with measurement and evaluation steps, so that they could be replicated and upscaled in the region as public policies.

The *Anudando la Red* (or “Knitting the Net”) project, from Chile, was designed to improve people’s safety as they move around the city for their everyday activities and to give visibility to the mobility of care. To reach these goals, the proposal was redefined by activating a strategic node to generate a quality space and invite people to participate in a collaborative documentation platform.

In turn, *Brincando com Confiança* (or “Playing with Confidence”), from Brazil, was reframed as an affective tool for returning to public space responsibly, interacting safely with other people by means of a game played on the ground. The game combines the offline world with online possibilities, so as to encourage different cultural groups to live in harmony and come closer to each other by playing and having fun.

The *Coordenada 0* (or “Zero Coordinate”) proposal from Ecuador, which seeks to be the epicenter of transformation and adaptation to the new normal through the recovery of trust in public life, fine-tuned the flexible design of a *multiple adaptive system* which can provide a response to a reality in crisis and make it possible to return to the streets and revitalize them via the creation of social spaces oriented to promoting well-being, productive and community life activities.

In addition, the *Ferramentas de Esquina* (or “Corner Tools”) project, also from Brazil, intends to help prevent COVID-19 through specific urban tools which are low-cost, easy to execute and applicable to vulnerable territories according to their social dynamics and the resources available. To attain this goal, the team developed a manual of urban tools that seeks to promote involvement in public space by different community actors.

The *Parada Sana* (or “Healthy Bus Stop”) project, from Panama, redefined an intervention in public transport stops so as to dignify the quality of users’ experience, facilitate accessibility and encourage physical distancing, using art to educate as well as to make a positive impact on the neighborhood’s appearance and the community.

Finally, the *Teatro Aumentado* (or “Augmented Theater”) project, from Uruguay, which was designed as a spatial alternative to the entertainment buildings that were closed due to the pandemic, was reviewed and redesigned to activate public space through a

cultural, technological, architectural, play-based and pedagogic device implemented by artists, who work in the territory and engage the local community in each event.

It should be stressed that all the teams have already had contact with the communities they will work with, as well as with the local authorities, and have met with a favorable response. However, processes and prototypes have been implemented at different rates, due to the restrictions imposed by countries as a result of the COVID-19 health crisis. Some proposals have already been fully carried out, whereas others are in the prototype implementation stage and others are seeking to reach that point.

Impact and outcomes

From the beginning, one question and one challenge have been present throughout the entire process: How to create an online collaboration environment that is intense enough to trigger a co-learning process which can actually add value to the incubated projects and teams, and how to prevent it from being perceived as detached from the local reality?

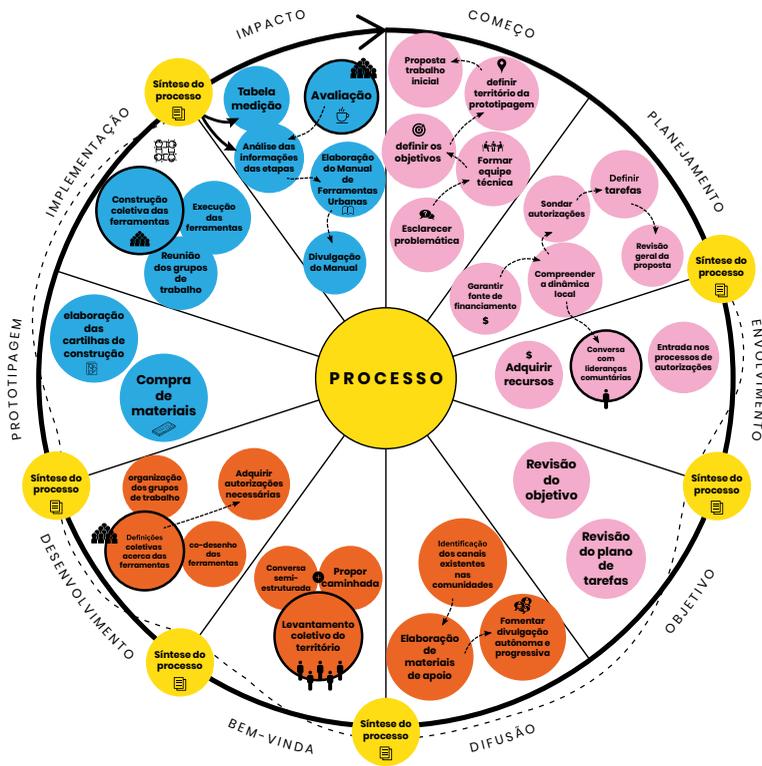
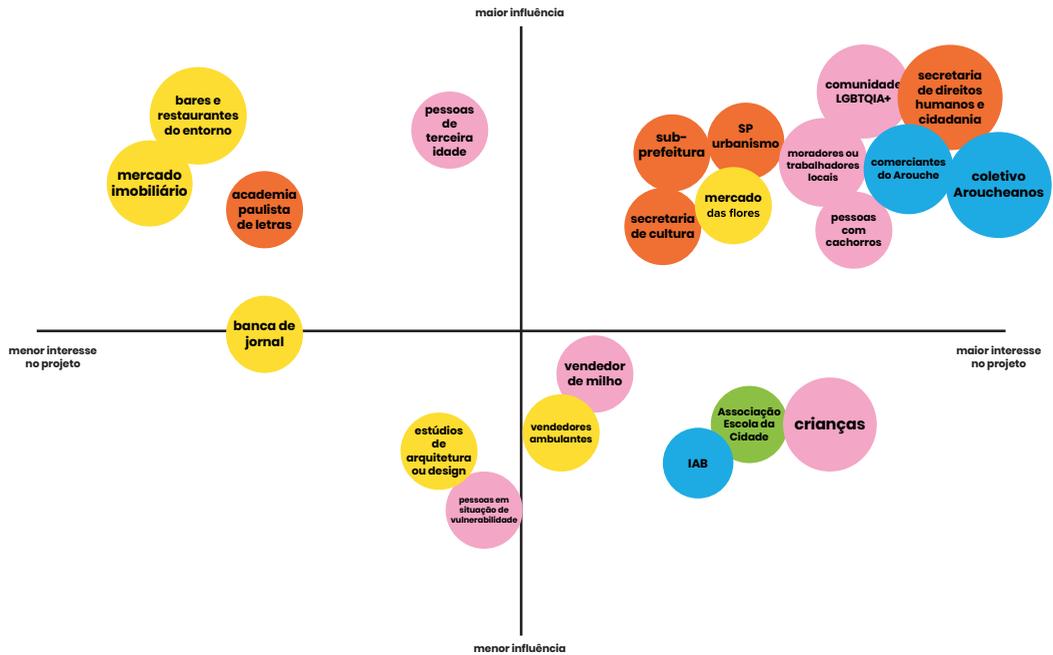
Considering the potential implied in the fact that proposals addressed a broad range of topics in different cities across the entire region, as well as the dynamics and the experts invited to the discussions, the incubation process was an extremely rich and fruitful learning experience.

Collaboration and networking made it possible to connect and intertwine people and ideas across Latin America and the Caribbean. This would have been impossible in an in-person format.

In this regard, two relevant outcomes are worth mentioning: first the empathy that was generated made it possible to connect the knowledge, experience, culture and sensitivity of people from different countries in the region. This created the necessary atmosphere so that the process could provide an enriching experience to everyone involved.



Above: *Coordenada 0* (or “Zero Coordinate”) project. Below: *Ferramentas de Esquina* (or “Corner Tools”) project.



Working materials of the incubation process in their original language (Portuguese)

The second relevant outcome was the enhancement of proposals through the exchange of views, realities, disciplines and experiences, using a methodology that deepens their connection with the local communities and makes them easier to replicate.

Finally, it should be stressed that processes were implemented in all the territories with strong community engagement and a high level of participation, which demonstrates their successful application as civic innovations in public space.

Conclusions

Organizing the Incubator was an intense process that involved adjusting preliminary ideas to turn them into experimental prototypes that were co-designed for specific situations. In this regard, one of the main challenges was to increase the proposals' transformative potential using an open approach, both during and after their own development, so as to generate synergies in the region of Latin America and the Caribbean. An additional amount of work and energy were required to reach the quality desired, given the quantity and diversity of the proposals, and the intense development of the process in a short time period.

Considering that all the proposals are major challenges that need to be implemented urgently, there is no doubt that the first great outcome has been the publication of the manuals with the essentials on how to implement tactical projects in public space. Such projects can foster the start of collaborative processes in Latin America and the Caribbean. This material will make it possible to replicate and upscale the proposals, which could potentially become new public policies for returning to urban space during and after the COVID-19 health crisis.

In addition, the published manuals include some aspects which are necessary when thinking about a collective action process in a territory. They provide a toolbox and methodologies for co-designing tactical and experimental interventions, something that is useful to foster new innovative proposals.

Furthermore, we know that, in order to be successful, a public space intervention project has to be structured, co-designed and co-constructed by as many and as diverse people as possible. By working with those who reside in, or often go to the place where the intervention will take place,

existing networks and the communities involved can be strengthened.

If the goal is for residents to actively use, appropriate and maintain a space, the territory's needs and established logics need to be empathized with and understood.

This is why the entire process attained the goal of broadening the proposals of intervention in public space, so that they would be understood as an iterative analysis, proposal, design and management process, conducted by those with the technical knowledge, side by side with those who will live in that space. The goal was to generate open and dynamic processes that would create a space for exchange and active participation by the entire community. ♦

1. An ideathon is an idea-centered event which, in its public version, becomes a collaborative network space.
2. In Latin America and the Caribbean, 45% of the population —about 55 million households— lives in precarious housing conditions (CELAG, 2020).
3. In Latin America and the Caribbean, only 65% of the population has access to drinking water and 22% to sanitation (CEPAL, 2018).
4. In Latin America and the Caribbean, in 2020, there could be 11.6 million more unemployed people than in 2019 (CEPAL, 2020).
5. In Latin America and the Caribbean, violence against women, especially domestic violence, has intensified during the pandemic: in 2019, 243 million women and girls (ages 15 to 49) were victims of physical or sexual violence from their partners (UN Women, 2020).
6. In Latin America and the Caribbean, school closures have affected over 115 million children and adolescents from kindergarten to higher education (UNESCO, 2020).
7. An incubator is an environment designed to speed up growth and ensure the success of ideas and projects through diverse tools and resources.

◆ 55. At risk

The Alto Fucha rururban commons

Promoters

Comunes Urbanos: Arquitectura Expandida and Colectiva Huertopía

City/country

Bogotá, Colombia

Website

arquitecturaexpandida.org

Year or period

2012

Relevant actors

Communities of the Alto Fucha neighborhoods, Arto Arte graphic artists collective, Cazomizo hip hop group, Secretariat for Culture, Recreation and Sport, Bogotá Water and Sewers Company.

Type of intervention

Program

Description

The Alto Fucha is an area with a number of self-built, low-income neighborhoods in the rururban area that borders the forest reserve in the eastern hills of Bogotá. After having spent several decades in a legal limbo, these neighborhoods have recently gained legal status. This has opened the door to potential urban plans which could threaten the environment and the permanence of the community in this place. The goal of the intervention was to generate controversy by showing alternatives for risk management in low-income neighborhoods,

since the situation is presented as an emergency for which relocation is the only possibility, when this could actually be motivated by a hidden agenda of speculation and green gentrification based on large-scale ecotourism. The project lasted four months (December 2018 to March 2019) and consisted of the consolidation of an activism and community defense project to counter aggressive urban planning processes in an area of environmental value. Risk management procedures were investigated and challenged, enhanced governance was advocated and protocols were proposed for community gardens in plots which had been abandoned by families that had resettled.

“In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Alto Fucha community multiplied its garden initiatives in plots which needed to be protected against the risk of abandonment, thus complementing its actions with solidarity economy networks.”



Photos: Ana López Ortego

◆ 56. Roca Negra City

Community architecture for an urbanism of associations

Promoter

Ariel Jacobovich
(Oficina de Arquitectura)

City/country

District of Lanús, Province of
Buenos Aires, Argentina

Website

[arieljacobovich.com.ar/
capa_ciudadrocanegra](http://arieljacobovich.com.ar/capa_ciudadrocanegra)

Year or period

2009

Relevant actors

FPDS | Frente Popular Darío
Santillán, MTD | Movimiento
Trabajadores Desempleados de

Lanús, Argentina Trabaja Program,
Research Secretariat of the Faculty
of Architecture, University of
Buenos Aires.

Type of intervention

Permanent

Description

The social and political
organizations which emerged
from the 2001 crisis became, in
later years, relevant actors in the
transformation of the inhabitable
environment. The *Frente Popular
Darío Santillán* (Darío Santillan
People's Front) called on them
to jointly think and develop a
community architecture and urban

equipment project that would
provide the neighborhood with
urban conditions which do not exist
in that part of the Greater Buenos
Aires area. In this way, a complex
system developed, in which
project formulation overlapped
with organizational, management
and construction aspects. The
project unfolded as a process
and became an interchangeable
system of interconnected parts,
with architecture as an "object of
consensus". Thus, educational,
recreational, cultural and
popular economy programs were
collectively designed.

**“The combination of the associations’
potentialities for organization and social change
with the capabilities of architecture gave rise
to a project that prefigured alternative city
models and forms of living together.”**

**“The debate-based architecture which started in Ciudad
Roca Negra put to the test the scale and capabilities of
associations’ self-management and joint work.”**



◆ 57.

Hypocenter and Memory Alert

Memory saves lives: activation and education in the face of socio-natural disasters

Promoter

Fundación Proyecta Memoria

City/country

Valdivia, Chile

Website

proyectamemoria.cl

Year or period

2019

Relevant actors

Museum of Contemporary Art-Valdivia, Ministry of Public Works, National Youth Institute at Los Rios Region, firefighters and churches.

Type of intervention

Ephemeral

Description

After several workshops with young people about remembrance of disasters in the city of Valdivia, it was found that almost 70% did not know the history of their city, which was hit by the strongest earthquake ever recorded in the world. Because of this, the need arose to carry out cultural and urban activities to activate the citizens' memory of disasters and to familiarize them with the history of the city using art, sound and

culture. The intervention chooses as a milestone the exact day when the earthquake is commemorated, seeking a place of remembrance where to survey the effects of the disaster. Later, workshops with young people are held and the Memory Hypocenter activity is performed, for which agreements with fire brigades and churches are made so that they will sound the sirens at 3.11 pm on that date.

“The outcome of the intervention was the Congress bill to declare May 22nd as the National Day for Disaster Remembrance and Education in Chile, so that cultural and urban activities may be developed in all cities to activate remembrance with survivors and new generations.”



Photo: Patricio Mora

◆ 58. Post-María imagination

Participatory community development as a path towards climate resilience

Promoter

La Maraña

City/country

Carolina, Comerío, Humacao,
Puerto Rico

Website

lamarana.org

Year or period

2017-2020

Relevant actors

PATBA | Parceleras Afrocaribeñas
por la Transformación Barrial in
Carolina, ARECMA | Asociación
Recreativa y Educativa Comunal
del Barrio Mariana de Humacao,
Inc. in Humacao, Brigada Palomas

Corp. in Comerío, Hacer Cambio,
Ayuda Legal Puerto Rico, Defend
PR, Hester Street Collaborative, 22
Lighting Studio, Patio Taller.

Type of intervention

Temporary, Program

Description

In order to address the devastation
caused by the Irma and María
hurricanes in 2017, the La Maraña
association has been dedicated
to promoting collaborative
community development as a path
towards Puerto Rico's equitable
recovery. To reach this goal, a
partnership was formed with three
communities which demonstrated
leadership in climate resilience, and

participatory reconstruction work
was carried out as an immediate
response to the hurricanes. Next,
a community talents and needs
map was developed, as a basis to
choose the social impact project
to be implemented. The outcomes
were the reconstruction of a park,
as well as of two houses designed
through a participatory process,
the identification of seventy-five
talents and dreams of change,
and the implementation of three
social impact projects involving
renewable energy, access to water
and community sustainability,
which gave rise to a free access
toolkit and a documentary.

**“The dream is that every community in
Puerto Rico may have the opportunity to
take its future into its own hands.”**

**“Through six steps that combine participatory
planning, community grants and collective training,
the model allows citizens to imagine the future
that they desire, to develop a long-term plan
and to collaboratively implement a community
project that will reflect their needs and hopes.”**



◆ 59.

Urban Hacktivist Laboratory

The laboratory-city



Promoter

TransLAB.URB

City/country

Porto Alegre, Brazil

Website

translaburb.cc

Year or period

2017

Relevant actors

TransLAB Instituto de Pesquisa em Inovação Social, Placemaking Brazil network, Bugio Discos, Novetrês, students, activists, professors and neighborhood residents.

Type of intervention

Ephemeral, Temporary, Urban Devices, Program

Description

This program is open to the public and its goal is the creation of temporary collectives that can try out urban social innovation projects based on technological tools, social technologies and the connection with art and activism. The project was carried out in a pedestrian street, at a point where the Historic Downtown meets the Cidade Baixa neighborhood. This is a place of great value for the underground scene, where activities such as

parties, concerts, fairs, political rallies and sports events take place, in an area also characterized by a homeless population. For five days, meetings were held with a group of sixteen people from different educational backgrounds. Theoretical and hands-on classes were given about topics such as open-source programming and tactical urbanism. The event ended with co-creation, prototyping and an on-site intervention. As a result, 40 hours of activities were completed.

“The outcome was a co-created installation which included concepts associated with programming, hardware and open-source software, as well as activism, hacker urbanism, tactical urbanism and placemaking, with the goal of helping to activate a pedestrian street used by many workers which had been neglected by public administration.”



◆ 60. “Las del Indu” food assistance

Architectural structures co-managed by the community

Promoter

Matéricos Periféricos

City/country

Rosario, Argentina

Website

matericosweb.com/extension/335-copa-de-leche-las-del-indu

Year or period

2014

Relevant actors

National University of Rosario, Municipality of Granadero Baigorria, Parents' Association of the Eva Perón School and Shelter, National Ministry of Transportation.

Type of intervention

Temporary

Description

Copa de Leche “Las del Indu” was the name of a group of mothers who had come together to provide assistance to one hundred fifty children of the industrial neighborhood in the city of Granadero Baigorria and the adjoining settlements. For about eight months, this institution had been working in precarious conditions in the house of one of its members. The goals of the project were to reinforce the organization and to empower the community by putting together different types of

knowledge, to give visibility to the problem of social exclusion through the construction of a structure, and to support neighborhood leaders in territorial disputes for the equitable development of the area. The general project guidelines were discussed and established during a number of meetings with the community and its leaders. Then, a workshop with architecture students took place, final decisions were agreed upon and food assistance was provided with the participation of community members, students and teachers.

“As a consequence of the construction, the community gained great visibility, which resulted in support from various institutions in the region. This made it possible to develop educational, recreational and training activities, apart from providing food assistance.”





◆ 61. Debris pavilion

Traveling exhibition platform
in the public space



Promoter

890ARQ

City/country

Valparaíso, Chile

Website

[instagram.com/890.arq](https://www.instagram.com/890.arq)

Year or period

2019

Relevant actors

890ARQ, Municipality of Valparaíso, Kontranatura, Afan, Printera, Plano

Curvo, Colectivo Pésimo Servicio, Valparaíso Cultural Park.

Type of intervention

Ephemeral, Urban Devices

Description

The project was conducted in the context of the social uprising and its repression by Chile's state enforcement agencies, starting on October 18th, 2019. The goal was to create a traveling, analogue exhibition platform to express the

feelings, perspectives and opinions of most citizens at a time when the conventional mass media chose to remain silent about them. The greatest impact was the possibility of generating democratic, active and cohesive areas in public spaces of the territory, since alternative information, gathered mainly through digital platforms, was not accessible to a large number of citizens.

“The process turned out to be an opportunity for recognition and reflection in itself, both in terms of its conception as a tool for collective expression, and of its architectural value as a piece for social connection and cohesion in public space.”



◆ 62. MIAA

Harassment and Abuse Interactive Map

Promoter

Mapas de lo efímero

Cities/countries

Argentina: La Plata, Santa Fe, Cipoletti, Viedma, Carmen de Patagones, Salta, Neuquén.
Colombia: Popayán, Bogotá and Pasto.

Website

miaamap.org

Year or period

2017

Relevant actors

Women and sexually dissident groups of the participant cities, local organizations which run the

MIAA network in each city, artists who intervene in public space. Art, Gender and Public Space extension program (National University of La Plata), Santa Fe en bici, Argenbici.

Type of intervention

Digital Solutions

Description

The project was started in La Plata, within the framework of the First International Women's Strike of 2017. Two women architects from the city developed a case record form and entered the reported cases into the My Maps platform, using iconography designed to represent the constructed categories of harassment and

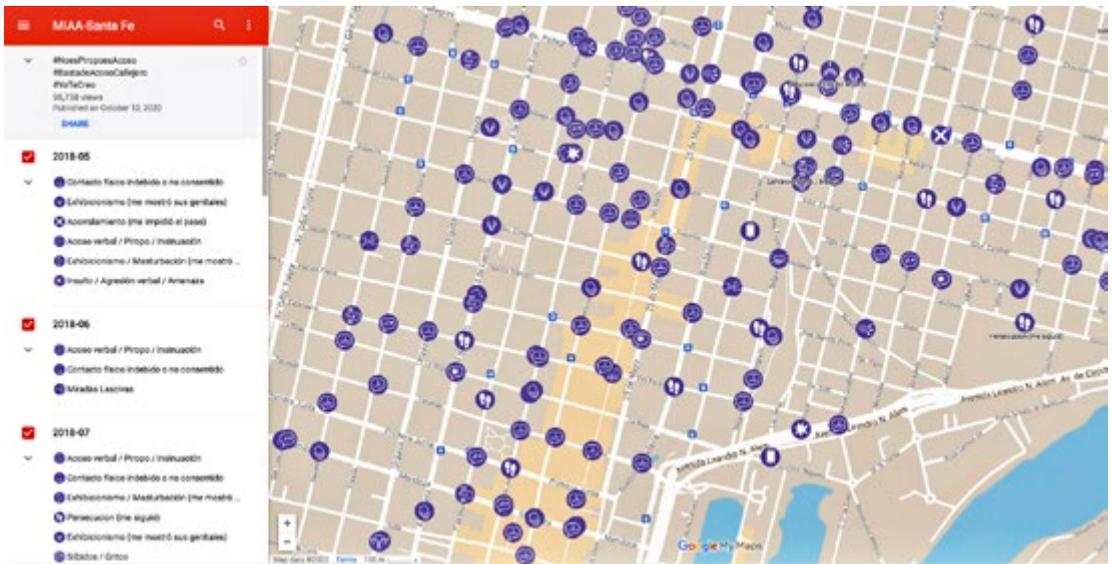
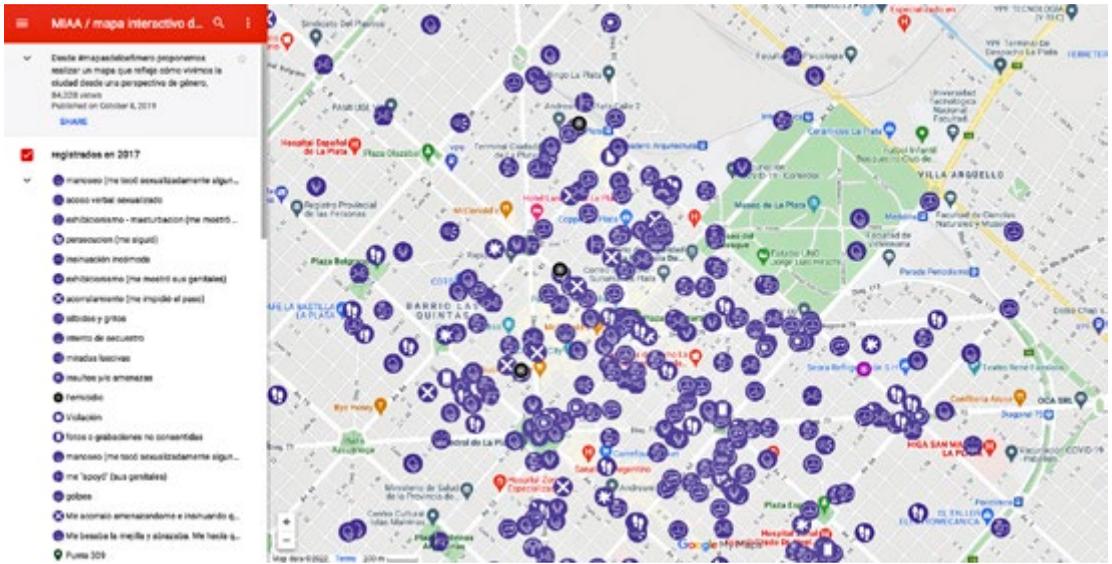
abuse. Their purpose was to identify and locate these systematic practices in the urban space and thus provide a tool for making them visible and for artistic action in the city. When they came into contact with the *Santa Fe en bici* ("Santa Fe by bike") organization, the proposal was made to start the MIAA network. The project continues to grow in the context of the gender emergency and the increase of femicides and feminicides in different districts. The fact that the initiative has been successively replicated in other cities bears witness to its general impact.

“The network made it possible to learn a great deal about the construction of asynchronous participation and about pre-production for artistic interventions.”

“The voice of participants proves that the tool is useful for deconstructing practices, and as a catharsis, both of which are necessary to heal and to raise awareness of rights.”

MIA-A

MAPA INTERACTIVO DEL ACOSO Y EL ABUSO



◆ 63. Paradiso

Goodwill garden

Promoters

Incursiones, Central Arquitectura

City/country

Caracas, Venezuela

Website

incursiones-ve.com/PARADISO

Year or period

2016

Relevant actors

Goethe-Institut, Cultura Sucre, Provita, Galería Abra, Unidad Educativa Colegio Dulce Nombre de Jesús, Colegio José de Jesús Arocha, Colegio Humboldt, Pasa

la Cebra, Fundación Bigott, Fundación José Ángel Lamas.

Type of intervention

Temporary, Urban Devices, Program

Description

Paradiso is an urban installation that offers an inclusive space in the middle of a conflictive context, where visitors are invited to imagine and build a possible city. The project promotes interaction, collaboration and a caring attitude, with the goal of restoring citizenship and trust towards both the city and other

residents. In addition to the garden design and construction, the experience included seed sowing workshops, attended by hundreds of children from local schools, who proved to be the keenest to take care of the intervention and advocate its principles. The installation was explored every day by over five hundred visitors, who modified the dynamics of the place and gave them new value. The time that people spent in the square where the installation was placed quadrupled; street vendors approached its surroundings and numerous conversations were sparked by its appearance.

“In a city where violence, insecurity and the degradation of public space have made everyone forget about basic rules for living together, Paradiso promotes positive behaviors, providing a safe scene which invites interaction and requires an active commitment from users to its growth and maintenance.”



2.6.

Green City

The city as an ecosystem

These projects focus on cities' environmental sustainability or on ecological areas. Some of the issues dealt with are the recycling of materials and the optimal use of resources, tree-planting, the recovery of gardens and green areas, the circular management of waste and the promotion of urban agriculture.

Map of Cases





Green City

Cases of study

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64.	Repairers Club (Club de Reparadores). <i>Urban movement that promotes the practice of repair. (Marina Pla, Melina Scioli, Julieta Morosoli, Camila Naveira)</i>	Buenos Aires, Argentina; Montevideo, Uruguay; others 362
65.	Conscious Street (Calle Consciente). <i>Benefits of pedestrianization for the health of citizens. (Tamara Egger, Manuela Palacio, John O. Ortiz, Iván Acevedo)</i>	Rionegro, Colombia 370
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64.

Repairers Club (*Club de Reparadores*)

Urban movement that promotes the practice of repair

Authors: Marina Pla, Melina Scioli, Julieta Morosoli, Camila Naveira



Promoter

Artículo 41 (NGO that promotes sustainability initiatives)

City/country

Founded in Buenos Aires; it is also active in Córdoba, Bariloche, and Comodoro Rivadavia (Argentina), Montevideo (Uruguay) and Mexico City (Mexico).

Website

reparadores.club

Social media links

facebook.com/ClubDeReparadores

twitter.com/clubreparadores

instagram.com/clubdereparadores

youtube.com/clubdereparadores

Year or period

From 2015 to the present

Relevant actors

Citizens in general, voluntary repairers, professional repairers, public and private sector support.

Institutional partners

CheLA (Fundación ExACTa), Environmental Protection Agency (Government of the City of Buenos Aires), Mecenazgo Cultural Program (cultural sponsorship program run by the Government of the City of Buenos Aires), Escuelas Verdes Program (green schools program run by the Government of the City of Buenos Aires), Municipality of San Miguel (Province of Buenos Aires), Akapol, Pernod Ricard, Telecom, Nike, Natura, Patagonia.

Project key quote/phrase

Repairing an object makes it truly your own. Repairing is a revolutionary action. Repairing implies care for natural resources. Repairing is a way of learning how things work.

Type of intervention

Temporary, Permanent, Urban Devices, Digital Solutions, Programs

Keywords

repairing, collaboration, sustainability, responsible consumption, circular economy, planned obsolescence, sustainable towns and cities

The Repairers Club is a movement that promotes repairing as a practice of responsible consumption and care for natural resources and for the whole planet. To repair means to extend the lifecycle of an object and prevent it from becoming waste. In this sense, it is a way of struggling against the throwaway and planned obsolescence culture by asserting the value of traditional and innovative repair skills. Besides, repairing involves celebrating values such as care, learning, DIY or doing it yourself, as well as communal actions and collaboration, which implies “doing it with others”. Under such premises, the Repairers Club promotes communal, itinerant, voluntary, and collaborative repair meetings where people of every age and trade exchange their skills and tools in order to extend the life cycle of the objects involved. It is a non-profit, “open-source”¹ project because it promotes independent events tending to replicate and scale up this initiative.

This project was born as a response to the linear-consumption model that prevails in nearly all big Western cities. Planned obsolescence emerged as a strategy to encourage unlimited economic growth during the crisis of the 1930s and was further intensified in the 1960s. Coupled with the exponential growth of technological complexity in recent decades and lower production costs resulting from globalization, planned obsolescence has had a negative impact on the repair business sector because technical barriers to restore any kind of object are much higher, and replacement values have decreased. As a consequence, many great cities are witnessing a slow “extinction” of small neighborhood repair shops. Our initiative was born in this critical context, with the purpose of making this extinction process visible and fighting against it by asserting the value of and promoting repair practices as a fundamental strategy to protect natural resources, prevent waste accumulation, and foster circular or spiral use cycles.

The Repairers Club vindicates repairing as a vital practice for sustainable and responsible consumption. Our purpose is to promote community gatherings in an open, free of charge, voluntary, and collaborative work environment designed to extend the lifecycle of various objects by horizontally sharing the participants’ know-how, experience, ingenuity, and tools.

The Club meetings are an experience of learning and collaboration and, besides, they contribute to expose and raise awareness about the problems derived from the current model of linear consumption and planned obsolescence.

Among the essential concerns behind our project are the increasingly short life cycle of products, difficulties in repair —because repairing is not generally considered in the design process and spare parts are no longer manufactured—, and the prevailing

consumption culture that encourages throwaway, and thwarts or hampers waste treatment and recycling, all of which are totally unsustainable in a planet with limited natural resources and a context of climate emergency.

Repairing as a collective practice

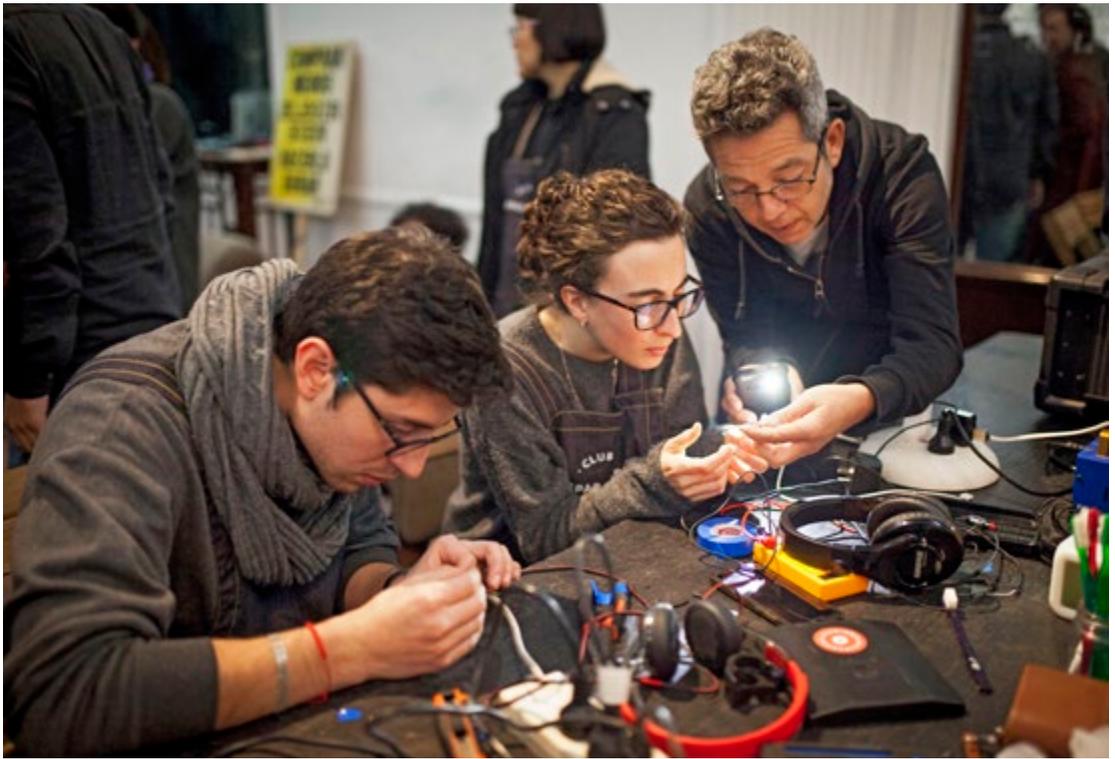
The Repairers Club promotes repairing through open and participative urban activation events: people are invited to meet and repair objects in a collective environment. The whole project has been designed as a series of itinerant events to be held in different public spaces, without a central venue. The itinerating strategy is motivated by two main goals: first, activation events are not intended to compete with repair shops but to support repair activities in general; second, the events are meant to inspire similar attitudes and become a genuine homage to repairing practices. Therefore, the Club tries to avoid locating the project in a particular geographical site and brings its activities to as many neighborhoods and towns as possible.

The aim of making repair activities visible and calling people to collaborate in a common workspace is further strengthened by the fact that the events are held in public spaces so that passers-by may be attracted and feel prone to take part.

Activation events involve a previous planning stage that includes some key factors. To begin with, previous alliances are needed, as well as a team endowed with certain repairing know-how or expertise. Besides, basic equipment and furniture such as tables and seats are also required, as well as the authority to assign a space for the activity, or the ability to obtain formal consent to use public space or a community or cultural center.

Most important is the previous dissemination of the event through digital media and social networks or through posters and flyers distributed in the neighborhood or advertised in local shops. This invitation is addressed to people (either professionals or not) with know-how and experience in different repair branches, to neighbors who have objects to be repaired, and to persons who volunteer and want to collaborate in these activities. The collaborative and participative character of the meeting is always emphasized.

An event may include only one type of objects —e.g., clothes & garments or electronic appliances— or various types. It all depends on the previous survey





of the know-how and skills of the promoter team, the attendants and volunteers, the available materials and tools, and the objects to be repaired.

Activation events have the twofold purpose of raising awareness about the problems of the current planned obsolescence and linear consumption model and using collaboration to develop an alternative which, for the time being, the mainstream economic system does not provide. As a result of the current paradigm of planned obsolescence and industrial design which does not take into account any future repair, replacing a worn object or an inoperative appliance is sometimes cheaper than fixing it. The Repairers Club aims at reducing such a squander of valuable and limited resources through solidarity, collaboration, and communal practices.

How the intervention is carried out

The goal of any event of the Repairers Club is to facilitate a horizontal meeting of people who bring an object to be repaired with others who have some know-how, expertise, or interest in repairing activities. Either professional or not, the latter are called “voluntary repairers”.

During the event, the first step is to create a collaboration climate suitable for diagnosis: both parties should come to understand why the object is failing and should evaluate whether repair is possible and what is required for success. This process demands time, patience, and mutual trust. The underlying idea is that by combining the knowledge and past experiences of the parties involved —whether they are voluntary repairers or attendants— the problem may be understood and identified.

It should be highlighted that the Repairers Club does not offer a repair “service”: the project does not contemplate that attendants might be assisted by voluntary repairers if the attendants do not actively take part in the process and offer some help, even if such help is limited to providing supportive comments or holding a lamp to shed light on the inner part of an object.

Participation is essential for the dynamics of collective and cooperative repair because the goal of the Club is teaching and learning how to repair.

If no person has the skills needed for repairing a certain object, the reason for this situation should be identified so that the object may be sent to a local repair shop or channeled appropriately for donation, reuse, recycling or disposal.

For this reason, part of the activation event consists of drawing collectively a map of local repair shops and services. The organizing team creates this map before the event, collecting data by walking round the neighborhood while inviting storekeepers to the event so that they can promote their services. Otherwise, the map may be drawn during the event with the help of attendants. The aim of such mapping efforts is to display and promote the activities of local repairers who may fix similar problems in the future.

The Repairers Club events, which are generally three or four hours long, are held on weekend afternoons because they were thought up as a recreational activity for the whole family.

As part of the previous work before each event, and according to the people who volunteer their services, the organizing team determines which repairing activities will be covered and assigns a worktable for each repairer, or type of object to be repaired, where materials and tools of the trade are displayed, ready for use. Generally, such materials and tools have been previously collected by the team and voluntary repairers, though attendants are also encouraged to bring their own.

For each event, one or two persons are assigned to a table or sector to welcome attendants. They invite incoming people to take part in the collective repair activity and they note down the objects to be repaired on a board, a notebook, or a sheet that may be posted on a wall, thereby keeping a record of the event, which is most useful to convey its general dynamics and collaborative character.

Impact and results

During the first five years of the project life, more than seventy-five events were organized in very different sites: in urban and suburban environments, and in both vulnerable and affluent neighborhoods. They were attended by over five thousand people altogether, and more than four thousand objects were repaired.

The impact of events differs in different environments. In vulnerable contexts, participation and the wish to repair objects is motivated by the need to extend their life cycle because access to new objects is difficult or too expensive. In other contexts, such as cultural centers in affluent neighborhoods, participation is more associated with entertainment and to a counterculture opposed to consumerism.

Welcoming attendants at the event and recording the objects to be repaired allow us to measure the quantitative impact of the project. The success rate of repairing interventions varies widely and depends on the types of objects to be repaired in each event; it exceeds 90% in the case of sewing, footwear, bike mechanics or bookbinding, but it decreases to 50% in the case of electric or electronic devices.

In addition, the creation of digital communication channels for the project has given rise to a community of more than thirty thousand people who follow our initiatives, send queries, and participate actively.

In early 2020, the online proposal reparar.org was launched, in order to promote neighborhood repairers: after a survey, a directory was created where people may geolocate them or look them up by branch of activity. Online access is aimed at satisfying repair needs beyond those that are met at collaborative events, as a tool that supports and enhances the role of repairing practices in the circular economy so that, working together, we can build more resilient towns and cities.

Conclusions

In the newsletter of August 18th, 2019, entitled “*Cómo funciona el arte de reparar*” (“The art of repairing: how it works”), Valentín Muro says:

When we succeed in transforming the space we inhabit, the clothes we wear, the tools we use, the presents we make, we experience something that feels very special among human emotions.

Even in something as simple as cooking our own dinner, the act of modifying what surrounds us has a je ne sais quoi which we often forget.

No doubt, work done in connection with repairing has a strong symbolic value. The multilevel effects of activation events constitute a great part of the Club’s achievements. It is not only a question of enabling people to extend the life cycle of an object by receiving the voluntary help of others, thereby avoiding throwaway and protecting natural resources: it is also a question of strengthening communities, of creating opportunities for human contact and collaboration towards a revival of certain spaces in the urban fabric.

The Repairers Club encourages the creation of self-managed teams willing to continue or replicate similar meetings in their communities, following “open-source” criteria. Thus, any person or community interested in holding an event may organize it and may use our website to request an organization manual or some assistance. Meetings of this kind have been held in the Argentine provinces of Córdoba, Río Negro and Chubut, as well as in Montevideo (Uruguay) and Mexico City (Mexico).

Reflections and lessons learned

One of the main lessons we learnt in the first five years of the Club is that communities have an important collaborative power that helps them achieve impressive results when a favorable, open, and horizontal context is created. Although the initiative has been designed and promoted by the authors of this report, it is carried out by the people participating in each event. Every gathering of the Repairers Club is “made” by the voluntary repairers and the attendants: the authors of this text are mere facilitators of such meetings.

Therefore, there is always some degree of uncertainty previous to each event because we cannot anticipate who will attend, whether there will be sufficient voluntary repairers, or whether enough objects to be repaired will be brought. Neither can we forecast the weather... It has always been important for us to rely on the fact that it is the group of attendants that shapes each event: no two are alike, because their characteristics depend on the growing community of habitués and also on the newcomers who drop by at each new meeting.



Besides the feeling of accomplishment and empowerment derived from extending the life cycle of an object, we think that repair practices are essential in a context of climate emergency, when extractive activities have reached such an extreme point. We depend on ecosystems which are seriously endangered by current consumerism egging us on to further extract, consume and grow. Repairing an object is a concrete way to counterbalance this utterly unsustainable model. It is a small but fundamental activity fostering care, commonsense, unhurried efficiency, effort, and perseverance, all of them qualities that we urgently need, both individually and collectively. When we repair an object, we help to somewhat repair the current model of unsustainable consumption, to somewhat heal our relationship with natural resources, and our ties with the nature we belong to. 🌱

1. The term “open-source” refers to an open software development model in which people other than the developers can also collaborate.

65. Conscious Street (*Calle Consciente*)

Benefits of pedestrianization for the health of citizens

Authors: Tamara Egger, Manuela Palacio, John O. Ortiz, Iván Acevedo



Promoters

IAA Studio, Taller Arquiurbano, Mcrit, Iber Geo, IDB Cities LAB

City/country

Rionegro, Colombia

Website

blogs.iadb.org/ciudades-sostenibles/es/peatonalizacion-para-la-salud-ciudadana-metodologias-participativas-y-experimentales-del-piloto-en-urbanismo-tactico-rionegro-calle-consciente/

Social media links

twitter.com/BID_Ciudades
[instagram.com/bid_ciudades](https://www.instagram.com/bid_ciudades)
twitter.com/arquiurbano
[instagram.com/arquiurbano](https://www.instagram.com/arquiurbano)
twitter.com/IAAStudio
[instagram.com/IAASarch](https://www.instagram.com/IAASarch)

Year or period

2019-2020

Relevant actors

Catholic University of the East (*Universidad Católica del Oriente*), shopkeepers, urban artists, neighbors, town civil servants, and Fundación Pintuco.

Institutional partners

Inter-American Development Bank, Municipality of Rionegro, Fundación Pintuco, Catholic University of the East

Project key quote/phrase

“We have seen that the hospital lacked decent access roads and waiting-spaces for pedestrians who were in constant potential danger.”

Type of intervention

Temporary

Keywords

tactical urbanism, citizens' health, sustainable mobility, urban art, collaborative urbanism, road safety

Pedestrian areas benefit citizens' health and well-being in many different ways. The temporary pedestrianization scheme *Calle Consciente* (Conscious Street) conducted in the city of Rionegro, Colombia, emerged from a consensual interchange among various urban stakeholders: ordinary citizens, urban artists, academia, and the public and private sectors.

The transformation itself was materialized through the collaborative creation of a macro-mural painting on the floor. Colors were used to prioritize bicycles, pedestrians, and recreational activities. In the long term, a pedestrian pathway will connect a new park with the historic downtown of the city. The present text describes how this process resulted in a consensus of all the stakeholders involved.

Hospital waiting rooms bring to mind long hours of uncertainty spent in closed spaces full of people, illuminated by fluorescent tubes and furnished with a snack vending machine. In 2019, the Colombian city of Rionegro decided on the experimental pedestrianization of a street section in order to extend the waiting rooms of the San Juan de Dios Hospital to public space, thus promoting local shops and creating pedestrian promenades to establish a sustainable, healthy and safe connection with the rest of the city. The relevance of this intervention became more evident still in 2020 in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, and within the framework of public life reactivation plans.

Rionegro Calle Consciente

The San Juan de Dios Hospital is located on Carrera 48, an arterial road that heads towards the town hall. Near the hospital, Carrera 48 is a wide roadway bordered by buildings with street-level retail shops and living quarters in the floors above. Besides, the road will lead to the future Lago Santander Ecological Park. Until October 2019, in spite of its daily pedestrian flow, Carrera 48 was mainly devoted to vehicle traffic and had regulated parking lots mostly for motor vehicles. The safety, comfort, and universal access of passers-by, visitors and, above all, hospital users were highly reduced by narrow and irregular sidewalks, the absence of pedestrian crosswalks, and the scarcity of areas where people could stay for a while.

The Municipality of Rionegro, which is part of the IDB's Emerging and Sustainable Cities Initiative (ESCI), is eligible for the Fiscal and Public Investment Expenditure Strengthening Program (IDB). The town authorities saw an opportunity of implementing their human-scale town view with the support of the IDB Cities LAB. This resulted in a tactical, temporary, and experimental project aimed at creating public spaces that prioritize people's safety, well-being, and comfort (people first design⁴). A section of Carrera 48 was pedestrianized in order to extend public spaces suitable for meeting and waiting, and also to promote sustainable, safe, and healthy mobility, with a view to later permanent interventions for transforming the road into a pedestrian promenade.

Pedestrianization involves many other benefits: it enhances the quality of life, boosts the local economy, and adds value to the surrounding area because

it extends public spaces and green zones. Rionegro's effective rate of public space is 5.8m² per inhabitant (Alcaldía de Rionegro, 2020) but the pilot pedestrianization plan added 2274.68m², which allowed citizens to meet and stay in the area surrounding the San Juan de Dios Hospital and nearby local shops. One of the main challenges was the extension of the hospital waiting rooms into the public space in order to improve their users' experience. When this intervention was conceived of, nobody foresaw the COVID-19 pandemic or guessed that San Juan de Dios would be one of the most frequented hospitals.

The research conducted by Huisman, Morales, and van Hoof and Kort (2012) shows that green open zones around hospitals have the potential to reduce users' stress, help patients recover and prevent epidemics, while also structuring and adding value to the local surroundings.

Besides, pedestrian areas encourage people to move about in the most natural way, i.e., walking, and they also foster other modes of active transportation, such as cycling. In short, they promote safe and sustainable mobility as well as healthy personal habits in daily urban life (World Health Organization, 2020).

Data for Rionegro indicate that fifteen-to-twenty-minute walks make up 27% of urban traveling, whereas cycling represents 2.4%. Moreover, in 2016, road safety figures were close to the upper limit of critical values (FINDETER, BID and Alcaldía de Rionegro, 2019). The pilot plan of pedestrianization spurred a greater number of citizens to move about in a sustainable, safe, and active way.

Finally, pedestrianization projects promote the transition from motorized to active transportation,



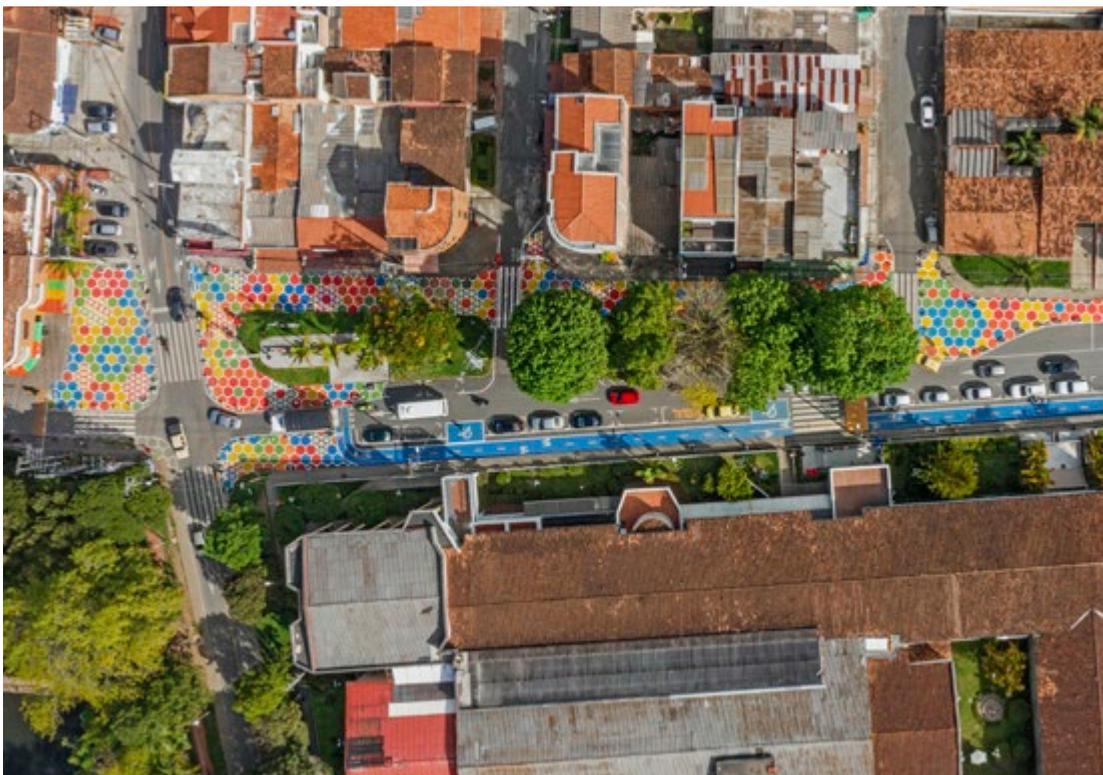
P
ospital
ZER

DROJER
EL LAGO

Rodrigo Hernández
ALCALDE
Patricia Giraldo
por la gente!

CINTURA

CINTURA



Before and after the intervention

and contribute to reducing greenhouse gas emissions (GHE) which contaminate the atmosphere, affect the breathing system, and predispose human beings to acute respiratory syndromes, such as those caused by COVID-19. In Rionegro, approximately 34.4% of carbon dioxide emissions are associated with the growing motorized vehicle fleet (FINDETER, BID and Alcaldía de Rionegro, 2019). For that reason, pedestrianization strategies are a good opportunity to support environmental sustainability and improve the quality of life at the local level.

The positive impact of pedestrianization has already been studied and proven at the international level (Castro Lancharro, 2018). Consequently, a steadily increasing number of towns and cities (Rodríguez & Chona, 2019), such as Rionegro, are including it as a strategy to cope with the COVID-19 pandemic. However, these changes require local dialogues with different stakeholders, including oppositional stances (Egger & Quiroga, 2019) so that methodologies may be adapted to each particular context.

Participative methodology

The design, implementation, and evaluation of the Rionegro Calle Consciente pilot plan were horizontal, experimental processes carried out with tactical urbanism tools. The intervention involved various kinds of contributions from the public sector², the private sector³, the Hospital patients and staff, local shopkeepers and people residing in the neighborhood, local artists, as well as architecture and communication students from the Catholic University of the East, and technical experts from the IDB Cities LAB, IAA Studio, Taller Arquitectónico, Mcrit and Iber Geo.

The pilot plan was a collective instance of city-making that resulted from understanding the genuine needs of the community and its imaginaries. The methodology in use foresaw three different stages: (i) the period before the intervention (management), when the different social actors were identified and a working group was established to shape and follow the project collectively; (ii) the period of the intervention itself (co-management), when the project was designed and carried out in co-creation workshops, resorting to the imaginaries of the people and to volunteer-based activities, such as the Parking Day⁴, during which everybody contributed to the planning, execution, and evaluation of an integral

transformation; and (iii) the period after the intervention (self-management), when the installed capacity built in the community and the government during the project development ensured the continuity, consolidation and improvement of the processes involved on the basis of the lessons learned.

From dreams to reality: best-quality collaborative implementation

From September to December 2019, the street was transformed into a living lab that unified all the stakeholders' dreams and ideas: to recover the public space in the neighborhood; to improve mobility at critical points; to connect the municipal bike docking station with the downtown area; to prioritize people with reduced mobility who visit the hospital; and to highlight regional identity through the color palette and the skill of local artists. Flowers were used as a motif for a geometrical exercise where a modular, multicolor, easy to construct web-pattern was created, starting from a figure such as the hexagon.

The following were key factors to ensure technical and aesthetic qualities, easy construction and replicability:

- ✿ the asphalt cover was improved before execution;
- ✿ with the support of specialized technicians and later on-site testing of each step, a geometric road design was chosen, which took into account a town model that prioritizes pedestrians and sustainable mobility;
- ✿ the modular and efficient architectural design required only four MDF fibreboard molds⁵;
- ✿ paint hues and hue combinations appropriate for different surfaces and uses were selected with the support of experts from the Pintuco foundation;
- ✿ before applying paint, the laying out was performed; zebra crosswalks, road, and hexagon borders were marked with expert advice, so that many non-specialized persons were later able to participate and paint without endangering the quality of the intervention;







- art was included as a means of expression and pedagogy; it involved seven local artists who used a free technique in line with the geometrical figures of the project and Rionegro's identity elements; technical advice was required for color management;

- with the aim of promoting citizen culture concerning sustainable mobility and urban activism, gatherings and cycling activities were organized with the support of the local administration and community collectives (e.g., Lunes de Ciudad⁶). The evaluation of proposals was further supported by student volunteers, who delivered an audio-visual presentation that recorded the citizens' perception of the space and the behavioral patterns preceding and ensuing physical intervention.

Impact and results

Rionegro Calle Consciente was a seed of urban innovation in this town. Currently, after the pilot project was implemented, 92% of the surveyed population has a positive perception of road safety, and 86% think pedestrians are more respected now. Qualitative

evaluations also show that spaces to lounge for a while may be more appealing if provided with street furniture. Evaluations also indicate that the original sidewalks should be improved in order to ensure universal accessibility from that side of the Hospital.

Now, almost a year after the intervention was implemented, it is evident that citizens and local institutions have embraced the inspiring idea as their own. The resulting joint effort between municipal authorities, the private sector, academic institutions, and the community in general has paved the way for the town government to extend the intervention toward the historic downtown as a response to the COVID-19 pandemic, under the guiding principle of a *conscious and safe street*. It has also encouraged the authorities to plan a permanent intervention for the medium term. The leading ideas are a high-quality pedestrian promenade which incorporates the lessons learned from the 2020 temporary experiment, the standards of Rionegro's Master Plan for Public Space (*Plan Maestro de Espacio Público*) and features such as universal access, street furniture, better street lighting, items of landscape design, and smart public transportation stops.

Experimental methodologies have spread at the national and international levels. The 2020 Colombian Biennial of Architecture (*Bienal de Arquitectura Colombiana 2020*) announced that this project was selected in the category Urban Design and Landscaping among other substantial public space projects for different regions of the country. Besides, in its July 2020 issue, the Colombian architecture journal *Axxis* published an article entitled “*Calles con Consciencia*” (or “conscious streets”), where Rionegro’s sustainable mobility project was highlighted. At the international level, the Spanish newspaper *El País* foregrounded the same project in a column published on June 23rd, 2020 dedicated to the importance of conscious streets. Finally, the experience of Rionegro was replicated in Baltimore, United States, as a second pilot project.

Reflections and lessons learned

The experimental pilot plan has successfully shown the advantages of pedestrianizing a stretch of Carrera 48, as well as the relevance of the project during the COVID-19 pandemic and after. Therefore, the pilot was scaled up in the city and is now being elaborated as a permanent intervention. This positive consensus resulted from three key characteristics:

- 🌱 **01. Horizontal collaboration among different stakeholders and everyday contact.** By combining different viewpoints, types of technical know-how, and everyday experience, the Rionegro project yielded a comprehensive proposal adopted by all people involved. Collaboration was also fundamental to align the intervention with the town cultural and communication programs.
- 🌱 **02. Collective intelligence.** Through the combination of collective experience with the know-how inherent in a wide variety of stakeholders (including experts in architecture, planning, urbanism, mobility solutions, painting techniques, and social work, among others), participative work was strengthened, municipal institutions increased their capability, and students, residents, and other volunteers learnt useful lessons.
- 🌱 **03. The urban laboratory as a tool for validating projects and instruments of urban planning.** The main advantage of tactical urbanism lies in its

temporary character, its low cost and its reversibility. Thus it makes room for errors that may be later corrected and improved. Feedback between different stakeholders was important in Rionegro: for example, the turning radius for buses required adjustment and local artists were included later on in order to highlight the project identity. Because of the sidewalks’ poor conditions, the bicycle lane became a pathway used by both pedestrians and cyclists, but the bike docking station at the terminal point created confusion. This suggested that a future improvement should be introduced in the final intervention as well as in other interventions throughout the town.

The true challenge posed by each urban transformation is to elaborate a common town view by bringing together the perspectives of different stakeholders who use and prioritize spaces in different ways. The experimental process *Rionegro Calles Conscientes* was no exception because Carrera 48 had multiple uses and widely different users. However, the pilot plan confirmed the potential of pedestrianization in order to generate inclusive, function-balanced spaces resulting from dialogue and aimed at the well-being of citizens. The experimental and participative methodology is the key to attain this goal.

Finally, the pilot plan was put to the test and reinforced by the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic: it was an opportunity to satisfy the need for public spaces that promote sustainable mobility and protect the physical and mental health of the urban population. 🌱

-
1. People first design: human-centered design.
 2. *Alcaldía de Rionegro* (Municipality of Rionegro), *Empresa de Desarrollo Sostenible or EDESO* (Sustainable Development Company), *Sistema Operativo de Movilidad Oriente Sostenible* or SOMOS (Sustainable Mobility Operating System for the East Area).
 3. Fundación Pintuco.
 4. Parking Day is an annual worldwide celebration where artists, designers, and citizens collaborate to temporarily transform parking lots into public green areas.
 5. The Medium Density Fibreboard (MDF) is an engineered wood product made by breaking down hardwood or softwood residuals into wood fibers, combining it with wax and a resin binder, and forming it into panels.
 6. lunesdeciedad.org

66.

Neighborhood Reading Station (Estación de Lectura Vecinal)

A place to exist, read and spend time

Authors: Nómada Laboratorio Urbano



Promoter

Nómada Laboratorio Urbano

City/country

Ciudad Juárez, Mexico

Website

nmdlab.com

Social media links

facebook.com/nmdlab

instagram.com/nmdlab

Year or period

August-October 2017

Relevant actors

Comité Vecinal Patria (Patria Neighborhood Committee)

Institutional partners

Arte en el Parque A.C. (non-profit organization), La Promesa Cultural Center, Parks and Gardens Directorate of the Municipality of Juárez.

Project key quote/phrase

The actions of a participative neighborhood committee and a strategic partnership between civil society and the local government

enabled the transformation of an underutilized public space into a recreation-education node that responds to the needs and visions of a community in the southeast of Ciudad Juárez.

Type of intervention

Temporary, Urban Devices

Keywords

urban innovation, collaborative design, citizen participation, tactical urbanism, public space, emerging library

The urban intervention in the cultural-community pavilion *Estación de Lectura Vecinal* (Neighborhood Reading Station) applied participative design strategies and a tactical urbanism methodology to provide a new context in an underutilized park/public space in Colonia Patria, a district in the southeastern outskirts of Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua, Mexico. The *Estación* shows what cross-cutting management involving citizens, civil society and the local government could achieve with the creation of a public space that responds to the needs of the community.

The *Estación de Lectura Vecinal* is a recreational, community culture pavilion that arose from a claim and proposal from the citizens to salvage an underused park in Colonia Patria, in the southeastern outskirts of Ciudad Juárez.

As a case study, the *Estación* seeks to give visibility to the social and cultural needs of the communities that live in the southeastern peripheral areas of Juárez and to the potential for citizen participation and collaborative design in community intervention and citizen urbanism processes to recover public spaces.

The overall goal of the project was to activate an underutilized park with the installation of a seasonal library-pavilion that would create new dynamics for the coexistence of neighbors and also become a point of reference in terms of recreational and cultural assets for the Patria community.

The specific goals of the *Estación de Lectura Vecinal* were:

- To establish a cultural agenda by creating a reading club (for children, youth and adults) managed by the neighborhood committee (organized community) of Colonia Patria;
- To strengthen the relationship between the community and civil society by organizing a cultural festival and art workshops in collaboration with the Arte en el Parque non-profit organization;
- To promote citizen participation, collaborative design and tactical urbanism as democratic tools for the transformation of public spaces.

Ciudad Juárez is an industrial border city in the State of Chihuahua, in the north of Mexico, and is adjacent to the City of El Paso, Texas, in the United States.¹

Over the years, Ciudad Juárez became known as a hallmark for violence. In 2010, the Citizen Council for Public Security and Criminal Justice considered it the most violent city in the world, with a rate of 191 voluntary manslaughters per one hundred thousand inhabitants. Furthermore, the Executive Secretariat of the National Public Security System stated that Juárez was the city with the highest number of feminicides in 2020, with 19 of the 940 reported in the country.

The expert Michel Wieviorka (2001) states that violence changes, and that it is not a spontaneous event but a social construction. According to Wieviorka, in social sciences there are three ways of understanding violence: common sense, that perceives violence as a crisis, frustration or aggressive behavior; the second is violence as a calculated resource to achieve a goal; and the third is the relationship between culture and violence, where the state, the social system, education and the family influence the production of violence.

All three types of violence are present in the history of Juárez: from feminicide, a sensitive topic that disrupted the 1990's, up to the war against drug trafficking (2008-2012) and the current socio-cultural effects of the urban sprawl, which are partly due to a city model ruled by the speculation of the real estate and maquiladora industries.

According to the National Statistics and Geography Institute (*Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía*, INEGI), between 2000 and 2010, the urban sprawl of Ciudad Juárez grew by over fifteen thousand hectares and totaled over thirty-five thousand in 2010. Due to the growth on the outskirts of the city and the urban sprawl, newly created areas are neglected and lack infrastructure and facilities.

As indicated by Alberto Aziz Nassif (2012), given its significant urban segmentation, Juárez is considered as three cities in one: the one in the north, with most of the infrastructure and urban facilities; the one in the west, that has been historically the poor area with no basic infrastructure, such as paved roads and education and health services; and the third one, the most newly established area in the southeast, which in spite of having social housing areas, has limited public-cultural infrastructure, like parks, libraries and









museums, among others. It is in this area that Colonia Patria is located.

The recovery of a park

The neighborhood committee of Colonia Patria submitted a petition from the citizens expressing the collective desire to initiate a series of urban actions to revitalize the Patria Park. According to the community, this public space, which is in direct contact with the main road of the district, Puerto de Palos street, had become a dangerous area due to the presence of informal merchants and its use for alternate purposes, such as parking charter buses, in addition to being a dumping site for tires and rubble.

As mentioned by Cedeño (2009), daily movements in parks are determined by their use and occupation, which in turn, depend on their centrality in the neighborhood context, including their location, design and weather conditions. Whereas streets are the place of sensory effervescence, the dynamics observed in parks suggest that they are spaces where time moves more slowly and where playful and

recreational intentions often combine with a form of enjoyment that seeks to return to the intimate and personal. Likewise, the expert indicates that, depending on their location and formal structure, in some cases parks become areas that passers-by simply walk across.

The 1890m² of the Patria Park are delimited by the Santa Clara, Puerto San Juan and Puerto de Palos streets; the latter is the main road leading to the housing complex. The dynamics in the Patria Park are slow and the place is underutilized: although it is in direct contact with the community, its conditions are not ideal for playing and recreation.

The neighborhood community stated that the developer that built the *fraccionamiento*² (district) provided only minimum facilities in this public space: sand pits, a few trees and secondhand children's games.

Based on this petition from the citizens regarding the Patria Park, the proposal was to develop a four-stage, cross-cutting and participative urban strategy that subsequently led to the establishment of the *Estación de Lectura Vecinal*.



✿ **01. Socio-cultural diagnosis and neighborhood mapping.**

This stage started after the community validated the urban strategy. A community working group of thirty people was created and its members operated as active participants at the site. The purpose of the diagnostic activities was to collectively understand the demographic, social and cultural characteristics of the Patria residents. Subsequently, activities that included a walk through the area, as well as observation and mapping exercises to identify dangerous areas and potential urban activation sites, were performed.

✿ **02. Collaborative design for urban innovation.**

As a result of the diagnosis and community mapping, it was identified that the families that lived in Patria were beginning to show interest in a series of reading promotion workshops offered by the La Promesa cultural center, which was less than one kilometer from the park. Following this premise, the Patria neighborhood committee

proposed that the guiding principle of the project should be the promotion of reading and outdoor arts, in pursuit of better community relations.

After the guiding principle was defined, consensus and participative design working groups were established, including the input from children, adolescents and adults. These dynamics gave visibility to the population's collective imaginary and vision, and helped to select the intervention area in the park and define the typology and scale of the project: an emerging outdoor library for the summer-fall season.

Through drawing exercises, constructions with toy building blocks and plasticine, the spatial configuration of the future pavilion was defined. The community's ideas began to gravitate towards creating an area shaded with pergolas, an essential element for urban comfort in a city like Juárez, located in a desert area. Finally, the proposal was baptized *Estación de Lectura Vecinal*.

🌱 **03. Cross-cutting and inter-institutional management.** After formalizing the proposal for the *Estación de Lectura Vecinal* and a month of working sessions with the residents, the management process for the urban intervention began with the submission of requests to obtain permits for cultural activities before the Parks and Gardens Directorate of the Municipality of Juárez. Likewise, artistic-cultural collaboration agreements were made with the non-profit organization *Arte en el Parque* and the *La Promesa* cultural center. These agreements ensured the implementation of the cultural festival *Arte en tu Parque* (Art in your Park) and the creation of the neighborhood reading club.

Thanks to the efforts of the *Arte en el Parque* organization, local companies donated materials (wood poles, pallets, recycled plastics and paint) through their corporate social responsibility programs.

Knowledgeable and skilled carpenters, blacksmiths, masons and decorators were identified within the urban activators neighborhood team, and organically became the laborers.

🌱 **04. Urban intervention and cultural-neighborhood activation.** To bring life to the *Estación de Lectura Vecinal*, a one-week intervention schedule with collective activities was defined. The activities included an overall cleaning of the site, tree maintenance, repair and re-painting of children's games, urban art on an adjacent wall and construction of the community pavilion.

After the neighborhood team was established, more families began participating in the intervention process. Some people supplied additional tools or provided catering, and others joined the repair and construction work.

The opening of the *Estación de Lectura Vecinal* was held in conjunction with the *Arte en tu Parque* festival that offered a diverse cultural agenda with outdoor theater groups, puppets, live music, workshops for children and a donation of fifty books with educational content.

A new space for meeting and reading

After the opening of the *Estación de Lectura Vecinal*, the *Patria* community established the summer-fall season (August through October) of the reading club. During those three months, it was possible to increase the initial assets from 50 to 150 books with different content (design, history, science, poetry, classic literature). Thanks to the participation of the *La Promesa* community center, 15 workshops on citizen culture and gender perspective serving 225 people of the sector were organized.

Formally, the *Estación de Lectura Vecinal* operated from August to October and was mainly used by children in the afternoons, between 4 and 8 pm. The highest occupation and interaction among neighbors were seen on weekends. A total of five hundred people from *Patria* and adjacent areas benefited from the *Estación de Lectura Vecinal* and the cultural festival *Arte en tu Parque*.

At one point, the neighborhood reading club had up to fifty active readers of all ages.

Although the project materialized with a scheme of material donations from local companies, the monetary value of the intervention was estimated at USD 2500.

Conclusions

In a city with such complex urban and socio-cultural conditions as Juárez, where up to three types of cities can be identified in one and with borders that extend beyond the geographical ones, concepts such as inclusive public space, neighborhood activation and urban-citizen innovation are usually easily blurred. However, when the community is aware of the problems in their environment and chooses to lean towards organization and participation, there is an opportunity to drive citizen processes towards urban innovation, citizen urbanism and the subsequent creation of public policies, all of which are fields that have been scarcely explored locally as yet.

The case of the *Estación de Lectura Vecinal* in *Colonia Patria* is an example of this.

Although the *Estación de Lectura Vecinal* was designed to operate temporarily, the collective learning that it provided is of great value and a testament to what a participative community can achieve through organization, co-creation and citizen empowerment.

Reflections and lessons learned

As an urban laboratory, the experience of the *Estación de Lectura Vecinal* was one of the first organizational and inter-institutional management challenges, as it involved a public space that evidenced multiple ingrained interests: informal trade supported by politically inclined labor unions, misappropriation by private companies and inappropriate urban practices, such as accumulation of tires and rubble.

To begin reversing these negative practices in the Patria Park, it was necessary to operate as mediation and consensus facilitators among the entities involved. Likewise, the neighborhood committee began a screening and reconfiguration process to involve those people who were actually interested in moving from citizen complaints to active participation and the development of solutions in their community.

As a final thought, we consider that the experience of the *Estación de Lectura Vecinal* has the potential to be replicated and further explored, by being reconfigured as a permanent cultural pavilion built of more outdoor-resistant materials, such as metal structures, concrete, retractable furnishings, and where even green infrastructure strategies and smart lighting with solar energy could be implemented. 🌱

1. The Socioeconomic Analysis of the Municipality of Juárez (*Radiografía Socioeconómica del Municipio de Juárez*) carried out by the Municipal Research and Planning Institute (*Instituto Municipal de Investigación y Planeación*) (IMIP, 2020) indicates that Juárez has a population of 1,499,445 inhabitants, and that including the Doña Ana and El Paso Counties, the total binational population is 2,556,878, with one out of every three inhabitants of the Municipality being an immigrant that was born in another city or country.

2. In Mexico, a *fraccionamiento* is a type of district that includes delimited blocks and plots, designed and planned for use as an industrial or residential area, and for which infrastructure, facilities, roads and urban services are provided.

67.

Afloat [in the Amazon]

Prototype of a floating public space

Promoter

Arquitectura Expandida

City/country

Leticia, Colombia

Website

arquitecturaexpandida.org

Year or period

2015

Relevant actors

Community of the Victoria Regia neighborhood in Leticia, Fundación Hábitat Sur, Fundación Organismo.

Type of intervention

Temporary

Description

The bioconstruction workshop led by Organismo and Hábitat Sur included a space for community

joint work to develop an intervention that could improve the conditions of public space in this flood-prone neighborhood. The goal was to work with the community in exploring mechanisms to construct a floating public and cultural space using discarded material, such as plastic waste, which is especially difficult to manage in a forest setting with poor road connections, like Leticia.

“The outcome was the design of a small pier that addresses the difficulties caused by floods to access the neighborhood. It was used as an emergency pier and as a small public space during the winter cold spell emergency.”



Photos: Ana López Ortego

68. Movimento Boa Praça

Community collaboration to occupy and revitalize green public spaces

Promoter

Movimento Boa Praça

City/country

São Paulo, Brazil

Website

movimentoboapraça.com.br

Year or period

2008

Relevant actors

Residents, collectives,

Subprefectura, Fundación AVINA, UN Habitat.

Type of intervention

Permanent

Description

The goal was to revitalize the Amadeu Decome Plaza, in the Lapa neighborhood, which extends over a 12.000m² surface area and was in a state of total neglect, representing an unsafe and frightening place that everyone

avoided. The methodology used consisted of open community picnics, in which recreational and cultural activities were organized. People gradually came to the plaza and started to understand and build what they needed to enjoy the place. The space was thus returned to the residents and the population, fulfilling again its original role: being a democratic meeting place for leisure.

“It is necessary to find minimum common denominators among the people who participate and to build upon them, through consensus, dialogue and experimentation. The project has shown that the process is not always fast or easy, but it produces the longest lasting outcomes.”





Photos: Carolina Tarrío

69.

Rainwater harvesting, storage and treatment (CAT) system

Community infrastructure that reinforces networks of solidarity and care



Promoter

CASA (Ciudades Auto-Sostenibles Amazónicas)

City/country

Iquitos, Peru

Website

casapucp.com

Year or period

2019-2020

Relevant actors

Committee No. 8 (Calle Venecia) from Santo Tomás, PUCP | Pontifical Catholic University of Peru, MPM | Provincial Municipality of Maynas, UNAP | National University of Peruvian Amazonia.

Type of intervention

Permanent

Description

The project was conducted in a peri-urban area of the city of Iquitos, located in the country's forest region, currently affected by an accelerated informal urban sprawl process. The purpose was to explore alternative water and drainage technologies and to propose public spaces that would provide adequate conditions for community activities, reinforcing networks of solidarity and care. Local materials were also explored and the population was provided with technical training. An approach based on the co-production of knowledge was

taken at each stage of the project development, from the choice of the place to work, the type of infrastructure to be applied and the collection of social and technical information, to the implementation and creation of a social committee for dealing with the preservation, use and maintenance of the technology implemented. The co-produced community space includes a rainwater harvesting, storage and treatment system (CAT, by its acronym in Spanish) which is used for doing laundry and personal hygiene. The system consists of adaptable modular components, so that it can be modified according to the particularities of other contexts.

“A new social gathering space was created, not only for Committee No. 8, but also for the surroundings. This space provides opportunities for women to develop their economic activities, such as washing clothes, as well as a safe place during the day and night, which reinforces bonds of solidarity and dialogue.”



Photos: Belén Desmaison

70. Coco Park

Community park and garden in Panama

Promoter

Huertos Urbanos de Panamá

City/country

City of Panama, Panama

Website

[instagram.com/
huertosurbanospanama](https://www.instagram.com/huertosurbanospanama)

Year or period

2017-Present time

Relevant actors

San Francisco Communal Board,
Camina tu Barrio, All Bank, Pro
Health Shop, R&W Asociados,

Remedios and Alex Wtges, Pintuco,
Concreto El Sol, Fundación Geo
Azul, Fundación Costa Recicla,
Bliss Panama, Vivarium Panamá,
Danilo Jazz School, Fundación
Semillas Ecológicas.

Type of intervention

Temporary

Description

The park stands in Coco de Mar,
a middle / high-middle class
neighborhood of the city of
Panama. The goal of the project
was to provide more green
and recreational areas to the

community, in response to the
needs expressed by residents
through a consultation process.
After the opening of Coco Park,
the goal has been to move it to a
permanent space where it can be
turned into a municipal park. A
vacant lot was identified next to a
store which, upon being contacted,
offered to lend the space for one
year. Donations were obtained
to adapt the site, and several
activities were carried out in order
to co-design the park. In this way,
community members of all age
ranges became involved in the
construction processes.

“Residents were consulted at a community event, so that their needs, habits and dreams for the neighborhood could be identified and included in the park design. A green area of over 2000m² was created for the city, where over 200 plants were put in the ground.”

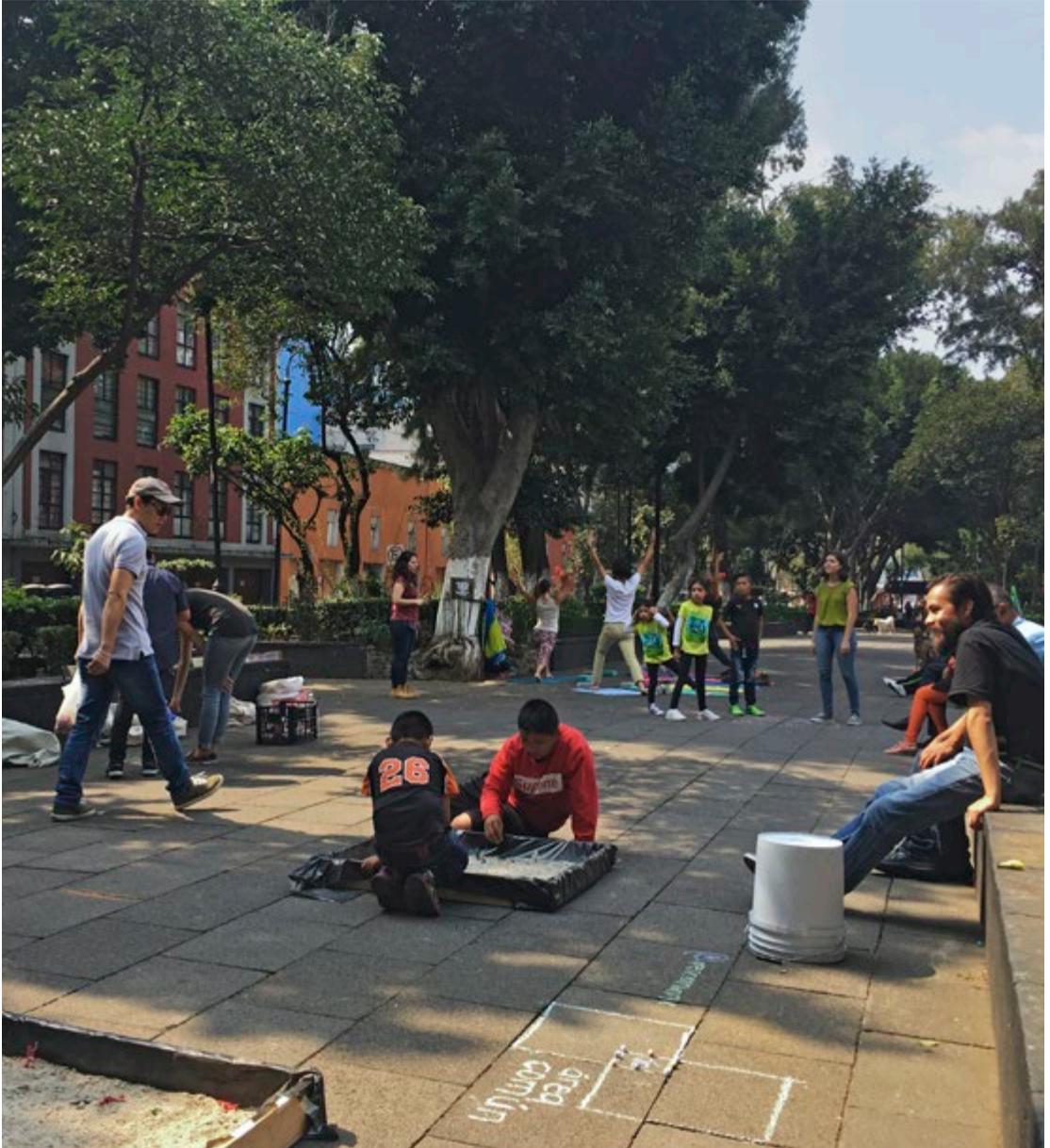


After and before the intervention

71.

Culture à la Carte

Tactical urbanism temporary activations



Promoters

Ocupa Tu Calle,
Huerto Roma Verde

City/country

Mexico City, Mexico

Website

vimeo.com/305996195

Year or period

2018

Institutional partners

Inter-American Development Bank,
Lugares Públicos.

Type of intervention

Ephemeral

Description

As part of the 2nd Placemaking Latin America Mexico 2018 event, a contest was organized, calling on Latin American organizations to perform interventions that would temporarily transform or activate one of four public spaces proposed in Mexico City. The requirement was to use tactical urbanism tools and, for foreign organizations, to have a local partner which could provide the necessary support to perform the

urban intervention. The activation was put in place in one morning and remained at the site during the entire day, offering a great variety of activities for all attendees, such as the setting up of an “airport” for pollinating bees, recreational yoga, a masks workshop, urban gardens, the installation of furniture for exchanging books, and intergenerational games like marbles and hopscotch. The purpose was to encourage participants to spend more time in the place, as well as diversity of uses and people in the entire plaza.

“An important characteristic of this type of project is their adaptability to circumstances which are not necessarily the same as when the design was developed. This is why they must have some degree of flexibility in terms of the elements, materials and colors proposed.”



✿ 72.

Together we are a Forest (*Juntos Somos un Bosque*)

Urban community forests

Promoter

Un Árbol para mi Vereda

City/country

Buenos Aires, Argentina

Website

unarbolparamivereda.org

Year or period

2016-Present time

Type of intervention

Permanent

Description

The project is set in an urban context undergoing a social and environmental crisis, both on a local and a global scale. *Juntos somos un Bosque* (“Together we are a Forest”) is a network of people and organizations that grow trees and native, edible and medicinal plants, with the intention of putting them in the

ground collectively and creating community forests in public spaces. The goal is to change the urban environment through concrete interventions in territories with socio-environmental conflicts, within the framework of planting festivals intended to raise awareness among participants about their role as active agents of the social and environmental paradigm shift that is needed to avoid the collapse of cities.

“Over thirteen festivals were held, in which more than three thousand native trees were planted. They were attended by over five thousand people and interventions took place in ten spaces with ongoing socio-environmental conflicts.”



73.

Rainbow Project (*Proyecto Arcoíris*)

Painting to improve behaviors and the school environment

Promoters

QROMA, Aporta (Breca impact platform) and Ocupa Tu Calle

City/country

Lima, Peru

Website

proyecto-arcoiris.com
ocupatucalle.com

Year or period

2018-2019

Institutional partners

Héroes del Cenepa educational institution, Municipality of El Agustino.

Type of intervention

Permanent

Description

The intervention was performed in the 1177 *Héroes del Cenepa* school, located in the high part of the El Agustino hill, in the district of the same name. The school was attended by about three hundred students and its main problem was the accumulation of large amounts

of garbage and remains of felled trees outside, as well as the high speed of the motorbike-taxis, which made students feel unsafe. The goal of the project was not only to solve these problems but also to improve the conditions of the school common areas and surroundings, as well as to incentivize correct hand-washing among boys and girls. Some of the most representative outcomes were the games painted on the schoolyard floor, the painting of murals in the exterior school walls and the repair of the nearby public stairs.

“The ideas collected in workshops with mothers, fathers, teachers and students were translated into an integral design for the common areas inside the school and its surroundings. The project managed to reduce to zero the garbage accumulated on the corner of the school street, thanks to the mothers and fathers’ commitment to taking care of the area.”



74. Casa da Mãe Santana

Tactical action for the activation
of an underused space



Photos Gaby Rocha - Adriana Sansão

Promoters

LabIT | Laboratório de Intervenções Temporárias e Urbanismo Tático, PROURB | Programa de Pós-Graduação em Urbanismo of FAU-UFRJ | Rio de Janeiro Federal University School of Architecture and Urbanism

City/country

Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

Website

intervencoestemporarias.com.br

Year or period

2017

Relevant actors

Coordinators of the II Oficina de Intervenção Temporária, Instituto de Arte Tear, DAD-PUC-Rio | Pontifical Catholic University of Rio de Janeiro Department of Arts and Design, Conselho Nacional de Desenvolvimento Científico e Tecnológico, Fundação de Amparo à Pesquisa do Estado do Rio de Janeiro, participating students.

Type of intervention

Ephemeral

Description

The action was the result of the II *Oficina de Intervenção Temporária*,

which had the goal of activating the underused space of Campo de Santana, a green island in the central area of Rio de Janeiro. This place, even if bucolic, bears the stigma of being dangerous. To achieve this, a proposal was made to add value to the park entrance and its railings. A wall of wishes was installed on one of the internal paths and a game for exploring the place was created. The action was carried out as part of the annual celebration of the associated institution, which resulted in high participation.

“Using collaborative design, an ephemeral collective intervention was performed taking a cross-disciplinary approach. The wall of wishes motivated seventy interactions, and sixty people engaged in the games.”



75. RUS Asunción

Landscaping installation in Playa Montevideo

Promoter

Colectivo Basurama

City/country

Asunción, Paraguay

Website

basurama.org

Year or period

2008-2009

Relevant actors

Tomboly Carísimo Arquitectura, Estudio de arquitectura -==x- (Minus equals plus multiplied by minus), Proyecto Ecoplax, Laboratorio de Arquitectura, National University of Asunción,

Fernando Szmuc Gertopán, Cultural Center of Spain in Asunción and Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation.

Type of intervention

Ephemeral, Urban Devices

Description

The Urban Solid Waste project (RUS, by its Spanish acronym) was conducted in Latin America between 2008 and 2010 for the Spain Cultural Centers (CCE) of the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID). The project described here was developed for

the Juan de Salazar CCE, located in the city of Asunción, Paraguay. It consisted of a recreational landscaping intervention in a degraded and semi-informal port space called Playa Montevideo. The intervention was performed in collaboration with Laboratorio de Arquitectura, which was developing work for reusing materials on a large scale. Big-sized street furniture pieces made of wooden pallets were put in place. These structures became “inhabitable nuts”: geometric structures able to be recombined, and heavy and resistant enough to be used as street furniture.

“The construction process, carried out in the place itself by a group of young architecture students, was also important for the small community of people who habitually use this space, who quickly took the intervention in their hands, making various modifications and additions to the project.”



Photos: Gaby Rocha - Adriana Sansão

76. URBAniños, resilience and education

A climate change adaptation strategy

Promoter

Univalle Laboratory of Urban Intervention | Valle University

City/country

Cali, Colombia

Website

[liurunivalle.wixsite.com/
labintervencion](http://liurunivalle.wixsite.com/labintervencion)

Year or period

2017-2020

Relevant actors

Community of the Siloé neighborhood (San Francisco Sector), Valle University Laboratory

of Urban Intervention, YMCA Cali, Secretariat for Territories of Inclusion and Opportunity (TIOs)-Municipality of Cali, José Eustaquio Palacios educational institution.

Type of intervention

Permanent, Programs

Description

The goal of the intervention is to motivate actions by children to address the overflowing of the ravine stream, providing didactic tools to facilitate their comprehension of the danger and motivate them to intervene so as to reduce their vulnerability

conditions. A number of play-based learning modules were designed for the technical purpose of managing the site runoff and reducing the amount of water that drains towards the Isabel Pérez ravine. During this exercise, a public space participatory design proposal was developed, taking into account the children's contributions by using a bottom-up approach that involved co-design and collaborative construction exercises, so as to reduce vulnerability to flooding in the area.

“The construction of the interactive modules led to a strong appropriation of space and it became evident that children intensified those behaviors which make them more aware of their surroundings. This reinforces their ability to help and educate the community from their own perspectives.”



3.

Collabo- rative Gover- nance



In Parts I and II of this book, we discuss citizen-led urbanism as a set of innovative practices by civil society, and explore the great diversity of civic actions that contribute to more sustainable and equitable cities in Latin America. We understand citizen-led urbanism as a way of thinking of and making cities which involves active citizens at all decision-making levels and at all scales of urban planning.

This section of the superbook explores the question of how the concepts of citizen-led urbanism can be turned into long-term systemic changes. How can we introduce innovation in urban public policies, so as to steer them towards new models of collaborative governance? Part III discusses how to find an urban governance framework for coordinating political-decision making in cities in a way that makes room for civic action as a force able to transform development models.

We present a number of texts which are intended to help understand, plan and manage cities as collective human projects. These discussions do not refer to innovation through specific urban projects, but rather seek a paradigm shift in the everyday processes for making the city through collective trial and learning methods. Authors discuss the transformation of institutional participation models into collaborative

governance models, where an active citizenry is viewed as a huge capital to strengthen our cities as shared spaces.

Diverse authors contribute their analyses of cases in which urban public policy was restructured in the direction of citizen-led urbanism models in Latin American cities. They discuss examples of synergies between government institutional frameworks and innovative methods of citizen-led urbanism, both of which sometimes cooperate harmonically, but other times face obstacles to work together.

We also examine urban laboratories as (potential) bridges between citizen-led innovation and public policy. These spaces are explored as experimentation platforms where ideas are tested, in a trial-and-error process, with a view to turning them into public policies. Study cases from the entire world were selected, in order to include a broad sample of urban laboratories and identify their similarities and differences with the few regional experiences that exist to date.

In this last part of the superbook, we intend to leave open to debate the question of how to promote some of the principles of citizen-led urbanism in order to influence public policy and succeed in collectively transforming our cities, with a focus on the people who live in them.

3.1.

Towards Collabora- tive Urban Governance

From citizen-led innovation to innovative governance

Authors

Juan Pablo López Gross, Federica Volpe, Tamara Egger



Photo: IDB Cities LAB, La Gaviota Park, Dominican Republic, 2019

The previous chapters in this book reveal how, during the past decade, not only challenges have increased in Latin American cities, but also the portion of the citizenry that is proactive, organized and trained to solve daily difficulties in a creative manner. In this text, we reflect on how to strengthen these civic forces through public policies, within an innovative governance framework that manages to combine bottom-up and top-down approaches.

Nowadays more than half of the world's population lives in cities due to the countless benefits they offer. However, they also pose serious challenges: discussions have been going on for a long time now about the need to improve the way we understand, plan and manage cities as collective human projects. Local governments need to adopt new practices and find new ways to understand what cities should be like in order to become more sustainable, livable and inclusive, and to provide more and better public goods. The new challenges require a change of pace, flexible and innovative design solutions, and the implementation of public policies to reduce, with the scarce resources available, social, economic, climate and security vulnerabilities.

Much is being said about urban innovation and experimentation as a development process led by local governments, but this is nothing new. Innovation is not about creating something different: it is a mindset. Urban innovation not only involves doing things in a new and more efficient manner, but it is also a dynamic trial and learning method, like cities themselves. It is an adaptation process through which every issue has to be reformulated in order to better understand its roots, causes and consequences, in such a way that solutions can be redesigned and improved on an ongoing basis. It is increasingly necessary and urgent to experiment with methods of citymaking, in order to implement policies that recognize the value of temporary interventions, so that actions or theories can be tested expeditiously, economically and with low impact, prior to undertaking large works or permanent investments.

As described in previous chapters, the past decade has been a period of active experimentation with diverse urban innovation practices in Latin America. Thus, many scenarios have been identified to test and confirm theories, mainly with the participation, collaboration and inclusion of the most vulnerable and

the use of new technologies. Many of these practices have actually originated in civil society or residents' movements. This shows that innovative practices do exist, and that there is an active civil society. The challenge, then, is for local governments to find ways to adopt this mindset.

How can public policies institutionalize and facilitate an innovation environment? Innovating is not a synonym for inventing. It does not mean creating something new, but rather doing the mental exercise of thinking differently.

Innovation has been described as an iterative trial and adjustment process in a constant cycle; a short-term experimentation that allows for continuous learning. In terms of governance, innovation calls for an attitude of openness and flexibility to accept change. Innovation environments are supported by underlying public policies which serve as catalysts for change, taking into account that innovation is not linear or predictable, and with experts, technicians and administrators playing a coordinating role in innovation processes.

For several years now, at the IDB Cities LAB team, we have been performing this liaison role in urban innovation, enabling dialogue among various stakeholders in cities in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC). In horizontal processes, we connect civil society, the private sector and the public sector with academia. As presented throughout this book, in LAC there is a very active, self-organized civil society, which is very willing to contribute its creativity and effort to build more people-friendly cities. In this regard, urban innovation cannot be said to be absent from Latin American cities, but we do notice a lack of synergies among various stakeholders to scale up these innovations so that they may become public policies and thus benefit a wider population.

In our experiences across the entire region, we have come across counterparts that are motivated and open to incorporate innovation and experimentation principles, but we have faced a series of bureaucratic restrictions that turn innovation in urban management into a serious challenge. This happens despite the fact that local authorities are aware of the benefits of closer collaboration with citizens, such as more efficient investments targeted at meeting people's needs, a capital of active citizens for the implementation and maintenance of projects

over time, or the strengthening of local identities and the elimination of distrust from the community.

The following are some challenges we faced in our practical experience, when conducting innovation projects in Latin American cities.

“It is very difficult; it has never been done before”

Innovation often triggers a natural reaction, considering the conditions under which things have historically or routinely been done. Political systems have been developed to organize the way we live together in order to generate social justice and protect the environment. The problem appears when these same rules start to restrict our ability to adapt. It is precisely there that the great myth of the need to overcome bureaucracy comes into play, making something look very difficult just because it has never been done before.

In his essay *Bureaucracy*, Max Weber (2015) described the characteristics of an ideal-typical bureaucracy as the foundations of a rational and equitable government. However, he also reflected critically on the concept of a rationalized bureaucracy as a threat to individual freedom. He also identified the danger that the rationalization of human life could trap individuals in a cruel “iron cage” of rational, rule-based bureaucratic control.

Consequently, to respond to the realities of rapid urban changes, we need governance models that offer alternatives to the traditional characteristics of the Weberian rational bureaucracy, and which include a flexible mindset, open to innovation and experimentation. The processes, systems and internal organization of local governments must and can adapt to these new realities; what they need is the political will to do so and the desire to make things happen.

“We are a very small team; we need more people”

In his work, Max Weber (2015) compares the fully developed bureaucratic apparatus with a machine, where each part has a specific task to perform. Characteristics like “hierarchical office authority” and the “the regular and continuous fulfillment” of assigned tasks restrict the space for individual practitioners to develop creative ideas and think outside the box. Consequently, in a traditional management model,

there is no space for each party—or practitioner—to develop creative solutions individually. Additionally, in local governments it is quite common to find very small technical teams of few officials, which are also very poorly coordinated with other areas or sectors of the administration. Finally, positions in public administration are not usually attractive for highly qualified professionals, given their uncompetitive salaries and the high personal and social commitment, as well as the deep vocation for civil service, which they require.

In contrast with this scenario, there are creative and bold ways of creating partnerships with the private sector, civil society and universities in cities, to strengthen technical teams and promote strategies for collaboration and participation, while generating synergies for the benefit of all. Several of the preceding articles in this book describe successful horizontal collaborations among various stakeholders, like the Rionegro Conscious Street (*Rionegro Calle Consciente*) or Panama Walks (*Panamá Camina*) initiatives.

“We can’t afford that”

Public administration resources are always scarce, and expenses are strictly tied to specific programs. It is difficult to fund innovative projects under these schemes.

It is essential to have strict systems in place for controlling expenses in public administration in order to prevent embezzlement or corruption. However, an innovative environment has to accept out-of-the-box projects, experimental processes, whose end results are not always adequate or permanent, and that do not traditionally stick to strict annual budget plans. Promoting projects that, by their nature, are experimental, low-cost, temporary, and based on trial and learning, is a safe way of innovating without wasting too many resources or taking big risks.

Another way of overcoming the financial limitations of local governments is creating specific innovation funds for supporting the process, and not necessarily for achieving an output or deliverable. Additionally, public-private partnerships are a great strategy to raise funds: in this case, the private sector may benefit from participating in urban experiments through in-kind contributions aimed at promoting products or services, and the workforce may contribute to implementation, whether it includes volunteers from corporate social responsibility programs, or

students who, for instance, need to complete hours of community work or internships, under agreements entered into with universities.

“Innovation is a luxury good”

The concept of innovation often evokes ideas of complex technology and high-cost solutions that do not seem to be a priority or a possibility in Latin American cities with complex challenges of vulnerability and inequality. However, innovation means improving or making a significant contribution to an existing product, process or service. Innovation does not only imply big technological breakthroughs, but rather the ability of any individual, organization, community or city to optimize or improve on processes, as long as such innovation is based on original ideas and a change can be demonstrated (Grasty, 2017). It is a feedback cycle that depends on the regular exchange of knowledge, which multiplies its positive effects.

This is why innovation in vulnerable contexts is more important than anywhere else. Traditional planning tools were developed for cities which grew slowly. Responding to complex contemporary challenges like rapid urban growth, social segregation and climate change requires innovative methodologies; therefore, innovation in vulnerable contexts is not a luxury: on the contrary, it is a need in order to react to rapidly changing realities.

“The administration is changing soon and we don’t know what will happen”

Power alternation is one of the pillars of democratic systems, but the changes of administration are often characterized by breaking with “the past” and proposing new plans and ideas, including new urban development programs. As a result of this lack of continuity, projects follow electoral timelines and are mostly planned for periods spanning four to six years. With this in mind, the various administrations usually seek a rapid and visible impact on public opinion, thinking from a political perspective, with a view to reelection in those countries where it is allowed. This is why urban development plans in Latin America do not follow long-term strategies, but are often linked to temporary political programs. However, in order to generate structural changes and improve complex situations, cities need long-range urban projects whose continuity is guaranteed.

When it comes to innovative projects, it is possible to adopt another approach that is based on the concept of small early victories. By promoting limited interventions, in a trial-and-error, experimental environment, with limited expenses, it is possible to find suitable solutions that, once tested, may become permanent in the long term. If the short-term impact is negative, the fact that limited resources were invested keeps administrations free from accusations of financial waste or even corruption.

Experimenting and failing with quick, low-cost, temporary initiatives is much more sustainable and effective than in the case of high-cost projects with long implementation timelines.

“Coordinating is difficult and can make processes even more complex”

Innovation is the result of combining different ideas that were not connected before. In urban transformation processes, there are many different disciplines and stakeholders involved.

In the Weberian bureaucracy, characteristics like “a fixed jurisdiction” and a rigid division of labor do not allow for cross-disciplinary or coordinated work among different sectors. Work in silos¹ often stems from fear of delaying internal processes or projects, or making them even more complex.

However, in order to generate innovation, knowledge and cross-disciplinary exchange among the various departments and stakeholders are essential. It is necessary to create a context where individuals feel comfortable experimenting and making mistakes, and where collaboration is promoted.

“We don’t think it is necessary to run that risk”

Doing things the way we are used to is comfortable; making changes is uncomfortable and risky. Innovation in the context of urban governance requires the political will to depart from business as usual and take certain risks to break with tradition and try new ways of thinking or planning the city.

Innovative projects are often processes that involve trials to determine what works and learn from errors, for subsequent correction and improvement. Uncertainty about the final results and the possibility of experiments being unsuccessful are all part of this process, but the long-term positive impacts will be much better. This may be very complicated in



an urban context and in the public sector; thus, it is necessary to have protected spaces available to experiment with urban innovation ideas, such as urban laboratories, which have been created locally, by various governments, as well as globally, and operate as hubs for the promotion of innovation.

Therefore, transparency and clear public communication are key for innovative urban governance. Every citizen should be able to understand at all times what is being done and why, whether successful or not. This is why, in order to generate innovative public policies, it is necessary to have an open mindset and the political will to take risks, with the confidence that it is worthwhile to do so.

A general response to these myths can be summarized as another question: is experimentation risky, or is it worse to leave things as they are? The answer depends on the meaning ascribed to public policy: the choice is either to uphold the classical interpretation that conceives of it simply as an intervention to solve market failures, or to take a new approach whereby it is rethought as an intervention with a public purpose and value. Under this new meaning of

public policy, innovation—whether a new technology or simply a new idea or solution—is not something that should be pursued for its own sake, but rather an open mindset that makes it possible to achieve results in successive steps, through short-term experiments that enable continuous learning. The response to these myths comes from Karl Popper, who in his book *The Open Society and its Enemies* invokes the reformist method of gradual and consensus-based transformation of society, which he calls “piecemeal social engineering”. Through small adjustments and readjustments that can be constantly improved, this method is intended to generate broad consensus, and is exposed to criticism. Popper advances the idea that, in a democracy, it is not possible to make radical changes but rather improve things a little, and little by little. In other words, improvements are made by introducing partial changes rather than proposing the total reconstruction of society. The advantage of this is that, at each step, it is possible to assess the result obtained, rectify errors in time and learn from them. Besides, this method is based on experience, on reality, and not on an abstract model.



In this sense, we continue our quest for an innovative, collaborative and inclusive governance that combines the potential of all stakeholders, who actively contribute to creating better cities for all citizens. ■

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1. In the sense of compartments that do not communicate with one another.

Urban laboratories as bridges between citizen innovation and public policies

Author

Alessandra Richter



Photo: IDB Cities LAB, Nuevo Renacer neighborhood, Dominican Republic, 2019

Cities are considered as hubs of transformation around which the social, economic, and political dynamics pivot. Therefore, throughout history, they have been exposed to innovation processes, such as the aqueducts and sewage systems of ancient Rome, the introduction of automobile vehicles, or electric lighting, which contributed to expanding and changing urban life. Other more recent examples of urban innovation are, for example, bus rapid transit (BRT) systems; collaborative economy models and their impact on urban traffic —Uber and bicycle sharing systems, for instance— as well as the transformation of abandoned lots, such as New York’s High Line, an abandoned spur track later transformed into a linear park (Benton, Moreno & Volpe, 2018).

Innovation does not only imply new ideas and cutting-edge technological solutions; it also refers to improvements or significant enhancements to an existing product, process or service (Grasty, 2017). It is an adaptation process and also a testing and learning method as dynamic as cities themselves. The need for opportunities to debate ideas, take new approaches for finding solutions, and test and catalyze innovation, have paved the way for public innovation centers and labs. From a global perspective, urban labs have now become essential for tackling great urban challenges anew, applying disruptive solutions.¹

A. The role of laboratories as urban innovation spaces

Public innovation laboratories in cities: what they are, their aims and roles

A lab is usually a space which has the conditions and equipment needed to conduct scientific, technological or technical research, experiments and practices (Universidad Veracruzana, 2020). They are unsealed spaces where researchers or scientists transform ideas and hypotheses through trial and error, in order to disseminate legitimate knowledge in the “outside world” (Latour & Woolgar, 1979).

Public innovation labs have been created in the last decade following the lines of scientific laboratories. They are spaces for experimentation, aimed at solving complex public problems by means of disruptive solutions, in the sense that they challenge traditional government structures (Long, 2019). Laboratories operate as experimentation platforms

where trial and error tests are carried out in order to transform ideas into public policies. They start as small, agile, dynamic organizations at odds with the status quo and ready to embrace a heuristic, multi-disciplinary, and non-conventional approach that engages citizens and places them at the center of interventions (Werneck et al., 2020). The work of public innovation labs is conducted at various levels, branches, and sectors of government; they are spaces to experiment with open government, social innovation, and the modernization of the state (Apolitical, 2020).

At the town or city level, urban innovation labs endorse a territorial approach aimed at finding local solutions for problems that tend to be global, such as climate change and housing for low-income populations (Steen & van Bueren, 2017). Urban labs play a fundamental role because they catalyze innovation, serve as bridges, and also provide experimentation at the local level. Thus, cities are thought of as experimentation areas where all transformations are citizen-centered. The essential basis of urban labs is a multi-sectoral approach, plus the ability to engage citizens in all stages of decision-making (Steen and van Bueren, 2017).

Shared features among urban innovation laboratories

Although the nature and goals of urban labs are quite different, they all share some common features, e.g., the ability to take risks but keep them controlled within testing boundaries; multi-sectoral collaboration; a commitment to citizen-led decision-making; the co-creation of projects and innovative solutions; and the fact of being comprised of multi-sectoral teams. These characteristics, which are further explained below, set them apart from other traditional organizations.

- ▶ **1) They are able to take controlled risks and provide room for failure.** Labs try to find successful solutions, but being small, dynamic units with a certain degree of independence, they are open to the possibility of failure and have the flexibility needed to accept it (Acevedo & Dassen, 2016). Laboratories include trial and error mechanisms and practices that allow them to evaluate whether a proposal works or not. Thus, by using labs, more traditional institutions are able to pilot innovation

schemes and lower the risks involved in possible failures (Acevedo & Dassen, 2016).

- ▶ **2) Laboratories use experimentation, testing, and evaluation methodologies.** Experimentation allows them to check or reject a hypothesis, and also to test the effectiveness of the suggested solutions. Through experimentation methods, such as design thinking², for example, labs identify the problem, design interventions, prototype³, quickly adapt pilot plans and evaluate their impact before upscaling projects, thus reducing costs and risks. We may cite some habitual methodologies used in urban laboratories, such as participative processes, tactical urbanism, urban art, culture, impact evaluation, technology, open data, and artificial intelligence (see the Box below). For instance, Madrid's IED City Lab⁴ uses an urban activation model —ACORA.city⁵— which is based on the orange (or creative) economy, with the aim of activating urban change processes. It uses technological tools such as digital connection and virtual reality platforms, participative processes that include the local population, and programs designed for training and raising awareness, so as to prevent the deleterious effects of gentrification in urban areas (IED Innovation Lab, 2017).
- ▶ **3) Urban laboratories are areas where cities' relevant actors may converge and collaborate. They are based on the co-creation of projects and innovations.** Many urban laboratories play the role of connecting the government with citizens, the academy, the private sector, and civil society in order to carry out joint efforts. For example, together with the National Ministry of Mobility (SEMOVI), the Laboratory for Mexico City⁶ created a participation device where representatives from civil society and officials from various local government agencies contributed to develop the Comprehensive Road Safety Program (Laboratorio para la Ciudad de México, 2017). Another example is the Torino Urban Lab (Italy)⁷ which, besides offering physical meeting spaces for citizens, private investors, and experts in urban innovation, conducts co-creation activities. Among them, Torino si Progetta, where citizens

take part in designing a city's master plan under the leadership of the local government. Finally, Hub Providencia (Chile)⁸ offers a mentorship program where a community of experts from various areas of the public and private sector provide consultancy and advisory services for start-ups, entrepreneurs, and residents engaged in developing innovative projects advantageous for the city and linked to the public sector (Hub Providencia, 2021).

- ▶ **4) Generally, laboratories consist of multidisciplinary teams.** Urban labs include a variety of disciplines, skills, and personalities, so that they may cover different fields and respond to urban multi-sectoral demands. In Bologna, Italy, the lab Fondazione Innovazione Urbana⁹ includes sociologists, geographers, and architects who co-design urban planning and sustainability projects with the contribution of the city's residents, communicators, graphic designers, managers, and experts in technology. In Washington DC (USA), The Lab @ DC¹⁰ has twenty members from different backgrounds: economists, social scientists, data scientists, political scientists, anthropologists, and psychologists. This variety enables them to work in very different projects, from the improvement of police body-worn cameras, to rental plans to alleviate the housing shortage.
- ▶ **5) Whatever their origin, urban labs are always driven by a strong leadership that connects them with the local public administration and makes them influential.** Urban innovation labs may emerge from various sources, such as organized groups from civil society, local governments, private businesses, academic institutions, and so on. Their common characteristic is a strong leadership that exerts influence on public administration. Thus, the Housing Innovation Lab or iLab¹¹ in Boston was created on the initiative of Mayor Walsh, as part of a collaboration effort between the city's department of innovation and the Department of Neighborhood Development. Similarly, Madrid's IED City Lab was initially part of the Innovation Lab of the European Institute of Design, which is an academic organization. Both

the nature of its activities and its uninterrupted relationship with the city result in design solutions suitable for Madrid's most important urban problems. Likewise, even though Fondazione Innovazione Urbana was co-created by Bologna's Municipality and its university, it has the financial support of the city's main private actors and of two bank foundations. It is considered a private entity that operates for public purposes and is subject to public rules.

The role of urban laboratories in the digital city

By Hallel Elnir

In the current context of rapid urbanization and digitalization, the vast majority of data is generated and used in towns and cities. Cutting-edge technologies (cloud services, big data analysis, artificial intelligence, 5G, and others) change the way citizen-led movements are created and conduct their activities, and increase the amount of data available in urban areas. Thus, new opportunities arise for testing and evaluating urban interventions, and —more importantly— for generating significant value by making political recommendations based on actual data.

*During the last decade, social networks and digital applications have become the main tools to foster social changes in urban areas, and are frequently used by social and citizen-led movements. For example, the Arab Spring, the MeToo movement, and the Global Youth Climate Strike arose from a simple post or hashtag. Social activists are also using digital tools to promote social change and gain influence on lawmakers. This trend was evident in the numerous digital applications submitted to the IDB's contest *The Return to Public Life*, a call for proposals meant to restore public confidence in urban spaces within the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.*

*Beside these bottom-up movements, cities promote digital transformation and use the resulting data to improve public policies. Many cities decided to collaborate with private companies, such as *Zencity* and *Citibeats*, which use artificial intelligence devices in order to detect citizens'*

*opinions and design data-based policies and approaches. Other cities, like Montevideo (*Montevideo Decide*) and Temuco (*Smart City in a Box*), implemented citizen collaboration platforms that improve their response to residents' needs.*

The main feature of these new trends is the use of large data sets, a field called "big data". As the city and its residents become more digital, urban laboratories are given the opportunity to change their methods and channel more efforts to the use of data. This trend may increase the effectiveness and impact of urban interventions and experiments, given the possibility to (i) capture citizens' opinions, wishes, and demands and devise solutions tailored to their needs, and (ii) facilitate the evaluation of interventions and suggest public policies based on more reliable data.



B. The challenge: from short-term experimentation to long-term public policies

For public innovation laboratories, one of the big challenges is to transform short-term projects into long-term policies. A lab may lose its forward-looking strategic vision if it is satisfied with just generating value and producing many projects in a short period (Werneck et al., 2020). Therefore, experimentation should be seen as a means to test an idea, a hypothesis or a solution, as a part of a long-term approach which allows for iterative solutions and which generates adaptation and continuous learning processes (Benton, Moreno & Volpe, 2018).

The role of evaluation is also decisive because it allows us to determine to what extent the proposed interventions will have the desired impact, and to assess whether it is efficient to implement them in the long term. The advantage of continuously evaluating experimentation projects is that, if they do not yield the expected results in the short-term, there are opportunities to redesign them, rectify mistakes and/or test a new idea before long-term implementation. For

example, The Lab @ DC conducted an impact evaluation in order to determine to what extent police body-worn cameras (a program already deployed in other states of the USA) might change police behavior. The experimental evaluation established that, by itself, such technology would not yield the desired changes in the behavior of police officers. This result helped the city's Police Department to complement that strategy (Yokum, Ravishankar & Coppock, 2017).

The abovementioned case of Boston's Housing Innovation Lab is a successful example of the institutionalization of public policies starting from experimentation projects. Innovation is a strategic process that arises from a specific problem; at each stage a hypothesis is proposed and tested through experimentation, so that its results suggest the queries and hypothesis of the next phase, until a public policy is finally designed and implemented. The process demands strategic collaboration with the city's government and involves the public departments relevant for the project (City of Boston, 2020). A good illustration of the whole process is the Compact



Living Pilot conducted by iLab (Boston), a four-year work that tried to verify whether a compact living policy would be effective in that city.

In the first stage, the following hypothesis was tested (City of Boston 2020): by creating an interactive experience around smaller living units, it would be possible to detect whether there was a demand for that type of housing in the city. With this purpose, iLab carried out the following experiment: a container was transformed into a mobile, fully furnished, 385-square-foot apartment. A roadshow including events and activation activities was organized to exhibit the compact apartment on wheels in six neighborhoods. More than 2,000 Boston residents came to see the unit and answered questions such as: Who do you think would want to live in a space like this? What kinds of benefits, services, and infrastructure would need to exist around a unit of this size to make it livable? The results and lessons learned through the experiment are summarized below:

- ▶ **The potential for compact living.** The hypothesis that there was a demand for this type of housing was confirmed. Compact living gives developers more options for building residential housing.
- ▶ **People interested in compact housing.** Not only students and young professionals were interested in the proposal: among those interested were empty nesters, people with disabilities who benefit from the proximity of public facilities, and young families.
- ▶ **Issues to be considered.** The infrastructure and benefits that surround compact living units, such as shared spaces, services and nearby public transportation are just as important as the unit design itself. Each neighborhood has its own needs and preferences.
- ▶ **Participative process.** The community and other important city actors should be involved at the time of design and implementation.

Once information was collected, a new hypothesis was proposed for the next phase: building compact, affordable units in and outside Boston's downtown is a feasible idea (City of Boston, 2018). In order to test this hypothesis, iLab organized a competition and asked housing developers to submit innovative and affordable compact living designs. The winning proposals would be built on five city-owned properties. The lab received six proposals that explored new housing opportunities and offered actionable innovative approaches (New Urban Mechanics, 2017). The winning proposal presented a multifamily housing project that promotes community and cooperative living and offers a range of unit sizes (Dream Collaborative, 2019). It was implemented as a pilot project on a vacant city parcel.

Boston worked out a Compact Living Policy¹² based on the results of previous phases. It provides companies with guidelines for developing compact living projects with ten or more residential units. The policy includes aspects concerning their design, management plan, complementary services, public transportation demands, etc. Companies interested in such developments must submit their proposals to the City.

This policy was first applied in 2018 as a pilot to test how it worked. By 2020, fifteen compact housing projects were approved in nine different neighborhoods and are now in progress. The Compact Living Policy will continue to be applied while the program is simultaneously evaluated and the projects start to be implemented.

C. Conclusions

Urban innovations labs are spaces for collective and collaborative experimentation that involve the government, citizens, and other relevant city actors (academia, the private sector, and civil society). Their purpose is to help in solving complex city challenges by applying innovative proposals and disruptive solutions. They include a territorial approach, engage citizens in decision-making, apply a multi-sectoral strategy to tackle problems, and can take controlled risks.

Many advantages may be derived from the existence of urban innovation laboratories. Since they try to see innovations as the ordinary citizen does, and they also strive to connect the government with all

the city's relevant actors, labs contribute to identifying problems associated with people's actual needs, and to co-creating solutions with a transdisciplinary approach. Besides, the experimentation involved fosters innovative solutions because iterative modeling, prototyping, and trial and error practices are used to decide whether a proposal works or not. This provides them with an increased flexibility and capacity for testing risks keeping them under control, so that the city gains room for innovating and applying new forms of citymaking.

However, carrying on experimentation in the long-term is a formidable challenge. One of labs' greatest difficulties lies in realizing that immediate achievements are not enough. A strategic vision should be included that conceives of innovation as a long-term commitment involving adaptations and continuous learning. International experience shows the importance of starting these processes with a definite objective in mind, having identified a specific problem, entertaining a definite hypothesis, and having evaluation methodologies available. Experience also highlights the key importance of a clear commitment of the local government and the strategic involvement of its various operative areas. ■

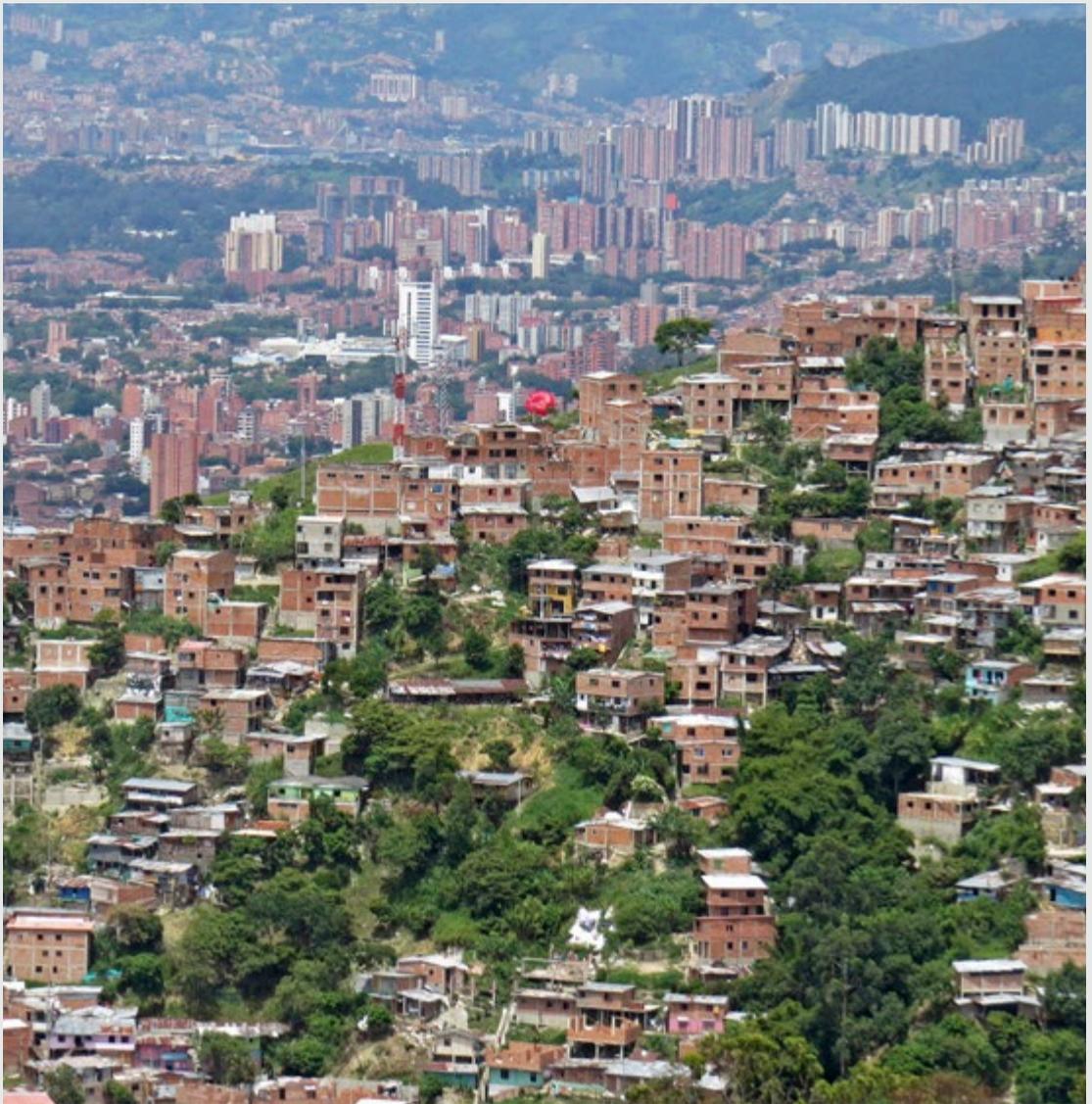
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1. The Royal Spanish Academy defines the term “*disruptivo*” as something that suddenly interrupts the normal development of an activity in order to create a favorable atmosphere for a radical change. In the entrepreneurial sphere, the term was introduced in the Harvard Business Review (1995) and it referred to the ability of changing the usual way of doing things and of rewriting the rules of the game. Disruptive innovations involve a radical turn, an all-embracing change of what has been established.
 2. *Design thinking* is a design methodology which, through practical and creative actions, provides a solution-oriented approach through human-centered design (Cohen, 2014). In order to improve and refine a concept, it propounds a flexible, non-linear process involving multiple iterations and five stages: empathize, define, ideate, prototype, and test (Dam and Siang, 2019). Thus, the problem is conceived empathically through analysis and observation so as to identify the main challenges involved. Then, the process generates multiple ideas embodied in low-cost prototypes that can be readily implemented. Finally, prototypes are evaluated and tested in order to select the best solutions.
 3. *Prototyping* includes the process of creating a product or solution and the subsequent tests it is submitted to. In the methodology of design thinking, the prototype is a low-cost expeditious test used to validate a hypothesis.
 4. The IED City Lab is part of the IED Innovation Lab, a private initiative that collaborates permanently with Madrid’s local government, the private sector, and civil society. For more information see: <https://iedinnovationlab.com/labs>
 5. Project ACORA promotes social, cultural, and economical activation in the Carabanchel district, Madrid. For more information see: <https://iedinnovationlab.com/project/acora>
 6. The Laboratory for Mexico City (*Laboratorio para la Ciudad de México*) was an experimental and creative area of the city government, active from 2013 to 2018. For more information, see <https://labcd.mx/>
 7. Torino Urban Lab (*Laboratorio Urbano a Torino*) is an independent organization created by the public administration to promote dialogue among relevant city actors and to engage citizens who are interested in urban transformation in public decision-making. For more information, see <https://urbanlavorino.it/?lang=en>.
 8. Hub Providencia is a comprehensive public network for entrepreneurship and innovation. Its aim is to promote the capabilities and develop the skills of citizens in this commune and of government officials. See <http://hubprovidencia.cl/web/#>
 9. Fondazione Innovazione Urbana, in Bologna, Italy, is a center dedicated to analyzing, communicating, activating, and co-creating urban transformations to solve the city’s social, environmental, and technical difficulties. For more information, see <https://www.fondazioneinnovazioneurbana.it/fondazione-innovazione-urbana-home>.
 10. The Lab @ DC has a specialized team that carries out experiments and iterative proofs of concept concerning the city public policies. For more information, see <https://thelabprojects.dc.gov/>
 11. Boston’s Housing innovation Lab is a part of the Mayor’s Office of New Urban Mechanics (MONUM). Its focus is to improve access to affordable housing by testing innovative housing models and promoting innovation in that industry. For more information, see <https://www.boston.gov/departments/new-urban-mechanics/housing-innovation-lab>
 12. For more information on Boston’s housing policy, see https://www.boston.gov/sites/default/files/embed/c/compact_living_guidelines_181012.pdf

3.2.

Cases of Innovative Urban Politics

Social urbanism in Medellín: social dynamics between public policies and community activism

Author
Jota Samper



In the 1990s, at same time that the United States was bombing Baghdad, Medellín was the most dangerous city in the world. However, Since 2003, the city has undergone an internationally renowned urban transformation, carried out by several consecutive administrations of mayors (2004-2014). As a result, the city, with its tenfold reduction in homicide rates, is now seen as an example of how to successfully engage with armed conflict and violence by adopting spatial and urban policies. The urban interventions conducted have become a model for cities with a high concentration of informal settlements and the challenge of scarce resources. Planners, politicians and the media have referred to this process of transformation of Medellín as “social urbanism”.

Under his contemporary interpretation, Alejandro Echeverri, then director of the Urban Development Company (*Empresa de Desarrollo Urbano* or EDU), coined the term “social urbanism” (Samper, 2010). Echeverri and Orsini define it as the learning experiences resulting from the urban upgrading conducted by EDU in Medellín in the period 2004-2007. These practices focused on “the construction and improvement of habitat in these [marginal] territories [in Medellín] that had low levels of consolidation” (Echeverri & Orsini, 2012, p. 148).

From then on, social urbanism has evolved to include most of the urban interventions conducted by the state in Medellín since 2003. Sotomayor explains: “Social urbanism commits considerable municipal resources to improving services and infrastructure in areas of the city where the Human Development Index (HDI) ranks lowest. Some examples of social urbanism’s public works projects include an integrated transit system via airborne gondolas (the first of its kind in the world), outdoor electric escalators, and a network of library-parks, state-of-the-art schools, day-care centers and other amenities in low-income peripheral neighborhoods. Social urbanism is also characterized by modern urban design and flashy architectural statements, as the symbolic capacity of architecture is evoked to challenge old stigmas associated with violence in spaces of previous relegation. As such, social urbanism aims to connect and integrate self-help neighborhoods into the broader dynamics of the city, while giving visibility to these formerly neglected communities” (Sotomayor, 2015, p. 374). These urban project practices have become

models to be exported to other cities with similar urban challenges of informality (Franco & Ortiz, 2020; Brand, 2013), and constitute state warfare strategies based on urban upgrading, aimed at reducing violence in informal settlements (Samper, 2012).

Scholars have defined social urbanism as a branding effort (Doyle, 2019; Kalandides & Hernández-García, 2013), and particularly, as marketing for the city of Medellín (Brand, 2010). In one of its most popular and misguided interpretations, social urbanism is an urban strategy to address violence (Maclean, 2015). A more detailed analysis of urban practices in Medellín reveals that the impact of infrastructure interventions on security is more complex, less clear and not entirely positive (Samper, 2018). Social urbanism is now praised as a Latin American movement “for the more extreme cases of the megacity of the world” (Leite et al., 2019).

In this article I examine this concept of social urbanism as applied to the socio-political and urban transformations performed from 2003 to the present in the city of Medellín. Under this umbrella term of social urbanism, I combine the ideological approaches underlying the policies of the government plan during Mayor Fajardo’s administration and subsequent administrations, like those of Mayors Salazar and Gaviria, with the thinking of other groups and institutions who are not affiliated with these ideologies but sympathize with their goals. Social urbanism is a concept that tries to universalize the learning experiences of the case of Medellín so that it can be exported to other contexts worldwide. In this article, I analyze the limits and challenges of the narratives and marketing of social urbanism. The current dissemination of this idea, which depicts the state as a heroic savior, is a dangerous and deceitful personification that leads to the elimination of the social capital built over decades in marginalized communities. I intend to provide a more detailed understanding of the true value of these urban practices as synergies between public policies and community activism.

What is social urbanism in practice?

The strategy of social urbanism uses urban projects to inject investments in specific areas, in a way that promotes civic pride, participation and a more significant social impact. The application of these

ideas in Medellín is fully visible in the implementation of the Integral Urban Projects (known in Spanish as PUJ), that comprise three areas of intervention. Firstly, inter-institutional coordination via the EDU, which dovetails the efforts of different municipal offices. Secondly, community participation in public meetings: among all Latin American urban upgrading projects, the PUJ stands out as an example of how to engage with marginalized communities. Finally, PUJs include a wide variety of projects that address public space, environmental remediation, housing and transportation. These projects are one of the most important contributions to Medellín's urban structure. The four PUJs created so far have become a model for intervening in informal settlements. Additionally, the resulting project sites attract both scholars and practitioners interested in addressing urban informality issues, as well as tourists who visit these unique spaces.

The word *social* in social urbanism refers to the upgrading of marginal areas and not to the restructuring of top-down practices for intervention in the city. In fact, social urbanism is an urban regeneration strategy that intends to deliver a higher quality of architecture and urban interventions particularly to the poorest areas of the city traditionally abandoned by the state. In practice, social urbanism involves citizens at several planning stages; however, it is far removed from the idea of a bottom-up approach. Social urbanism is still a top-down design approach, performed by the elites guided toward the poor (Samper, 2010). Nevertheless, this process, in the context of the city of Medellín is radical, in the sense that the government is, for the first time, working directly and intensely with residents of poor communities building public infrastructure with a high level of quality. I claim that the emphasis on a top-down planning process disguised as radical participation of civil society in the production of the projects presents the highest risk when exporting the Medellín model to other places.

The dangers of social urbanism

The Medellín model has been the victim of its own invention. The city has invested significant efforts to showcase its positive changes through the media and in several publications (Escobar Arango, 2006). The internationalization of the urban projects and changes

in Medellín through the application of social urbanism has been disseminated by media like *The Economist* (2014), *The Guardian* (Brodzinsky, 2014; The Guardian, 2015) and *The Washington Post* (Faiola, 2008), all advocating the miracle of Medellín. These urban projects and practices have earned Medellín a number of recognitions, like the award to the world's most innovative city in 2012 by the Urban Land Institute (BBC News, 2013), and the Veronica Rudge Green Prize in Urban Design in 2013 (GSD, 2013), among others. The story of Medellín's transformation is often told in city campaigns, in terms of the state coming to the "heroic rescue" of the neighborhoods that communities have built with their own hands.

This approach adopted by the state to publicize these interventions as an impressive humanitarian project is problematic, not only due to this "rescue" myth, but also because it conceals the work, art and experience of community members in dozens of neighborhoods around the city; these neighborhoods had been building their communities, infrastructure and facilities for decades without any government support. The image of the state as the "savior" also deprives us from what we could and should learn from those living in informal communities. The stories of the founders of informal settlements in the city present an alternative image of the state, where it is neither the savior nor the invader of their territory. On the contrary, their stories present what the government calls the "transformation of Medellín", not as one of the most recent and innovative state interventions, but as the result of a series of interventions that were already in progress, collaborations that the communities have been leading for decades (Samper & Marko, 2015).

The abundance of publicity and, most importantly, its reach, has the unintended consequence of erasing the local, less publicized narratives. These community narratives include the residents' experience of the construction and reconstruction of their neighborhoods before, during and after the state-implemented interventions. This new narrative reproduces and reinforces the idea of a new story for informal settlements, one that implies erasing the conflicts and battles faced by the marginalized communities to demand their right to the city. Portraying the state as a savior implies that the members of the community who survived the displacement caused



Public space and mural



Commune 13 before and after the PUI

by violence and reconstructed their lives by building their own neighborhoods are mere victims rather than agents of the positive change in their territory. In other words, during the past fifty years, these informal settlements have transformed the sight of what used to be the almost unpopulated slopes of the Andes mountains in the valley that surrounds the city of Medellín. Nowadays, when you look at the slopes around the city, it is almost impossible to see the bare mountains without any buildings. It can be said, then, that these dwellers built the first transformation of Medellín.

The danger of this approach is that it erases the civic capital and the agency of civil society, while also concealing all previous interactions between the government and the community. During the creation of informal settlements, its residents build infrastructure, public space and facilities. When the government steps in, its interventions usually involve the upgrading of projects previously built by the community. The PUI projects often used the space of infrastructure that communities had already put in place, like plazas and soccer fields.

The narrative of social urbanism creates two competing stories about the building of the city of Medellín. On the one hand, marginalized communities fight against private and state actors for their land, and to be acknowledged as belonging in the territory they have conquered. On the other, the new public policies for poor communities, in their haste to publicize their efforts, bury decades of community participation and empowerment. However, it is essential to understand that neither of these narratives about the city's transformation can exist without the other. Successful physical infrastructure and public policy projects are actually successful because they are implemented within cohesive social contexts and in neighborhoods with consolidated urban structures. This process of recognizing the interactions between the government and the communities is called "consolidated synergies" (Samper and Marko, 2015).

Social dynamics between public policies and community activism

The main problem with the case of social urbanism in Medellín is the risk of misunderstanding its process and its contributions. The project presented for the

city's greenbelt shows the inability to understand the value of infrastructure projects which are disconnected from the marginal communities where they are located. This was an environmental remediation project proposed by the municipality of Medellín to face the challenges of the invasion of informal settlements on the city mountainsides. Although it was presented under the same objectives and strategies of social urbanism, this project overlooked the role of citizen participation in the development of informal areas. On the contrary, it forced a top-down vision on the communities and ignored any needs they could have. If the greenbelt had been built, thousands of families would have been displaced, and none of their problems would have been solved. This project would have created green infrastructure interventions to produce or exacerbate urban socio-spatial inequities in the self-built settlements in Medellín (Angelovski, Irazábal-Zurita & Connolly, 2019). Strong opposition by civil society stopped what would have been the largest project for eradicating marginal neighborhoods in the contemporary history of Medellín.

It is undeniable that the innovation of the Medellín model lies in the constant effort to create high quality infrastructure in traditionally marginalized areas of the city. My argument here is that a second, less explored, urban innovation that can be found in Medellín is that of the synergies between public policies, like those extolled in social urbanism, and the activism of the communities that have already been fighting to be included in the production of the city. I claim that, in Medellín, the new urban innovation consists of those moments of co-creation between the community groups that already exist in these territories, and the infrastructure built by the government. I see two primary forms of co-creation that other places, including Medellín, need to learn from.

The first form is synergy by addition, where government projects are based on infrastructure previously created by civil society. The history of Medellín is full of these moments: projects like soccer fields, plazas, schools, health centers, new roads and stairways are based on projects previously built by the communities. The partial success of these projects is that they are founded on the fabric of citizen participation and the claim of their right to the city. The second type of co-creation is synergy by exposure, where innovative government interventions reveal the

civic capital and the creativity of local organizations. The case of the Graffitour in Commune 13 is perhaps one of the most valuable examples to explore this type of synergies (Samper and Escobar, 2020). Here, successful government projects became the scene for community members to display their artistic and entrepreneurial initiatives to the public.

The fundamental lesson learned from these interventions in Medellín is the synergy between state-run infrastructure projects and community-led projects. These community projects, many of which started as the residents' response to violence, leveraged the success of social urbanism to export the

positive values that existed in their communities. This synergy creates a new hybrid that launches both efforts to a new space where the government, local community organizations and foreigners help communities more appropriately. If we export more of this synergistic co-creation narrative, rather than one that represents the state as a savior, there is a lower risk of committing further abuses in marginal communities in the name of social urbanism. ■

Can top-down art-based urban renewal strategies contribute to demarginalize informal settlements?

Voices and perspectives from two neighborhoods in Bogotá

Authors

Jennifer Duyme Barenstein, Daniela Sanjinés



It is widely assumed that popular visual art, such as murals, can potentially be a powerful driver for urban regeneration with important social, economic and environmental benefits (Hersey & Bobick 2017, Koster, & Randall, 2005). Participatory art projects are believed to contribute to fostering social cohesion, engagement and cooperation and to trigger local initiatives around common interests. Grebe (2017), Grodach (2009) and Lowe (2000) for example, argue that creative community development projects enhance community trust, solidarity and social integration not only between communities but also within communities, thus making a tangible contribution towards reducing segregation and inequalities.

Closely linked to these social benefits are the presumed positive impacts on security (Hernández et al., 2016). Above and beyond the potential security impacts of economic development, community participation, and social capital, proponents of the 'broken windows theory' suggest that orderly urban arrangements highlight stewardship. This reduces the likelihood of transgressive behavior and stabilizes a non-violent political and social order (Cerdá et al., 2009; Schaible & Hughes, 2012). The literature on Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED)—the alteration of features of the built environment to reduce the opportunity for crime—focuses on the creation of safe neighborhoods through the development of *territorial reinforcement*, via a number of methods, including maintenance and beautification of the urban environment (Cozens & Love, 2015; Ekblom, 2011; Gibson & Johnson, 2013; Saville, 2017).

Similarly, over recent years there has been an increased focus on the potential for 'place branding' and social marketing strategies for informal settlements and other impoverished neighborhoods. It has been argued that these strategies contribute to improved self-esteem and attachment to place among community members, and have the potential to reduce levels of stigma attached to living in 'slums' while increasing tourism to the area. Based on these expectations, urban renewal projects with an emphasis on murals have emerged in a wide range of neighborhoods and cities globally.

Colombia is a country with a strong culture and tradition of street art and murals driven by bottom-up social movements. Furthermore, based on

the assumption that poverty and marginalization are a direct result of the lack of institutional action, participatory upgrading programs have been implemented through different local institutions to ensure comprehensive and inclusive interventions since the 1970's (Escallón 2008, Torres Tovar & Robles 2014). In recent years, a number of municipalities across the country started to recognize the value of murals as a strategy to beautify neighborhoods of informal origin and to foster the socio-spatial inclusion of marginalized communities (Hernandez-Garcia, 2013, Hernandez & Lopez 2011). While the role of street art in urban regeneration has been studied and debated in a number of countries, in Colombia, so far, there is a paucity of research focusing on the wider societal impacts of art-based urban upgrading programs. Considering that these types of urban interventions are increasingly gaining currency, a better understanding on how they are perceived by the concerned communities is of pivotal importance.

In this article, we present the findings from a research project conducted in 2019 in Bogotá, where the past municipal government implemented *Habitarte*, a large-scale art-based urban regeneration strategy with the specific aim of demarginalizing poor neighborhoods of informal origin through beautifying interventions.

Bogotá's Secretaría de Habitat commissioned the implementation of the project to a consortium of consultants, which included a team of technical experts and community organizers. The project was expected to adopt a participatory approach as a means to foster social cohesion, a collective care for the neighborhoods' public spaces and ultimately to reduce the stigma and socio-spatial exclusion of marginalized communities.

Although *Habitarte* is not the first art-based urban regeneration program in Bogotá, it is certainly the largest. According to official reports, it was implemented in 83 neighborhoods in Bogotá where 95,000 facades, 141 murals and 4 macro-murals were painted¹.

Witnessing this unprecedented government led art-based urban upgrading strategy several questions emerged: How do participants in Bogotá's art-based urban regeneration programs assert and perceive their impacts? To which extent did the program contribute to destigmatize historically

marginalized neighborhoods? What was the impact on neighborhoods' quality of open spaces? What influence did the process and its outcomes have on social cohesion, safety and the quality of life in the neighborhood? How is the program's aesthetic notion perceived by the community?

To answer these questions, we conducted rapid appraisals in six informal settlements where we conducted walking interviews with community leaders and systematically observed and documented the artistic interventions. We further selected a sample of two representative neighborhoods for in-depth case studies. In these two settlements, we conducted intensive fieldwork over a period of two weeks; with the help of eight research assistants, we carried out detailed observations, focus groups, walking interviews, and 70 semi-structured interviews with formal and informal community leaders, teachers, artists, shopkeepers, project staff, and residents in the neighborhood.

Our findings indicate that there are no simple answers to our questions; first of all, the inhabitants of informal settlements are very heterogeneous and their attitudes towards the project were clearly influenced by their age, gender, occupation, and their personal needs and priorities. Secondly, the project in the two neighborhoods differed in terms of intervention type; in "La Mariposa", an area comprised of seven neighborhoods of informal origin located on the steep slopes in the North of Bogotá, the project proposed the painting of the largest macro-mural in Colombia, which took the shape of a large butterfly. Through a fairly complex technical process, renowned urban artists from outside the community were tasked with painting over 2.600 houses, inhabited by approximately 15.000 people. Hence, at this scale, the scope for participation in the selection in design and colors was extremely limited and it required an immense effort for the large group of community workers tasked with convincing households to paint their houses. The macro-mural could only be seen from a distance and, as will be further discussed below, was welcomed by some community members but more often looked at with suspicion.

In *Las Manitas*, a neighborhood located in Ciudad Bolívar—a district with a rich history of urban street art and home to the most renowned urban artists—the strategy was implemented through two

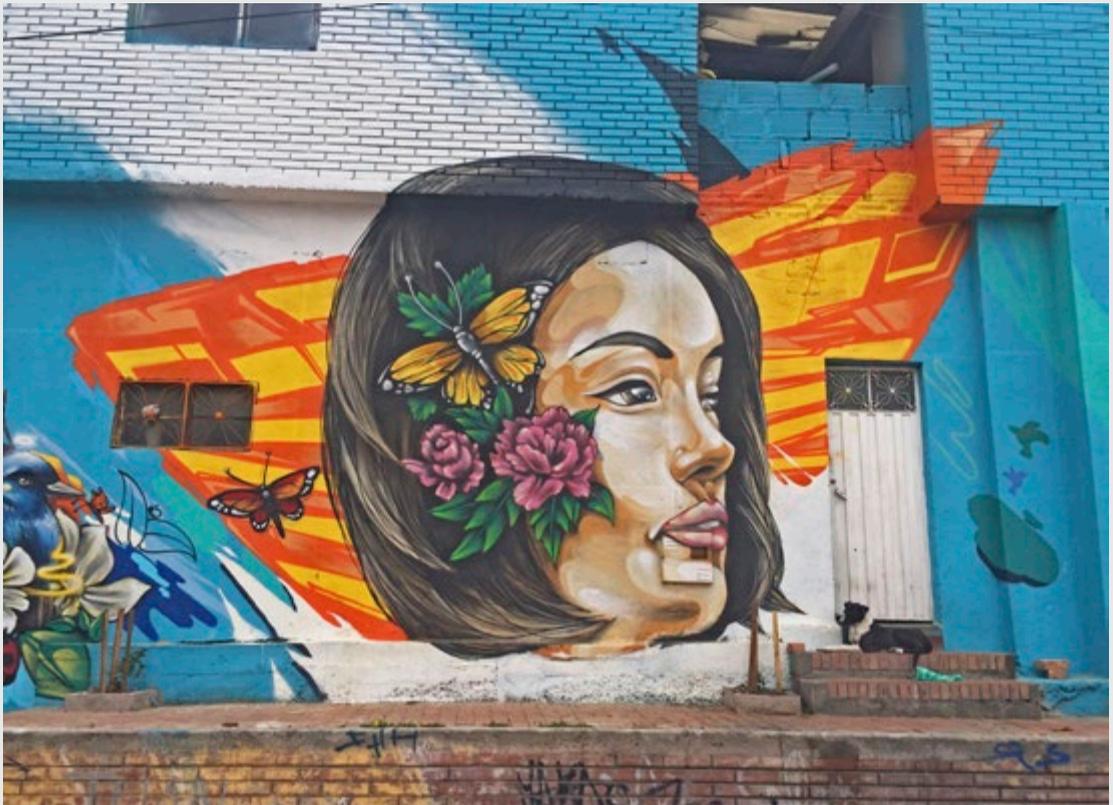
types of interventions. The first one consisted of several micro-murals executed by local artists and the second one, involved the painting of facades in a predefined set of bright colors and patterns. Thus, while the project claimed a participatory approach, in reality—given the overall objective to beautify the neighborhoods according to the agency's aesthetic notions—also in *Las Manitas* the scope for community participation was confined to deciding on the themes and location of the micro-murals, while they had only a limited influence on the color they were given to paint their houses.

Communities' perspectives

As mentioned above, communities' perspectives on the project were heterogeneous. While some people appreciated this approach towards urban renewal, many people had doubts about their overall impact and felt that their neighborhood had other needs and priorities. With reference to the three types of interventions, there were some recurrent themes, widely shared views, and opinions that emerged from a large number of interviews, whereby a clear distinction could be made between the co-creation of micro-murals on the one hand, and the painting of facades and macro-murals on the other.

On micro-murals

The micro-murals in *Las Manitas* were much appreciated by everybody in the community regardless of gender, age or social status. Several were executed by local artists or by well-known muralists from Bogotá that engaged with the inhabitants to co-create the subject of the mural. In particular, the murals painted around the local school saw an active engagement of teachers and students. According to the school principal, the street leading to the school prior to the intervention was a hot spot for local drug dealers, but as part of the social mobilization that took place during the execution of the paintings, he was able to convince them to move somewhere else. This increased considerably the safety of the area and reduced the exposure of children to drugs. The micro-murals in general increased a sense of pride and place attachment among the neighbors whose care for the public places around the murals was enhanced. The co-creative process through which the micro-murals were conceived also improved the



relation between muralists and the community. For young people they were a welcome opportunity to get to meet well-known local muralists and elderly people's prejudices towards street artists were often replaced by sincere admiration for their skills and talents.

Community voices about micro-murals

"Here they invite people to paint murals. Artists come from outside the neighborhood, they interact with others and finally work along with them. I have met several artists and very skilled people here. And I had never seen them; I had only seen them in the street, and I had seen what they paint, but I had never met them or greeted them personally, or talked to them. They tell you what they think about graffiti or about what they paint, how and where they have painted. It's fantastic; you interact with the rest." (Henry, young resident of La Mariposa)

"I used to see the sports court, all sad and gray, and I came up with the idea of painting some murals in the stairs and that big wall in the back, but we didn't have the resources. And then, *Habitarte* came along, and it was a coincidence, it was exactly what we needed." (Fernando, school principal at Las Manitas)

"We know that painting will not solve our problems. But what painting does is to evidence more problems. It makes residents ask themselves about the place where they live and gives them the will to improve it. Since the mural was painted, people have been more aware that the place is full of dog poo and garbage." (Jaime, resident of Las Manitas)

"Of course, the perception has changed! Before, one used to think 'those darned air brushers...' But now you see them and say, 'that guy is really good at drawing, he's a good artist!'" (Ana, resident of Las Manitas)



“What’s really nice are the murals, they have beautiful colors. They were chosen by the community and have sort of a theme.” (Paola, shopkeeper in Las Manitas)

“I like the process of painting in the neighborhood, because people take a different perspective on graffiti and the mural, they know who paints it, they can ask him or her why they do that, they can choose designs from the artists’ own style, they can paint the houses in their blocks and work together, because it becomes a collective effort, private property disappears and a different space is created where people share, where private property is owned by everyone.” (John, local artist tasked with painting a mural in Las Manitas)

“Oh, that mural they painted down there is beautiful. It looks pretty and not everyone is able to do that, you need to be smart, and extremely talented to paint that, indeed.” (Antonio, shopkeeper in Las Manitas)

*All the names have been changed to protect respondents’ anonymity.

On painting facades and macro-murals

The painting of the houses’ facades and the macro-mural in “La Mariposa” were more contentious and to some extent also depended on the specific color people had to paint their house. The very nature of a macro-mural entails an artistic production that can be enjoyed only from a certain distance. This further exacerbated the lack of appreciation for this type of intervention. Some people liked the initiative and gratefully accepted the paint, but critical voices prevailed over the positive ones. Several people refused to participate and were highly critical or even suspicious with regard to the motives behind this project. While the project aimed at destigmatizing the neighborhoods, many voices expressed that the project’s specific aesthetics —using bright fluorescent colors— could potentially further marginalize them. Often, residents seemed very sensitive towards the fact that only poor neighborhoods of informal origin were the target of this type of interventions and hence expected to paint their houses in such bright

and ‘clownish’ colors, while nobody would ever consider painting with similar colors the houses in high income neighborhoods. Inhabitants also felt that the bright colors were an offense to their neighborhood’s dignity and that low-income neighborhoods had the right to more ‘elegant’ colors. This forced the project staff to renegotiate the palette of colors proposed to the community, which however only led to minor modifications. Thus, while the project genuinely considered its intervention as a strategy to meet people’s ‘right to beauty’ many people believed that the painting was intended to signal to outsiders that these are poor and notoriously dangerous neighborhoods. But the lack of appreciation for the colors was only one of the reasons negative attitudes towards the facade paintings prevailed over the positive ones. In fact, a wide range of suspicions and fears were diffused among the local inhabitants, such as that the intervention was intended to legitimize an increase in taxes or that it was a first step towards them being evicted in order to make space for real estate investments targeting higher income people. While these fears were unjustified, they nevertheless indicate the mistrust of historically marginalized and impoverished communities.

Community voices about the painting of facades and macro-murals

“Before, this would look dark, kind of gray, but now things have a little more color and a little more life, and that makes you feel sort of safer.” (Resident of La Mariposa)

“I heard a lady say that the colors were that bright so that they can identify you from a helicopter as a resident of the communes of Medellín.” (Freddy, resident of Las Manitas)

“In several houses, they are giving out paint to help many people who don’t have the opportunity to get that. Many neighbors need that help. It’s a good thing that they paint the houses, but some people don’t like that.” (Shopkeeper of Las Manitas)

“Yes, the neighborhood looks kind of more organized, you can see the change. You just



hope that they won't raise taxes and utilities. They said they wouldn't, so let's hope that will not happen." (Juliana, resident of La Mariposa)

"The reasons why people do not agree with *Habitarte* are, first, that they are afraid that they will be charged higher taxes if their houses are painted and, second, that the government will come and drive us out." (Fernando, community leader of La Mariposa)

"The representative of the Municipality said 'you agreed on the color'... But how many people agreed on it? How many families live here and how many can you fit in the school yard? Only 10% of them agreed on the color. When we consider the opinions, most people don't want to participate." (Luz, resident of La Mariposa)



"The colors they used are too bright. I would have liked softer colors." (Carmenza, community leader of La Mariposa)

"It will only be possible to see the butterfly from a distance or from a plane. So, my question is: Who is going to buy me a ticket so that I can see the butterfly painted in my neighborhood? You can only see the facades from here? A number of colors, but a shape that you cannot see from close up?" (Ariel, community leader of La Mariposa)

"The intention is to paint, to make a macro-mural and to do it quickly... So as to show it to the city, like in the film *The Strategy of the Snail*², but this has no impact on human beings. To have a true impact on the communities, something deeper needs to be done." (Patricia, resident of Las Manitas)

"As a board, we do not want these colors, because they used very loud colors, and so that sector has become much more stigmatized. We explained that we wanted more elegant colors." (Berta, member of the Community Action Board of La Mariposa)

“I have heard that they are painting the butterfly, but people here don’t want to paint their houses because they want to render the walls, and they don’t have enough for the render. It’s just painting and that’s it.” (Wilson, resident of La Mariposa)

“I don’t agree with them coming to do all these things, because the neighborhoods that paint their houses like this are the poorest ones! Nobody in the wealthy areas would accept such colors.” (Julie, resident of Las Manitas)

“I think this has no impact on the community. In my opinion, it doesn’t. Because the colors that they give us seem as if they wanted to prosecute us, as if they rejected our neighborhoods, as if they were pointing at us.” (Doña Edelmira, resident of La Mariposa)

*All the names have been changed to protect respondents’ anonymity.

Conclusion

With pressure to present tangible results, government administrations are often drawn to art-based interventions as ‘quick-win’ projects. However, as seen in the case of Bogotá, large-scale top-down initiatives should be mindful that establishing a relation based on mutual trust and respect with marginalized communities requires time to identify and build upon their own capacities and initiatives. Rather than expecting people to participate in top-down projects, external agencies should strive at participating in residents’ own, bottom-up initiatives. This entails recognizing that marginalized communities are not passively waiting for external support, but are creative and resourceful. Indeed, by supporting communities in developing their own projects, the risks of imprinting a homogenizing image and very particular aesthetics could be mitigated. Indeed, identifying, supporting and complementing existing local cultural initiatives not only recognizes communities as the main drivers in the development of their neighborhood but also ensures the continuity and sustainability of these approaches. ■

1. Alcaldía de Bogotá. 2019. *Informe de Cumplimiento del Plan de Desarrollo Bogotá Mejor Para Todos 2016-2019. Informe de Empalme*. Retrieved from: http://www.sdp.gov.co/sites/default/files/informe_de_cumplimiento_de_pdd_2016-2020_0.pdf

2. *The Strategy of the Snail (La estrategia del caracol)* is an emblematic Colombian film in which a group of tenants who are going to be evicted from a house in the center of Bogotá find an ingenious way to keep their dignity by dismantling the house from the inside, leaving only the facade.

A collaborative project process for the urban and social integration of Villa 20 in Buenos Aires¹ (2016-2020)

Authors

Jorge Martín Motta, Florencia Almansi, María Elisa Rocca, Tomás Reverter



Photo: City of Buenos Aires Housing Institute

1.

The context of and the approach to the Villa 20 project-process

The *housing problem*, caused by accelerated urbanization processes, has been the subject of theoretical debates and triggered actions performed by various actors from the public and private spheres, as well as by sectors involved in the social production of habitat, in all of Latin America. In the Autonomous City of Buenos Aires, endeavors to upgrade shanty towns (*villas*) and settlements have suffered many fluctuations, shifting from former intervention paradigms that endorsed eradication, to more recent ones that promote upgrading. Inadequate changes for the scale and complexity of the problem have been the constant result of the measures taken, besides a lack of medium- and long-term policies apt to ensure a continuous approach by the public administration. Moreover, the collaborative dimension, evidenced in the participative processes developed, has been poorly implemented.

However, in parallel with the lack of an integrated and planned approach, the historical process of the formation of shanty towns and settlements has been carried out by the residents themselves, through joint actions that involved dwellers, the state (with noteworthy omission periods) and other stakeholders. The upgrading process is based on this historical instance of social production of habitat, and the rationale for this intervention is characterized by a complex approach and an open structure.

Across the few experiences of interest that were promoted, collaborative participation stands out as a useful tool throughout the planning, diagnosis, intervention, and evaluation stages. In the case of the *Villa 20* project-process, various participation devices were forged that facilitated decision-making and consensus among the stakeholders involved. All these implied a two-way (both bottom-up and top-down) approach to the implementation of housing policy.

a. Shanty towns and settlements in Buenos Aires: their context and the intervention paradigms

Three relevant aspects could be pointed out to contextualize the problem: the spatial and social inequalities of the capitalistic-urban setting; non-compliance with existing regulations that constitute the right to the city, a failure which leads to collective struggles

and movements; and finally, the lack of connection between the local and metropolitan levels for promoting integral and collaborative housing policies (Abramo, 2009 and 2012; Harvey, 2012; Herzer, 2012; Carrión & Erazo, 2016).

Even though the total population of the city of Buenos Aires has not varied much over the last sixty years, the population of shanty towns and settlements has increased (up to 50% between 2001 and 2010), so that almost two hundred thousand people live in such settlements (INDEC, 2010). Inequalities derived from the concentration of population in vulnerable urban sectors are further worsened by the physical conditions prevailing in habitat and dwellings, and also by the socioeconomic, educational, and sanitary conditions of the residents (Motta & Almansi, 2017).



Aerial view of the neighborhood
Photo: City of Buenos Aires Housing Institute

In such a context, the approval of a specific regulatory framework was not enough to reverse the problem: pressures to find housing solutions led to social unrest episodes, such as the occupation of plots of land at the Indomeric Park in 2010 and in the *Papa Francisco* sector in 2014.

The local state has displayed a gamut of variously successful housing policies, which show a high degree of disconnection among different government areas (administration, finance, etc.) and also among the levels of government involved (the Government of the City of Buenos Aires, the government of the Buenos Aires province and the national government).

b. State responses: from eradication to participative upgrading

Two main approaches have been taken throughout the history of state interventions in the shanty towns and settlements of Buenos Aires. On the one hand, the policy of eradication, which involved demolishing substandard homes in order to build new ones and relocate families, either in housing complex units or individual houses available to residents through mortgage loans. On the other hand, the policy of upgrading, which tends to provide infrastructure, facilities, and (better or new) housing for residents of existing neighborhoods, in order to improve the latter and promote their urban and social integration. This approach is the one that prevailed since the creation of the City of Buenos Aires Housing Institute (*Instituto de Vivienda de la Ciudad* or IVC)². However, this agency has experienced complex and changing political circumstances that have resulted in a series of “unfinished processes”.

The key concept that inspires the upgrading approach is the *urban and social integration of settlements* into the rest of the city. Such interventions involve the participation of the community, and catalyze a management process that includes all the different stakeholders in various ways (Cosacov et al., 2011; CESBA, 2018; Arqueros et al., 2019; Roitman, 2019; Zapata, 2020). In this sense, in recent years, neighborhood leaders, together with the local administration, have started a process of unprecedented scale, complexity and comprehensiveness in the city of Buenos Aires.

c. Planning and managing project-processes: the approach to urban complexity and resilience

The result of *project-process planning and management* is a *target-outcome* that emerges from a participative, collaborative, territorial process within a consensual framework (Motta & Almansi, 2017; Motta et al., 2018; Almansi et al., 2020). The target-outcome is not necessarily defined in its entirety; it is a goal. The actions triggered by the process are aimed at that goal, but changes concerning the path to follow and the final objective are admitted, provided the following premises are taken into account:



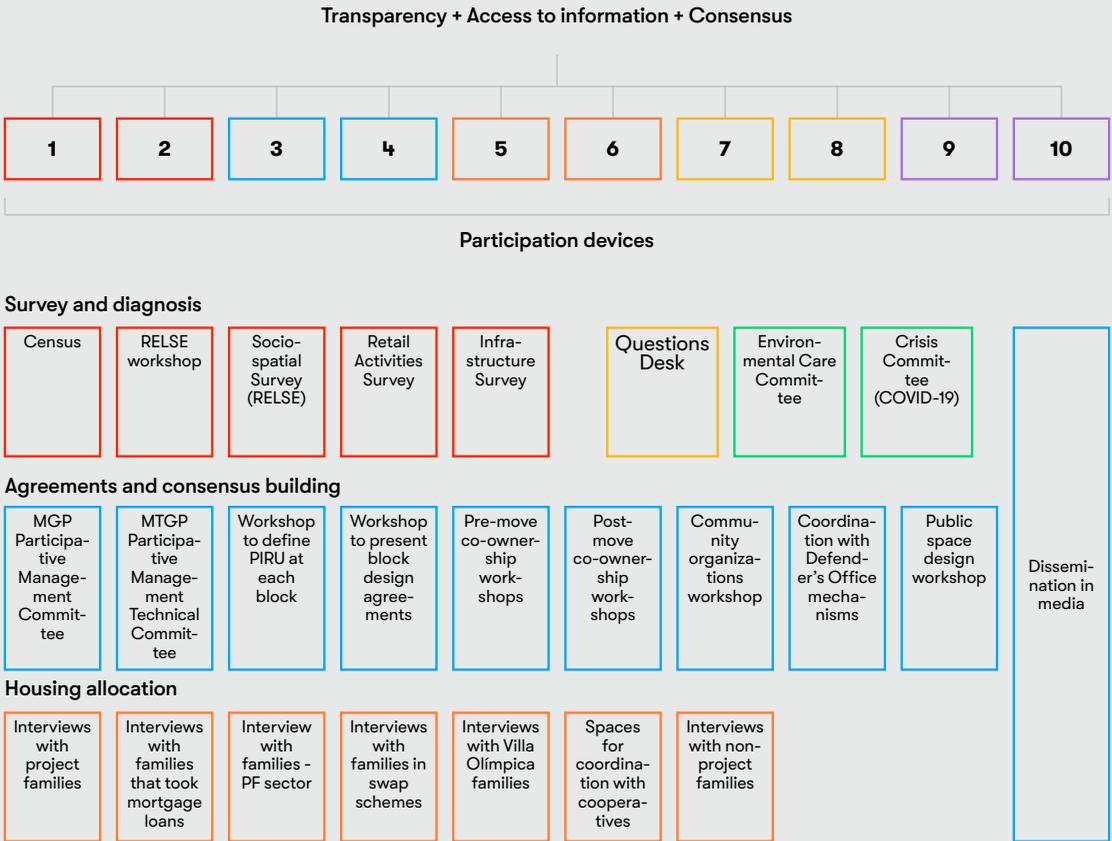
Photo: City of Buenos Aires Housing Institute

- ▶ The historical process of the site must be recognized, as well as the pre-existent communal fabric involved in the social production of the city.
- ▶ The process is not static and its development is conditioned by its context.
- ▶ Stakeholders are ready to participate and to support consensus above their own individual criteria (common objective).
- ▶ Within the framework of participative processes, the dialogue between different types of knowledge is the adequate tool to build consensus.
- ▶ Decisions can be modified and the responsibility for “errors” is accepted collectively.
- ▶ Transparency enables monitoring by everyone involved.
- ▶ The time scale of processes is articulated into short-, medium-, and long-term actions.
- ▶ The variety of participative planning and management tools reinforces consensus building.

d. Participation devices: a holistic conception of joint decision making

Participation is a useful tool for structuring a variety of devices for decision-making at different levels, using different methodological strategies, always within an open-planning system that admits internal changes and adaptations derived from the activities themselves (resilient quality of the process).

Chart 1. Participation devices. Villa 20 coordination team.



Devices are participation spaces conceived mainly for integrating the knowledge from different formal disciplines with the knowledge and practices of the population and its organizations.

Unlike the traditional participative methodology, this way of generating participation spaces allows feedback into the project-process. The main challenge in long intervention processes (spanning over several government administrations) lies in strengthening the social fabric without losing flexibility through a process that, in turn, requires decisions that consolidate it. Organized participation frameworks are a key feature in urban restructuring programs, because they mediate between neighbors, their organizations, and the institutions in charge of materially providing goods and services. Likewise, they are critical for conducting collaborative processes of urban and communal

management, and also for building institutional and local action capacity (Healey, 1997 and 1998).

2. Socio-spatial characterization of Villa 20

Villa 20 is located in the district of Villa Lugano, in Commune 8, and is the fourth most populous settlement in the city of Buenos Aires, where 19.2% of the population (Cosacov, 2011) i.e., approximately 27,900 individuals, live in settlements (IVC, 2016).

The neighborhood itself extends over approximately 48 ha that may be divided into three sectors: a first one which is already “consolidated” in the sense that it has gone through various restructuring projects; the second one may be considered “solid” in the sense that it has not undergone previous interventions and has resulted mainly from the social production of habitat; finally, there is a third adjoining sector called



Above: Location of Villa 20 in the City of Buenos Aires and Commune 8.
 Below: Neighborhood sectors.
 Photo: Villa 20 coordination team

“Papa Francisco” (Pope Francis), the area where the land occupation of 2014 took place, formerly used by the Federal Police as a vehicle tow yard, a portion of which is suitable for building new dwellings.

Villa 20 emerged in the first decades of the 20th century and grew steadily until the seventies, when this process was interrupted by the eradication policies imposed by the military dictatorship. When democracy returned, a repopulation and growth process started which has continued until the present (Bordegaray, 2006).

In the nineties and in the first half of the following decade, the government of the City of Buenos Aires implemented several programs that consolidated a portion of the neighborhood. The following are the main landmarks of the actions carried out in the last twelve years:

- ▶ In 2005, the Urbanization Act for Villa 20 (Act #1770) was passed.
- ▶ In 2008, the law that declared the infrastructure, and environmental and sanitary emergency of the neighborhood (Act #2054) was passed.
- ▶ In 2013, the government of the city proposed a bill entitled “Master Plan for Commune 8”, which authorized selling the 12 ha of the neighborhood to private parties. Resident families reacted and, in February 2014, the area called Papa Francisco Neighborhood was occupied (occupants were ejected in August 2014).

NEIGHBORHOOD LEVEL	1948	2005	2014	2016	2017	2019	2020
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1st settlement in the area • Housing built by the Eva Perón foundation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Urbanization Act #1770 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Occupation of the Papa Francisco area 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Start of Upgrading Process • Creation of the MGP (Participative Management Committee) • Census • Upgrading Act #5705 • Beginning of RELSE (Socio-spatial Survey) • Opening of Health Center (CESAC 43) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1st PIRU (Integral Upgrading Project) Definition Workshop • 1st steps of the Infrastructure Project (SSH) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1st stage of the Infrastructure Project • Last PIRU Definition Workshop • 2nd stage of the Infrastructure Project (IVC) • 1st street opened (Miralla) • Elementary school opened • Expansion of Educational Zone • Creation of the Environmental Care Committee 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1st connection with drinking water infrastructure • Health Center Relocation Project (CESAC 18) • 2nd street opened (Corvalán) • Creation of the COVID-19 Crisis Committee
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1991 • Creation of the 25 de Marzo Cooperative 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2006 • Urbanization Act #2054 (amendment) 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2018 • 1st step of the Papa Francisco Housing Project • RELSE completed • 1st Families relocated • 1st Demolition • 1st Courtyard opened 		

Historical urbanization process. Social production of habitat.

Process for the design of a general model for managing and establishing agreements. Participative design process. Implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

CITY LEVEL	1967	1999	2010	2016	2017	2019	2020
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creation of the Housing Municipal Commission (Act #17.174) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shanty Towns Act (#148) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Occupation of the Indoamerican Park 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creation of the Secretariat for Social and Urban Integration (SISU). Project for Villa 31 and Villa 31 bis • Start of PIRU for the Playón de Chacarita and Rodrigo Bueno neighborhoods (IVC) • ACUMAR Project in Villa 21-24 (IVC) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amendment to Rentals Act • Start of PIRU for Villa 1-11-14 (IVC) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1st families relocated in the Estación Buenos Aires project (PROCREAR) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design of new upgrading processes
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1973 • Creation of the Peronist Shanty Town Residents' Movement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2003 • Creation of the City of Buenos Aires Housing Institute (Act #1251) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2011 • Creation of the Secretariat for Habitat and Inclusion (SECHI) 				
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1974 • Relocation of Villa 7 (Justo Suárez) 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2014 • Master plan for Commune 8 				
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1977 • 1st Project of the National Housing Fund (FONAVI) 						

Process ↔ Project
Project ↔ Process

Complexity
Uncertainty

Open Process
Local Decision-Making



Agreed-upon block layout project. Source: Villa 20 coordination team



2016



2017



2019

Integral Upgrading Project: a) 2016 (process start); b) 2017 (initial agreements, Law #5705 and c) 2019 (all neighborhood blocks with an agreed-upon layout project).
Source: Villa 20 coordination team

3.

The project-process intervention in Villa 20 from a collaborative perspective

a. Project- Process Structuring

In December 2015, there was a political change that aligned the national with the local government, and which drove interventions in the city's shanty towns and settlements (CESBA, 2018). In this new context, the City of Buenos Aires Housing Institute (IVC) tried to forge a closer relationship with neighborhood

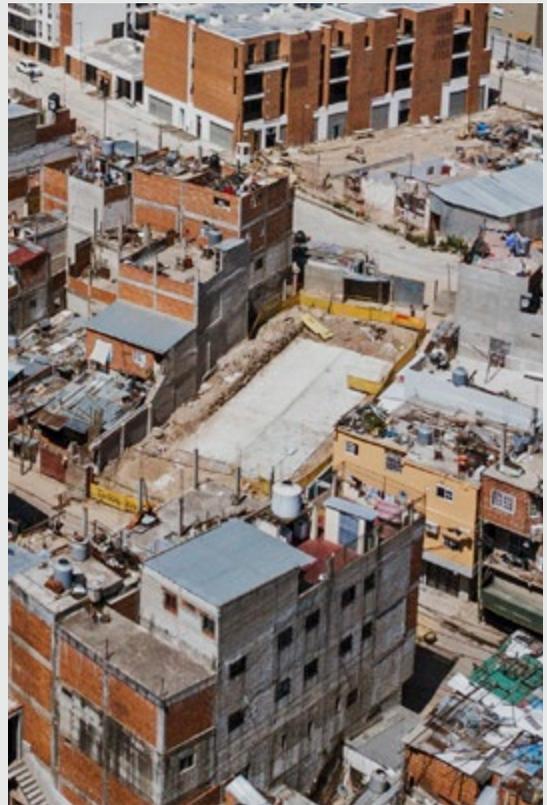
leaders³ in order to start a dialogue about the interventions' objectives and invite relevant stakeholders to participate in the decision-making processes and in the intervention strategy.

Throughout 2016, in order to consider these issues, the Participative Management Committee (*Mesa de Gestión Participativa* or MGP), a multi-stakeholder decision-making space, became established. This body was the result of a process started jointly by the IVC and community organizations. It included reaching micro-agreements with each of the stakeholders involved, on the basis of a common objective: the neighborhood upgrading. Thus, regular meetings were made possible so as to develop structural definitions. Among them, the following may be mentioned:

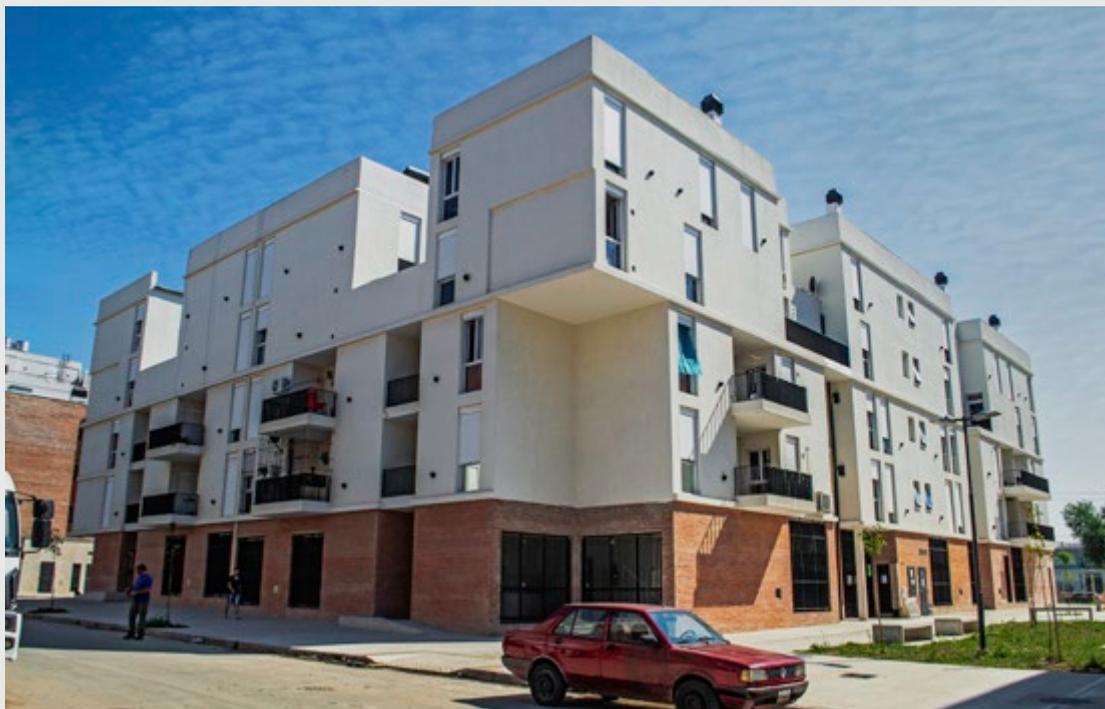
- ▶ a. Design and presentation of an urban and architectural project for the area called *Papa Francisco*.
- ▶ b. Participative design of the 2016 census conducted by IVC.
- ▶ c. Writing and issuing regulations for Bill #5705, which was aimed at upgrading, zoning, and socio-urban integration. The bill was passed in November 2016.⁴
- ▶ d. Participative design of the socio-spatial survey.
- ▶ e. Methodological design and implementation of workshops to define PIRU at each block of houses.
- ▶ f. Presentation of the urban infrastructure project.

b. Results after four years since the project-process was started

The most important result of the project-process was the strengthening of a participative decision-making procedure in order to reach agreements about a common urban governance strategy among the different stakeholders involved. Since the process was consolidated, different results have been achieved in three primary areas of socio-urban integration.



Above left and right: Opening of Miralla street
Below left and right: Configuration and improvement of ventilation and light courtyards
Photo: City of Buenos Aires Housing Institute



New dwellings in the *Papa Francisco* sector. Photo: *Villa 20* coordination team

On the one hand, in terms of *urban integration*, *Villa 20* is the first large-scale neighborhood in the country to have an Integral Upgrading Project (PIRU) collaboratively designed and approved by the stakeholders involved. Demolitions have been completed and streets have been opened following suggestions made at participative design workshops. Significant advances have been made (more than 300 dwellings were demolished, over 550 meters of streets have been opened, and more than 200 ventilation and light courtyards have been built). Finally, works to build infrastructure for basic public services have progressed, as well as the provision of urban facilities (primary school, health center, etc.).

With regard to *housing integration*, upgrading works were performed as a priority in more than 150 homes that required urgent intervention; 1,665 new houses were built (by the end of 2020, approximately 1,000 families moved to their new homes) and houses partially damaged by the opening of streets were also improved. Besides, title deeds for all dwellings thus delivered were properly registered, and associations of co-owners for managing the buildings were established.

Finally, in the area of *socioeconomic integration*, jobs have been generated and residents received introductory training about the job market. Moreover, actions have been taken to promote entrepreneurship and the creation of local-scale undertakings.

4. **Some considerations about the dilemmas derived from collaborative and participative socio-urban integration in large-scale neighborhoods**

Large urban restructuring processes imply long intervention periods and, in the light of urban planning and social participation, they also raise important dilemmas. The main challenge for collaborative management in such situations is, precisely, to foresee future tensions and dilemmas.

The first dilemma is institutional in nature: participative planning involves changing traditional planning rules and urban policies. Therefore, it is necessary to generate and sustain an open planning process that starts from a consensual definition of the project-process and sets short-, medium-, and long-term goals.

The next dilemma to be faced is the coordination



Block design workshops. Photo: City of Buenos Aires Housing Institute

of the collaborative and participative process. Organized participation scenarios have an integrating function; therefore, their coordination is essential to mediate among the different stakeholders involved.

The third dilemma concerns the flexibility needed for the project-process, which is not a pre-defined product but results from a territorial-historical process. Thus, it is important to devise a planning scheme combining several requirements: open management, the population's collaboration and participation in decision-making, a team to deploy the process in the territory, and a variety of participative planning and management tools to enable consensus-making.

The case of *Villa 20* has proven, in the short term, the possibility of undertaking a project-process and obtaining paradigmatic results in the context of the city of Buenos Aires. The approach to large-scale shanty towns still raises questions, especially about the sustainability of the process in the long-term, given a context of changing political scenarios and unstable macroeconomic conditions. Therefore, the challenge is to keep consolidating resilient and collaborative project-processes that apply participative methodologies and seek the consensus of all the stakeholders involved. ■

1. This paper is based on previous works by the same authors (Motta and Almansi, 2017; Motta et al., 2018; Almansi et al., 2020) and expands their content.
2. The IVC was created in 2003 (Act # 1251) as a continuation of the Housing Municipal Commission (*Comisión Municipal de la Vivienda* or *CMV*).
3. Three groups of actors were mainly involved: a) leaders who supported the governing party strengthened the Territorial Unity Team (*Equipo de Unidad Territorial*, EUT); b) leaders aligned with the opposition continued to support the neighborhood Action Committee for Urbanization (*Mesa Activa por la Urbanización*, MAU). This committee had been formed during the takeover of the area called Papa Francisco; it had the professional advice of technicians from the University of Buenos Aires Open Workshop on Social Projects and Open Chair on Communal Engineering (*Taller Libre de Proyecto Social and Cátedra Libre de Ingeniería Comunitaria*) and from other organizations, such as the Civil Association for Equality and Justice (*Asociación Civil por la Igualdad y la Justicia*, ACIJ); and c) other leaders and neighbors not included in the above organizations. In 2019, former members of MAU organized a new group called Residents' Union (*Unidad Vecinal*).
4. The bill was passed by unanimous vote on the first reading and, later on, during the public hearing, orators voiced their unanimous approval; the bill had 100% of positive votes on the second reading. It was the first act passed within the framework of upgrading processes carried out in the last five years.

The Pact for Public Spaces: A commitment for Peruvian local governments

Authors

Lucía Nogales, Lia Alarcón, Cynthia Shimabukuro¹



Training sessions for officials of municipalities which signed the Pact, 2019

Even if public spaces are key for the dynamics of cities, and a cultural expression of their residents, they also reflect the inequality that affects the Latin American region. In the case of the city of Lima, there is a deficit, on average, of one thousand nine hundred hectares of public spaces for leisure purposes, and most of this deficit is in the lowest income districts (Castro & Huaman, 2021). Today, the importance of public spaces has become even more evident, as they pose a lower risk of COVID-19 contagion, for the reason that they are open spaces and enable proper physical distancing.

However, both the implementation of improved public spaces and the development of a more equitable, human and resilient city find several obstacles in cities like Lima, including the limitations inherent in traditional urbanism practices applied by governments, administrative fragmentation, discontinuation of public policies when a new administration takes office, and the inflexibility of urban plans incapable of keeping pace with the current transformation of cities.

The purpose of this article is to show the potential of the Pact for Public Spaces as an innovative alternative to traditional urbanism, and as a dynamic coordination, planning, transparency and guiding tool that may inform local urban policies, providing an alternative to their administrative constraints. Thus, the following topics are discussed below: (i) the importance and the role of public spaces in Latin America, and the challenges and problems faced by local governments; (ii) the potential of social pacts as instruments for planning, coordination and transparency; (iii) the implementation process of the Pact for Public Spaces in Peru; and (iv) its potential to be scaled up in the Latin American region.

The importance of public spaces

The different urbanization processes of Latin American cities and their economic development over the past three decades have resulted in a mosaic of intense transformations that gave rise to dispersed and fragmented urban structures, thus contributing to increased socioeconomic and territorial inequalities (Ziccardi, 2015). As regards public space, there are certain common problems in the region, including the prioritization of space for privately owned cars over that used by pedestrians, restrictions on the use of

“quality” spaces often designed for merely decorative purposes, the emergence of malls as new “social spaces”, and the exclusion of those people who use public space to work.

These conditions have resulted in increased insecurity, generating discontent and mistrust among citizens (Segovia, 2005), and have contributed to making society more centered on the individual, as opposed to strengthening the social fabric and promoting the common good. Besides, in low-income neighborhoods, investment in public spaces is neglected, deepening the situation of vulnerability in which more than 113.4 million people live, according to UN-Habitat (Duhalde, 2014).

In spite of all this, certain experiences in the region have shown that changes in urban policy may contribute to the development of integrating and inclusive public spaces, designed with a focus on people and capable of cultural and symbolic representation, and which contribute to the health and economy of the area’s diverse population, including the most vulnerable sectors. According to Segovia (2005), examples of such policies are ensuring an intense use of public spaces by enabling a combination of activities in low-income neighborhoods, designing facilities connected to transportation points, encouraging the use of quality materials to confer prestige to a site, and fostering the orderly allocation of space to diverse —commercial, residential, cultural and social— uses, to reduce the effects of conflictive (deteriorated or abandoned) spaces. To conclude, a good policy focused on public spaces should decrease the existing inequality, reduce urban fragmentation, improve community relations and guarantee the full exercise of citizens’ rights.

Problems faced by local governments: the case of Lima, Peru

In recent years, the tasks and duties of local governance systems in Latin America have been increasingly decentralized (Zurbriggen, 2011) in pursuit of greater efficiency and efficacy in the decision-making process, given that local municipalities are closer to the needs of the community. However, as the author also notes, local governments face limitations that may hinder their work, such as the lack of resources and technical capacity to execute projects, or short or unstable terms in office that affect

the planning of long-term processes, the continuity of policies, and the definition of common approaches and criteria.

In addition, Latin American cities face political and administrative fragmentation, which has a direct impact on the perception of urban problems and, consequently, on the solutions proposed through urban projects at different scales. According to a study conducted by Lanfranchi and Bidart (2016), the city of Lima² is, together with Belo Horizonte, second in the ranking of metropolitan areas with the highest number of officially recognized municipalities in Latin America. Each of Lima's municipalities constitutes an administrative unit and structure with "duties, authority and budget to plan and execute its own public policies" (Bensa, 2017, p. 243).

This means that fifty governments are responsible for planning and managing separate solutions to the common problems of the city, with no direction or criteria that can guide them towards the same goal. This is aggravated when the urban plans and strategies proposed by a government are truncated by the arrival of a new administration every four years, if there is no political will to give continuity to such plans and strategies. This not only results in the waste of the economic and human resources invested in developing such plans and strategies, but also contributes to the dissatisfaction and discontent of citizens,³ who do not see any tangible changes for addressing the city's major problems.

In this context, there is an absence, not only of innovative planning tools, but also of mechanisms to monitor performance and to overcome the barriers arising from administrative fragmentation. In Peru, even if there is a regulatory framework applicable to the diverse instruments to be developed according to the level of government—regional, provincial or by district— and to the scope of each type of instrument—strategic planning, territorial conditioning and land management— (Dammert-Guardia, 2021), the different rules, proceedings and laws are developed independently from each other; as a result, conflicts, contradictions and lack of clarity arise among them. Moreover, there is no binding obligation to control or enforce compliance with such regulations (Dammert-Guardia & Lozada, 2021).



Pact first signed by municipalities at the 2019 FIU

The potential of social pacts as planning tools

Social pacts, understood as explicit agreements between diverse stakeholders following discussion processes (ECLAC, 2010), are tools that have been used at different times and places to establish the criteria for promoting joint actions aimed at addressing specific issues —access to education, health, etc.— or temporary situations —political or war conflicts. According to ECLAC:

A social covenant requires and promotes changes in political action. It results in a more proactive state, stronger mechanisms of legitimacy and representativeness, stronger engagement on the part of economic agents, and the participation of various social stakeholders, together with the creation of appropriate forums. The covenant is a process rather than a result (2010, p. 246).

Besides, social covenants can have varied contents and involve diverse stakeholders. One of their main advantages is the possibility of establishing roadmaps or guidelines agreed upon by representatives of different social sectors, and, as social covenants do not stem from governmental institutions, they are politically unbiased and thus transcend the political and administrative cycles under which these operate, thus ensuring more sustainable processes. Moreover, their impact may be local, but they may be potentially applied at the national and regional scale.

Process for implementation of the Pact for Public Spaces

In 2019, the process to create the first Pact for Public Spaces was initiated in Peru⁴ for local governments. At present, the purpose of the Pact is to provide lines of action and shared and specific commitments to design and manage public spaces, to foster and exhibit good practices in these spaces, and to provide local governments with training on approaches that promote the development of a more equitable and resilient city. Thus, the Pact is intended to be a planning tool to improve urban public policy and an instrument for citizens to work jointly with municipal governments and authorities, so as to improve the management and quality of public spaces (Ocupa Tu Calle, 2019).

The Pact is comprised of:

- ▶ **The coordination team**⁵, which is responsible for directing and guiding tasks, developing instruments, managing training sessions for officials, sharing relevant tools and promoting new networks.
- ▶ **The technical committee**⁶, which provides technical and institutional support and contributes by providing training and specific tools to public servants, in addition to helping identify pilot projects.
- ▶ **The sponsors**⁷, responsible for aligning their ongoing projects with the commitments under the Pact through their capacity for action and for process financing. They also cooperate in facilitating training to local governments.
- ▶ **The local governments**⁸, which implement the commitments and report on indicators.
- ▶ **The citizens**, responsible for controlling and monitoring compliance with the commitments by their local governments.

The first document (2019) included five areas: inclusion and citizen security, sustainable mobility, environment and city, street furniture and equipment, and citizen participation and governance. There were commitments and goals, as well as measurement

DIAGRAM OF ACTORS OF THE PACT



indicators for each of them, which were developed jointly with the authorities involved.⁹ Even if the goals were set by the municipalities themselves according to their capacities, the task was difficult for many and, ultimately, only eight municipal governments set goals and reported on them.¹⁰ On the one side, some municipalities did not know exactly how to make the required calculations, and on the other side, as goals were expressed in terms of precise numbers, many were concerned about how citizens would react if they were not achieved.

In 2020, as the pandemic struck, the context and the priorities changed, and new challenges arose for cities due to the spread of COVID-19. This led to a need to update the initial document so as to adjust public spaces to the physical distancing requirements and prevention measures to avoid contagion. However, the changes and the uncertainty that marked 2020 hindered the process, and it was not possible to report on the results of the different municipalities that were still participating. Therefore, the Pact for Public Spaces 2021 has been adjusted to respond to the new requirements posed by the pandemic with six new lines of action: inclusion, sustainable mobility, environment, infrastructure and collective facilities, culture and citizens, and transparency.

Among the main results of the activities completed throughout 2021, following an invitation to all seventeen participating municipalities, a data bank

has been created with the potential sites where seed projects may be conducted to improve the quality of public space. Thanks to coordination with a course held by Ocupa Tu Calle, in which the draft designs of two interventions on said sites were developed, and to the sponsorship provided by GIZ, the surroundings of markets in two neighborhoods were improved through street furniture and painting interventions.

Coordination with the Pact's sponsors has led to the development of projects that are of interest for companies themselves. As an example, Qroma, a company dedicated to the paint business, invited the participating municipalities to perform a painting intervention in a potential site through the Arcoiris (or "rainbow") project¹¹ methodology. Seven municipalities responded to the initiative, proposing sixteen areas. The long-term purpose is to work in coordination with more companies and sponsors, so as to expand and conduct more interventions like this one in different areas of the city.

In addition to the direct enhancement of public spaces, the Pact is also intended to contribute to the training of those responsible for its implementation. To this end, a training program has been set up, supplemented with sessions to exchange good practices, for municipalities to share the projects they are undertaking and engage in mutual learning. In 2021, five training sessions have been held, with one hundred and seven attending officials. These sessions have been organized with the aid of the sponsors and institutions of the technical committee, and their content was related to the six areas covered by the Pact. In addition, the municipalities have access to a data bank of tools and guidelines developed by the central government or international technical cooperation entities, and which are often unknown to local governments.

Lastly, as regards citizen participation, it has been proposed that community members play an active role in the whole process through a strategy to control compliance with the Pact for Public Spaces. This strategy empowers citizens to report any irregularity in connection with the commitments undertaken by the relevant municipality and/or the management of public spaces in their cities. Citizens report these events via an online form, and the coordination team contacts the corresponding municipality to find a solution to the situation

DIAGRAM OF THE AREAS COVERED BY THE PACT



reported. This strategy has enabled the resolution of four reports filed.

Conclusions

Local governments have to deal with a system that tends to hinder timely, efficient and effective actions. In an increasingly complex context, where decisions are needed in order to solve, not only historically neglected issues, but also new crises, and where a speedier execution of projects is also demanded, it is essential to identify mechanisms that provide the necessary support for conducting these projects and that enable greater continuity and better contact with citizens.

Pacts, regarded as processes, whatever their content, entail a mechanism of collective learning about democratic culture, negotiation rules, reciprocity of rights, and the disposition to surrender one's own rights for the common good (Hopenhayn, 2014, p. 24). In this regard, the Pact for Public Spaces is an instrument for urban planning that is easy to implement and able to address the issues faced by public spaces, which have been long disregarded in the national urban agenda. The Pact guides, supplements and supports local public policies to promote common action criteria, with a view to improving the quality of life in public space. The Pact further pursues approaches agreed upon by the different administrations of the city, and seeks to contribute to their continuity by making citizens involved as

essential stakeholders in charge of follow-up.

The Pact for Public Spaces is intended as a tool to leverage the knowledge of municipalities and other stakeholders about the urban problems in their districts, encouraging opportunities for coordination and knowledge exchange among all actual and potential participants, such as local governments, the national state, specialized technical institutions, private companies and civil society.

This article describes the process of the Pact for Public Spaces implemented in Peru and its potential to be promoted in other cities and countries of the region. Even if the region currently faces a crisis of a magnitude that is impossible to ascertain, citizens, as this book shows, are increasingly active and concerned about their public spaces. It is precisely the strength of the citizen-led urbanism movement that can advance agreements for the common good, involving the necessary stakeholders so that responsibilities, rights and rules can be established that provide opportunities for harmonious relations among society or community members. In the face of any crisis, social organization and coordination processes need to be strengthened to guarantee democratic spaces that contribute to improving the quality of life in our territories. ■

1. My special thanks to Héliida Quispe, who coordinates the Pact for Public Spaces and who collaborated with the review of the information.
2. The structure of the metropolitan area of Lima is special within the country because Lima is the capital city, so it operates as the local government, but it is also vested with the competence and authority of a regional government. Within the province of Lima, there are forty-three districts under the scope of the Metropolitan Municipality of Lima, as well as seven other districts which comprise the Constitutional Province of Callao.
3. According to the last survey conducted by the Lima Cómo Vamos citizen observatory, 45.2 % of Lima's residents are not satisfied with public space in their neighborhood (Lima Cómo Vamos, 2019).
4. The Pact for Public Spaces has been promoted by the Lima Cómo Vamos citizen observatory, through its public spaces project, Ocupa Tu Calle, and it is supported by a technical committee composed of national authorities, international cooperation organizations, academic partner institutions and civil society.
5. Lima Cómo Vamos citizen observatory and Ocupa Tu Calle project.
6. Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Housing, Construction and Sanitation, Ministry of Women and Vulnerable Populations, CAF, IDB, Urban95, Plan International.
7. European Union, GIZ German Cooperation and Qroma.
8. Municipality of Surquillo, Municipality of San Bartolo, Municipality of Miraflores, Municipality of San Borja, Municipality of Barranco, Municipality of Pueblo Libre, Municipality of Magdalena, Municipality of Jesús María, Municipality of Lince, Provincial Municipality of Callao, Provincial Municipality of Piura, Provincial Municipality of Cusco, Municipality of La Molina, Municipality of San Juan de Miraflores, Provincial Municipality of Arequipa, Municipality of La Victoria, Metropolitan Municipality of Lima.
9. At the beginning, twelve municipalities joined the initiative, and committed to it at the IV International Forum on Urban Interventions (Lima, Peru, 2019).
10. In 2020, goals were replaced by indicators.
11. More information at <https://www.qroma.com.pe/sostenibilidad/>.

The Inter-American Development Bank Cities LAB

Author

Alessandra Richter



Background

In recent years, the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) has promoted the creation of multisectoral solutions to face evident urban challenges in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC). In 2016, the Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Division was created, as part of the Climate Change and Sustainable Development Sector, to support sustainable and productive urbanization for the benefit of homes in the cities of Latin America and the Caribbean. As part of the HUD knowledge portfolio, the Cities Laboratory (Cities LAB), a platform for innovation and experimentation, was created in 2017.

Why an urban innovation lab in the IDB?

The LAB is intended to supplement the IDB's capacity to generate operations and knowledge for the benefit of cities in the region, providing opportunities for co-design and experimentation. This platform makes it possible to strengthen innovation processes for creating solutions to complex urban challenges. It also enables experimentation in areas of potential lending, or during the first stage of loans, so as to include innovative approaches to medium- or long-term operations.

There is a demand in the region for governments to increase their capacities for innovation and experimentation processes. This demand cannot always be met through the design cycles of the projects implemented by the IDB. The LAB seeks to meet this demand at the local level, adapting innovation processes to the local context and strengthening local governments' capacities to create innovative solutions with long-term impacts.

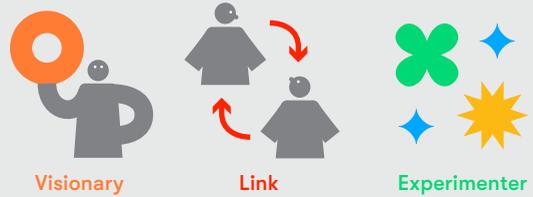
Purpose and roles

The main purpose of the Cities LAB is to facilitate and foster experimentation and innovation in LAC cities, and in connection with the IDB's operations related to them. The LAB seeks to multiply good practices in urban innovation by playing three main roles (Figure 1):

▶ **1. Visionary.** It identifies and analyzes innovation trends worldwide. It rethinks cities to identify opportunities for innovation and novel solutions within the framework of the IDB's operations. In this role, the LAB helps to recognize challenges

Figure 1.

Roles of the IDB Cities LAB. Source: IDB



in LAC cities which may be addressed through an experimentation approach. The LAB applies two methods to identify challenges:

- **Demand-driven innovation.** The partner, an IDB country specialist, or the customer identifies and points out a challenge which may potentially be addressed through innovation.

- **Spark-driven innovation.** The LAB identifies opportunities through research, ongoing mapping, exploration activities and open innovation challenges.

▶ **2. Link.** It creates opportunities for coordination and exchange among cities, IDB teams and other relevant stakeholders, such as civil society, academia and the private sector, in order to validate, leverage and bolster the innovative solutions which are meant to be tested and implemented. For example, in the urban experimentation processes described in this book (La Gaviota and Norma Estrella Parks, Active Territory, Panama Walks and The Return to Public Life), the role of the Cities LAB was bringing together different stakeholders: citizens, the public sector, academia and urban technicians and/or activists.

▶ **3. Experimenter.** It promotes and provides technical assistance to city governments for the materialization, financing and execution of experimentation projects through iterative design, implementation and evaluation processes. The LAB generates the capacities and synergies required so that the projects may potentially be turned into public policies, should they prove successful.

The Cities LAB iterative process

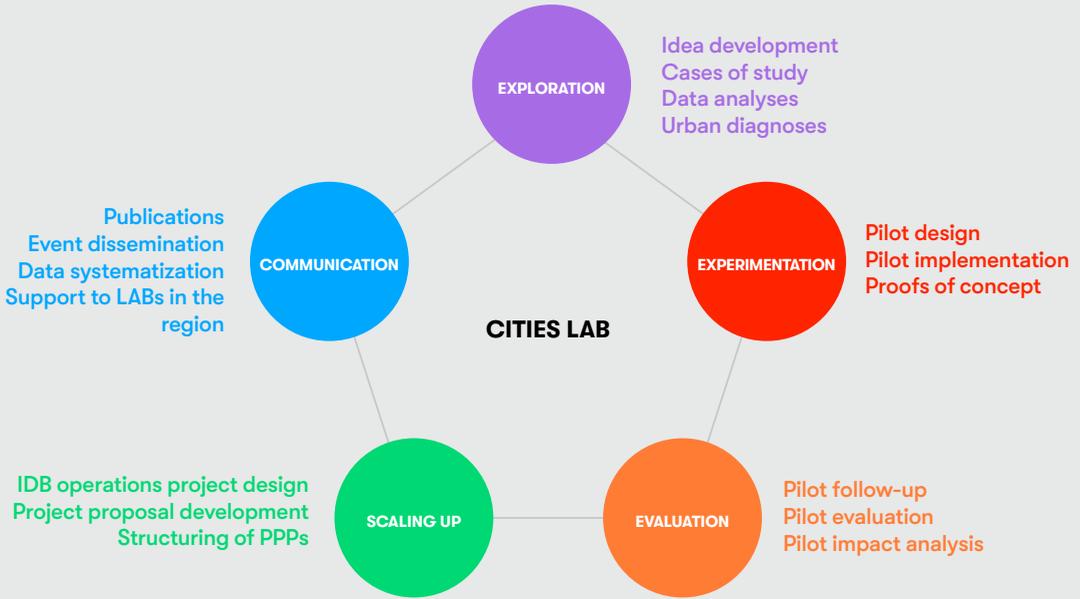
The LAB understands urban innovation as an adaptation process where urban challenges must be rethought, in order to understand both their causes and consequences. In this way, the proposed solutions can be redesigned and improved on an ongoing basis.

Over its four years of existence (2017 – 2021), the LAB has applied an iterative process, similar to design thinking, to test and refine urban solutions. This process consists of five steps implemented on a flexible, non-linear, basis (Figure 2). In each phase, the LAB uses and/or develops a number of tools to attain its purposes.

- ▶ **1. Exploration.** The LAB has completed more than twenty exploration activities including, among others, contests (in universities, civil society or among different cities), placemaking forums, knowledge exchange programs and brainstorming sessions. Through these activities, the LAB identifies the challenges shared by cities and proposes innovative ideas and solutions. These activities also facilitate the engagement of relevant stakeholders in urban innovation processes. Two examples are The Return to Public Life ideathon, developed in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the contest for universities to revitalize the historic neighborhood of San Telmo, in Buenos Aires.
- ▶ **2. Experimentation.** The LAB, together with local governments, has designed and implemented prototypes and strategies on a temporary and experimental basis. These experiments are undertaken as proofs of concept to verify whether a certain hypothesis is valid or not, and also to test the validity of the solution proposed through diverse tools and approaches, such as tactical urbanism, participative processes, digital and technological tools and urban art. The LAB has conducted more than twenty-five experimental projects on different topics, including the revitalization of historic downtowns (see Chart), the reactivation of public spaces, sustainable mobility, the management of solid waste and the monitoring of informality. Cases in point are the use of drones to monitor the growth of informal
- ▶ **3. Evaluation.** The LAB monitors and assesses the results of experimental projects by means of quantitative and qualitative tools, to measure the impact of interventions and determine their relevance. Furthermore, the LAB has helped local governments to assess their existing projects through innovative methods. The LAB has used several instruments, such as perception surveys, digital tools for data collection, impact assessments and big data analysis. Some examples are the evaluation of the Panama Walks (*Panamá Camina*) pilot project using data from Waze, and the evaluation of the City of Buenos Aires Culture Pass program.
- ▶ **4. Scaling-up.** To be scaled up, a project needs to be feasible, attractive from a cost-benefit perspective, and there has to be political will on the part of local governments to turn these experiments into public policies. As an example, to continue with the Conscious Street (*Calles Conscientes*) tactical urbanism pilot project in Rionegro, Colombia, the city's new government used the lessons learned and the installed capacity to undertake its own initiatives in public space within the COVID-19 context.
- ▶ **5. Communication.** The LAB shares experiences and lessons learned through its web page, social media and other means of communication. The LAB also generates opportunities for connection and contact between cities and diverse stakeholders, such as academia, the private sector, other areas of the IDB and other international organizations. Examples of this are IncubaLab, an event that gathers urban labs, and the dissemination of projects on social media.

areas (Manaus, Brazil) and the project for the activation of public spaces in Ciudad Juan Bosch (Santo Domingo Este, Dominican Republic).

Figure 2.
IDB Cities LAB five-stage process. Source: IDB



Revitalizing historic downtowns and innovating

By Isidora Larraín

Why pursue urban experiments in historic downtowns?

It might seem counterintuitive to pick the most consolidated areas of a city for experimentation. However, historic downtowns often face functional and physical obsolescence processes that translate into decay, neglect, overcrowding, or underuse. Urban experimentation offers new alternatives to the traditional systems, in order to put an end to longstanding deterioration processes and channel the energy of central areas towards new directions.

The Cities LAB approaches historic downtowns through processes that assess reversible alternatives and make it possible, on the one hand, to mitigate progressive deterioration or neglect, and on the other, to test, analyze and temporarily evaluate new formulas to improve the use and preservation of downtowns in the medium and long term. The LAB's actions in historic downtowns follow four criteria (Figure 3): i) reversibility, taking care of heritage spaces; ii) temporality, with intervention timelines being limited to some months; iii) low relative cost, as compared to permanent interventions; iv) high impact, mostly in terms of enhancing the value of heritage and changing the community's perceptions about its urban landscape.

Over half of the pilot projects conducted by the Cities LAB were developed in historic downtowns. This is evidence of the strong need of cities in the region for new solutions in these areas. The exploration conducted by the LAB is part of a worldwide trend in architecture and urbanism¹ which consists of developing creative and innovative processes in cities on a series of layers of historic elements that must coexist and form a consistent whole with new interventions.

Figure 4.

Summary of the experimentation toolkit for urban centers. Source: Own elaboration.

TOOLKIT



Figure 3. Summary of the IDB Cities LAB's four criteria for urban experimentation in historic downtowns. Source: Own elaboration.

4 CRITERIA. INTERVENTIONS



Figure 5.
IDB Cities LAB project cycle since 2021. Source: IDB



Why experiment in historic downtowns?

In heritage spaces and historic downtowns, value is usually placed on historic assets, and respect for the past is prioritized (Otero-Pailós, 2016), whereas present-day needs are not necessarily met. However, giving continuity to the sustainable use of heritage in cities ensures its preservation.

How to experiment in historic downtowns?

The LAB has used diverse tools that facilitate access to the territory, so as to optimize interventions in historic downtowns (Figure 2). Some examples worth mentioning are Panama Walks (Panama), São Luís de Maranhão (Brazil) and Paramaribo (Surinam) (Larraín de Andraca, van Doorn & Lanting, 2020).

Five major common lessons have been learned through experimentation in historic areas:

1. Contests and initial events. Contests and events, such as festivals, are valuable elements when included in a process that enables the collective improvement of an area. The validation process, bringing to the same table the winners of the competition, public agencies, and the community, enables an interesting transition from innovative ideas to actual projects, and facilitates reaching a consensus. Examples: Hermanitas de los Pobres, in Santiago, Chile

(Echenique, n.d.) and Bajo Autopista San Telmo in the City of Buenos Aires, Argentina (IDB, 2019).

2. Application for loans or investment funds.

Working on projects that have been granted loans or have pre-allocated funds, or which have applied for long-term solutions, makes it possible to test and scale up investments, introducing any necessary adjustments. The experiment involved also serves as a catalyst or basis, in the short or medium term, to provide grounds for the impacts of innovation, in the framework of a loan or long-term public policy.

3. Optional new technologies. The incorporation of new technologies may contribute to data collection and analysis, participatory processes, impact assessments, and to recording audiovisual material. However, these new technologies are a means to an end, rather than an end in themselves. Often the simplest methods or analogous tools are more effective. For example, observers on site may capture more precise qualitative information than the technologies implemented. In the Panama Walks pilot project, Waze and Google data, together with observation on the ground, were used to assess the traffic resulting from pedestrianization.

4. Replication by adaptation. Methodologies require creative and tailor-made adjustments so that they can be replicated. Historic downtowns are essentially unique, which means that



their particular social, economic, cultural and environmental context needs to be considered.

5. Co-design with different stakeholders.

It is a good practice to reinforce national and local² capacities for the co-design, adjustment and continuity of interventions. These processes are developed with interdisciplinary teams, capable of translating tangible and intangible aspects into design criteria. Local partners inherit temporary interventions, and are the agents of sustained change.

Where is the best place to experiment within my city?

Today, cities' historic downtowns are often smaller, but their mixed structure serves diverse functions which coexist in limited areas, and offer opportunities for small-scale experiments which can be replicated in the rest of the city (Carrión, 2017). According to Habitat III (<https://habitat3.org>), historic downtowns are, in general, an example of a sustainable and compact city³.

Next steps

Based upon the lessons learned over its first years, the Cities Laboratory will continue to contribute to catalyzing and promoting urban innovation in cities. The LAB pursues the strengthening of a long-term approach that may help institutionalize public policies under local governments and that may be aligned with the IDB's loan operations. To this end, the LAB is working on the following aspects:

- ▶ Development of strategic alliances with key stakeholders that will supplement innovation work, such as HUD Cities Network, IDB Lab (through the start-ups approach), IDB Invest (working with the private sector) and the IDB Knowledge, Innovation and Communication Sector.
- ▶ Promotion of spaces for connection and coordination among innovation entities of the local and national governments, academia and civil society, to promote learning about intra-regional and international experiences.



- ▶ Consolidation of experimentation methodologies, to contribute to the pursuit of innovative solutions in a wider range of urban topics, apart from the activation of public spaces and the revitalization of historic downtowns, areas where the LAB has already become a point of reference.
- ▶ Strengthening of capacities of governments of the cities in the region to conduct experimentation and innovation processes, e.g., through mentorship and technical assistance programs for co-designing, implementing and evaluating pilot projects.
- ▶ Contribution to the development of urban labs or urban innovation units, so as to multiply experimentation efforts in LAC. ■

1. This trend, often mentioned by the Danish architect Bjarke Ingels, aims at design evolution rather than revolution. In other words, the creative and innovative processes in the contemporary city are linked to the concept of *tabula plena*. This concept emerges in contrast to the idea of the *tabula rasa*, or clean slate, proposed by the English philosopher John Locke. Under the *tabula rasa* concept, a problem (or an urbanism / architectural intervention) is initially looked at from the perspective of a child, without any preconceptions or established rules. The point is to act freely, from one's own experience or perception (without the influence of previous ones). The *tabula rasa* approach was very powerful among modernist movements, which would renew an area or plot of land mainly through the total demolition of any existing structure.

2. In the case of protected heritage, many countries in the region have to coordinate national and local level teams to intervene in these spaces. An urban experiment is also an opportunity to demonstrate the results of coordinated work and invite others to activate heritage areas using revised processes and permits.

3. This is so because they feature spaces for pedestrians, walkability to various services, old trees, spots that symbolize the city's history and identity, and multiple experimental possibilities for promoting inclusion, eco-efficiency, resilience, and collaboration in our cities.

From citizen-led action to public policy: Urban laboratories in Quito

Authors

Roberto Madera-Arends, Ninike Celi-Atala



Between 2016 and 2019, the Itinerant Laboratories of Tactical Urbanism (LIUT, by their acronym in Spanish) developed six projects in the city of Quito. In 2020, the motivations and principles underlying these projects were turned into an urban development public policy for the Metropolitan District of Quito. The ideas of *pilot projects*, *experiments* and *collaborative urbanism* made their way into formal municipal urban development departments, namely, the Metropolitan District of Quito Municipality's Secretariat for Territory, Habitat and Housing (STHV), thanks to an endless number of experiences, lessons learned, milestones, stakeholders and individual wills.

Although the LIUTs were not the first tactical urbanism experiences in Quito —and will not be the last ones—, it is true that they embody the principles and motivations that drive collaborative work and citizen-led action for the improvement of the urban environment, the reinforcement of neighborhood organization, social cohesion and the pursuit of public policy decisions that may facilitate replicating such experiences in the rest of the city.

The inclusion of collaborative urbanism practices in the policies of the city of Quito was influenced, not only by initiatives like the LIUTs, but also by some projects of the Municipality of Vienna's Urban Planning Department. The methodology and concepts used for the projects in Vienna were shared with Quito's STHV through a professional exchange initiative organized by the IDB Cities LAB. The purpose of this professional exchange was to learn how the Municipality of Vienna's Urban Planning Department, an urban development regulatory body, plays an enabling role to understand and help the innovation ecosystem that promotes the appropriation and improvement of public space through the practice known as *placemaking* (see Box 1). Thanks to the exchange with Vienna, the political will of the authorities at the time and the hard teamwork within the STHV, it was possible to create the Urban Laboratories project, which would imitate experiences such as those developed by the LIUTs, as well as other placemaking actions from different cities in the world.

Given the local and international experiences identified, the inflexibility of the current regulations governing public space, the lack of clear procedures to enable citizens to occupy public space and the

socio-spatial inequalities which were worsened by the COVID-19 pandemic, the team at the STHV raised the need to experiment with urbanism concepts that could create a friendlier city for pedestrians, cyclists and nature. It was also considered necessary to include citizen participation methods for data collection, joint design and management, and for the monitoring and evaluation of interventions, so that cross-sectoral regulations could be updated and proposed. This approach gained political support from the municipal authorities, including the Mayor of Quito. This was decisive for having regulations about urban laboratories created and obtaining the commitment of other social actors to implement them and maintain them.

Below are a number of experiences, milestones and lessons learned throughout the process of designing public policy about urban laboratories in the Municipality of Quito.

The Exchange between Vienna and Quito: placemaking in public policy

The professional exchange between the cities of Vienna and Quito took place during July and August 2019. This exchange consisted of one public servant from Quito's Secretariat for Territory, Habitat and Housing taking part in the work developed by the Urban Planning Department of the Municipality of Vienna (Egger, 2020).

The professional exchange focused on public space and how a municipal regulatory body can play an enabling role to understand and strengthen the ecosystem of innovation and interventions in public space.

One of the most important projects for the topic addressed here is the one called PlaceCity, implemented jointly by the City of Vienna, the City of Oslo and other stakeholders from civil society, business and academia with placemaking experience. The project intends to map and understand placemaking initiatives and stakeholders in Vienna and Oslo, in order to create public space reactivation tools in both cities.

The PlaceCity project studies actions performed in public space which are based on very diverse approaches, such as art, road safety, physical activity, economic reactivation, urban agriculture, gardening, etc., but most of them are not considered by regulations, so neither citizens nor the municipal government itself can find a way to replicate these projects efficiently in the rest of the city. Thus, the Municipality steps aside and, instead of acting on public space in the most orthodox and conventional way dictated by the regulations in force, strives to learn about the motivations, methodology, funding sources and success factors of innovative interventions, in order to replicate them as urban revitalization strategies.

One of the most relevant lessons learned from this professional exchange was the importance of advancing joint projects between stakeholders both inside and outside the city government structure. In this way, those who are part of a project's consortium leave their comfort zone and stop working in silos, in order to conduct joint activities and reach common goals. This avoids nonconstructive criticism, which often stems from lack of knowledge about the context of a project.

Citizen-led action: The Itinerant Laboratories of Tactical Urbanism (LIUTs)

The LIUT are collaborative exercises at the neighborhood scale, conceived to improve public space conditions on the basis of the problems and needs identified by the community of local residents. Such problems and needs become proposals which are co-designed and later implemented in a neighborhood *minga*¹. The entire process develops as a citizen-led action, with no municipal planning or financial support. The purpose of the LIUTs is not only to improve the neighborhood through citizen-led action, but also to have this multi-stakeholder participatory methodology turned into a public policy, so that it can be adopted and replicated by other neighborhoods in the city.

From 2016 to 2019, six interventions took place in Quito, in the neighborhoods of Santa Clara and La Pisulí (2016), San Juan Alto and Toctiuco (2017),

La Lucha de los Pobres (2018) and Los Anglicanos de Guamaní (2019). Except for Santa Clara, all of these are underserved neighborhoods located in the periphery of the city, and some of them are called “informal neighborhoods”. They feature elevated criminal insecurity rates, highly unsafe roads, sidewalks and corners in a bad state of repair, neglected green areas, no inclusive urban furniture and accumulation of solid waste, among other problems. However, a distinctive feature of these places is their strong communal organization, an essential factor to put a LIUT project into practice. The six interventions undertaken consisted of seven pedestrian crossings, improvements and the placing of new equipment in four children's parks, three artistic murals, four artistic interventions in stairs, the reconditioning of two community parks and a *minga* for cleaning a natural stream and planting trees in the area.

In the development and materialization of the LIUT projects, the neighborhood community residents are considered as experts: they know historical, cultural, identity and demographic details that supplement the information surveyed by municipal or national authorities. Together with students and professors of the Urban Design subject of the Central University of Ecuador School of Architecture and Urbanism (FAU, UCE), neighborhood residents share information and co-design public space elements that fit their needs.

In parallel, the YoutHub collective strengthens collaboration networks with other stakeholders with the potential and the will to support each neighborhood intervention, and also organize and facilitate workshops with the inhabitants. The local authority is one stakeholder within the collaborative structure of the LIUTs, whether it is a person or a municipal regulatory body, since this stakeholder is viewed as a means to turn this methodology into a public policy.

It was clear from the six interventions carried out by the LIUTs that each experience was a learning process for everyone involved: (i) residents enhance their citizen participation skills and learn about new tools to improve their neighborhoods; (ii) students learn about and experience a collaborative urbanism action together with the community, understanding the residents' needs so as to design plans and proposals that can solve real problems; (iii) local authorities discover new forms to connect



Above right and left: Intervention in public space during the LIUT project *minga* at the Los Anglicanos de Guamani neighborhood. Photo: María José Freire, 2019. Left and center: Stairs before and after the LIUT intervention in the Lucha de los Pobres neighborhood. Photo: María José Freire, 2018. Right: *Minga* and intervention with murals in Chimbacalle. Source: Secretariat for Territory, Habitat and Housing, 2020

with the community, as well as unconventional ways to improve public space; and (iv) civil society as a whole reinforces its holistic approach in order to promote sustainable urban development.

The challenge is to turn these experiences into an input of formal municipal procedures for urban development, so that new and updated regulations about public space and mobility may not reproduce unsustainable models. Very significantly, public servants who are responsible for urban planning and development make direct contact with the co-designed projects and interventions, so that they can understand that there are neighborhood-specific problems which require targeted solutions, and that these can be built from the bottom up. The realization that regulations cannot be applied in exactly the same way across the entire city gives rise to the need to create spaces to experiment with, and test, new concepts that link the technical and the social domains with a view to designing a flexible urban

development public policy which can better address specific and actual needs.

On the other hand, it should be recognized that the LIUTs did not include any stage for monitoring and evaluation of the interventions, which provides the opportunity for the methodology to incorporate data surveys for this purpose when it becomes a public policy. This makes it possible to update urban development guidelines and generate new ones that can later be applied in a cross-cutting manner to public policies, such as participatory budgets and other joint management alternatives that exist in Latin American and Caribbean local governments.

Quito's urban laboratories as a public policy

The City of Quito still has a long way to go in terms of sustainable urban innovation. One of its greatest shortcomings is the bad quality of public space for pedestrians. The scattered territorial model that has characterized Quito in recent decades prioritizes

mobility through motor vehicles and gives less priority to pedestrians and active mobility. This problem has become more apparent in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, especially with the implementation of physical distancing measures in public space. In addition, the pandemic worsened the economic crisis in Quito, forcing many stores to limit the number of customers allowed in at one time or putting them out of business.

One of the lessons learned from the COVID-19 health emergency is the need to redesign the city's public policy and budget, especially for public space and its mobility system. Public policy is being questioned, and there is a pressing need to take immediate measures, which do not fit with the current regulatory framework or with the habitual procedures of the entities which perform works. As a result, a mechanism was sought to implement new measures with the necessary flexibility to test them continuously and identify if they were successful or not in the area, so that decisions could be made on an ongoing basis.

Based on the experience of the professional exchange with the Municipality of Vienna in 2019, the City of Quito's STHV has been working to develop a methodology for promoting the creation of spaces to share ideas, experiences and to improve the quality of habitat through experimental and temporary actions in public space, using low-cost and fast turn-around strategies called "Urban Laboratories".

In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, there is institutional support and political will to implement Urban Laboratories, since they are a strategy for the economic recovery of the area. For example, the Circuito Cumbayá pilot project includes the implementation of ParQuitos, an action that consists of placing street furniture in public parking lots to use them for recreational and commercial purposes. Economic reactivation is sought by using them to put tables and chairs of the restaurants down the street, in order to increase their seating capacity, which has been reduced indoors due to physical distancing measures. The Corredor Chimbacalle and Iñaquito-AAPA pilot projects also explore public space improvement ideas which promote road safety, as well as the increase of public space for pedestrians and the local and solidarity economy.

Lessons learned

There are five important lessons that can be derived from the development of the Urban Laboratories proposal and the implementation of the pilot projects in Quito:

- ▶ **Political will.** This is essential to make things happen. The pilot projects implemented in Quito and promoted by the city's authorities have achieved greater efficiency, especially through coordination among different municipal bodies, which enabled better use of time, technical staff, resources, etc.
- ▶ **Economic activity.** The inclusion of economic activities in the project proposals has attracted the interest of citizens, small shops and enterprises.
- ▶ **Reinforcement of collaboration.** The driving force that ensures the laboratories' continuity over time is the development of collaboration networks among stakeholders who share a problem, co-design solutions and participate in implementing and maintaining them.
- ▶ **Information surveys.** It is key to have data and information available before, during and after implementation, to have evidence of the results of the public policy applied experimentally in the area and to make the decision to turn it into a permanent policy.
- ▶ **Direct experiences.** It is important that those who work on urban planning and development leave their comfort zone and become involved in innovative processes for making cities and sharing experiences, so that they have first-hand contact with specific needs and propose how to meet them through public policy. In the case of Quito, the STHV officials were part of the LIUT work team, participated in the exchange with Vienna and were involved in the first steps of the Quito Urban Laboratories pilot projects.

The Municipality of Quito's STHV, in coordination with the different public and private bodies and the active involvement of the community and academia, has managed to implement the three urban



Above: Before and after the *minga* of the Chimbacalle Urban Laboratory intervention. Source: Secretariat for Territory, Habitat and Housing, 2020. Below: Outcome of the first stage and increased pedestrian space as a result of the Chimbacalle Urban Laboratory. Source: Mobility Operations Department of the Metropolitan State Company for Mobility and Public Works, 2020

laboratory pilot projects in the city, and has created a methodology with guidelines to enable experimentation on the ground. As a result, the Mayor has enacted Resolution No A-096, dated December 16th, 2020, which turns the Urban Laboratories into a public policy of the city of Quito.

The results of the Urban Laboratory pilot projects in Quito and the creation of this public policy have attracted great interest by several stakeholders. City lawmakers, municipal bodies, private companies, the community, the academic sector and even several international cooperation agencies have proposed future laboratories in different parts of the city, for implementing diverse sustainable urban development concepts in order to improve citizens' habitat, mitigate climate change, reactivate the economy, promote inclusion and create comprehensive neighborhood upgrading plans, especially in the informal areas of the city.

Finally, the Urban Laboratories are an example of what it is like to rethink, resignify, rebuild and plan

the city: they consist of continuous experimentation from an approach that considers territorial specificities; they change ideologies, provide education, and strengthen capacity-building for institutions and communities, as well as joint efforts by both of them, so that the district inhabitants may appropriate its different areas and can be encouraged to self-manage their own habitat. Citizen-led experiences such as the LIUTs, international initiatives and Quito's Urban Laboratories make it clear that the journey is as important as the destination, since the constant exercise of creating, evaluating and improving sustainable development and habitat policies on the basis of the specific reality of a particular area makes it possible to plan the city from the local to the general. ■

1. A *minga* is a community solidarity meeting during which work of social utility is carried out.

Ruta N in Medellín

Author

Juan Pablo Ortega Ipuz



Background

In the Development Plan 2008-2011, the municipality of Medellín proposed the “Entrepreneurship Hub” project as a space to consolidate science, technology, innovation, and entrepreneurship in the city.

Ruta N, the center of innovation and business of Medellín, was officially created by the Mayor of Medellín, the Public Services Enterprise (EPM), and UNE on 11 November 2009. It was created based on the need of designing and implementing a public policy on innovation, which allows the identification of the key actors of the Science, Technology, and Innovation (STI) system, the consolidation of an STI plan, and the design of tools for the development of such a system. The Ruta N Corporation Medellín was born to promote and develop new businesses based on knowledge, innovation, and technological development capable of competing in the global market as a source of economic and social development for the city.

Ruta N Mission: Consolidate Medellín as Latin America’s innovation capital

Ruta N is the city’s significant commitment to urban transformation, moving from a traditional economy to a knowledge-based economy. Designed in a global context, it helps Medellín to be recognized as the leading city in innovation and business in Latin America. Ruta N has only one destiny: the economic competitiveness of Medellín, improving living conditions with opportunities for all its citizens.

The principles at the foundation of Ruta N’s activities, strategic areas, and programs are:

- ▶ Leverage and enhancement of existing capabilities
- ▶ Connection with the world
- ▶ Focus on strategic sectors
- ▶ Passion for excellence
- ▶ Networking

Strategic Areas

Ruta N was initially consolidated around two strategic guidelines and six action areas to promote programs that turn Medellín into a center of global innovation.

i) Innovation platforms:

The first strategic guideline promotes the development of complementary entities such as incubators, transfer offices, and technology centers, and the generation of culture, promoting innovation so that it becomes an aspiration of the citizens of Medellín.

- ▶ **Knowledge management:** Ruta N’s primary asset is talent, capturing and sharing knowledge, experiences, and skills among all the city actors; from that as its starting point, it can develop the skills that the region needs to make innovation a factor of competitiveness.
- ▶ **Network management:** Ruta N promotes collaborative work with all audiences and actors in the innovation ecosystem. Networking is a key factor to generate impact and scale projects.
- ▶ **Culture management:** Ruta N brings to Medellín a continuous program of awareness, dissemination, and training to promote innovative culture as a common language among citizens. It strives to raise awareness about the importance of science, technology, and innovation, for the development and competitiveness of the city.

The aim is for the whole city to pulse with and catch on to “innovation” by incentivizing the need to create added value in existing companies and new businesses to be competitive in the global market.

ii) Knowledge business:

In the second strategic guideline, Medellín, as a leading city in innovation and business, needs to compete in different international markets. To do this, Ruta N develops innovators’ skills and connects them bilaterally with global networks of knowledge, capital, markets, and services.

- ▶ **Market access:** Successful innovators consider demand as a key factor in their projects.

Therefore, Ruta N offers information, contacts, and services that help innovators better connect with the market, develop solutions to real needs, and expand their trade borders.

▶ **Access to capital:** Ruta N provides resources, information, contacts, and services for companies to find partners and funding for their innovative initiatives in their various stages of development. Within this strategic area, Colombia's first early-stage investment fund was promoted, in partnership with the IDB-MIF (now IDB LAB).

▶ **Developing business skills for innovation:** Innovation must be a stable, structured, and sustainable process. Ruta N develops the skills and knowledge necessary to accelerate the maturation of ideas towards the market.

Achievements

A good innovation strategy should be measured for its progress and its impact in the short, medium, and long term to ensure that the expected results are being achieved. In the case of Medellín, the most up-to-date and consolidated results, which are through 2019, show that the innovation strategy gives clear consequences for the social and economic development of the city.

The results are obtained from objective external measurements conducted annually by the Colombian Observatory of Science and Technology (OCyT) and through the Regional Innovation Survey, a survey of a representative sample of companies in the Metropolitan Area of Medellín carried out by the National Consulting Center. This survey collects data regarding investment in research and development (R&D); investment in science, technology, and innovation activities (ACTI); the availability of entrepreneurial capital; the impact of innovation on job creation; and the added value of innovation.

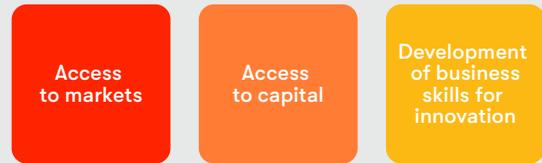
In 2019, Colombia's investment in ACTI was 0.68% of the national Gross Domestic Product (GDP), while in Medellín it was 2.45% of the GDP, or 3.6 times more. The country's R&D investment was 0.25% of the GDP, while Medellín's was at 1.26% of the GDP, or 5 times more. Although these results reflect the city's commitment, the goal is to reach at least 3% investment in ACTI and 1.5% investment in R&D as a

INNOVATION PLATFORMS



Infographic about innovation platforms. Source: rutanmedellin.org

KNOWLEDGE-BASED BUSINESS



Infographic about knowledge-based business. Source: rutanmedellin.org

percentage of the GDP by 2021, reinforcing Medellín as the leading Latin America city.

Regarding the availability of entrepreneurial capital, in 2009 there was only one emerging venture capital fund in Medellín. However, by 2019 there was a network of angel investors and a network of 22 capital funds, with an investment availability of \$458 per capita. In the 2019 OCyT Regional Innovation Survey, 77% of companies reported bringing to market at least one innovation in the previous year, which led them to increase their sales by 32%. Similarly, according to information from the Department of Municipal Planning of Medellín and the National Administrative Department of Statistics of Colombia (DANE), over the last 10 years the city's economy has grown on average one percentage point more than the national average. And, according to econometric analyses performed by the Center for Studies in Systemic Economics (ECSIM), innovation contributes about 30% of GDP growth.



Lessons Learned

The case of Ruta N offers multiple lessons to consider when structuring and implementing innovation policies in cities and regions, namely:

- ▶ **1. Strong corporate governance model.** From an early stage, the designation of a plural Board of Directors, with well-known leaders in the corporate, academic and institutional sectors guarantees the foundational strategic purpose of the organization.
- ▶ **2. Build on what is built.** Analyze and understand in depth what the region has already built. In the case of Medellín, the main starting points were education policy, entrepreneurship policy, urban development strategy, and the Medellín Cluster City program, which define the strategic areas of competitiveness of the city. This analysis allowed us to understand that the next logical step was to structure the innovation strategy for the economic and social development of the city.
- ▶ **3. Leverage existing capabilities.** Ruta N was supported by EPM, UNE, Proantioquia, CTA, EAFIT University, and many other companies, institutions, and universities with an interest in the city.
- ▶ **4. Define a challenging vision and get it backed by all the key actors in the city.** For Medellín, the initial vision was to become Latin America's innovation capital by 2021, starting from position 35 according to the innovation indicators available in 2009.
- ▶ **5. Focus on areas, sectors, and enabling technologies for which your place has or can develop world-class skills and capabilities.** Ruta N's initial focus was on three strategic sectors in which the city has great strengths: health, energy, and information and communications technologies (ICTs). The emphasis today focuses on key enabling technologies (KET).
- ▶ **6. Connect with global innovation hubs from an early stage, understanding that endogenous growth is slow and costly, and that to be large you must stand on the shoulders of giants.** At Ruta N, from an early stage and in a deliberate way, projects were developed, good practices were adapted, and strong connections were established with Silicon Valley, Boston, Israel, Singapore, Austin, Toronto, Barcelona, Florianópolis, among others.
- ▶ **7. Design short-, medium- and long-term strategies, plans, and programs.** With the methodological support of Compartamos with Colombia, Ruta N developed a strategy focused on business development and capacity-building to accompany entities such as incubators, transfer offices, and technology centers, and on the development of a culture of innovation for all citizens.

- ▶ **8. Deliver a clear and strong message to both citizens and the world, indicating that innovation is a strong strategy for the economic and social development of the region.** In the case of Ruta N, an iconic three-building, 32,000 m² complex was built in a strategic location surrounded by multiple entities and institutional capacities.
- ▶ **9. Establish a plan to ensure the operational stability of the innovation strategy.** In a national and local effort with the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Tourism of Colombia; Proexport (now ProColombia); the Agency for Cooperation and Investment of Medellín (ACI); EAFIT University; Ruta N managed to attract to Medellín one of the four Global Service Centers of the multinational company Hewlett Packard (HP). HP located its center in one of the Ruta N buildings, and this rental income allowed for Ruta N to achieve operational stability.
- ▶ **10. Consolidate an innovation plan with the active participation of all key actors in the city, as a roadmap to achieve the city's vision, and secure the resources to implement it.** In Medellín, the Science, Technology, and Innovation Plan 2011-2021 was structured and approved as public policy for the development of innovation in the city through the adoption of Act 24 of 2012 by the Council of Medellín.
- ▶ **11. Be recognized globally as an innovation hub and attract talent and innovative companies from around the world to Medellín.** Ruta N established a landing program for local, national, and international companies in Medellín as a business platform for Latin America, which to date hosts +400 companies from 34 countries that have generated more than 12,000 sophisticated jobs in the city.
- ▶ **12. Actively promote the city, innovation as a city strategy, and achievements made at the national and international level.** Medellín's achievements led to Citigroup, The Wall Street Journal, and The Urban Land Institute to award it recognition for being the most innovative urban center in the world in 2013, surpassing New York and Tel Aviv.
- ▶ **13. Establish a proactive strategy to search for national and international partnerships and cooperation.** Through this strategy, Ruta N has leveraged very important resources from the CTI Fund of the General Royalty System of Colombia, the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), Innpulsa, the Colombian Ministry of ICT, the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID, for its acronym in Spanish), among others.
- ▶ **14. Intervene where the market does not operate properly.** Ruta N identifies and focuses efforts on where the market leaves gaps, selecting a few strategic sectors and enabling technologies with high impact potential on the economy and society; and promotes specialized accelerators, early-stage capital funds, etc.
- ▶ **15. Be committed permanently to innovation.** Local urban development is crucial for positioning Medellín as an innovation hub in global city networks. The Innovation District in Medellín was structured around an implementation plan for 2013-2023, which incorporated an urban renewal strategy for the 150 hectares around the Ruta N Building with a focus on innovation.
- ▶ **16. Commit all organizations, companies, universities, and entities to achieve the city's vision.** The Innovation Pact of Medellín has been signed by more than 4,800 organizations that have voluntarily committed to investing a growing percentage of their sales in research, development, and innovation activities.
- ▶ **17. The responsibility is everyone's.** Citizens not only take advantage of the innovation environment but they are key actors in its development, building and activating dozens of technology communities, networks of people with common purposes of constant learning in different technologies, languages and frameworks.

Progress and Future Challenges

Medellín's main challenges for the coming years are focused on consolidating itself as a global hub of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, developing the

necessary and sufficient talent to achieve it, and building up a sustainable and inclusive urban development through a powerful digital infrastructure that supports this strategy.

As such, in recent years, efforts have been concentrated on strengthening world-class skills in enabling technologies of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, and firm steps have been taken to achieve the goal of consolidating the city as a hub of global innovation.

Some of the initial achievements are:

- ▶ **1.** In 2017, Ruta N became Colombia's first Artificial Intelligence hub and one of the first on the continent, in partnership with the Outsourcing Institute (IO) and the Institute for Robotic Process Automation and Artificial Intelligence (IRPA AI).
- ▶ **2.** In 2018, Medellín was chosen as the headquarters of Accenture's new Advanced Technology Center. Within months of operating at Ruta N, it already employs hundreds of engineers and the goal is to reach 2,000 high value-added jobs by 2020. The focus of the Center is artificial intelligence and digital transformation.
- ▶ **3.** In 2019, the World Economic Forum selected Medellín as host of the fifth Fourth Industrial Revolution Center in the world, the first center of its kind in Latin America. The city has decided to focus its efforts on Artificial Intelligence, the Internet of Things, and Blockchain, for the creation of public policies and enabling projects with global reach.

To build on these achievements, they must be accompanied by an ambitious plan for the development of talent and digital infrastructure.

Regarding these challenges, a City Talent Management System has been launched. Ruta N, as coordinator and taking advantage of the city's experience in attracting and generating talent, seeks to develop an open talent management system, through public-private collaboration mechanisms that include tertiary-sector organizations.

Nowadays, a sustainable and inclusive urban development requires digital infrastructure. Ruta N is laying out Medellín's ICT infrastructure for

equity through the IDB's technical cooperation project "Building Digital Innovation Systems", which achieves internationally competitive broadband access and helps reduce the inequality gap in the city, giving high speed Internet access to everybody through a powerful digital infrastructure. ■

IED City Lab in Madrid

Authors

José Francisco García, Juan Pablo López Gross



Urban art to activate local creativity

Background, objectives and approach

The IED City Lab was established in July 2017 within the framework of the IED (European Institute of Design) Innovation Lab promoted by the European Institute of Design, a private educational institution focused on design, visual communication, fashion, and management. The Institute is defined as an evolving training system; a real laboratory capable of thinking and reinventing itself day by day.

The lab was started to influence and steer urban decisions through the exploration of new ways to participate in the transformation of reality, using culture of design as language of communication, and Orange Economy, innovation and creativity as tools of activation and transformation of the urban environment. The mission of IED City Lab is to improve the quality of life in Madrid, Spain. It aims to be an ecosystem of innovation, designed to contribute to the interaction of design with cities, with the challenge of transforming urban regeneration into human regeneration, urban design into human design. The City Lab seeks to make people's needs the center of their work.

The approach of the IED City Lab is to think of the city as a complex, diverse, mixed, and changing reality under permanent conflict. It is understood that cities are constantly evolving, and transforming every day. This vision seeks to make design a part of urban transformation processes and to bring a new perspective to citizens, one that is closer, creative, and stimulating. The focus is on supporting the people who make up the orange economy, the creative fabric of cities —design, architecture, art, and technology professionals¹, the oranges.

IED City Lab's structure

The structure of the IED City Lab is flexible, fluid, and open. Although it is a private initiative project, a permanent collaboration between the public and private sector, and citizens, among others, is essential. In addition to the City Lab, there are also other Labs, thanks to which the IED City Lab can offer the perfect space for collaborative work with different public and private actors. A key figure is that of resident companies who work out of the IED City Lab and carry out their activities there, such as Khora Urban Thinkers², experts in urban strategy, or Itinerant Office³, an Italian architects' studio that leads

international research and outreach projects on the city and public space. It is not a laboratory or an incubator in the classic sense of the terms, but rather a space where resident companies are invited to be physically present and develop projects together. In addition, its structure allows them to work with public administrations to develop projects in collaboration with Orange Economy members —those who want to transform their reality through creativity— and with citizens.

The resident team is made up of different professionals with different backgrounds, such as lawyers, architects, designers, philosophers, sociologists, economists, and programmers. This broad and diverse vision has been key to tackle projects successfully. The Lab's structure seeks a balance between horizontal and fluid operation, and the necessary efficiency and operability to carry out projects. For this, there is a cross-cutting global management team, which coordinates the different laboratories, which are, in turn, composed of a specialized team for each. In addition, young talent from design schools and other universities adds value to the work of the team.

Examples of Innovative Experiments

a. ACORA.city model – the orange effects that transform the city

One of the projects underway is the [ACORA.city](#) model, a new and proprietary methodology for urban activation based on a place's creative fabric and orange economy.

For the City Lab and its ACORA.city model, the orange economy is a vision that works as a filter to find creativity where it is not expected. This model moves through this filtering process searching for, activating, and adding value to creativity to promote economic development.

This orange economy includes the cultural and creative industries, the local creative fabric, artisans, artists, audiovisual creators, and emerging professionals of architecture, engineering, sociology, or technology. The members of the orange economy are people committed to preserve, improve, and strengthen their environment and the community they live in. They develop a valuable activity for the collective whole, integrating themselves



Left: Participation process with neighborhoods, orange economy and City Lab professionals
 Right: Virtual reality visualizations prior to interventions in public space (Almodóvar Square - Madrid)

positive gentrification, an original concept that refers to the improvements of the urban environment and its social and economic dynamics, which, at the same time, try to anticipate and reduce the negative consequences of these dynamics for the local population.

ACORA.city can be better visualized as an oil stain because its effects are different in each place, depending on the social, cultural, or economic context. But there are always positive results, which provide new dynamics of collaboration, better urban environments, and benefits in business expectations for the orange economy.

The ACORA.city model develops in seven phases: information, participation, connection, intervention, training, communication, and evaluation. The methodology allows for the development of a project of this nature anywhere with concrete effects.

b. Carabanchel Creativa project

The Carabanchel Creativa project⁴ is a pilot of the ACORA.city model taking place in Carabanchel, Madrid, a neighborhood with a remarkably interesting architectural industrial heritage, the result of the industrial manufacturing activity that took place

there during the second half of the 20th century, and which can still be seen in buildings and in the urban structure of the neighborhood. The vision is to pursue social, cultural, and economic activation of this district through creativity, with its own resources and technology. The pilot applies the seven-phase methodology detailed above, adapting it to the scale of the urban environment and to the expected timeline. Carabanchel Creativa has 3 specific objectives:

- ▶ Use the creative fabric of the city to transform Madrid and this neighborhood by connecting professionals with each other and with other cities of the world.
- ▶ Improve public space with new forms of participation by applying innovative processes, equipment, and technology.
- ▶ Create new peripheral spaces of influence and attraction in the city.

This pilot project seeks to produce effects in several ways —socially, culturally, economically, and in an innovative way. Specifically, it promotes diversity

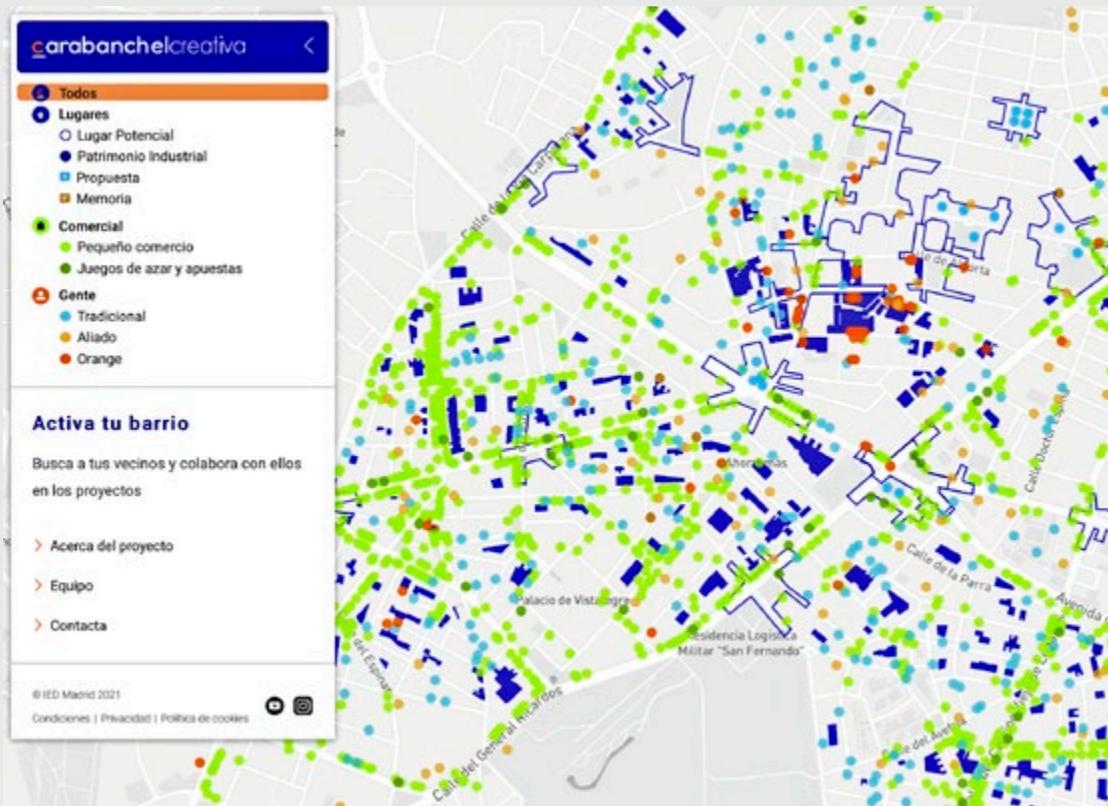


Figure 2: *Carabanchel Creativa* pilot project visualization tool.
Source: IED City Lab

as a value in participation processes and in generating collective decisions in urban interventions; it focuses on the improvement of the local heritage and landscapes, generating a greater sense of belonging, and constructing neighborhood memories. Also, it aims at creating a network of project exchanges, encouraging collaboration between professionals, and boosting the formation of new local business models with international reach. Finally, the pilot embraces innovation by generating new processes of participation with technological content and virtual reality, visualizations prior to interventions in public space, and implementing a creative digital platform. Below are some images of maps developed for the *Carabanchel Creativa* pilot project, which show a mapping of the orange economy, and a mapping of possible spaces to be recovered or interesting industrial heritage that constitute essential parts of the neighborhood identity.

Some relevant data of the project to date:

- ▶ More than 100 people from the Orange Economy participating
- ▶ More than 450 mapped activities
- ▶ More than 20 public spaces to reactivate
- ▶ More than 200 references of Industrial Heritage included
- ▶ More than 300 references of traditional shops

Figure 2 provides a screenshot of the visualization tool that shows all the neighborhood resources.

The participation of the citizens in the ACORA methodology and *Carabanchel Creativa* project is essential to achieve the impact we seek. Citizens, in a process of co-creation with the creative sector and with the City Lab, participate in making decisions about the most important spaces to reactivate and the activities they want to do in them. With the citizens of the neighborhood we share the changes and gentrification processes that are going to take place in their urban environment, and also our vision of “positive gentrification”, the concept with which we define our approach to these urban changes and transformations.

As a summary, our methodology seeks to reduce the negative effects of transformations in city neighborhoods, and increase the positive effects of these processes, involving citizens, economic agents, members of the creative or orange economy, professionals, women and local public administrations.

We have learned that in a complex urban environment, simple solutions will not work. We need to involve many people in these processes. Methodologies based on human centered design are necessary, which put people at the center. Projects that think of the city as the setting for people’s lives, dreams, desires, memories and experiences. ■

1. The Orange Economy is a concept adopted from the so-called creative and cultural economy, as an abbreviation of the ecosystem defined by the IDB in its report “The Orange Economy: An Infinite Opportunity”. It encompasses the creative and cultural economy and its associated industries, its creative support activities, design, new media, software, arts, and heritage. In this economy, talent and creativity are the main inputs and resources

2. khoraurbanthinkers.es

3. itinerantoffice.com

4. www.carabanchelcreativa.com

From Fab Labs to Fab Cities in Barcelona

Authors

Tomás Díez, Tamara Egger



Aerial view of the Fab Lab House. Photo: Adrià Goula, fablab.com

Background, goal, and approach of Fab Labs

Today, our cities can be described as large consumer centers that import products and produce waste. As cities continue to grow, the recurring questions are: what is the model of the city we want? What is the role of the citizens within it? Urban dynamics are no longer only related to physical space. We live in a time when new technologies are converging, such as digital platforms, advanced manufacturing processes, new materials, and new ways to exchange information and money. These technologies are changing the way we live in cities, but traditional urbanism, which focuses on the conditions of our physical spaces, responds very slowly to this change. While technology is looking for another way to deliver supplies to people in cities, where do these supplies come from? How do they accumulate the economic activity that defines the formulation of the city?

Digital manufacturing makes it possible for us to make almost anything, anywhere in the world, by bringing what is possible right now on the Internet to the physical world. Digital Manufacturing laboratories, or Fab Labs (short for Fabrication Labs), question the current production model of the city, proposing an alternative model that allows the relocation of production in urban centers while empowering the public through the sharing of open knowledge.

The goal of Fab Labs is to turn citizens into “changemakers”, in the sense that people can truly bring a change to urban living conditions. It proposes a model in which the citizen is no longer a consumer or a client, but instead becomes an active agent in the urban environment, which will be one of the keys to the future cities.

Fab Labs explore new technology concepts to combine citizen production with traditional top-down planning and public policy tools. The Fab Lab mission is to provide access to the tools, knowledge, and financial means to educate, innovate, and invent using technology and digital manufacturing to enable anyone to do “(almost) anything”, from a small electronic circuit to an entire house, and thus create opportunities to improve lives and livelihoods around the world. The basic concept of Fab Labs is to share digital information across global networks, while the materials and people are located in cities. All manufacturing labs have the same tools and processes, allowing for shared knowledge and exponential growth of

the capacity for innovation of people, communities, neighborhoods, or cities. The Fab Lab project is a globally distributed laboratory for research and invention.

Fab Labs began as an outreach project for MIT’s Center for Bits and Atoms (CBA) and became a global and collaborative network. The Fab Foundation is a non-profit organization formed in 2009 to facilitate and support the growth of the Fab Lab international network and the development of regional capacity-building organizations. The Fab Lab network is an open and creative community of manufacturers, artists, scientists, engineers, educators, students, hobbyists, and professionals located in more than 75 countries. There are more than 2,000 Fab Labs globally, located mainly in large urban agglomerations. They are growing exponentially; about 50 percent of Fab Labs are in Europe and about 30 percent in the Americas. To articulate this growth, and distribute the responsibilities of the network, the digital platform fablabs.io was developed. This platform is where all the Fab Labs of the world are registered and placed on a map; knowledge is shared; projects are developed; and the community discusses these issues.

The case of Fab Lab Barcelona

Fab Lab Barcelona began as a project developed at the Institute for Advanced Architecture of Catalonia, and led by Tomás Diez. It was the first production laboratory in the European Union. It worked on collaborations with the public sector (European Union and local governments) and large companies (Nike, IKEA, Airbus). Internationally, Fab Lab Barcelona is the organizer of the Fab Academy and Fab City projects. Fab Lab projects are very diverse, from devices that measure pollution in cities to aquaponic systems to reduce agricultural production land uses, or the Fab Lab House, an entire house that can be produced in a Fab Lab.

The Fab Lab House

Specifically, the Fab Lab House is a self-sufficient home that makes its plans available on the online platform and can be produced in any Fab Lab in the world. It was partnered by a group of organizations and companies led by the Institute of Advanced Architecture for Catalonia (IAAC), the MIT Center for



Interior of the Fab Lab House. Photo: Adrià Goula, fablab.com

Bits and Atoms (CBA), and the Fab Labs Global Network. The project won the Solar Decathlon Europe in 2010, a university competition that challenges student teams to design and build highly efficient and innovative buildings that run on renewable energy. Fab Lab House is a completely solar house, with its own modern technology, designed to produce maximum resources with minimal investment. Linked to the Fab Labs concept, Fab Lab House is a people-built home that functions as an active resource production center, rather than a passive consumer environment. The house produces more than twice the energy it needs to operate through its photovoltaic system, produces food in its permaculture and fruit orchard, and has its own small laboratory for manufacturing objects for everyday use, which is connected to the worldwide network of Fab Labs by videoconference.

The Fab City

Another project promoted by the Fab Lab Barcelona is the Fab City Global Initiative. In 2004, the then mayor of Barcelona, Xavier Trias, announced that in 40 years Barcelona would be a self-sufficient city, producing everything it consumes. To meet this goal, 41 cities have joined the “Fab City” global network, following the pledge of the Catalanian City. The Fab City Global Initiative seeks to change the industrial paradigm. Currently, the city is based on a linear model, centered on the extraction of cheap raw materials on one side of the world, long transport paths to another side of the world with high consumption of fossil fuels, where these resources are converted through cheap labor into products that are then transported to the centers of consumption (cities), where products become garbage, which is then returned to nature and polluting the planet. The Fab City concept seeks to convert this linear model to a circular model, where the concept of a Fab Lab space is scaled to the city system, and it is articulated with complementary infrastructure for local production. At the base, there is the network of production laboratories around the globe (bottom-up); above, there are public policies (top-down); in the middle, there is the “Fab City” dealing with capacity-building issues and developing strategies at the technological and urban level. The concept pushes for a centralized production model as technologies

are becoming more and more accessible. The vision for the future is that instead of Italy exporting pizza to everyone, the recipe is exported, and each city has a pizza oven.

The Fab City project asks how open source and citizen-accessible projects can be generated to redefine power structures and resource distribution in cities and the strategies to scale these concepts globally. It deals with thinking about urban agglomerations within a new paradigm of operation. Right now, cities operate in centralized or decentralized governance models with a certain autonomy. Going forward, there will be a more horizontal and distributed model with independent urban centers, connected in digital networks, and based on production technologies that generate a balance between citizens and government. The goal is to make cities and citizens locally productive and globally connected.

Conclusion

Over the last two centuries, we have refined systems for the movement of atoms, on a planetary scale, in the form of raw materials, using energy sources associated with fossil fuels; we have also transformed these materials into consumer goods, thanks to industrial processes that generate high emissions and an enormous amount of waste. This economic model, which is based on infinite growth through the use of supposedly infinite natural resources, gives precedence to economic benefits over caring for biological and social systems. However, in reality, the labor, energy and raw materials associated with most of the products we consume are not cheap, because their environmental and social impacts are not gauged within the real costs of any product or company. Said impacts will be borne by future generations like a loan they never signed.

Under this linear economic paradigm, urban morphology and dynamics have developed with the notion of constant growth around mobility infrastructures, such as airports, ports, and roads. Also, knowledge development and advances of the 20th century focused primarily on mobility technologies, resulting in the production of cars, trucks, trains, or airplanes. Cities are responsible for the majority of CO₂ emissions and also constitute the largest concentration of the population on the planet. These



Interior and exterior of the Fab Lab House.
 Photo: Adrià Goula, fablab.com

impacts will continue to increase, so we must envision and implement an economic model of the city that is regenerative as regards the systems on which it depends; that allows cultural diversity in relation to the generation and circulation of value on a local scale; whose principles include logics of care among all the natural systems that play a role therein, including its inhabitants; and that facilitates the integration of technologies, at the service of people, technologies that interact in the city and its bioregions, and not the other way around.

The Fab City global initiative —conceived between Barcelona and Boston— takes all this as a starting point to launch a model in which atoms stop traveling thousands of kilometers to get to our hands and stomachs; on the contrary, they continue to circulate locally. Instead, bits of information travel great distances around the planet, thanks to the digital revolution and telecommunications, and manufacturing models have become the key to developing, over the upcoming decades, an urban model focused on the development of productive cities and bioregions. Local manufacturing and production could help to increase the resilience of citizens and enable them to regain the ability to meet the needs of their local communities, providing them with technology that could help to:

- ▶ Promote the production of a large quantity of food in proximity to urban centers, reducing energy consumption in transport, improving its nutritional quality and transparency in supply chains.
- ▶ Transform the energy production model on a local scale, using complementary micro-generation and distribution technologies.
- ▶ Increase the use of new raw materials from materials considered waste, associated with increased demand for existing industrial capacity in cities and peri-urban areas.

- ▶ Reduce the movement of materials on a global scale and excess production, since cities can produce what they need on demand, using mostly local materials.
- ▶ Rethink the urban infrastructure necessary to provide cities with the capacity to be productive, and also to transform the urban metabolism, including bio-digesters, biorefineries, material libraries, flexible factories and fab labs as learning and prototyping centers.
- ▶ Develop repositories of designs and new open-source technologies for the regeneration of vital natural systems in cities and in their bioregions.
- ▶ Increase the technological sovereignty of cities, thanks to the increase in infrastructure and training, with the aim of having a local innovation model, connected to knowledge networks on a global scale.

If we want to envision new possible futures for productive cities that can maintain atoms on a local scale in bioregions and move bits of information on a planetary scale, processes must be enabled in which urbanization can become restorative, regenerative and productive, to thereby reconfigure relationships between species and life forms that make it possible to think, read and write with the experience of living in between. ■

Fondazione Innovazione in Bologna

Authors

Giovanni Ginocchini, Valeria Barbi



Photo: Margherita Caprilli

Background

Fondazione Innovazione Bologna (Bologna Innovation Foundation) was founded in 2003 under the name *Esposizione Bologna*, because it started primarily as a communication project to disseminate the urban transformation of the city, managed by the Office of the Mayor and financed by private and public institutions. In 2006, it was transformed into the Urban Center of Bologna, with the idea to shift it from a one-way to a two-way communication initiative. It developed several workshops and projects around the city to understand and inform urban transformation projects starting from the bottom-up, the neighborhoods. In 2018, it adopted the current name and status. The focus now is on whole city transformations, not only the physical transformation, but also demographic and social transformations. The city is changing very fast and there is a need to understand who are the main actors that decide the future of the city and how we can govern the city in a more collaborative way.

Structure and role

Fondazione Innovazione Bologna could be described as a private entity that operates for public purposes and therefore largely subject to public rules: it was co-founded by the Municipality of Bologna and the University of Bologna and it is also supported by some of the main local stakeholders of the city and two bank foundations. The two main sources for the budget come from the Municipality and the University, and funds from winning bids for the participation in national and European projects.

Fondazione positioned itself as a collective brain, a place where new ideas become reality; a collector of innovative actions; and a meeting point that stimulates the dialogue between citizens, public institutions, associations, and bottom-up movements, that all together represent the economic, social, and cultural world active in the area. *Fondazione* works as an “open lab” taking a systematic users’ co-creation approach to transform the city into a more livable and resilient organism. To achieve this ambitious goal, the *Fondazione* integrates research and innovation processes in real life communities and settings by opening up the co-design and co-creation phases to the various key stakeholders of the city. In order to involve a wider number of actors, *Fondazione* works not

only at the main headquarters, but also out in the field with communities and groups of citizens. In this context, citizens are not only passive actors to inform, but vectors of information, change promoters, and actors able to study, propose, test, and apply new answers to city changes: they live within and around urban areas and they represent the more informed and reliable actors to refer to. We define this method as the “Proximity Approach”. The participatory and co-creational approach is applied not only to encourage the participation of citizens in what matters to them, but also as a tool for the city to shed light on topics and issues that citizens may be unaware of. To this end, *Fondazione* places a lot of emphasis on communication and knowledge sharing through local, national and international events, both in presence and online, on a wide range of topics: from citizens participation to environmental crisis, from urban challenges to geopolitics and the new frontier of global citizenry.

Three main pillars

Fondazione operates around three main pillars of action, for each of which there is a dedicated department in charge. The first area, Urban Center, is information, communication, and promotion of urban culture. It builds on the mission of the first stage to not only hear about what is wrong in the city or to promote projects coming from the municipality, but also to promote a two-way communication process and involve citizens and push for civic imagination. The second area, Civic Imagination, deals with management of participatory processes, which aims at boosting citizens participation in public life and promotes the co-design of the city. Considering that it is more fruitful to work together to face old and new challenges, and involving all the stakeholders of the city, *Fondazione* organizes campaigns, events, and laboratories around the city to develop and gather proposals, ideas, and solutions. The third area of work, Mapping the Present, is the most recent one and deals with the analysis of city transformations, relying on data from the municipality and other organizations, multimedia technologies, and cartography. This work aims at promoting a better understanding of the city through open data and citizen engagement.

Examples of main interventions

a. The Urban Innovation Plan

The main idea behind the Urban Innovation Plan is the willingness to disseminate opportunities, tools, resources, spaces, and skills, stimulating cooperation for the common good and choosing regeneration, re-use, and “repair” over the use and waste of resources. The works for the Plan started in December 2016 with the aim of outlining a transversal innovation perspective for the Administration and the city of Bologna. It describes some of the most important urban policies of Bologna, their sources of funding, and the collaborative method to achieve them.



Photo: Margherita Caprilli

With a document open and implementable over time, the disruptive idea behind this Plan is to link choices and projects of the Administration, with a spontaneous network of citizens arising all over the city. The aim is to create a space for discussion and co-design for all that would connect opportunities, the potential of the territory, and public decisions, adopting as a method the activation of communities and reporting. Half of the 80 million euros of interventions financed by the Plan are directed to regenerate unused buildings to create new public spaces devoted to the cultural and welfare sectors, while the other half will finance actions destined to children and low-income citizens.

The Plan consists of two volumes that lay out priorities, objectives, and strategies for a sustainable, welcoming, attractive, and collaborative city. The first volume, “The path towards the Urban Innovation Plan”, describes the planning effort with a 2021 horizon made by the Administration, the planning

tools and funding programs. The second volume, “Towards an urban innovation plan”, is a multi-voice storytelling report, which gives an exhaustive picture of the approach adopted by the Fondazione and the needs and lines of action that have emerged in the processes activated with organizations, communities and citizens of Bologna. This volume is based on the data collected between 2017 and 2018 in about 280 meetings and merges the perspective of the Administration with the “bottom-up” one, which suggests and identifies central elements to frame the next interventions in the social, educational, digital, cultural and public space, on a city scale and at the neighborhood level.

b. District Labs

These Labs are an extension of an administration reform carried out by the Municipality. In 2015, the city reorganized itself by creating six distinct districts as an extension of the city government, each with about 50-60,000 inhabitants. The districts, each with their own councils and presidents, act as local hubs attuned to each neighborhoods’ needs. The newly formed districts better allocate the city’s resources and have spurred a renewed sense of community and shared purpose.

Along with the new districts, the city also created six laboratories, one in each district, to foster connections between local government and the people of Bologna. The District Labs are the places where citizens identify the areas of intervention and prioritize the actions to be implemented in their neighborhoods, according to their social and economic conditions. Their main goal is to permanently engage communities, associations, enterprises, and citizens through participatory processes to highlight priority actions (for example, in regeneration of public buildings and open spaces, social engagement, education, culture, etc.).

Another key element of this initiative is the Participatory Budget, a direct democracy tool inaugurated in 2017 to redistribute financial resources that the Municipality allocates to implement projects elaborated and voted for by citizens. One million euros have hence been allocated by the Municipality for local projects proposed, co-designed, shared and voted for by citizens through the District Labs.



Photos: Margherita Caprilli



Photos: Margherita Caprilli

The Labs can be seen both as a series of meetings and a methodology, they offer dedicated spaces in each district to all citizens, who can give voice to their needs, collect ideas, co-create new proposals and democratically vote for the best solutions. In just a few years, they contributed to increasing citizen engagement with over 7,000 citizens involved in about 280 meetings across all the 6 districts of the city, allowing more than 14,000 people to collect and vote on hundreds of different suggestions, and resulting in the final activation and launch of 25 initiatives and about 480 collaboration pacts implemented to date.

The project cycle of the Labs is structured as a circular process of one year, with specific steps: i) selection of the priority areas inside the public administration, where the different sectors of the public administration cooperate to decide the goal of the year; ii) presentation of the proposals through the work with the associations —intermediate bodies (in Italian, *corpi intermedi*)— that act as representatives of the neighborhoods; iii) the third step is the co-creation and analysis of the proposal with the citizens. It is a gradual process, which progressively opens more at every stage. After this, the proposals for participatory budgeting are voted on. Once the proposals are selected and implemented, the co-design process starts again.

c. U-Lab

U-Lab, started in 2016, is a Living Lab financed by ROCK (Regeneration and Optimization of Cultural heritage in Knowledge and creative cities), in the framework of EU R&I program HORIZON 2020, with support of the University of Bologna, Fondazione Rusconi and the Municipality of Bologna. The project

focused on the university zone, which is nestled in the City center of Bologna and characterized by social conflicts mainly due to the forced coexistence of different communities (students, residents, tourists, business owners).

For the entire project's duration, the university zone was transformed into U-Lab, a living open-air laboratory that encouraged participatory practices to co-design actions of cultural regeneration, such as the greening of city squares, the mapping of urban areas to improve their accessibility or the re-design of public lighting. U-Lab linked different expertise and sectors to collaborate on projects for strengthening the specific identity of the U-area as a cultural, creative and sustainable district by improving safety, turning social conflicts into new opportunities, increasing the accessibility of the area for all, attracting visitors and tourists, entrepreneurs and private investments.

A 4-phase methodology was developed to efficiently ensure the participation of all stakeholders in the co-design of innovative experiments to be tested in the U-Zone. Starting from the observation phase, stakeholders share their needs and discuss ideas and proposals to identify a common vision to regenerate the area of interest. A co-design phase follows, in which stakeholders transform ideas into concrete action plans, developing a variety of thematic initiatives. The experimentation phase then includes the selection of the best proposals and the allocation of funds to implement them. Lastly, there is a monitoring phase, during which, through the use of technologies, large amounts of data are collected for the before and after of the initiatives of cultural regeneration that will support the decision to replicate

them also in other contexts. The Fondazione had four main functions in the project: i) Megaphone, to communicate the transformation of the city; ii) Antenna, to gather from people their ideas about the city; iii) Arena, to offer a place for public meetings focusing on public spaces; and iv) Factory, to develop, experiment, and evaluate ideas.

Conclusion and lessons learned

The participatory and co-creational approach of the Fondazione not only encourages the participation of citizens in what matters to them, but also allows the city to shed light on topics and issues that citizens may be unaware of, such as air quality and how to improve it, policies for the allocation of city buildings for temporary use, or student housing conditions. Through the work of the Fondazione, Bologna is able to catalyze the Imagination of the city.

From addressing the everyday issues of single districts, to finding solutions to long-term challenges of the entire city and its metropolitan territory, Bologna strives to involve citizens in all decision-making processes, so that one may think that the age-old distinction between the governors and the governed has definitely lost its meaning. This was particularly important in 2020 while facing the totally unexpected and extraordinary situation dictated by the sanitary emergency caused by the spread of the coronavirus. This led the Foundation to reflect on the last three years of dialogues with the city, the data collected, and the methods and practices tested together with citizens, communities and local stakeholders and to contribute to the city's future through the Observatory on the coronavirus emergency and its tools: documentation (digital archive, public dialogues and round tables for public debates); survey (multidisciplinary and multisectoral analysis on the impact of the pandemic in the city, with surveys, focus groups, interviews, data analysis and participatory research tools); shipyards (routes and worktables for the rapid activation of solutions and actions to respond to the emergency). ■

4.

Conclu- sions and Call to Action

Final reflections: The civic sphere, the public sphere, and the dialectics of implementation

Author

Andrés G. Blanco B.



When thinking about concepts such as “civic sphere” and “public sphere”, we are prone to describe them as dichotomous analytical categories defined to a great extent by their differences. *Civic* is a “bottom-up concept” related to what pertains to the community, what is flexible. On the other hand, *public* is a “top-down concept” related to what is bureaucratic and predictable. Such dichotomies are risky because they may turn complex decision processes into dilemmas. The so-called radical’s dilemma is a useful example for urban transformers: “Do you work from the outside to create a coherent alternative to the status quo, but risk being ignored and marginalized; or do you work within the system and directly influence the levers of power, but risk being co-opted and shifted from radical to incremental change?” (Mulgan, 2014, 8).

The articles included in this book insist that we should avoid the temptation of this dichotomous thinking, and remind us that “in theory there is no difference between theory and practice—in practice, there is”, as Yogi Berra would say.¹ Experiences such as “social urbanism” in Medellín; *Habitarte*, in Bogotá; the upgrading process in *Villa 20* in Buenos Aires; or *Fondazione Innovazione*, in Bologna—to name just a few—reveal there is a continuum between the civic and the public realms, where innovative urban transformation dialectically combines elements from both ends.

The dichotomy between the civic and the public spheres is inadequate though now new,² as other analytical oppositions, such as informal versus formal, or planning versus market.³ More interestingly, in each case described here, the combination of government and citizen-led elements is different, flexible, and pragmatic. This may seem disappointing insofar as it confirms that standard solutions ready to be packed and replicated are difficult to find. However, it suggests the possibility of developing place-specific experiences based on understanding local problems and particular contexts.

Some cases show that dynamic adaptations are required in view of different types of changes. This principle is basic in a context where proposals to innovate in public policies proliferate as quickly as they are discarded and canceled. Labs are a typical case: according to estimations, by 2015 a new lab was created each month; by 2016, 64 labs were identified in Europe; and in 2019 there were 50 in Australia and

New Zealand (Tonurist et al., 2015; Fuller & Lochard, 2016; McGann et al., 2019). However, the same research works show that such labs had an average-life of 3–4 years, and that 12 of the European initiatives were at risk of being canceled within a year or less. In 2018, this trend became more visible when two of the most acclaimed programs were canceled: *MindLab*, in Denmark—which inspired the creation of other labs in Europe (Coblence et al., 2017)—and *Laboratorio para la Ciudad de México*, praised by *Apolitical* (2019) as the spark that kindled innovation in Latin America. By the time they were closed, these were the oldest labs in their respective regions.

Anyway, urban transformation through innovation projects should not aim at permanence; it should propose the solution, rather than the mere relief of actual problems. Depending on various factors—such as the implementation stage, the development of the problem to be solved, or the context dynamics, among others—initiatives may take a more public or more citizen-led approach in order to cope with a changing reality. And that’s fine. By the same token, closing a lab because it is absorbed into an institutional structure or into civil society is not intrinsically mistaken, insofar as it represents, within a continuum of possibilities, a move intended to attune initiatives to the problem to be solved.

In short, the experiences described in this book show the importance of seeing each problem afresh, looking at outside experience for inspiration but being fully aware of the specific context in order to find the combination of civic and public elements suitable to solve it. Moreover, these cases also show the importance of paying continuous attention to how initiatives and targets interact, so as to gain flexibility and be able to introduce changes according to advances in implementation.

The above considerations imply an essential principle which, even if obvious, is frequently ignored: experience means action. The continuous, dynamic, and specific development of a combination of elements suited to solve a problem is a practice that should be tested in the real world. Innovative urban transformation is not mere desk work, but requires precisely what its name suggests: transformation. This is why the former mayor of Curitiba (Brazil), Jaime Lerner, who conceived and devised the so-called miracle of the city, used to say that “innovation is a starting point”.



Of course, this does not imply that planning should be left out. Diagnosis and plans are basic inputs in the process of identifying alternatives to solve a problem. However, the only good plan is the one that is implemented and takes the feedback of such implementation. Let us recall the famous quote of General Dwight D. Eisenhower, who devised the massive plan for Normandy landings in the Second World War: “Plans are worthless, but planning is everything”. Boxer Mike Tyson put the same idea more bluntly when he said: “Everyone has a plan till they get punched in the mouth” (Freedman, 2013).

Thus, planning actions for urban transformation should be thought of in the same way as we prepare to tour a city for the first time: with a clear idea of what we want to know and where to head for, but always ready to accept more and better touring places and alternative destinations that come to our mind during the journey itself. This suggests that urban transformers should think of their strategies as scripts, in the sense given to that term by Freedman in *Strategy: A History* (2013):

...So what turns something that is not quite strategy into strategy is a sense of actual or imminent instability, a changing context that induces a sense of conflict. Strategy therefore starts with an existing state of affairs and only gains meaning by an awareness of how, for better or worse, it could be different. This view is quite different from those that assume strategy must be about reaching some prior objective. ... This is why as a practical matter strategy is better understood modestly, as moving to the “next stage” rather than to a definitive and permanent conclusion. The next stage is a place that can be realistically reached from the current stage. That place may not necessarily be better, but it will still be an improvement upon what could have been achieved with a lesser strategy or no strategy at all. It will also be sufficiently stable to be a base from which to prepare to move to the stage after that. This does not mean that it is easy to manage without a view of a desired end state. Without some sense of where the journey should be leading it will be difficult to evaluate alternative outcomes. Like a grandmaster at

chess, a gifted strategist will be able to see the future possibilities inherent in the next moves, and think through successive stages. The ability to think ahead is therefore a valuable attribute in a strategist, but the starting point will still be the challenges of the present rather than the promise of the future. With each move from one state of affairs to another, the combination of end and means will be reappraised. Some means will be discarded and new ones found, while some ends will turn out to be beyond reach even as unexpected opportunities come into view. Even when what had been assumed to be the ultimate goal is reached, strategy will not stop. ... [it] will mean a move to a new and more satisfactory state but not the end of struggle.

All this sounds like a lot of work, and so it is. Innovation is the starting point, as Mr. Lerner would say, but perseverance, attention and tenacity are required from then onwards to make changes sustainable. Thus, as any other public policy, urban transformation demands not only imagination, but also perseverance, as Pressman and Wildavsky underscored in their classic *Implementation* (1984). Fortunately, energy and passion are not lacking, as the cases included here clearly show. ■

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1. According to Freedman (2013), this phrase has been also attributed to Albert Einstein.
 2. See Mulgan (2014) or McGann et al. (2017) for an analysis of various innovation labs within the civic-public continuum.
 3. About the inadequate “formal versus informal” dichotomy, see Hart (2006); Portes and Castells (1989). For the “planning versus market” dichotomy, see Webster and Lai (2003).

Charter for Citizen-Led Urbanism

Cities are produced and reproduced by those of us who inhabit them. It is in our hands to create alternatives centered around our desires and needs, by producing cities with a focus on people's lives.

Nobody can save himself or herself alone.

We cannot experience cities in isolation. Cities are the spatial expression of social, interpersonal, economic, power, care and support relationships. They mirror how we relate to each other and are, at the same time, the framework for developing different ways of doing so.

Public space is a sounding board of the battles for the right to the city and a reflection of the spatiality of social and economic injustice. Failure to think of our common spaces from a rights and justice perspective does nothing but replicate segregation and exclusion practices, while perpetuating situations of extreme urban inequity. We must break this cycle.

We need to regain the strength of collective action and conceive strategies and tools that may help us to create more equitable, accessible, sustainable and egalitarian cities. This book intends to showcase these practices and evidence their true value, but most of all, it is meant to empower, motivate and incorporate voices into the discussion and the transformation of this great Latin American movement.

The conditions are in place for the consolidation of a movement that seeks to improve the experience of everyday life and develop a new urban model. We must strengthen citizen-led urbanism.

Thousands of people in the region, local governments and civil society organizations are proposing tools and solutions to help create more sustainable, inclusive and resilient spaces, for people and with people. It is time to conceive of urban space as a laboratory, and of citizens as experimenters.

Citizen-led urbanism is participatory, cross-disciplinary, collaborative and, especially, replicable. More and more communities are implementing urban changes based on their uses and needs. Beneath the diversity of issues, stakeholders, places and ways of working, one common characteristic can be recognized: organized societies with the firm belief that they are the ones who know best the territory where they live, makers of decisions who understand the potential of *common goods* as collective resources.

May all of us who inhabit, enjoy, govern, move, work and study in cities stand united for their vitality and for this citizen-led urbanism movement. May this pressing and latent need to change reality as we know it drive us to fight, work and grow as we improve the cities where we live.

A.

Annex

Guest authors



Acevedo Gómez, Iván

Colombian and Spanish architect based in Barcelona, specialized in co-design and co-urbanism with socio-environmental co-responsibility. Over the past twenty-one years, with his teams at IAA Studio and TABUÚ, he has co-developed nearly a thousand interdisciplinary projects to humanize, recover and regenerate spaces and facilities, which have received awards in biennales and international competitions. Especially deserving of note is his project entitled *El espacio público: La piel de la Democracia*. He is an activist, professor and member of organizations which seek to counter the effects of climate change and the lack of social justice.

Acosta Caro del Castillo, Néstor Ricardo

Co-founder of the Nómada Laboratorio Urbano group. He holds a master's degree in Environmental Sciences from the Autonomous University of San Luis Potosí (UASLP) and a bachelor's degree in Industrial Design from the Autonomous University of Ciudad Juárez (UACJ). He studied architec-

ture at the Autonomous University of Durango (UAD) and has earned diplomas in environmental impact, socio-ecological systems, geographic information systems and ecological restoration, all of them from the Institute for Science, Technology and Research of San Luis Potosí (IPICYT).

Adler, Verónica

She holds a bachelor's degree in Economics and a master's degree in Public Policies from the Torcuato Di Tella University, Buenos Aires, Argentina. She has been working at the Inter-American Development Bank since 2003. Between 2003 and 2008, she worked with Colombia and Venezuela from Washington DC, contributing mainly to the programs and projects on urban and rural housing of social interest, neighborhood upgrading and improvement of degraded areas. In 2008, she was appointed to the bank's representation in Uruguay. From then onwards, she has mainly worked with Uruguay, Argentina, Chile and Bolivia on projects related to the economic development of subnational sectors, neighborhood improvement, subnational public infrastructure and revitalization of degraded urban areas. She has also coled the implementation of the Emerging and Sustainable Cities Initiative in Montevideo.

Almansi, Florencia

Doctoral student in Social Science, architect and holder of a master's degree

in Design and Management of Social Policies. Specialist in participatory urbanism. She was co-coordinator of the *Villa 20* Integral Upgrading Project (2016-2019) at the City of Buenos Aires Housing Institute. Senior researcher at the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED-Latin America) in the areas of habitat, environment and participation in urban and national-scale public policies.



Barbi, Valeria

Political and natural scientist, expert in climate change. She is an Environmental Projects Coordinator and Science Communication Specialist with about 11 years of experience on lecturing about climate change and environmental protection, and with a strong expertise on citizens engagement strategies on sustainability related projects.

Blanco G., Andrés B.

He earned his bachelor's degree in Economics and his master's degree in Development Planning from the University of los Andes in Bogotá. He also holds a PhD in Urban and Regional Planning from Cornell University. He has over 20 years of experience in the design, implementation and

evaluation of development projects and innovations in public policy. He currently works at the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) as Unit Chief for Client Relations in the Knowledge, Innovation and Communication (KIC) Sector, where he leads the interdisciplinary teams in charge of the preparation, approval, implementation, and evaluation of the IDB Group organizational units' knowledge, innovation, and communication strategic plans.

Brawl Márquez, Leonardo

Social activist, urban planner, architect, designer of citizen-led processes, placemaker and musician. Co-founder of the TransLAB.URB collective and the Translab Social Innovation Research Institute (international network of citizen labs). Co-founder of the Brazilian Network of Collaborative Urbanism, Placemaking Brazil, and of the Raíz Urbana (FAO-UN network) and Corredor Sur projects. He is part of the Placemaking Latino-america, Jane's Walk, Placemaking X, CivicWise, BrCiudades and Frena La Curva networks.



Carrasco, Carolina

Architect from the University of Chile and holder of a master's degree in Urban Planning from the University of Melbourne, Australia. Co-founder of the Espacio Lúdico NGO, a platform based on urban gamification strategies for the well-being of cities, and director of applied research at this organization. Associate professor at the Viña del Mar University. Director of the master's program in Design of Integrated Cities. Professor of the "Obra y Ciudad" workshop for fourth-

year students of the undergraduate Architecture course. Her interests are related to experimental urbanism and collaborative urban design, and she undertakes applied research, both in academia and as part of professional projects.

Celi-Atala, Ninike

Architect specialized in sustainability. In 2016, she was the winner of the Quito Architecture Biennale with the project entitled "Methodology to recover creeks and their urban environment in Quito" (*Metodología para recuperar quebradas en Quito*). She was part of the delegation of architects to China, where she completed training in urban planning and participated in C40, UN-Habitat, NACTO and HKG-BC workshops. She has experience in the development of public policies for public space, sustainability and land management instruments. She currently works at Quito's Secretariat for Territory, Habitat and Housing as the head of the Habitat Implementation Unit and is part of the Quito Land Use and Management Plan team.

Chong, José

Peruvian architect specialized in international cooperation, urban planning and sustainability. Technical coordinator of the Global Public Space Programme of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), focused on developing urban strategies and innovative tools for geospatial analysis, community participation and collaborative urban design. He is the focal point of the UN-Habitat Urban Planning, Finance and Economy Section for countries in Latin America and Arab States.

Ciancio, Cecilia

Architect from the University of Buenos Aires. She approaches design from diverse settings and on various scales. She performed project and territorial

tasks related to the *Barrio 31* neighborhood at the Secretariat for Social and Urban Integration (SISU) of the City of Buenos Aires. As a member of Urbanismo Vivo, the Civic Innovation School and CivicWise, she develops civic and social innovation projects from a co-learning perspective. Co-founder of Ciudades Comunes.



Di Sienna, Domenico

Architect and urban planner. He develops his professional activity as a researcher, consultant and promoter of social design, urban innovation, network thinking and knowledge management projects. He experiments with and develops hybrid systems connecting the world of architecture and urbanism with the world of communication, open innovation, and network organization and learning systems. His work revolves around the Sentient City, a city model based on a techno-social ecosystem where knowledge, collective actions and interactions among people create spaces that promote learning and collective intelligence processes.

Diez, Tomás

Venezuela-born urbanist who specializes in digital fabrication and its implications in the future of cities and society. He is now the Strategic Director of Fab Lab Barcelona at IAAC, co-director of the Master in Design for Emergent Futures, as well as the founding partner and Executive Director of the Fab City Foundation. Tomás has participated in technological and social projects, such as rehabilitation plans for marginal areas of Caracas, the Hyper-habitat installation for the XI Venice Architecture Biennale and the launch of Fab Labs in cities like Lima (Peru), Addis Ababa

(Ethiopia) and Ahmedabad (India). His research focuses on understanding the relationship between technology and humans for the creation of a new economy based on distributed manufacturing infrastructure and data architecture, through open platforms on a global scale, which could allow for the local production of (almost) anything in cities and human settlements worldwide.

Duyne Barenstein, Jennifer

PhD in social anthropology and specialized in the socio-economic, cultural and institutional dimensions of housing, urban and infrastructure development, resettlement, and post-disaster reconstruction. She is a senior researcher at the ETH Centre for Research on Architecture, Society and the Built Environment (ETH CASE) and the Executive Director of the Master of Advanced Studies course on Housing (MASETH Housing). She has directed several international and interdisciplinary research projects and consultancies with a focus on socioeconomic and cultural dimensions of the built environment in Latin America, and South- and South-East Asia.



Elnir, Halle

Urban planner specialized in international development. While working as a Smart City consultant at the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) Housing and Urban Development Division, he made use of innovative technologies to address urban challenges, develop and share knowledge, and create public-private partnerships in the region of Latin America and the Caribbean. Previously, he worked in the private sector

in Israel, providing advice on strategic planning, execution and implementation of urban projects, and supporting master plans for cities. He holds a master's degree in International Development & Urban Planning from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Israel, and a bachelor's degree in Political Science and Geography from Tel Aviv University, Israel.

Escobar, Carlos

He graduated as an architect and urban designer from the National University of Colombia. He is part of the IDB Housing and Urban Development Division. He has held different positions at the Valle de Aburrá Metropolitan Area Planning Office. At the Urban Development Company (*Empresa de Desarrollo Urbano*), which is part of the Medellín Mayor's Office, he has coordinated processes for the planning of urban facilities, urban renewal and slum upgrading, specifically, the Integral Urban Project (PUI) at Commune 13. He worked as an independent consultant for the IDB country representations in Colombia and Honduras.



Falú, Ana

Architect, academic, researcher of the Argentine Scientific and Technical Research Council (CONICET) and renowned feminist activist. She is a Professor Emeritus at the National University of Córdoba. Co-founder and executive director of CISCESA, an NGO based in Córdoba, Argentina. She completed postgraduate studies in the Netherlands. She is co-founder and member of the Latin America and the Caribbean Women and Habitat Network, HIC-AL (*Red Mujer y Hábitat de América Latina*) and Articulación Feminista Marcosur (AFM). She is a

member of the Global Platform for the Right to the City, and a member of the UN-Habitat Advisory Group for gender mainstreaming across the agency. In addition, she is a gender advisor for United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG). A pioneer in Latin America in working for women's right to the city from a feminist perspective, she contributes to strengthening women's voices and organizations and to influencing public policies from a critical and feminist standpoint, focusing strongly on local governments.

Folch, Tomás

Architect with a master's degree in Architecture from the Pontifical Catholic University of Chile, and a degree in Landscape Architecture from Harvard University. At present, he is a professor and co-director of the Center for Ecology, Landscape and Urbanism (*Centro de Ecología, Paisaje y Urbanismo*, CEPU) at the Design Lab of the Adolfo Ibáñez University, and a partner at the Paisaje Urbano / PAUR professional studio. Throughout his professional and academic career, he has designed projects in the areas of heritage and urban recovery, social housing and facilities, and landscape architecture, as well as projects for the private sector. At present, he develops professional initiatives with PAUR focusing on public space and social infrastructures.

Franco, Víctor

Architect from the Polytechnic University of Catalonia. Master of Territorial Planning and Environmental Management (University of Barcelona). Doctoral student of Architecture (University of Buenos Aires). Co-founder of Habitaria and Ciudades Comunes. Researcher at the Human Spatiality Institute (*Instituto de la Espacialidad Humana*) of the University of Buenos Aires and at the Center for Public Policies and Society (*Centro de Políticas Públicas y Sociedad*) of the National University of Rosario. Professor of undergraduate courses (FADU-UBA

and FAPyD-UNR) and graduate programs (FAU-UNNE). Director of research projects and author of several publications on housing and cities.

Frizzera, Agustín

Executive Director of Democracia en Red, an organization that works at the intersection of digital technology and politics. He coordinates the Causas Comunes project. Member of the Latin American Political Innovation Network (*Red de Innovación Política de América Latina*). He holds a bachelor's degree in Sociology (University of Buenos Aires) and a master's degree in Urban Management (Polytechnic University of Catalonia, UPC).

Fuentes Flores, Pablo

Architect, Master of Architecture from the Pontifical Catholic University of Chile and Master of Urban and Territorial Management from the Pontifical Catholic University of Valparaíso. He has worked for various public institutions which develop policies in the areas of cities, housing and territory. In 2016 he participated in Habitat III as part of the group of international experts in Urban Governance. He is currently an IDB consultant, co-creator of the Plazas Públicas de Bolsillo project and founding partner of the Ciudad de Bolsillo consulting firm, dedicated to the innovative design of public spaces.



García, José Francisco

Head of IED Innovation Lab at the European Institute of Design, Spain. He is also the promoter of Una Mirada Limpia, author and consultant for

cities and territories, and director of the Fundación Uncastillo Centro del Románico in Spain. Before that, he was General Director of cultural heritage and urban landscape of the Madrid City Council, manager of the Tourist Board of the Zaragoza Provincial Council, and director of the pavilion of the province of Zaragoza at the 2008 International Expo. He is an expert in cultural heritage management, urban landscape, territorial development and tourism. Speaker at international forums and congresses, and visiting professor at several master's programs in Spanish and Latin American Universities.

Ginocchini, Giovanni

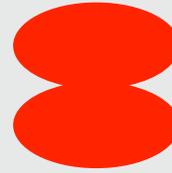
Director of the Foundation for Urban Innovation, an organism founded in 2018 by the University of Bologna and the Municipality of Bologna. Since 2012 he has worked as Director of the Urban Center of Bologna, consultant of the Municipality of Bologna and has been responsible for several participatory urban planning laboratories in different institutions. In the past, he collaborated with the Department of Architecture and Planning of the Politecnico di Milano in the field of strategic planning. He graduated from the University of Florence, and his main focus of analysis is innovation, participation and communication in the context of urban transformations.



Hurtig, Milagros

She studied architecture at the University of Buenos Aires, where she also earned a postgraduate degree in Metropolitan Urbanism. Her interests revolve around participation, placemaking and public space issues in cities. At present, she is pursuing the 4CITIES+ master program in Urban

Studies, taught by six universities. Her research currently focuses on public art from a gender perspective and as a social innovation tool. She has been part of the Urbanismo Vivo team since 2018.



Lacayo, Laura

Nicaraguan sociologist with work experience in Latin America. For over eight years now, she has managed non-profit organizations and developed participatory social programs and projects in various areas, such as community development, human rights education, gender, right to the city, citizen participation and voluntary work.

Larraín de Andraca, Isidora

Architect from the Catholic University of Chile. She received an MSc in Sustainable Heritage from Bartlett, University College London. She is part of the Cities LAB team, where she works on innovative urban projects related to cultural heritage, inclusion, eco-efficiency and creative and cultural industries from a cross-disciplinary approach. Previously, she designed and managed urban and architectural projects in the downtown area of Santiago, Chile, and coordinated the adaptation of the Neighborhood Upgrading Program for historic urban landscapes at the Chilean Ministry of Housing and Urbanism. She has designed projects in diverse contexts in Malta, the United Kingdom, Patagonia, Brazil and Suriname, among other places.

Lastra, Matías

Architect with a degree from the

University of Buenos Aires, member of Urbanismo Vivo and Ciudades Comunes. Since 2012, he has worked on social architecture, urbanism, community projects and cultural management. He specializes in applied design methodologies aimed at strengthening community participation in neighborhood upgrading and urbanization processes. He was a founding member of MOBA, an award-winning progressive housing solution financed by the governments of Chile and the United States. He was also co-founder of the Urban Movement for Artistic Transformation (*Movimiento Urbano de Transformación Artística*, MUTA), which in 2019 toured several countries in Latin America performing urban interventions.

López Gross, Juan Pablo

Specialist of the IDB group Innovation Lab (IDB Lab). Venezuelan architect with over thirteen years of experience in urban development, social inclusion and innovation. He graduated from the School of Architecture and Urbanism of the Central University of Venezuela, holds a diploma in Public Leadership from the Institute of Advanced Studies in Administration (IESA) in Caracas and a master's degree in Applied Political Studies sponsored by the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID) in Madrid, Spain. In 2015, he joined the IDB as part of the Housing and Urban Development Division and became co-founder of the IDB Cities LAB. Since 2019, he has worked as a Finance Operations Specialist at the Innovation Laboratory of the IDB Group (IDB Lab), leading initiatives that promote innovation for the inclusion of vulnerable populations in Latin America and the Caribbean. Before joining the IDB, Juan Pablo was founder and chief operating officer of URBIX, a consulting firm specialized in urban and citizen matters, and the Executive Secretary of the Local Public Planning Council of the Municipality of Chacao, Caracas.



Madera-Arends, Roberto

Environmentalism, urban cyclist, passionate about biodiversity and its reconciliation with cities. He graduated in Environmental Engineering at SEK International University in Ecuador and holds a master's degree in Urban Environmental Management from the University of Wageningen, the Netherlands. He has worked on environmental monitoring, ecological restoration, citizen engagement, research, climate change and sustainable urban development. He is currently a member of the IDB Cities LAB team at the IDB Housing and Urban Development Division, where he collaborates on urban innovation projects.

Madriz, Mayra

Urban planner with ten years of expertise addressing the socio-cultural dimension of urban revitalization projects in the US and Latin America. As the director and leader of the Gehl office in San Francisco, she has managed high-profile urban projects and worked with real estate developers, innovative corporate leaders and governmental agencies in the US and Latin America. Her work focuses on the behavioral and socio-cultural dimension of urban development, and addresses issues related to social inclusion, change management and human experience as manifested in the public sphere.

Mashini, Dominique

Architect and Master of Urban Development from the Catholic University of Chile. She has worked as a researcher and participated in design and urban planning projects. She served

as executive director of Fundación Santiago Cerros Isla. At present, she works as a consultant with the Urban Design Lab (cooperation agreement between the Inter-American Development Bank and the Vienna University of Technology) and does research on territorial planning based on landscape ecology principles. Her work focuses on metropolitan governance, decentralization and institutional strengthening, urban sustainability and cultural heritage in historic downtowns.

Mendoza, Miguel Ángel

Co-founder and project manager at Nómada Laboratorio Urbano (2014), a team of experimental agents based in the city of Juárez, Chihuahua. Through social architecture, participatory design and placemaking, he has developed sociocultural strategies, community projects and urban interventions in cities such as Juárez, El Paso, Las Cruces, Chihuahua, Mexico City, Mérida and Oaxaca. He is a member of the Placemaking Latinoamérica network and works with the Placemaking MX foundation.

Motta, Jorge Martín

PhD in Urbanism. Architect. Specialist in urban and regional planning. Executive advisor of the Latin American University Network of Housing Chairs (*Red Universitaria Latinoamericana de Cátedras de Vivienda*, ULACAV). External researcher at the Center for Urban and Regional Studies (*Centro de Estudios Urbanos y Regionales*, CEUR-CONICET) and the Design Research Laboratory (*Laboratorio de Investigación en Diseño*) of the School of Architecture, Design and Urbanism of the University of Buenos Aires (+ID Lab-FADU). He currently serves as Project Planning and Development director at the Argentine Ministry for Territorial Development and Habitat.



Ortega, Juan Pablo

CEO of Tech Innovation Group, a holding with a portfolio of 16 biotech, health tech, and wellness tech companies. Co-founder and former CEO of Ruta N, program of the Municipality of Medellín to enhance the development of new knowledge-based businesses with international projection through the development and strengthening of the ecosystem of science, technology and innovation (STi). He was adviser to the Mayor of Medellín in structuring “Cultura E”, a city entrepreneurship program. Electronic Engineer from the Pontifical Bolivarian University, MBA from EAFIT University. Innovation and Technology Management and Policy program at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) as a Fulbright fellow.

Ortiz, John Octavio

Architect from the National University of Colombia, Medellín. He has pursued studies at the Harvard University executive education program on Climate Resilient Architecture: New Approaches to Design with Materials, and The Walkable City - Graduate School of Design (GSD).



Palacio, Manuela

Architect from the Pontifical Bolivarian University. She received her MSc in Urban Regeneration from the Bartlett School of Planning, University College London. She is a consultant with the Inter-American Development Bank Housing and Urban Development Division. She has worked as an advisor for social housing projects and has participated in urbanism projects and metropolitan planning processes in Colombia, Mexico and the United Kingdom. Her experience in the public, private and academic sectors focuses on the implementation of comprehensive urban solutions that contribute to the equitable and sustainable development of cities.

Pinto de Souza Sawaia, Camila

Educator graduated from the Singularidades Institute and student of architecture and urbanism at FAU-USP. Member of the A cidade Precisa de Você Institute, co-creator of the Cocriança collective and teacher at the PuriSementes space. Co-author of the book entitled *Situando Jane Jacobs* (2018).



Quispe, Héliida

Holder of a bachelor’s degree in Economics and Environmental Management from the Antonio Ruiz de Montoya University. Specialist in Applied Statistics from INEI Peru, and in Public Management from the University of the Pacific. Technical assistant at the Lima Cómo Vamos citizen observatory, where she supports the monitoring and follow-up of the quality of urban life and leads

the implementation of the Pact for Public Spaces, which provides guidelines for the municipality to create and recover sustainable, inclusive and safe public spaces.



Ramírez, Patricia

PhD in Sociology. Staff researcher at the Social Research Institute (*Instituto de Investigaciones Sociales*), with a focus on urban studies. She teaches the research seminar on urban processes, public space and citizenship in the Political and Social Sciences, Urbanism and Geography postgraduate programs at the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM). She is a member of the National System of Researchers (SNI, by its Spanish acronym) and has been a Rockefeller Foundation fellow in the Urban Culture Program of the Metropolitan Autonomous University (UAM). She studies cities and public space from the perspective of social uses, practices and relations among various urban and institutional groups and actors.

Reverter, Tomás

He is pursuing a degree in Administration. He is the former president of Cooperativa de Vivienda y Consumo Cosquín Ltda and former assistant secretary for Social Housing Management. He was a member of the *Villa 20* coordination team (2018-2020) at the City of Buenos Aires Housing Institute and currently serves as coordinator of this agency.

Richter, Alessandra

Consultant with the Housing and Urban Development Division of the Inter-American Development Bank. She is currently part of the IDB Cities

LAB team, which promotes urban innovation and experimentation. She has over nine years of professional experience designing, implementing and evaluating international development projects in the fields of urban economy, urban innovation, housing policies, governance and subnational government finance. She previously worked at the IDB office in Peru, and in that country's Ministry of Housing and Ministry of Agriculture. She holds a master's degree in Public Administration and Development Practices from Columbia University's School of International Public Affairs (SIPA) and a bachelor's degree in Economics from the University of the Pacific in Peru.

Rizzo, Cintia

Holder of a bachelor's degree in Social Work from the University of Buenos Aires (UBA). She is pursuing a master's degree in Urban Studies at the National University of General Sarmiento (UNGS) with a focus on Gender, Cities and Territories (Latin American Council of Social Sciences, CLACSO). She is part of the CISC-SA-Buenos Aires technical team. Professor of the Social Work undergraduate course at the National University of José C. Paz (UNPAZ). External researcher of the Infohabitat team (UNGS, UNT, UNR). She is a member of the Housing and Gender Commission of Espacio Habitar Argentina. She has participated in research initiatives and in the execution of projects aimed at improving housing conditions and strengthening women's organizations in territories based on their habitat.

Robertson, Cristián

Architect from the Catholic University of Chile. He holds an MSc in Building and Urban Design in Development from The Bartlett, DPU, University College London. Partner of ARDEU. He has participated in the coordination, design and/or execution of consultancies related to urban planning, metropolitan governance, heritage and innovation. Co-founder

of Ecología de lo Informal, an applied research platform related to informal settlements in Latin America. He served as deputy director of Resilience for the Metropolitan Region of Santiago as part of the Rockefeller Foundation's 100 Resilient Cities (100RC) project. His interests revolve around neighborhood upgrading, housing and public spaces on a territorial scale, social urbanism, the transformation of vulnerable neighborhoods, and territorial management in metropolitan areas. He is part of the founding team of the Junto al Barrio NGO and co-founder of the Reconstruye NGO. He has received an award from Architecture for Humanity.

Rocca, María Elisa

PhD in Architecture. Architect. She holds a master's degree in Housing. Founding member of the Cohabitar Urbano non-profit organization, responsible for organizing the Open House Buenos Aires architecture festival. She was a member of the team that coordinated the *Villa 20* upgrading process (2016-2019) at the City of Buenos Aires Housing Institute, and also served as head of this government agency (2019). At present, she is the general director of Affordable Housing at the City of Buenos Aires Housing Institute, which is part of the Ministry of Human Development and Habitat.



Samper, Jota

Assistant Professor of the Program in Environmental Design ENVD at the University of Colorado Boulder. Architect and planner. He has taught architecture, urban design and planning. His work at Informal Settlements Research (ISR) is focused on sustainable urban growth and stands at the intersection of urban informality and

urban violent conflict. He obtained his BA in architecture from UNal in Colombia, as well as a master's degree in City Planning and a Ph.D. on Urban and Regional Planning from MIT. His Atlas of Informality project has been presented at TEDx to an audience of over one million viewers.

Sanjinés, Daniela

Holder of an MSc in International Cooperation and Urban Development from TU Darmstadt and an MSc in Sustainable Emergency Architecture from Universitat Internacional de Catalunya. Since August 2018, she has been a researcher at the ETH Wohnforum - ETH Case, where she is engaged in several research projects in Latin America and is part of the MAS ETH in Housing coordination team. Previous work includes the design and implementation of affordable housing policies in Colombia and the design of participatory camp improvement plans for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees.

Scopel Simon, Isadora

Architect and urbanist. She works as a freelance architect. As a member of the TransLAB.URB team, she engages in urban activism by means of urban activations and interventions in the context of regional integration projects for urban social innovation. She has experience in bioarchitecture and focuses on the research and practice of ecological urbanism, feminist urbanism and ecofeminism.

Sobral, Laura

Holder of a bachelor's and a master's degree in architecture and urbanism from FAU-USP. President of the A Cidade Precisa de Você Institute, member of The Alexander Von Humboldt Foundation's German Chancellor Fellowship for Tomorrow's

Leaders (2017-2018). Author of the book entitled *Doing it Together. Cooperation tools for the city co-governance* (2019). She is currently pursuing her doctoral research in Lisbon, Portugal, and Vienna, Austria.

Sobral, Heloísa

Journalist from the Cásper Líbero University, advertiser from the FAAP foundation and holder of a postgraduate degree in Cultural Management from CELACC, ECA-USP. Director of MUDA_práticas culturais e educativas and administrative coordinator of the A Cidade Precisa de Você Institute. Only in the last ten years, she has coordinated over 500 projects in Brazilian public spaces.

Shimabukuro, Cynthia

She studied architecture at Ricardo Palma University and holds a diploma in Digital Manufacturing from PUCP. She is pursuing a master's degree in Urban Development and Management with a specialization in Strategic Urban Planning & Policies at the Institute for Housing and Urban Development Studies (IHS), Erasmus University Rotterdam, thanks to a NUFFIC fellowship. After earning experience in design offices, she decided to focus on urban processes associated with experimentation, participation and co-creation.



Vaghi, Adriana

Holder of a bachelor's degree in Social Work and specialist in Community Development from the National University of Luján, Argentina. She undertook postgraduate studies in

feminisms and gender at UNIA, Spain. She works at the Center for Urban and Regional Studies (*Centro de Estudios Urbanos y Regionales*, CEUR) of the Argentine Scientific and Technical Research Council (CONICET). She sits on the commission of women experts at the Workplace and Gender Violence Observatory, CONICET, and is part of the CISCESA-Buenos Aires technical team. Founding member of the feminist association Seminario Mujer Latinoamericana - Mujer Andaluza (Huelva, Spain). She has participated in research and development projects that consider the gender dimension in relation with space and territory.

Velarde, Franklin

Holder of a master's degree in Urban Studies from FLACSO. He studied Sociology at the UNMSM. In 2016, upon the invitation of the Research Center for Architecture and the City (*Centro de Investigación de la Arquitectura y la Ciudad*, CIAC-PUCP), he conducted research in Lima about the ways to produce public spaces in the context of the consolidation of urban habitat in mountain slope areas. At present, he is a member of the urban matters team of the Callao 2040 Metropolitan Development Plan and a professor at the School of Architecture and Urbanism (FAU-PUCP).

Vergara, Javier

Architect from the Pontifical Catholic University of Chile. He received his MSc in City Design from the London School of Economics. He is co-founder and Executive Director of Ciudad Emergente. He has specialized in projects related to social innovation, citizen participation and technologies applied to cities. He has worked on tactical urbanism projects in Latin America, Europe and the US.

Vitale, Pablo

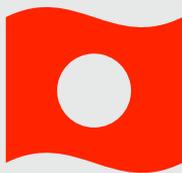
Co-director of Asociación Civil por la Igualdad y la Justicia, ACIJ (*Civil Asso-*

ciation for Equality and Justice). Holder of a bachelor's degree in Political Science and specialist in Social Policies from the University of Buenos Aires, where he is currently pursuing a PhD in Social Sciences. He is also part of the Urban Studies and Photography Studies areas of the Gino Germani Research Institute (IIGG). Undergraduate and graduate professor at UBA and UNSAM.

Volpe, Federica

International expert in urban development and urban innovation. She has worked at the Inter-American Development Bank Housing and Urban Development Division for several years, focusing on housing policy issues and participating in the IDB Cities LAB platform, whose objective is to promote urban experimentation in Latin America and the Caribbean. She has produced several publications and courses on urban development issues, including "Alquiler en Números", a booklet containing country factsheets on rental housing in Latin America and the Caribbean. Previously, she worked in international organizations, NGOs and in the private sector in Chile, Austria, the United States and Italy. She holds a master's degree in Latin American Studies and Sustainable Development from Georgetown University's Edmund A. Walsh School of Foreign Service, a master's degree in International Relations from the University of Florence, and an undergraduate degree in Diplomatic Studies from the University of Trieste, Italy.





Organizations Contributing Cases of Study

A Cidade Precisa de Você

A Cidade Precisa de Você believes in the importance of public spaces and citizen engagement to create more equitable cities. It is a collective of people who, organized as a non-profit, have the social purpose to promote an urban pedagogy that enables the exercise of citizenship, developing actions that may translate into awareness and activation of public spaces so as to build more just, democratic and sustainable cities.

ACIJ

Asociación Civil por la Igualdad y la Justicia (ACIJ) is a non-partisan and non-profit organization engaged in defending the rights of the most disadvantaged social groups and in strengthening democracy in Argentina. The Right to the City area, in particular, aims at promoting the collective right of inhabitants, especially of the most vulnerable groups, to equitable access to cities under the principles of sustainability and social justice, strengthening territorial actions and organizations whose goal is to achieve the full exercise of the right to an adequate urban living standard.

Al Borde

Architecture bureau based in Quito, Ecuador. Led by Pascual Gangotena (1977), David Barragán (1981), Marialuisa Borja (1984) and Esteban Benavides (1985), who obtained their degrees in architecture from the School of Architecture, Design and Arts of the Pontifical Catholic University of Ecuador. They approach the discipline from all its complexities and find a space to operate in the cracks of the system; their thinking is the result of practical work done on an everyday basis, very close to the local reality. Their projects aim at making the most effective use of the resources that exist in the territory and include a significant social innovation component. They have received numerous awards, among them: 100+ Best Architecture Firms 2019, from the Italian magazine *Domus*; a nomination to the Design of the Year 2015 award from the Design Museum in London; the Lafarge Holcim Award Acknowledgment Latin America 2014, in Medellín; the Global Award for Sustainable Architecture 2013, in Paris; and the Schelling Architecture Prize 2012, in Karlsruhe.

Artículo 41

Artículo 41 is a non-profit organization inspired by Article 41 of the National Constitution of the Argentine Republic, which defines our right to a healthy environment and our duty to preserve it. Its founders believe in this right and in this duty, not only for present and future generations, but also for all the species living on the planet. It promotes the transition to a sustainable and regenerative future through culture, communication and citizen engagement.



Ciudad de Bolsillo

Ciudad de Bolsillo's work focuses on the study and collaborative creation of public spaces with a view to renewing harmonious relations among people and institutions. They have developed public and private projects in Chile, Uruguay, the Dominican Republic and Guatemala, most notably, the pedestrianization of roadways, the recovery of vacant plots, the transformation of bus stops into innovative public spaces and the enhancement of underused places in vulnerable neighborhoods. Ciudad de Bolsillo consists of citizen-led actions that change the world.

Ciudad Emergente

Ciudad Emergente is a tactics and tools laboratory that seeks to develop cities and districts collectively. We have experience in more than 10 countries and work with cross-disciplinary teams, combining practice with research and providing direct training to over 3,800 people in innovative methods to improve their neighborhoods and cities, thus allowing over 1.8 million people to benefit from better public spaces.



Espacio Lúdico

Espacio Lúdico is a non-governmental, non-profit organization which intends to drive citizen-led urban innovation programs in order to generate inclusive social and territorial transformation through play and the application of research on play to collaborative project design and management.

Fab Lab Barcelona

Fab Lab Barcelona is a research and production center that rethinks the way we live, work, and play in cities. It is part of the Institute for Advanced Architecture of Catalonia, where it supports different educational and research programs related to the multiple scales of human habitat. It is also the headquarters of the global coordination of the Fab Academy program in collaboration with the Fab Foundation and the MIT's Center for Bits and Atoms. Its mission is to provide access to the tools, knowledge and means to educate, innovate and invent using technology and digital manufacturing to allow anyone to make (almost) anything, thereby creating the opportunity to improve global and local lives and livelihoods.

Fondazione Innovazione Urbana

FIU is a lab for analysis, communication, development, and co-production focused on urban transformations. Its goals are to help the city of Bologna to become more welcoming and sustainable, to strengthen local urban welfare, and to boost urban and digital democracy. To this end, it acts as a "collective brain" and hub of urban change, a catalyst for ideas and activities, and a place where citizens, public institutions, associations, social movements, and all representatives of the economic, social, and cultural worlds can meet, discuss, and interact proactively.

Gehl Architects

Gehl is an urban design and research global consultancy which focuses on the relation between the built environment and quality of life. It applies strategic planning and human-centered design to empower citizens, decision-makers, company leaders, and organizations by facilitating processes, pilot projects and integrated mobility strategies.



IAA Studio

Founded in 2010 in Colombia, this studio is made up of an interdisciplinary team for participatory architecture. It pursues comprehensive urban transformations, deploying strategies that help counter the effects of climate change and the lack of social justice. The team works for the humanization and recovery of public spaces and their environmental structures on the basis of collective consensus and from a gender and eco-efficiency perspective. It prioritizes co-design processes with children, promoting the conscious evolution of communities and territories.

IED City Lab

The IED City is part of the new Innovation Lab promoted by the European Institute of Design (IED), Madrid. It aims to be an ecosystem of innovation, designed to contribute to the interaction of design with cities, with the challenge of transforming urban regeneration into human regeneration, and urban design into human design.

Nómada Laboratorio Urbano

Firm of urban strategists founded in 2014 and based in the city of Juárez, Mexico. They develop consultancy services, projects and interventions which contribute to the improvement of cities, public life and people's socio-cultural well-being. The team rethinks cities and the way to co-design them for everyone. Research, experimentation and participatory design are considered as essential tools to respond to new urban challenges. By means of placemaking, tactical

urbanism and citizen innovation strategies, the team works hand in hand with citizens, neighborhood committees and community leaders to create local responses.



TransLAB.URB

Autonomous collective that develops projects involving experimentation and practice in urban social innovation, divided into 3 categories: Co-creation & Participation, Urban Pedagogy and Urban Activation. It is a heterogeneous and trans-disciplinary group engaged in urbanism processes that rest on social technologies, technological resources and the connection between art and activism. Its approaches are based on civic process design, tactical urbanism, hacker urbanism, placemaking, sociology, psychology, cartography and mapping.

RUTA N

Innovation and business center in Medellín that aims to help improve quality of life for the city's residents through science, technology and innovation. Its mission is to coordinate the STi ecosystem to transform Medellín into a knowledge-based economy. To attain this goal, it has defined three strategic priorities: to attract talent, capital and global companies to the city, to develop and strengthen the fabric of innovative and entrepreneurial businesses, and to generate STi solutions for the city's challenges.



Urbanismo Vivo

Urbanismo Vivo is a team that develops projects meant to connect citizens with the place where they live, promoting a friendlier, more active and humanized city. It works in the territory on three main areas: innovation, as a way to design processes from a creative perspective to produce livable cities; diversity, for integrating the views of the territory's inhabitants; and exchange, for collaborative work and networking both at the local and international levels, as the driving force for great transformation processes.

WINGU

Non-profit civic tech organization, with a multidisciplinary team that enhances social projects and initiatives and maximizes their impact through digital transformation and the implementation of innovative technological developments.



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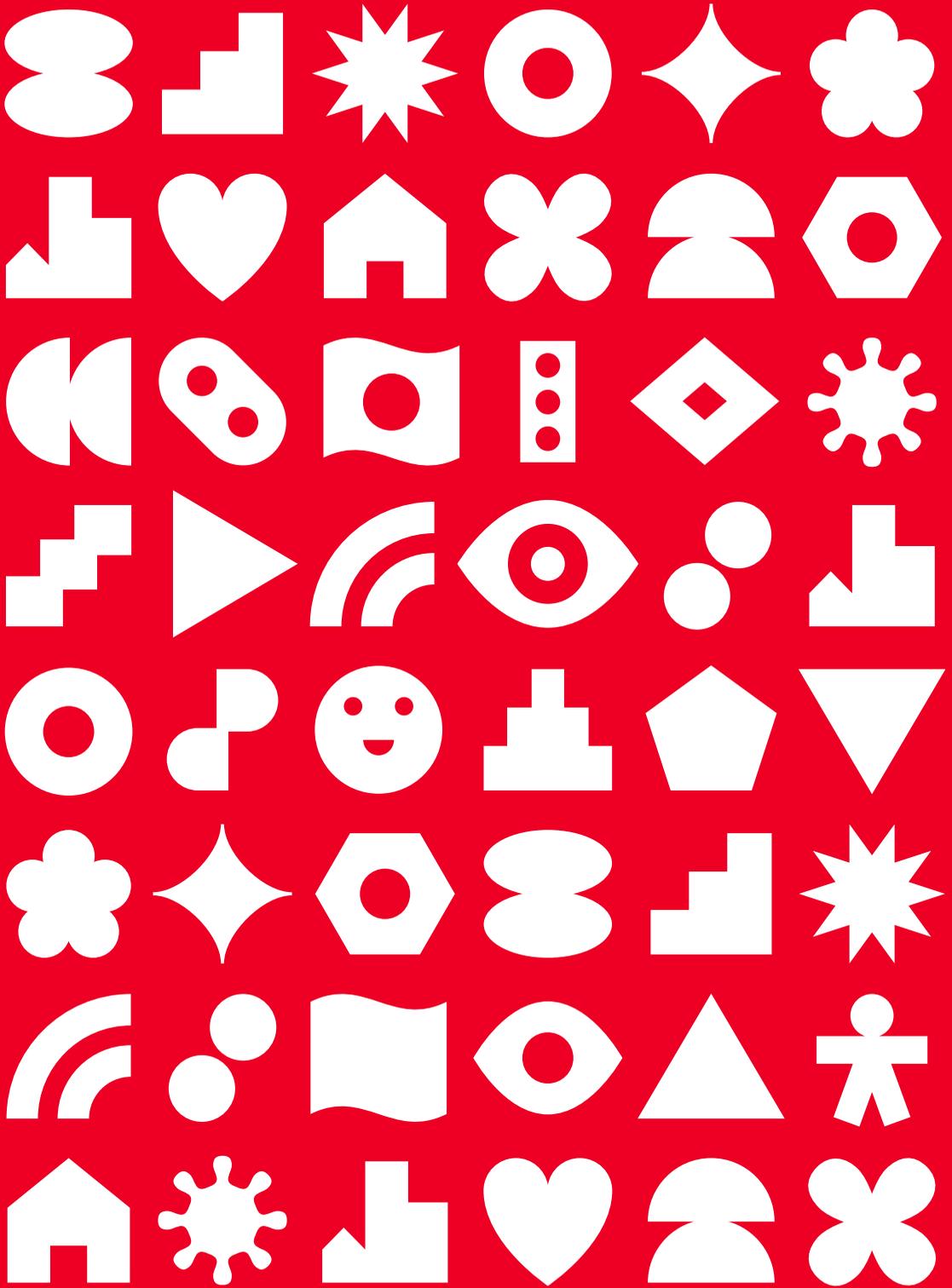
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This is a publication about citizen-led urbanism processes in Latin America. It follows the recent life of a movement originating from, and driven by and for citizens, who out of a compelling love for their cities, have brought together actors from all fields to co-create new, more inclusive and equitable public space models. By using tools such as innovation, creativity and co-responsible solidarity, citizen-led urbanism has been able to complement the traditional approaches to urban planning and city governance.

This publication also invites us to move from the theory and concepts that provide the rationale for citizen-led urbanism to the actual practical experiences which are helping to shape it and consolidate it as a regional movement. It thus takes us on a journey through successful projects developed in different places and contexts of Latin America and looks at the experience of the first urban innovation labs, as a means to consider the paths that may lead to new horizons of an inclusive future, in view of the challenges, both known and yet to be known, of the first half of the 21st century.

In less than one decade, with their impressive diversity and vigorous urban activity, members of the citizen-led urbanism movement have brought about changes in the streets, neighborhoods and cities where they live: changes in the way of thinking of authorities and fellow citizens; changes in public policies, which have an impact not only on the urban landscape, but also on how we relate to each other through our relationship with what we call “the urban” and with ecosystems, with our individual needs and with the urgency of organizing ourselves collectively to identify solutions for the common good.

This is why this book became a superbook, i.e., an extensive compilation about a fabulous collective adventure, undertaken by thousands of people whose common denominator is creativity and their will to think and do things differently. We hope it may serve as an inspiration to its readers so that they, too, may take a leading role in this story.

