A Question of Socio-political Configuration: Artistic Practices in Community, Culture, and Public Spaces

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Abstract

This investigation addresses the possibilities of socio-spatial intervention, generation, and political extent of reach of artistic practices in community (APC) in Latin America. At times articulated to collective action, APC suppose the transformation of some socio-micro-spatialities that can provoke alternative spatial configurations, and at the same time, infer in the forms of active citizenship that can incite processes of memory, remembrance, forgiving and forgetting.

For this purpose, the work seeks to identify the social processes and the actors involved in the mentioned spatial and social transformations based upon the analysis, study, and evaluation of three artistic interventions developed in Bogotá and Medellín: *Ciudad Kennedy, Memoria y Realidad (2001-2003)*, *Ex-situ/In-situ: Moravia (2008-2010)*, and *Práctica Artística en La Grieta (2007-2011)*.

The inquiry emphasises the ways in which these creative practices activate forms of resistance within the complex violent Colombian context. It departs from the principle that on the one hand, these practices activate occupations and social organizations that create new spatialities in urban contexts, and, on the other, that they activate languages and affections for the construction of memory.

Through long-term duration projects, and the development of common spaces carried out with the participation of communities, in which bonds of trust are created, narrations of truth, citizenships, self-representations and memorial archives seem to be able to appear. The study aims at showing that these are process in which the social, cultural and public spaces are always fields of conflict. Where culture is understood as a practice, an event, and as a potential of the imminent, and public space, is understood as a field constructed through a constant unequal social struggle.

This investigation problematizes and indicates the presence of social beliefs and artistic representations that have motivated a diversity of collective and creative practices in local neighbourly scales. Also identifies observable impacts generated in the participant communities through specific political devices. However, such actions develop in micro-scales, which implies that more than transformations they could be referred to as political-cultural adjustments. These, even though on a small scale allow for questions about the potential of alternative socio-spatial configurations. Naming the world differently, reinventing realities, imagining possibilities to think and construct our collective and individual selves different.

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Project presentation

The immediate academic precedent of this investigation is the dissertation I wrote for my Master of Arts degree as a postgraduate student in the Centre for Cultural Studies at Goldsmiths University of London in 2010. My project was an inquiry into the process of historical representation in Colombia, a study of how, through various strategies, contemporary art projects from the 90s until the first decade of the 21st century attempted to subvert those ingrained socio-cultural notions.

The research focused on the politics of historical representation and the artistic reflection produced as an answer to those lived realities. It discussed class, postcolonialism and cultural processes in Colombian society. The analysis found affinities in the relationships between social realities and artistic practices and in the ethical component that artists and artistic projects demonstrated in their work. The investigation raised new questions regarding the social function of art and whether art could operate as a social mediator.

From that point, my research interests expanded to the study and discussion of various artistic practices that articulated art to social and political activism, especially after the 1970s. The widening of my initial interest explored artistic proposals that developed associations with the complex social, political, economic, and cultural vicissitudes lived at the time in the region. Proposals that produced unconventional aesthetic responses establishing an artistic paradigm. A way of art-making which was always apart from the art institution and decidedly sought the socialisation of art.

Before enrolling in the mentioned MA program, I had completed undergraduate studies in Visual Arts in Bogotá, Colombia. I developed an artistic practice interested in generating public art projects that would propose a stronger involvement from the audience and circulate in non-

conventional spaces. The Colombian contemporary art scene made it clear to me how artists were attempting to politicise creativity by understanding artistic and cultural production as a generator of political meaning and simultaneously as a device for social interpretation. As an undergraduate student and later as a teacher and artist in Colombia, I was present in many of the projects discussed as part of this thesis.

Creating, participating in, and observing such projects allowed me to understand the extent of reach that the artistic practice could have, both in terms of the amplification of the artistic practice and its capacity for influencing social particularities. I was able to perceive a particular phenomenon: the creation of alternative modes of artistic intervention in real contexts as a precept of how in its formal aspects, in its subject matter, and in the modes of production and distribution, the creative process is organised as a mechanism to open spaces for different degrees of social and political articulation. This phenomenon paved the way for what I will call Artistic Practices in Community (APC) to develop; a mode of art production centred on collaboration, mediation, trust, relationships, and translation that is inclusive, operating under non-hegemonic logics.

Inquiring about APCs reinforced questions that had surged regarding the *nature* of the artistic practice growing since my undergraduate studies. Matters concerning how to create art, produce meaning, and how the artistic circuit functions enticed me to question ideas such as authorship and to discover how the artistic practice through alternative strategies operates as an instrument for social mediation that incentivises political transformations. This process generated new questions regarding APCs: their operations and functions, the artists' role, and the type of communities they work with, which led to further questions about Colombia, its urban emerging context, the cultural production at the margins, and how art has articulated to other cultural actors

such as collective action in communities for the generation and amplification of their public spaces in the absence of the State.

This investigation develops a notion of public space as a field of conflict for representation, where a constant struggle for re-signification, appropriation, recovery, emancipation, and other manifestations that seek political revindications, enclosed by the markets, global design logics, and the advance of capitalism converge. This definition diverges from its characterisation as a place of encounter in a city, which arguably clouds other ways that communities and individuals have found for being inside urban contexts. Through these challenges that incrementally struggle for the control of public space, other political subjects and identities can emerge, consolidating other forms of heterogeneous relationships that allow the creation, configuration, and organisation of alternative modes of space.

Public space is produced through the constant emergence of struggles, where citizens play a role in the configuration and reconfiguration of a given place. This phenomenon has generated a transit from a tangible space to expanded fields. In an ample sense, the idea of the *public* can be associated with democracy and cultural rights. The implications of this notion would indicate that the representations, discontinuities, and contradictions of democracy would then configure and are configured simultaneously by the production of public space. This premise opens the possibility of conceiving that democracy and public space result from a volatile permanent articulation, dispute, and resignification process.

The transformation of public space is different worldwide. Other examples studied suggest that the socio-political, economic and cultural context of the public space in question is paramount to its political configuration. Thus, to understand the logics in which an urban conglomerate and its spatial production are configured, managed, and developed, it is critical to understand the logics

and motivations that originated its population reception and density. This is a particular situation in Colombia because it is affected by the internal armed conflict that, through decades of political violence, has generated internal mass displacements that have pushed rural populations into the cities and caused a social and humanitarian crisis. Thus, the urban political subject that emerges in Colombian cities corresponds to the socio-political context in the country. This particularity, allows us to question whether there is a direct relationship between public space and democracy in the country.

In this way, this current research project was conceived and, as a general focus, had the analysis, discussion, and exploration of the work and socio-political implications of three APC proposals developed in Bogotá and Medellín in the 21st century.

The objective of this inquiry seeks to develop a reading of the projects regarding their actions and operations considering concrete dimensions of the said practices. Likewise, to analyse how artistic creation inserts in social and cultural relationships through a determined mode of production and how relationships develop in the contexts in which they are deployed. It also addresses the claims and hopes they produce and what are the specific contributions and extent of reach the projects have.

The timespan in which the three case studies develop coincides with the first eleven years of the 21st century: 2001-2011. This decade immediately follows the proclamation of the 1991 Political Constitution of Colombia, a moment that dramatically changed the country's notions of art and culture. This new national establishment understands culture as the mechanism for the attainment of peace and citizenship rights, which, in turn, incentivises communities to develop diverse and versatile relationships with culture. Hence, I recognise in the Colombian contemporary art scene an emergence of participatory or contextual artistic practices from the 90s and APC as

an observable phenomenon produced in the 21st century. The former is a form of art where audiences participate under the direction or instruction of the artist or cultural agents, and the latter is a collective artistic mode of production where the project's conception, meaning, and development are sought collaboratively between the artist, cultural agents and the community through long-term horizontal relationships of trust.

The demarcation between these artistic forms suggests that the project's social, political, and cultural implications are different too. Therefore, the knowledge contribution that this thesis is proposing is the demonstration of how in the specificity of the Colombian context, and the influence of the 1991 constitutional project, APCs emerged and, in their articulation to collective action, succeeded in shaping urbanisms and amplifying the public dimension of urban spaces, not just in appearance, but in the relationships that communities establish amongst themselves.

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Introduction

The conditions of sociality in a city are essential to reproduce and implant emerging new experiences and behaviours. Sexual, musical or attire preferences, for example, assign to city residents, diverse and versatile social and cultural locations that add up to the ones that can be assigned by class, ethnicity, age or political affiliation. The everyday consumption of popular productions such as music and food, more than reaffirming Raymond Williams's 'culture is ordinary' (Williams, 1958) it reiterates that culture is a heterogeneous space of collective construction in constant struggle, wherein 'the cultural dialogues, conflicts and negotiations occur in glocal topographies in which the hegemonic and the subaltern, the national and the international and the canonical and the popular confront and negotiate in complex ways' (Rodríguez, 2004, s/p). These topographies, mentioned by Rodríguez, result from specific socio-spatial peculiarities in a problematic articulation with the ubiquity of globalisation.

Considering the ordinariness that Williams proposes (2008, pp. 39-41) together with the glocal topographies of Rodríguez (2004) when referring to the cultural practices in the third world, supposes that a community is configured through a cluster of meanings and shared purposes that emerge through everyday practices, power relations, habits, costumes, type of work and entertainment. Simultaneously, these everyday practices suggest a continuous social process in which activities such as cooking, farming, the organization of a living place, personal hygiene, the use of street spaces, behaviour in family atmospheres, and the rest of the actions that compose the everyday, are transformed, adjusted and resignified constantly throughout time.

Laura Itchart and Juan Donati amplify this description to establish a way to understand such practices by stating that, 'when speaking about cultural practices, we recognise the process,

the shift of the centre, the negotiation. We can no longer separate, on one hand, culture and, on the other, the uncultured' (Itchart & Donati, 2014, p. 19). The opposition between 'high' culture and 'low' culture correlates with two conceptions that Williams (1958) sees are generally accepted as culture, on the one hand, that it is a way of life in its entirety, and on the other, that art and knowledge result from a specialised and exclusive creative work (Williams, 1958). He opposes these notions of culture that derive from dominant social groups and rejects the idea of culture based on a radical separation between an exclusive, cultured and minoritarian social class and an ignorant, anonymous and ordinary majority. Still, he adds a central point to the discussion: Ordinary people also produce and enjoy that culture (Williams, 1958). Williams, Rodríguez, Itchard and Donati coincide in recognizing that there is a relationship between culture and the place of that culture; moreover, they suggest that culture is produced by power relations in which concrete social actors struggle in unequal conditions for their representations and the cultural meaning of their practices.

In Colombia, the 1991 Political Constitution recognises culture in analogous ways to what Williams, Rodríguez, Itchard and Donati describe. The current cultural policies of the Ministry of Culture are a direct consequence of the Constitution, and Bogotá was the first city in the country to implement guidelines for cultural policy concerted with other cultural agents. This cultural and artistic impulse promoted a dynamisation of social and artistic forces that resulted in alternative forms of experimentation and collective work in the country. Artists and cultural agents adjusted their wagers for social and political themes to a revealing interest that directed their focus toward micro-social spaces by appealing to social interaction initiatives in their artistic strategies. As communities were constructing their own pacification processes, for the first time, powerful things were happening in the city's neighbourhoods which promoted movements of social expression that, in turn, increased the generation of cultural policies. The new socio-cultural framework forged a

generation of artists, cultural developers, leaders, and non-art subjects that found an instrument for civil resistance in this new space.

This thesis understands this cultural phenomenon as artistic practices in community [APC] and not necessarily as art. At its core, this is an epistemological turn that incorporates everyday life, mass and popular culture, and 'lower' forms of culture to the artistic tradition. This perspective recognises and identifies the instances, resources and cultural agents (which are not only artists) implied in a process or artistic event. It also acknowledges that they are developed by non-art subjects and artists that participate directly and horizontally in the production and circulation, the investigation, and the social appropriation of new artistic agents. Thus, by reconsidering the relationship between individual subjects or collectives that develop them, the subjects that consume it, the places from which they enunciate, and the range of meaning and affections implied in the circulation and social appropriation of such practices, the category APC radically transforms the supposed unidirectional mode of the artistic creation.

These practices establish modes of action that differ from the conventional work of art. It is observable that such projects are interested in more than just representing or producing artistic objects. Their operation is concerned with the intimate relationship with the contexts and spaces where they are deployed, in which there is an evident correspondence with the realities lived. This suggests that APC can promote a nuanced relationship between art and life. In that respect, communitarian artistic projects and co-elaborative practices directed toward the work with social groups facing concrete necessities converge under an understanding of art as a possibility of social and cultural interaction. Working outside the institutional space and with collective autonomies as a starting point, these practices generate proposals that understand art as a mediator of socio-political processes. Amid an eminent communitarian sense and a close relationship to their

contexts, APC seek to open other alternatives and forms of revindication for individuals and collectives by deploying artistic and cultural devices. Proposals that, for example, encourage the learning of ancestral knowledge, in which questions about identity-making processes or the spiritual uses of the land can arise.

This investigation focuses on the specific cases of *Ciudad Kennedy, Memoria y Realidad (2001-2003)*, *Exsitu/Insitu Moravia: Prácticas Artísticas en Comunidad (2008-2010)*, and *En la Grieta: Práctica Artística en Comunidad (2007-2011)* developed in Bogotá and Medellín. These case studies are artistic experimental actions developed in unison between a diversity of cultural agents. The projects speak of aesthetic alternatives, redefinitions, spatial production and reconfiguration, and nuanced links to the political, the collective and the artistic. This complex scope of influence creates a necessary discussion around APCs to locate their specificity and examine the notions they promote, their aims, modes of doing, consequences and reframing experienced in the social and artistic fields: an examination that proposes an analysis that can provide a glance at the complexity of the projects beyond good intentions.

The analysis of the projects in this investigation gives a detailed view of the genealogies, strategies, operations, and methodologies of the artistic practices. Two elements constitute the core of the thesis: the first one opens an inquiry into the emerging urban contexts of Bogotá and Medellín. Analysing the unstable notions of public space as an essential element for APCs operations that seek to provoke cultural possibilities in the communities and promote radical encounters and mediations. The projects, I argue, activate an occupation, fostering the development of other socio-spatial configurations. The second element considered is the activation of remembrance and memory as a community-building mechanism. I argue that the notions of

memory, remembrance, forgiving and forgetting are deployed as a tool for the re-definition of the individuals and collectives involved in the projects.

APCs are a mode of artistic exercise that inquire about public social space. The projects studied have selected and captured memories, experiences, territory, and situations, indicating such aspects through communitarian declarations of their conflicts, struggles, and hopes in some of the social and cultural sectors in the country. Proposing an inquiry on these practices in Colombia is an attempt to understand what is being produced through art as a social possibility. Furthermore, it is an effort to understand what we live as a community.

The promotion of strategies of social reorganisation through cultural, creative, and artistic processes, the strategic relationship to a specific identity, the appropriation of all sorts of resources, the simultaneous resistance and reproduction of hegemonic and resistant discourses, the fostering of bonds of solidarity, and the cooperation amongst groups to obtain common goods, as mentioned above, do not only emerge from art subjects but from a multiplicity of heterogeneous diverse and versatile agents, which is why, under this premise, the investigation creates a link to a parallel category of analysis: collective action. This allows for a flexible framework of possible analysis that can apprehend the diversity of social and institutional formations that have found in culture a vehicle to open new ways and modes of direct intervention in the public dimension of urban spaces. Moreover, tracing the trajectory of the emergence of new social subjects, individual or collective, can help understand the resizing of the artistic and cultural scope in specific places and concrete situations. The conditions of emergence of collective action and its articulations to contemporary artistic practices in this work are diverse and specific to every neighbourhood and every micro-space from which they are produced. Therefore, the emphasis of the thesis is placed on the articulation between artistic practices in community–collective action–spatial production.

It is essential to indicate that the APCs articulated to collective action presented in this inquiry do not represent a homogeneity. On the contrary, they differ between themselves in the tactics they deploy to insert themselves and articulate to non-art social spaces, in the strategies promoted to negotiate with different levels of institutionality, in the artistic representations used to intervene or appropriate resources, in the ideas mobilised, and in how individuals and collective organisations appropriate their strategies. The sprouting of artistic practices that articulate to collective action, especially those from the 21st century, maintaining the impulse brought forth by the 90s, is not an exclusive Colombian phenomenon. On the contrary, they have been happening in different spaces around the world, especially in marginal areas, not only in the Global South but also in cities of central countries where inequality persists.

Over the last three decades, the discussions around the public sphere concerning the meaning of culture have determined that such meaning is not an abstract feature associated with a particular social class, gender, or ethnicity. On the contrary, culture is recognised as a system of social relationships between social actors in concrete social life spaces. In this way, culture has been assumed, simultaneously, as a means for the negotiation of social conflicts, the place where those conflicts happen, and a mechanism of power that different hegemonic and subaltern social groups permanently challenge: a space and tool for intervention and transformation of reality, and, therefore, of the relationships between the social actors. This provisional definition not only concerns some of the theoretical references included in this inquiry but, more importantly, it can develop a relationship between cultural and creative practices and the processes of communal organisation with the place of their own culture.

There is an evident rapid turn in the meanings of what is understood as cultural and artistic: their academic representations, social uses, and acknowledgement as fields of study. In some way,

this has enlarged the fields of multi-disciplinary study; also, social movements have found in art and culture alternative strategies for intervention and the attainment of resources for their actions. In Bogotá, different groups and social movements have found a space for their political agendas through art and culture. Victor Manuel Rodríguez declares that,

> When thinking about art as a set of social practices and knowledges and not as an object, it inscribes it in power relations, tensions and exclusions, not so much because of its themes or 'sources of inspiration', but because of the way it mobilises disciplinary power relations through which, social creativity modes are integrated to the artistic discourse as artistic expressions or practices that carry aesthetic dimensions (Rodríguez, 2016, p. 69).

Under this premise, developing an approach that engages with phenomena sprouting from notions, ideas, or artistic and cultural practices in urban spaces implies observing the specific conditions of the established power relations between social groups or individuals concerning the institutions, the material conditions of the places where it happens, and the self-representations established throughout the social process. In other words, inquiring about artistic and cultural practices with communities involved in urban spatial production and the construction of other subjectivities implies the study of different social discourses encouraged by diverse suppositions and revindications that converge in cultural devices capable of transforming urban spaces. Thus, an investigation as this one, interested in social transformations produced in urban micro-spaces through APC, engages with the empowerment of emergent subjects in different territories, the attainment of cultural rights, processes of collective appropriation of spaces in the city, and other forms of articulation constructed for the defence of their causes.

Discussing public art in Bogotá, Colombian artist and scholar Oscar Ardila affirms that it is associated with 'the consolidation of meanings that truly represent a collective, a neighbourhood or a region in present time' (Ardila, 2015, p. 27), as opposed to murals, graffiti, statues and busts, monuments, or landmarks which urban experts curate. He continues describing how such

meanings 'are not only revealed through official policies and legal or technical heritage criteria but also involve those who are represented, that could be a community or citizens' (Ardila, 2015, p. 27). Ardila's affirmations are helpful for situating the complexity of the urban transformation happening since the 90s in Bogotá. It is critical to insist on the interest of this investigation in inquiring about the practices and discourses by diverse actors in the Colombian artistic sphere, which are not limited to professionals, students, professors and university faculties but includes social organizations, activist collectives, architects, designers and social researchers amongst others, that mobilise various resources and make part of support networks that operate in neighbourly, local, regional and international scales.

To establish differentiated roles within the practices studied, the investigation attempts to revise categories related to artistic and cultural practices from art theory, cultural studies and others concerning the social production of public space, which gathers notions concerning territory, urbanism, geography, governability, and governance. Together with concepts from cultural studies and cultural practices, attempts articulations between urban spatiality, culture, and the meanings, affectations, and possible social uses of the artistic practices studied.

The general and specific objectives of this investigation and the knowledge contribution proposed have already been mentioned. Nonetheless, it is essential to reiterate that this thesis argues for how, in the specificity of the Colombian context that lays the ground for the development of the 1991 Political Constitution and, with it, a completely new understanding of culture as a mechanism for the attainment of peace and citizen rights, APCs emerge, and by articulating to collective action shape urbanisms and amplify the urban dimension of public spaces, not just through tangible interventions, but in the relationships that communities foster and create.

Under the terms discussed above, this investigation aims at the following:

- Locating a contemporary context of artistic and creative practices in community in Colombia and their articulations, resistances, and responses to the socio-political and cultural circumstances lived in the country.

- Identifying and characterising the productions and actors involved in creating and transforming urban micro-spaces through contemporary artistic and creative practices in spaces outside the usual artistic circuits.

- Engage in an analytical discussion with the multidisciplinary, varied, and consistent critical production about 21st century urban artistic participation.

- Establishing specificities in the urban space production in Colombian cities, with an emphasis on Bogotá.

- Developing an analytical understanding of the three projects studied at depth, their backgrounds, actions, operations, and modes of doing, considering concrete dimensions of these practices, and how they can insert themselves in social relationships.

- Analysing the ways in which they relate to the contexts they intervene, the demands and hopes that surge, and the possible contributions.

- Identifying and analysing modes of doing and actors involved in influencing forms of active citizenship that can provoke processes of memory, remembrance, forgiving and forgetting.

For these purposes, the investigation is divided into four parts:

1. *The Colombian Context*

The first part of the investigation provides a contextual framework of Colombia as a field of study and a historical overview of the country over two centuries. The importance of this approach is understanding the nation-building process developed after the country's independence in the

19th century and the social, political, and urban formations that set the stage for the 20th century phenomenon known as *La Violencia (1948-1962).* It continues with a narration of the events that, from different ramifications, converge in Colombia, where institutional military forces fight a war with left-wing subversive guerrilla organisations, right-wing paramilitary groups, and narcotraffic organisations, encircling the civil population for decades in a struggle for land, markets, and political legitimacy. Years of war which seek a solution through a proposal of a political mechanism to search for peace, reconciliation and the attainments of civil rights through culture that this thesis sees as fundamental for the development of APC in Colombia: the 1991 Political Constitution. Lastly, the section concludes by presenting the development of *La Comisión de la Verdad* [The Truth Commission] as a direct consequence of the 2016 peace accords with Las Farc-EP.

2. *Urbanisms and Public Space*

This part discusses the production of social urban space in contemporary cities. A necessary examination to understand the extent of reach of the social processes and productions and the actors involved in the transformation of urban micro-spaces through the deployment of APC. The section begins by discussing how in the contemporary conditions of the advance of capitalism and globalization, the perception and apprehension of public space in a global context make it an inconstant concept in which the magnitude of the public dimension of urban public spaces and the production and access to common resources have been significantly impacted. The section continues evaluating the conditions of public space, the growing social inequalities, and the socio-spatial segregation in Bogotá, under the light of the right to the city. Such social circumstances function in many ways as the ignitors of collective action, which amid emancipation and autonomy, recognise emerging actors and new activisms from art that have succeeded in impacting their local

areas and transforming their social public spaces. The section ends with a discussion on the issues of cultural policy in Colombia that derive from the 1991 Political Constitution, which seeks the enactment and apprehension of citizen rights through culture amidst the internal conflict.

3. *From artistic practices to artistic practices in community: Twenty years of contemporary artistic practices in the city [1991-2011]*

This section presents the radical transformation process of the idea of art in Colombia from the 90s, where the shift from a committed social art to art as a social intermediation referred to as APC is discussed. A crucial component of this part is addressing the struggles and challenges concerning meaning, the appropriation of circuits, and the attainment of diverse resources coming from the artistic field in the development of its relationship to the city. To achieve this, the project *La Piel de la Memoria* [The Skin of Memory] (1997) is presented as an antecedent and an example that introduces a discussion about the political in Colombian contemporary art by analysing its operation, resources, and modes of doing. The section continues to evaluate how urban artistic practices struggle for meaning, visibility, resources and circuits. An analysis that goes beyond technical valorisations or visual impact, proposing, on the contrary, an appreciation in terms of the political dimension of the urban interventions and their contribution to the production of public space. A discussion is proposed in terms of art as social intermediation and how this notion is seen through a Latin American perspective, which has led to a specific relationship between artistic practices and the micro-spaces of the cities in the region. Finally, this part discusses how collective action articulates to APC with their action repertoires in specific cases in Bogotá and Medellín in the projects: *Ciudad Kennedy: Memoria y Realidad (2001-2003)*, *Exsitu/Insitu Moravia: Prácticas Artísticas en Comunidad (2008-2010)*, and *En la Grieta: Práctica Artística en Comunidad (2007-2011)*.

4.   Shaping Urbanisms

This section can be seen as the core of the inquiry, as it establishes the role of APC in urban transformations and the alternative spatial production of specific urban neighbourhoods in the two mentioned Colombian cities by evaluating and analysing their operations, ways of doing, resources gathered, and new forms of organisation and political expressions. The section closes with the conclusions, in which the investigation finds that artistic practices in community articulated to collective action can develop socio-political transformations in specific communities. Through the assembly of alternative and unexpected reorganisations of shared resources, diverse social agents, and private and public actors, APCs achieve to configure and produce alternative micro-social-spatialities. Since the spatial transformations are temporal, fluid, and fragile, their capacity is limited, and rather than permanent cultural transformations, we could be talking about periodic cultural and political adjustments. However, their scale, rather than implying a low impact, the thesis argues that they ought to be conceived in terms of their capacity for visualising individual subjects and collectives that find other ways of being in a city.

In this way, the theoretical path across the central aspects concerned with investigation related to urban spatiality, the modes of spatial production in the current state of capitalism, the right to the city, the issue of urban commons and the production of common spaces, the forms of social organisation, collective action and the frameworks for cultural policy in Colombia in a specific period (1991-2011), constitute the concrete structure in which to make relevant questions about certain artistic practices and their relationship to the city. It is clear that the interest of this document is grounded in something other than an inquiry around traditional forms of art in a city, urban spaces in and of themselves, nor collective action appropriating artistic forms while

occupying city spaces during political manifestations. This investigation directs its efforts on socio-spatial shapings resulting from the articulation between artistic practices and collective action.

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Colombian Context

Colombia as a field of study

The writing of modern Colombian history has had different lines of development. Usually, Colombia is presented as either uncivilised, corrupt, and unviable or as a country that, despite having complicated social, political, and cultural processes, remains as a nation in the world.

One of the most significant contributions was published in 1993 by David Bushnell, *The Making of Modern Colombia: A Nation in Spite of Itself*. The first comprehensive study of Colombian history ever written in English. His text emphasises the political development of the 19th century *foundational* Colombian society to explain patterns of 20th century Colombia. In the introduction to the book, he proclaims,

> Colombia's image as a nation is compounded by ambivalent characteristics of Colombians themselves. (…) they continue to exhibit major differences along the lines of class, region, and in some cases ethnicity. (…) the country lacks a national identity or a proper spirit of nationalism, at least compared to most of its Latin American neighbours. Indeed, hyperbolic nationalism is not common in Colombia; and the national character (…) can be said to exist, in a composite of sometimes contradictory traits. (Bushnell, 1993, p. viii).

In 2001 Colombian historian Marco Palacio and American scholar Frank Safford, published *Colombia: pais fragmentado, sociedad dividida* [Colombia: fragmented country, divided society]. The authors explain that the narrative followed by their book is,

the country's spatial fragmentation and, on the other hand, the profound social division of Colombian society, whether cultural, social, ethnic, class, regional, political, or ideological. (…) Colombian history results from a variegated fabric in which geography and the social action attempting to dominate it intersect, giving a peculiar sense to the social divisions (Palacio & Safford, 2001, p. 8).

The book studies Colombian economic and social developments and, in this way, is an excellent complement to Bushnell's political perspective. Both books address the formation of the Colombian State; the former as the product of a continuous application of a political model that does not fit with the reality of the Nation, and the latter, as the failure of the bipartisan model to integrate a divided society.

A more recent approach that authors from different fields and contexts have taken when writing about Colombia has been the appropriation of news headlines that, at the time, referred to difficult moments in the Nation's history. Book titles that suggest a limited view of the Colombian context. For example, Colombian American journalist Silvana Peternostro wrote *My Colombian War* in 2007; in 2009, American journalist Garry Leech published *Beyond Bogotá: Diary of a Drug War Journalist in Colombia,* and in 2009 Canadian sociologist Jasmin Hristov wrote *Blood and Capital: The paramilitarization of Colombia* a passionate however, impressionist narration of the paramilitary phenomenon. In 2013, Human rights activist Robin Kirk published the book *More Terrible Than Death: Violence, Drugs and America's War in Colombia* in which the author makes an overview of the recent human rights violation tragedies, indicating the American military intervention in the country as the primary cause of the contemporary chaotic situation. All this literature presents an unequal and sensationalist view of Colombian history. Their study focuses more on the effects of war in society and less on the causes of that conflict and the cultural consequences of political violence.

Colombian scholars and authors have developed different relationships with the national history to the ones mentioned in the last paragraph, which see the country as a State on the brink of failure. In a way, they continue the work started by Bushnell and offer other forms of historical accounts and narration of the violence that has always been present in the country. The main difference with Bushnell, Palacio and Safford is that there is an intentional avoidance of explicit comparisons to nations in the North Atlantic that lead to concepts such as underdevelopment, progress, and dependency. Without aiming for a historical washing of contemporary Colombia, books, articles, and other literature propose violence as a by-product of the social-political, economic and cultural paradigms of the last two hundred years and not as an ingrained normality of Colombians and an inherent impediment in the Nation's social formation. Michael J. La Rosa, German Mejia, Nubia Ruiz Ruiz, José Orlando Melo, Carlos Granés, and Ricardo Arias Trujillo, in their work (of great value for this investigation), emphasise cultural mechanisms, institutional formations, and economic patterns that have sustained the Nation throughout decades.[1]

A final and very recent approach pertinent to mention is the historical study of the social, political, and cultural impact of the 1991 Political Constitution in the country. In its initial articles, there is a decided judicial framework for the protection, formation, dissemination, strengthening, and enticement of a pluri-cultural society in all territories of the Nation. Discussions regarding the transformative impact that the new constitutional configuration has had on cultural formations, manifestations, and the search for peace, can be seen in the work of Roberto Pineda Camacho,

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[1] See LaRosa, M.J. & Mejia, G.R. (2014), *Historia Concisa de Colombia (1810-2013)*. Bogotá: Ministerio de Cultura de la República de Colombia, Melo, J.O. (2022), *Historia Mínima de Colombia.* Ciudad de México: El Colegio de México, Ruiz, N. (2006), *El desplazamiento forzado en Colombia 2000-2004. Aportes teóricos, análisis demográfico y territorial.* In *Desplazamiento, mobilidad y retorno en Colombia: dinánicas migratorias recientes* Bogotá: Universidad del Externado, Granés, C. (2022), *Delirio Americano.* Barcelona: Penguin Random House, and Arias Trujillo, R. (2010), *Historia Contemporánea de Colombia.* Bogotá: Universidad de los Andes.

Rodrigo Uprimny Yepes, Luz María Sánchez Duque and academician and member of the 1991 Constitutional Assembly Carlos Gaviria Díaz, their work has been leading voices in Colombia.[2]

This section of the thesis will follow an approach that links and complements the work that Colombian scholars have been proposing, as mentioned above. The Colombian nation-building enterprise, the conflicts and resistances it generated in the 19th century, and the confrontation between armed and civilian forces, political and social actors, and private and public sectors in the 20th century are the series of events that led between 1989 and 1991 to a process that this thesis places as a pivotal point in the Colombian social, economic, political, and cultural becoming: the 1991 Political Constitution. Understanding the meaning of the 1991 Political Constitution, the events that led to it, and the ones that happened after its proclamation, is important because it allows locating a contemporaneity of Colombia that can provide a framework for understanding phenomena directly related to the projects evaluated in this thesis.

19th century Colombia: a model to assemble

The narration of the Colombian context proposed in this part will flow between three main interconnected axles: violence, the non-recognition of difference and forced displacement. The selection of these three historical axles is concerned with the study of how communitarian resistance to the implementing of a political, social, economic, and cultural foreign model has generated alternative cultural formations seeking the defence of their representational needs, which in 1991, led to the new constitutional project. It does not, in any way, suppose an understanding of Colombia as a failed State because of its incapacity to overcome political violence. On the

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[2] See Pineda Camacho, R. (1997), La Constitución de 1991 y la perspectiva del multiculturalismo en Colombia. Alteridades, 7(14), 107-129, Uprimny et al. (2011), *Constitución de 1991 y Cultura.* Bogotá: Alcaldía Mayor de Bogotá-Secretaría de Cultura, Recreacion y Deporte.

contrary, the historical context presented is a relevant narration of violence in Colombia, its causes and its critical effects. In other words, this is the context that presents the conditions by which the contemporary artistic production of 21st century Colombia has emerged as a force capable of positive societal change.

Today's Latin America began to take shape about two hundred and thirteen years ago. Independence movements in the region from 1810 prepared the base for the birth of the republics and, with them, the national States that today configure Latin America. This process did not happen overnight, and it would take almost a century to be completed.

Napoleon Bonaparte's occupation of the Iberian Peninsula and the decision to name his brother King of all the Spanish territories was the catalyser for the process by which the Spanish provinces in America became democratic republics. The territories that gained their independence from the Spanish Crown had to decide the type of government they would install to supply their necessities. Most States decided to become liberal republics. However, even though the birth of Colombia can be situated in those first years of the 19th century, which saw its declaration of independence on the 20th of July of 1810, it would take the country over one hundred years to consolidate as a liberal republic.

Colombia's first moment of violence was its formation. Independence wars were the prevailing reality in the republic's first ten years. This decade saw a political and military battle between the provinces that disagreed on the political system and representation proposed and the reconquest attempt from 1814 that King Fernando VII ordered after Bonaparte's fall. Spanish troops led by Pablo Morillo arrived in 1815 at Cartagena de Indias. Morillo's strategy would favour the newly independent State, as people saw the Spanish military as an occupying force (LaRosa &

Mejia, 2014, p. 44). It took the Spanish Army one year to seize the capital Santafé, installing what is known as the *Régimen del Terror* [Terror Regime].

In 1819 Simón Bolívar entered Santafé, defeating the Spanish reconquest efforts. This victory allowed him to install a government capable of commanding all political and military concerns, and the city would never fall under Spanish rule again. Born to wealth, and son of European descendants, Bolívar, was the president of the Gran Colombia until 1830 and dictator of Perú from 1823 to 1826.

The newly modern liberal republics were configured through the force of military rule that established the three branches of government. However, under the mantle of jurisdictional and administrative unity, Nation States erase the territorial presence of a wide variety of ethnicities. In the case of Colombia, they are configured by indigenous, afro-Colombian, and Rrom communities, besides the Mestizo community, made by the mixture between the former and the Europeans that arrived in the first decade of the 16th century. Thus, Colombia is the result of 'historical population dynamics that made the country an intermixture of nations, that is, a diverse tapestry composed by communities with profound differences in their language, traditions, practices, and beliefs' (LaRosa & Mejia, 2014, p.49), that have struggled since the first instances to find common ground, a space, and a set of values and beliefs to coalesce as a Nation.

After the colonial period, the demographic dynamics that LaRosa & Mejia (2014) refer to implied that local colonising movements were expanding the internal agricultural frontier. Once an independent country, the migration flows were provoked mainly by the massive expulsion [eviction] of settlers from zones with a high concentration of land ownership to what, in the 19th century, were considered wastelands, that is, lands without formal ownership.

Land, no longer property of the Spanish Monarchy, became the stumbling block of the new republic. In the book *Frontier Expansion and Peasant Protest in Colombia, 1850-1936 (*1998), Canadian scholar Catherine LeGrand notes that in the mid-19th century, 75% of the land was considered wastelands. By the end of that same century, they were in the hands of the Catholic Church and great extension landowners to 'establish private property rights over vast extensions of land and to convert in dependant workers the peasants that were living in them' (Le Grand, 1988, p. 61). Later, in the 20th century, this phenomenon of eviction would shift towards the Amazon rainforest zones that had only been inhabited by native communities that were never subjected by the Spanish colonisers (Melo, 2022, pp. 155-156). A displacement and dispossession phenomenon that can be traced back to the colonial past was now nuanced and invigorated in the republican era. When referring to the history of the country since its formation in the 19th century until today, Colombian scholar Dr Nubia Ruiz Ruiz points out that 'Colombia has consolidated its territories and constructed its demographic history from the dynamics of the internal conflict' (Ruiz Ruiz, 2006, p. 11).

The 19th century brought upon native communities the onslaught of the civiliser project promoted by the Nation-State that understood the liberal republic model as the most desired political configuration. The ideal of consolidating a republic of citizens did not accept the existence of people different to citizens educated under the dominating Western model. Simultaneously, native communities had to adapt to a growing market economy that transformed them into campesino communities caught between smallholding and sharecropping, which kept them in rural poverty. The 20th century for these communities was on the one hand their struggle against poverty and, on the other, their political mobilisation to defend their territories, language, beliefs, and culture. Unlike other regional countries such as Perú, Bolivia or Ecuador, Colombia is not a

country with a predominantly native population. However, the country does have a significant percentage of native communities that, even though today are protected by the current Political Constitution, see themselves having to face the pressures of the social and economic dynamics that, after two centuries of republican life, continue to attack their continuity as ethnic peoples, and their right to remain as such in the future.

After Brazil and the United States, Colombia is the third country on the American continent with the most significant population of people of African ancestry (LaRosa & Mejia, 2014, p. 53). I argue that their historical relationship with discrimination is analogous to the one suffered by native communities, given that, as with indigenous groups, independence for them was not achieved with the expulsion of the Spanish Empire since this process only concerned white and mestizo populations. Their history continued to be of domination and resistance. Only in 1851 would their freedom be decreed, and from this point, slavery would be a crime in the Nation.

The contemporary map of Colombia, slowly configured in the 19th century, shows a country of large cities harbouring 75% of the population, mainly in the Andean and Caribbean regions. This urban predominance, however, hides the campesino past that, even though begins years before the proclamation of independence, simultaneously sprouted from local colonising movements and the survival of indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities. Therefore, the tensions generated by the mobilisations and the forced displacements of the population, which led to their transformation into campesino communities, subsequently forced to relocate to new or growing cities, holds one of the keys to a critical historical event that initiates the contemporary Colombian conflict known as *La Violencia* [The Violence] *(1948-1960).*

The Conflict

The history of Colombia has been explained through its conflicts. The complications of nation-building after three hundred years of Spanish rule proved to be a difficult task. Throughout the 19th century, conflict was more the norm than the exception. After the separation of the province of Panama at the dawn of the 20th century, the next centennial brought a period of relative peace from 1904 until the war with Perú in 1932. The economic, political, and social crisis of the time in Latin America was answered by populist leaders. Charismatic men and women, some of whom had mobilised or were displaced from rural lands, arrived at the cities searching for opportunities. Their political pressure compelled the ruling elites to invest in housing and public health. Unions were formed, and programs for social mobility were tested (LaRosa & Mejia, 2014, p. 112).

In Colombia, the leader defending these social causes was Jorge Eliécer Gaitán. From humble origins, he completed a law degree in Italy. Upon his return, Gaitán settled in a lower-middle-class neighbourhood in downtown Bogotá. He served in several public offices, including being a member of the City's Council, Ministry of Education and Mayor of Bogotá. His first presidential bid in 1946 was unsuccessful. However, he obtained majority votes in main capital cities like Bogotá and Barranquilla. Nonetheless, Gaitán was never given the full support of the Liberal Party that promoted their own candidate.

Being the candidate with the highest favouritism for the 1950 elections, Gaitán was assassinated in downtown Bogotá on the 9th of April in 1948. This event would change Colombia's history as much as President Kennedy's assassination in 1963 did for the United States. The riots that were seen following the assassination, known as *El Bogotázo*, left several zones of the city looted and reduced to rubble, the tram system inoperable, and churches and ecclesiastical archives

incinerated. The marginalised working-class people of Bogotá were enraged seeing their hope for a better future withered.

Out of all the populist leaders of the time in Latin America, which included Eva and Juan Perón in Argentina, Lázaro Cárdenas in México, Víctor Raúl Haya de la Torre in Perú and Getúlio Vargas in Brazil, Gaitán was the only one assassinated. The assassination terminated the socialist populist program in Colombia violently. The chaos unleashed in many cities made it evident that the country's conservative and traditional hegemony would not allow the people to have an authentic voice in the political field.

The urban political violence awoken on the 9th of April merged with rural political violence. The conservative president Mariano Ospina Pérez was unable to take control of the riots in the capital, which made it clear that the political class had lost control of the country. Now that Gaitán was dead, a progressive turmoil consolidated and expanded into an uncontrollable force: *La Violencia* [The Violence] became the way the period between 1948 and 1960 would be characterised. This period saw the emergence of armed confrontations between liberals and conservatives across the country. The conservative repression was violently answered by liberal factions, which were first organised to defend against political persecution and later as counteroffensive organisations (Kalmanovitz, 1994, pp. 398-399). The phenomenon took place in parallel with a political crisis, related to both 'an organic crisis amidst the circles of power, and the adoption of new and efficient ways to disrupt and dismantle the most radical nuclei of the subaltern classes' (Vega & Rodríguez, 1990, p. 2).

Historians like Catherine LeGrand, Michael Jiménez, Herbert Braun, and Alvaro Tirado argue that *La Violencia* began in the 1930s, mainly due to the agrarian conflicts of the decade. Laws and policies favouring big landowners consolidated the land ownership concentration in rural

Colombia. From a different perspective, Colombian scholar María Victoria Uribe divides the historical process into three: Conservative Violence (1948-1953), Military Regime Violence (1953-1957) and National Front Violence (1958-1964). It is an impossible task to claim a date for *La Violencia*. However, the tensions between liberals and conservatives and large landowners and campesino communities, two leading causes of the conflict, have been present since the 30s.

One of the consequences of *La Violencia* was the visualisation of the weakness of the State. The central government had little power, legitimacy and presence beyond Bogotá, and people in rural areas had no incentive to follow laws produced from a distant capital (LaRosa & Mejia, 2014, p. 114). The decision of the Liberal Party not to have a presidential candidate for the 1950 election transformed politics into something beyond elections and government. Violence became a tool for political intervention. Assassinations for vengeance or political ideas, cattle raiding, and territorial quarrels determined the reality lived in many urban and rural regions of the country. *La Violencia* also made the disconnection between rural, urban, rich, and poor Colombia visible. People in rural areas saw an incapable leadership in Bogotá that was not interested in addressing the situation, which led them to take hold of the political issues in ways convenient to them. Ruthless and visceral violence was used to destroy their enemies. According to Nubia Ruiz Ruiz, it resulted in over four hundred thousand abandoned parcels and two million displaced peasants that would become the first urban 'misery belts' (Ruiz Ruiz, 2006, p. 15).

La Violencia en Colombia: Estudio de un Proceso Social (1962) [Violence in Colombia: A Study of a Social Process], published months after President Kennedy visited Colombia, was a book that painted a realistic picture of the years of violence. Written by Orlando Fals Borda, Monseñor Germán Guzmán Campos, and Eduardo Umaña Luna, it made an impact on Colombian intellectuals. It created a consensus on the meanings of the phenomena. The first paragraph reads,

'Much has been written about *La Violencia*, but there is really no agreement about its meaning' (Guzmán, Fals Borda & Umaña, 1962, p. 23). The authors conclude that,

> the struggles and sufferings *(of the violence)* have configured a country of undetermined characteristics, yet, leaving its "sacro-traditional" values, and the closed colonial structure behind. The acceleration of the contact between rural areas and the cities, the local invasions of extra-groups, and the migrations (without mentioning the processes that cultural contact and transculturation caused), perhaps, have placed the foundations for an integrated Nation (Guzmán, Fals Borda & Umaña, 1962, p. 421, italics are mine).

The political class, however, read it as something foreign. At the time, they were more interested in the Alliance for Progress and the dollars pouring from the anti-communist rhetoric of the Cold War. It would take years for the national leadership to pay attention to the situation and configure an action plan to stop or at least decrease the violence. The plan was a collaborative effort between the Liberal and Conservative parties called *El Frente Nacional* [The National Front].

The National Front was a plan devised by the Bogotá elites to give the political class breathing room and control over the country again. It changed how politics had been conducted for the last century, which meant, excluding the party not elected and leaving little room for something other than violent mobilisation. The political parties agreed to share power alternating from 1958 to 1974 every four years. The plan managed to decrease the violence experienced in rural areas. However, an agreement signed in the capital would not dissipate the hostility, rage, and vengeance felt.

The political agreement of the National Front included a twenty-year economic plan based on industrialisation. The Colombian elite wanted to expand their markets beyond commodities such as coffee, bananas, and oil. This meant that industry at the time expanded to the cities. For example, at the end of the 60s, Colombia implemented an agreement with Renault to assemble their vehicles. The new industrial impulse required labour, which motivated people to move into the cities in search of a better future. However, the process of internal migration in Colombia at

the time was propelled, apart from the post-war economy that stimulated industrialisation in the cities, by the violent rural conflict underway during the 50s and 60s.

This new industrial momentum the country experienced was simultaneously hiding a very complex historical conundrum happening in the rural country. The agricultural model introduced in the 20s was made to privilege the agro-industrial sector, therefore, forsaking small-scale farmers, that is, traditional campesino communities (Granés, 2022, p. 203). Consequently, the program engendered a significant internal migration process into the cities. Unable to find formal employment, the displaced communities developed so-called invasion neighbourhoods (Torres, 2014, p. 57) that encircled and amplified the urban frontier. However, some campesino communities that decided to resist their forced displacement organised themselves into insurgent guerrillas.

The solution to *La Violencia* embodied in the National Front generated a new and unforeseen framework of violence in the form of left-wing guerrilla insurgencies emerging across the country. The narrow-mindedness of the elitist bipartisan political pact left many Colombians who did not want to be affiliated with either party without political participation after 1958 (Melo, 2022, p. 233). However, a few months after the establishment of the National Front, the Cuban Revolution of 1959 took place. This revolutionary event ignited hope in Colombia for those disillusioned and marginalised that were questioning the traditional political class. Many organisations and social collectives unaffiliated to the traditional political class and contrary to their ideologies sprouted, including insurgent organisations such as Las Farc-Ep [Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia – Ejercito del Pueblo] in 1964, and ELN [Ejercito de Liberación Nacional] in 1965. The former signed a peace agreement in 2016 with the government of

Colombia after fifty-two years of war, and the latter is still active and in an ongoing peace negotiation process.

After an intense period of repression by the Colombian government in the 70s, characterised by extrajudicial assassinations, unlawful incarcerations, and an aura of a State of Siege, the following decade had a more conciliatory agenda with the subversive guerrillas. The appeasing efforts would last only until the 6th of November 1985, when the M19, an urban guerrilla founded in 1970 after a presidential election in which the result was questioned as corrupt and fraudulent, seized the *Palacio de Justicia* [Justice Palace], site of the Supreme Court chambers. An infiltrated commando took the building and held the Supreme Justices, civil servants, and other employees hostage. They intended to place the president of the country on a public trial. The Army did not allow this and intervened with force, driving a military tank through the building's gates. Only one M19 member survived the siege, and over one hundred people died, including eleven Supreme Court Justices. Twelve people were seen leaving the Palace during the events led by military personnel that 'disappeared' without further explanation (LaRosa & Mejia, 2014, p. 118). This incident became a reference to the country's modern history and represented the beginning of another tragic phase of the Colombian conflict.

Earlier this same year, las Farc-EP with an amnesty given by the government, were allowed to form a political party with demobilised members called *Unión Patriótica (UP)* [Patriotic Union]. The party achieved unexpected success in the 1986 local elections. However, during the following four years and until the first years of the 90s, the UP political leaders were systematically assassinated by forces including the Army, paramilitary mercenaries, and drug cartels (Melo, 2022, p. 264).

Due to geographical, economic and political reasons, Colombia became the epicentre of drug trade in South America. As the UP leaders were assassinated (3500 by 1992),[3] the government in Bogotá was openly ignoring the situation. Such a political environment can help us understand narcotraffic's accelerated increment, especially in Bogotá, Cali, and Medellín. The most infamous representative of these new and powerful cartels is Pablo Escobar. From humble origins, Escobar started as a gravestone thief in 1982; as his fortune soared due to the production and commercialisation of cocaine mainly to the United States and Europe, he was elected to the House of Representatives.

Towards 1984 Escobar's power and wealth had become uncomfortable and too big to ignore. Rodrigo Lara Bonilla was a young and ambitious Ministry of Justice that began the drug lord's persecution by publicly condemning money laundering. Later that year, he would be assassinated on the cartel leader's orders. This assassination drove the country into a ten-year war between the government and the drug cartels. The latter, almost always with better finances and armament, also used poverty and social inequality to their advantage. Groups of salaried assassins, adolescents, most of them from the *comunas* [slums] in Medellín, would accept the equivalent of one hundred dollars to kill a politician or a police officer. Car bombs, assassinations and kidnappings became part of daily life until December 1993, when a military unit captured and killed Escobar. After the Medellín cartel, the government and armed forces placed efforts on the Rodríguez Orejuela brothers, leaders of the Cali cartel. By the mid-1990s, the cartel system had been replaced by a more atomised structure, composed of smaller narcotraffic organisations with reduced visibility and less aggressive towards the State. The production, transport, and

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[3] Gómez-Suarez, Andrei. (2013). La coyuntura geopolítica genocida de la destrucción de la Unión Patriótica (1985-2010). *Estudios Políticos*, 43, Instituto de Estudios Políticos, Universidad de Antioquia, (pp. 180-204).

commercialisation of drugs in the country continued nuancedly. However, the war against the cartels was over.

While the State was fighting the insurgency and the cartels, a new actor in the conflict emerged in 1980: paramilitarism. *Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia (AUC)* [Colombian United Self-defences] was an organisation led by Carlos Castaño. At the peak of its power in the mid-1990s, the structure had over 30,000 men. Their most common modus operandi was the massacring of small rural communities followed by violent forced displacement of anybody left alive. Thousands of people died in this new phase of the conflict, in which the paramilitaries aimed to capture the territories still controlled by Las Farc- Ep, ELN, and the new low-profile drug dealers.

By the end of the 90s, Las Farc-EP and ELN were fighting against the Army and the paramilitaries, the AUC against the guerrillas and, at times, fighting at others collaborating with the Army. The Army against all, and simultaneously collaborating with the AUC and the narcotraffic organisations against the government and parallelly cooperating with guerrillas and paramilitaries. It was a confusing and excessively violent time. Political violence now operating in the rural and urban country, the propelling of mass forced displacement, and the continued absence of consensus regarding the Nation's political configuration, representation, and land distribution were at their highest points; amidst the chaos and the ascending number of victims, the country seemed increasingly out of control.

Over the last two centuries in Colombia, the notion of conflict has acquired different meanings. However, there is a political economy that links not only the ones that began in the 19th·century to the ones that developed in the 20th and 21st but also ties the three axles proposed in this section. Conflicts in Colombia have been influenced much more by land ownership, territorial power and the control of the means of production (represented first in a liberal and later in a neo-

liberal model) than hatred concerning ethnicity and particular customs. Indeed, there is intense racism in Colombia that has influenced power structures and politics, but this has not been the root of conflicts in the Nation. Violence, forced displacement and the non-recognition of difference in Colombia have emerged as a result of an interrelationship between imposed social, economic and political systems that allocate and distribute resources to favour elites, a phenomenon that has shaped the country's interactions in local, national, regional and international arenas.

The Constitution of 1991

The Colombian Nation is understood today as a political community, not just a cultural one. As mentioned above, Colombia is a country made of different Nations. Nonetheless, accepting that within the political community, there are cultural diversities and pluralist ideologies was not an easy process, since the overarching principle of the country with regard to having a cultural homogeneity was deployed from the beginning of the republic. As this 'desired' homogeneity was not a reality in Colombia, the imposition of a uniform civilisational idea for all the population became the preferred method for nation building developed by the urban elites, that formed a cauldron of liberal political ideals, capitalist bourgeoise thinkers and the norms and practices of Catholicism (Pineda Camacho, 1997, pp. 113 - 129). In this way, the notion of inhabiting the same space was established based on the certainty that ruling classes had in which not all Colombian society had been civilised. Thus, closing that gap by forcing everyone to fulfil that civilizatory ideal became the fundamental objective from the republic's birth until the 1980s. In this decade, it became evident that even though the geographical obstacles had been conquered, and due to the advances in communications, the regions had constructed infrastructure that broke at least in part their isolation, the cultural homogeneity sought by the elites for close to two hundred years was

unattainable. Today, it is clear that the national community can only be political; thus, the space it inhabits is also political.

The debate over the expansion of the participative base of the Colombian State, in other words, the demands for a pluri-ethnic and ideologically diverse Nation, in which political, gender, social, and ethnic civilian and armed opposition organisations led the rebellion and resistance against the bipartisan regime (National Front) that ruled the country from the mid-twentieth century, obtained an unexpected magnitude, when the student movement *La Séptima Papeleta* [The Seventh Ballot] configured between 1989 and 1990, after the assassination of four opposition presidential candidates, promoted the idea of a new Constitutional Assembly. The 1991 Political Constitution was born out of this movement. It opened the space for a renewed social pact that established Colombia as a Social Rule of Law State, affirming its participative, democratic, and pluralist character and proclaiming social equity as its objective. A project that functions as a response from a society tired of years and years of politically motivated violence, forced displacement, lack of civil rights and representation, the imposition of a political model only serving an elite, and the non-recognition of difference.

On the 4th of July 1991, the new Political Constitution was proclaimed. In its 7th Article, the Constitution declares: 'The State recognises and protects the cultural and ethnic diversity of the Nation'. It took close to two hundred years of struggles and tensions for the country to recognise these realities. Even though the Colombian State has a limited capacity for ensuring the whole population with all the benefits of the rights recognised and awarded in the current social contract, after two centuries of republican life, the situation is very different from the first years of the Nation.

However, the Constitution's purpose could be written in Article 22, which states that peace is a duty and a right of mandatory compliance (Gaviria Díaz, 2011, p. 47). In this way, the primary

constituent (the people) assumed peace as an objective and democracy as the path of the new political order, attempting to procure a more ambitious Nation that placed rights as a sense of co-existence. This meant a complete reconfiguration of the Nation sought for almost two centuries through a unifying liberal political model that did not correlate with the realities of such a diverse territory, which resulted in an escalation of violence over nuanced political violence, forced displacement and land usurpation, and the obstinate impulse of social, political, and ecclesiastical elites to control and homogenise a State to their interests.

Political and civil rights have gone through a necessary amplification. The current political, social, environmental, and cultural configuration established by the 1991 Constitution and the institutionality formed to uphold its compliance constitutes an overwhelming event. As a result of countless political rebellions, cultural resistances, ideological and partisan battles, and social confrontations of fratricide wars that fill up the pages of the contemporary history of Colombia, the formal democracy inaugurated in the 19th century today tends toward a political system in which the individual is also understood as a social and cultural being with the right to be and do differently. The fact that all ethnic groups are now understood as independent, autonomous communities and, at the same time, part of the Nation is the fruit of their continued political struggle throughout the 20th century that made their rights visible and recognisable in the light of the 1991 Political Constitution (Pineda Camacho, 1997, pp. 107 - 129).

The principles established in the new Magna Carta express the social agreement reached between the diverse groups and political communities of the country, ordained equality without discrimination and the full recognition of the rights of citizens. The Constitution conceived culture as a principle, asset, and a good deserving of special State protection. Simultaneously it determined as purposes of the State, the promotion and participation of cultural life, the stimulation of access

to Colombian culture in equal measure amongst the diversity and plurality of the country and the protection of the cultural and ethnic diversity. Moreover, it outlaws the different forms of discrimination, amongst them the ones derived from national or family origin, language or religion. It establishes the 'inalienability, imprescriptibility, and indefeasibility of spaces of public use, natural parks, communal lands of ethnic communities, reservation lands, and archeologic heritage' (Uprimny & Sánchez Duque, 2011, p. 34), and promotes the exercise of free artistic and search for knowledge, as a framework for the guarantee of fundamental rights or constitutional pillars, as are the freedom for the development of one's personality and the freedom of conscience and political participation (Uprimny & Sánchez Duque, 2011, p. 34). Apart from the mentioned examples of the protection and promotion of cultural rights, the Constitution expands, proclaiming that under 'no circumstances the State will exercise censorship over the form and ideological content of artistic and cultural manifestations' (art.1, num. 4), and that the guarantee of access in equal opportunity to cultural manifestations, concedes especial attention to people with physical, psychic, and sensorial divergences, senior citizens, infants, youth, and the sectors with more significant needs (Uprimny & Sánchez Duque, 2011, p. 35).

Contrary to the past situation, the amplification of cultural rights towards a judicial dimension has visualised the cultural diversity in the Colombian cultural and social imaginary. Indeed, this category of rights encompasses remarkably diverse magnitudes, some of which have had a more significant development than others, as is the case of the ethnic communities' cultural rights. Some cultural rights have a very strong imbrication with other rights, such as education, freedom of expression and association and development of personality, making it hard to identify them specifically. This imbrication, even though it can highlight the expansive potential of cultural rights, it also carries the risk that against the lack of determination, they lose their identity as an

individual and concrete right, from which their expansive potential can be harmed (Uprimny & Sánchez Duque, 2011, p. 43).

The judicialisation of cultural rights does not guarantee their deployment by any means. However, it can contribute to generating criteria for public policy compatible with upholding and respecting cultural rights. In addition, it can offer instruments for political enforcement, making the political demands and petitions made by different actors to defend their cultural rights much more powerful than ever before.

Effects of the 1991 Political Constitution, Culture and Peace in Bogotá

In Colombia, the forms and strategies citizens have developed for dialoguing with the State and the cultural establishment have distinctly changed since the proclamation of the new Constitutional configuration in 1991. However, there have certainly been effective cultural initiatives, social movements, and organisations with the capacity to challenge the State, defending and promoting their causes before the 90s. The changes in the relationship between communities and the State amass the accumulated social experience of over six decades of political violence in rural and urban territories. Through their organised communities, they have achieved influencing the agenda of public and private institutions.

The social changes lived in Bogotá over the last three decades are the result of cultural policies promoting the participation and appropriation of the city by its residents. To achieve this, a rethinking of the cultural institutionality was necessary. This was expressed by the introduction of culture as part of the central government administration body, represented in the *Secretaría de Cultura, Recreación y Deporte* [Deputy of Sport, Recreation and Culture] in 2006. This new institutional body strengthened citizen participation in the Districts' Cultural System, increased the

sector's budget sustainably by diversifying and amplifying it to cultural and heritage practices, and updated and concerted the general framework of the city's public cultural policies.

Simultaneously, this institutional strengthening meant the transformation and professionalisation process of cultural management and the development of a two-way stream from the institutionality to the neighbourhoods and from the neighbourhoods to the governmental organisations. It entailed the generation of management models and participation processes that established a clear normativity in the relationships between governments and agents coming from the cultural spheres and, likewise, the alinement of social control strategies. However, it is not surprising that such processes found resistance from cultural grassroots organizations that understand the notion of professionalisation working against the logics of popular cultural organisations and social knowledges. Examples of this will be presented in part 2.

Assuming the complexity of culture, its role in the exercise of citizenship, and the emergence of new political subjects in the city, against the exclusivity of the sector and its political value with regard to contemporary democracy and the active participation in the social life of cities, has —not without contradictions and challenges—, rapidly dissolved the existing limits between the artistic, the cultural and the social. Today, the institutional, cultural agenda of cities, besides including art and cultural expressions contain formative educational processes and discussion platforms that constantly update their cultural policies regarding instances such as artistic education, early childhood, youth, women's rights, uses of public space, cultural institutional investigation, cultural heritage, and cultural entrepreneurship. To all this, a new task resulting from the 2016 peace accords with Las Farc-Ep was added: the construction of a memory of the conflict and the symbolic reparation of its victims.

This process has promoted and demanded changes directed to the symbolic reparation of victims of the armed conflict. It has had an unprecedented importance in the country, and from this point of view, correspondingly, to artists and cultural promoters. The path walked from the 1991 Constitution by artistic and cultural practices, through their interventions, actions, disruptions, and protests in their processes of creation; likewise, their practices of social and academic appropriation, pedagogy and research have played a decisive role in the construction of memory processes of the Colombian conflict.

In this light, cultural policy as a tool allows civil society and the State to directly participate in the solution of the problems and issues that affect the everyday life of communities through the consultation of planned strategic guidelines. It should not be disregarded that, considering what has been seen over the last century, artistic practices have functioned as transgressors and shapers of the established social and political order. In that respect, cultural policies in Colombia, and especially in Bogotá, have not been guided solely towards artistic consumption but have been oriented toward the whole of society.

Aftermath and Backlash in the 21st Century

In the first decade of the new century, Alvaro Uribe Vélez was president of Colombia. Elected on promises of fighting the guerrilla organisations with all the force of the State, his administration pushed Las Farc-Ep, the biggest group at the time, through an aggressive military campaign to the corners of the country. As it often has happened, rural population and ethnic communities were the victims at the crossfire. He financed the military operation with aid funds from the United States through a program called *Plan Colombia* [Colombian Plan]. Across ten years, The *Plan Colombia* transferred over 12 billion dollars to the Colombian government to fight

insurgency, making Colombia the third country in the world with the highest international aid package given by the United States after Israel and Egypt.

Paramilitaries continued their terror operation during this decade. Although technically they had demobilised, that process resulted in their transformation into *Grupos Armados Organizados* (GAO) [Organised Armed Groups]. Criminal bands controlling large parts of the country. Their campaign against leftist insurgents, campesinos, human rights advocates, activists demanding agrarian reforms and better work conditions, and union workers struggling for fair and just provisions was terrifying for society. Their persecution, assassinations and disappearances intensified during this time. In spite of the Constitutional mandate, violent forced displacement, political violence, and attacks on ethnic and rural communities soared.

After an extremely violent and bloody first decade of the 21st century, the violently displaced population in rural areas increased to its maximum levels. The assassinations of social leaders from ethnic, rural and urban communities escalated as never before. In 2012, President Juan Manuel Santos distanced himself from his predecessor seeking peace negotiations with Las Farc-Ep. A one-year secret negotiation period in Havana and, later, a four-year official negotiation generated a peace agreement with the insurgent group. The agreement had to be approved by public vote through a plebiscite. By a minimal margin, NO was the winner. The Colombian society had voted against peace with Las Farc- Ep, evidencing the failure of their project. After fifty-two years of conflict, it was clear that the population did not support the insurgency, and the votes for people wanting peace were not in support of the guerrilla organisation but in the interest of ending the conflict (Melo, 2022, pp, 279 - 280).

After the agreement's negation, the government had to return to the negotiating table and modify the original text. Months after, a new agreement was signed without being publicly

endorsed. It initiated a process of demobilisation, weapons abandonment, and peace with Las Farc-EP. The agreement had and continues to have many consequences. Two deserve special mention: *Justicia Especial para La Paz* (JEP) [Especial Justice for Peace], a parallel justice organism in charge of investigating and conducting trials for war crimes to all actors involved in the conflict: Las Farc-EP, the Colombian Army, and the civil society; and the *Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica (CNMH)* [National Centre for Historical Memory], whose work has developed detailed reporting of crimes committed against the civil population. Today, there is a Museum of Memory in Bogotá, and an archive is being formed with the purpose of Colombian society, not forgetting the violent decades of the recent past. A vital part of the CNMH is *La Comisión de la Verdad* [The Truth Commission]. An independent, autonomous organism linked to the JEP. Its 11 members, which include academics, social leaders, and journalists, were elected collectively, after a long process, by the Government and Las Farc-EP during the peace negotiation process. The entity is tasked with a threefold mission: clarifying what occurred during the conflict, promoting and contributing to the recognition of the victims, and promoting co-existence in the country's territories.

Peace between Las Farc-EP and the Colombian government meant silencing the longest armed conflict in the western hemisphere. The mission that the *Comisión de la Verdad* was given was, on the one hand, the strengthening of the original mandate that sought peace and co-existence; on the other, the following stage of the constitutional injunction of achieving justice for the victims in truth and recognition.

La Comisión de la Verdad [The Truth Commission]

In June 2022, after six years and over 38 thousand testimonies gathered from across the country by its members, the commission published its findings and recommendations. It included

testimonies from victims that had suffered violence in various forms; forced displacement, assassinations, bombs, sexual violence, kidnappings, torture, and others, perpetrated by the armed actors of the conflict: Las Farc-EP, AUC, narco-traffic organisations, and Colombian State agents. The commissioners also interviewed living former presidents of the country, former Farc-EP commanders, and former Paramilitary bosses. Moreover, it established 29 *Casas de la Verdad* [Houses of Truth] around the country for the recollection and release of information. The process resulted in the publication of 24 volumes and 8000 pages, which have been made public in written version, and also through theatre plays, documentaries, exhibitions and digital formats.[4]

The commission's work was centred around reconstructing the truth, understood as a collective production and not a single official incontrovertible version.[5] It aimed at recognising and establishing collective responsibilities and confirming the factors that persisted and made the Colombian war one of the most prolonged conflicts in recent history, in which 90% of victims were non-combatant civilians. It engages with one of the most sensible and, at the same time, complex elements in the construction of peace: healing wounds.

Their findings demonstrate devastating figures: over 450,000 deaths, over 120,000 people missing, over 8 million violently displaced from their homes, over 50,000 kidnappings, and 17,000 child soldiers recruited between 1986 and 2016 (Comisión de la Verdad, 2022, pp. 139-142).[6] In the social presentation of the final report that the commission offered to the country, in his speech, father Francisco de Roux, the commissions director, emphasised the need to end the invisibility of

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[4] La Comisión de la Verdad. 2022 'No hay future si no hay verdad' Bogotá https://www.comisiondelaverdad.co/hay-futuro-si-hay-verdad

[5] La Comisión de A Verdad. 'Recorridos, Como lo Hicimos' 2022., https://www.comisiondelaverdad.co/recorridos/como-lo-hicimos/

[6] La Comisión de la Verdad file:///Users/camiloescobar/Downloads/CEV_SUFRIR%20LA%20GUERRA%20Y%20REHACER%20LA%20VIDA_DIGITAL_2022.pdf

those affected by the conflict and its consequences: 'We ask for the truth of the tragedy to be accepted (…) for the recognition of the victims and making it never again possible'.[7]

The final report presented a tragic scenario for the Colombian State. According to the findings, 45 per cent of the deaths can be attributed to paramilitary groups that often acted aided by the Colombian Army, who were themselves, perpetrators of 12 per cent of the fatalities, through the phenomenon known as *false positives*, or extrajudicial executions, that became a *systemic practice* aimed at eliminating the enemy at all costs, Las Farc-EP was responsible for 21 per cent of the assassinations, and the still active ELN for 4 per cent.[8]

One of the report's main conclusions was that the non-combatant civil population was by far the most affected by the decades of the armed conflict (Comisión de la Verdad, 2022, p. 24).[9] There were differentiated effects among certain social groups. Even though the conflict was lived across the country, it was the ethnic communities that endured the most destructive and persistent impact of the war. The report had an unprecedented inclusive approach, a differentiated approach that visibilised the disproportionate violence suffered by different communities.

Nine sections configured it: 1) *No es un mal menor* [It is not a minor evil] regarding the experience and involvement of children and adolescents in the armed conflict; 2) *La Colombia afuera de Colombia* [Colombia outside of Colombia] on the matter of exiled communities; 3) *Resistir no es aguantar* [Resisting in not bearing] addressing violence against ethnic groups; 4) *Sufrir la Guerra y rehacer la vida* [Suffering the war and rebuilding life] relating to violent forced displacement; 5) *Mi*

[7] La Comisión de A Verdad, 2022, Declaraciones del padre Francisco de Roux. https://web.comisiondelaverdad.co/actualidad/comunicados-y-declaraciones/intervencion-del-padre-francisco-de-roux-en-la-entrega-de-informe-por-parte-de-organizaciones-de-derechos-humanos
[8] La Comisión de A Verdad, 'Hay 'Futoro si hay verdad' Bogotá, 2022. file:///Users/camiloescobar/Downloads/CEV_NARRATIVA%20HISTORICA_DIGITAL_2022.pdf
[9] La Comisión de A Verdad, 'Hallazgosy recomendaciones' Bogotá 2022. https://www.comisiondelaverdad.co/sites/default/files/descargables/2022-06/Informe%20Final%20capi%CC%81tulo%20Hallazgos%20y%20recomendaciones.pdf

cuerpo es la verdad [My body is the truth] concerning victims of sexual abuse; 6) *Hasta la Guerra tiene límites* [Even war has limits] a more general approach focused on the violation of human rights; 7) *Colombia adentro* [Inside Colombia] about territorial narrations; 8) *Cuando los pájaros no cantaban* [When the birds would not sing] on the subject of testimonial narrations; and, 9) *Hallazgos y recomendaciones* [Findings and recommendations] a connecting volume. There was no recipe or methodological agreement for constructing the truth, and intersectionality was crucial for understanding that not all processes were equal.

Another conclusion the report had was the role of the United States in the Colombian armed conflict. The commission recognised the US government's support to the peace process between the Colombian government and Las Farc-EP. However, it was critical of the role that different American governments played, which, according to the commission, had a significant influence on the development of national security policies that immersed the Colombian military forces in a 'war mode' and, thus, prevented contemplating the conflict as a complex historical process in which the State also played the role of perpetrator. Likewise, in the report, the commission observes an American influence on the militarization of society and the concealing of information regarding the relationship between paramilitary groups and the Colombian Army (Comisión de la Verdad, 2022, p. 512).

In the *Hallazgos y recomendaciones* section, the commission's report shows how drug trafficking was not only the main financer of the conflict but also became an ingrained industry that permeated the economy and the political system (Comisión de la Verdad, 2022, pp. 384-393). The commission recommended that the Colombian government lead and promote an international debate that reframes the international drug policy, which can allow for the generation of a new

vision that can develop a transition from a prohibitionist perspective to a regulatory one (Comisión de la Verdad, 2022, p. 458).

According to the commission, the conflict had not only armed causes. It was also motivated by non-armed ones, part of an economic, political, and cultural framework that promoted the rise-up in arms of excluded political and campesino leaders (Comisión de la Verdad, 2022, p. 582). Similarly, the report discussed the neoliberal economic model implemented for decades that was fundamental in the exclusion and production of inequality (Comisión de la Verdad, 2022, p. 470). Exclusion was understood not only in an economic sense. The patterns of racial, ethnic, cultural and gender discrimination played a crucial part in the persistence of the conflict (Comisión de la Verdad, 2022, pp. 151-158). Finally, the commission recognises how the State abandoned the most vulnerable regions and social groups (Comisión de la Verdad, 2022, p. 527). This was seen especially regarding the youth, that against the economic crisis and the overwhelming logics of war acting in the territories, were forced to become members of irregular armed groups as a possible way of life (Comisión de la Verdad, 2022, p. 601).

This was not only the first time that a collective project of such magnitude and rigour was developed in Colombia, but it was also the first time that those who were for decades standing on different sides of the conflict had the opportunity to listen to each other, and, in many cases, reconcile. In order for this to happen, for example, the commission organised sessions so that members of the Embera community could sit in the same room in a public act with Salvatore Mancuso, former commander of the AUC, and see him recognise his responsibility for their victimisation, and ask forgiveness for the assassination of their community leader Kimmy Pernía.[10]

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[10] Colombia en tansición. September 2nd, 2020 'Mancuso pidió perdon por la desaparición de Kimy Pernía' Periódico El Espectador, Bogotá, Colombiahttps://www.elespectador.com/colombia-20/paz-y-memoria/por-telefono-mancuso-pidio-perdon-por-la-desaparicion-del-lider-kimy-pernia-article/

In a public event in 2021, Braulio Vázquez, a former Farc-EP commander speaking on behalf of the guerrilla group, also recognised their responsibility for the demands of victims in the Cauca region.[11] The retired general and former police commander Oscar Naranjo recognised that stigmatisation is also a form of violence which he contributed to when stigmatising the public university as an institution.[12] On the 10th of May 2022, the social collective *Madres de los Falsos Positivos (Mafapo)* [Mothers of the false-positives] gathered to listen for the first time as military personnel recognised their responsibility in the extrajudicial executions.[13] These spaces of recognition have provided society with an opportunity for the horrors of war to be acknowledged, and for biased or partial perspectives to be overcome. It is a starting point for peace to be established amongst Colombians. Moreover, it has allowed for a humanisation of the opponent that breaks the narrative of friend and foe.

The commission presented the report to the elected president Gustavo Petro, who still needed to take office in August 2022. Overall, it has been a process in which the complexity of the armed conflict and the collective responsibility was recognised. Not only irregular armed forces but the national Army and other sectors of society have been acknowledged to have played roles that impacted the communities.[14] This conflict perspective has not been free of resistance. For some, it is politically uncomfortable. In the presentation of the report (July 2022), the then-acting

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[11] Noticias Caracol. January 17th, 2022. 'Caldono escribe una nueva historia' Noticias Caracol TV [Video] https://noticias.caracoltv.com/el-proyecto-es-colombia/temporada-2/videos/caldono-un-territorio-azotado-por-el-conflicto-hoy-ve-caminar-la-esperanza-por-sus-calles

[12] RCN radio Colombia, September 3rd, 202. 'General (r) Oscar Naranjo pide perdón por haber estigmatizado a la Universidad Nacional'RCN Radio, Bogotá. https://www.rcnradio.com/judicial/general-r-oscar-naranjo-pidio-perdon-por-haber-estigmatizado-universidades

[13] Redaccieon 20+20. May 2022. 'Comisión de la Verdad adelanta 10 verdades sobre los falsos positivos en Soacha' Periódico El Espectador, Bogotá, https://www.elespectador.com/colombia-20/paz-y-memoria/falsos-postivos-madres-de-soacha-participan-en-encuentro-por-la-verdad-con-militares-sobre-ejecuciones-extrajudiciales/

[14] La Voz de América, June 18, 2022. 'Militares colombianos asumen su culpa en crímenoes de Guerra y lesa humanidad'. La Voz de América. https://www.vozdeamerica.com/a/militares-colombianos-responsabilidad-falsos-positivos-jep/6663641.html, La W Radio, June 21st, 2021. 'exjefes de Farc reconocen responsabilidad por secuestros ante la JEP' La W Radio, Grupo Prisa, https://www.wradio.com.co/2022/06/21/en-vivo-exjefes-de-farc-reconocen-responsabilidad-por-secuestros-ante-la-jep/

president of the country, who was invited, did not attend and left the country for a marine law conference in Portugal.

The process of truth, collective memory construction and collective responsibility recognition that provides a path for healing and reconciliation of the Nation is an unprecedented and new radical process that Colombians are beginning to experience. Examining this new phenomenon and analysing possible implications is valuable for this investigation. However, it is pertinent to clarify that the projects central to this thesis, their implications and transformations were produced at a moment when there was no governmental or State promoted effort to construct memory processes. Art and culture, together with communities and organised social groups, saw the importance of constructing collective memories that could help foster other imaginaries and identities well before the State apparatus ever did. In a way, the artistic projects deployed collectively with the communities were, at times, the only instruments they had for constructing memory, remembrance, and bearing witness.

From the first instances of the republic, violence has been endemic to Colombia. At times, influenced by geographic circumstances, where large areas of the country created strong regional identities in their isolation; at others, by political factors that, together with historically weak central governments and the enormous power of the oligarchy and the Catholic Church, contributed to the tensions that would turn into armed conflicts throughout different stages in the 19th century. Apart from a short confrontation with Perú in the third decade of the 20th century, much of the Colombian conflict has been an internal burden. A combination of hesitant leadership, unbecoming judicial practices, the indifference of the press, faint-hearted and insensible public servants, and a generalised fear has permitted impunity for criminals that have operated in contemporary Colombia.

A conflict, however, does not define a Nation and its people. On the contrary, this narration attempts to place the focus not on the conflict but instead on the resistances and struggles that have emerged in communities that have not caved in their strive for a plural and diverse country that recognises all its members. The social resistance that has withstood so many conflicts is evident in the warm, informal, inclusive, and pleasantly sceptical of all who take everything for granted Colombian style. A type of resistance influenced by the country's particular historical and cultural development. Even though the conflict has become part of daily life, the same is true for society's warmth, generosity, and collaborative spirit.

2-
Urbanisms and Public Space

This section aims to discuss the processes of urbanisation and urban planning with the objective of indicating the extent of reach of categories for socio-spatial analysis, such as social production of space, public space, urban common resources, common spaces, the right to the city, and collective action. The description, analysis and conceptualization of the context in which artistic practices in community interact with the categories above and articulate to collective action, shaping urbanisms and amplifying the public dimension of spaces in the city, creating alternative spatialities, is crucial for the discussions proposed by this investigation.

Emphasis is placed on the public dimension of urban spaces in two Colombian cities: Bogotá and Medellín. The said dimension is configured by the tensions between the local, the national and the global. Hence, it is not possible to address the processes of urbanisation and urban planning in Latin American cities, ignoring the current conditions of globalisation and the advance

of capitalism, that affect the reach and management of the common urban resources, the modes of social organisation, and the emergence of alternative spatialities in the micro-spaces of the city.

Finally, it explores the concept of the right to the city with refreshed political perspectives that aim to analyse and discuss the emerging challenges of citizen involvement in matters of public interest. It also acknowledges the diminishing role of the State, which has led to the emergence of new social actors. In this context, public cultural policies have become a valuable tool for many social organizations, not only to strengthen their emancipation processes but also to ensure the fulfilment of their rights through cultural means. This is particularly significant in the context of an internal armed conflict that appears to be closer than ever to its resolution.

On the social production of public space

A specialized vocabulary has emerged from various fields, such as cultural policy, urban and political studies, and contemporary art, to describe the extensive transformation that Bogotá in particular, and other Colombian cities in general have undergone in the past thirty years. These changes encompass population growth, urban expansion, rapid urban development, and increased political participation of citizens. The terminology employed includes jargon such as 'civic culture', 'governance', 'public space', 'artistic field', 'artistic practices', 'urban renewal', and 'the right to the city'.[15] These terms appear in documents related to artistic public policy, political campaigns, academic research, and professional development in the cultural industries.

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[15] See, Jaramillo Marín, Jefferson. (2008). Restablecimiento de derechos, derecho a la ciudad y construcción de ciudadanía para las poblaciones desplazadas en Bogotá. *Papel Politico*, *13*(2), 523-564. Retrieved September 23, 2022, from http://www.scielo.org.co/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S0122-44092008000200006&lng=en&tlng=, Motta Vargas, R., & Ramírez Moreno, N. (2016). LA GOBERNANZA DEL AGUA Y LA PARTICIPACIÓN CIUDADANA EN BOGOTÁ. *Revista Republicana*, (21). Recuperado a partir de https://urepublicana.edu.co/ojs/index.php/revistarepublicana/article/view/334, Torres Alfonso, Torres Angie (2016) Acción colectiva, gestion territorial y gobernanza democrática en Bogotá. *Universidad Piloto de Bogotá*, Ramírez Chaparro, César Alejandro, & Jiménez, William Guillermo (2007). Estructuras de gobernanza y niveles de gobernabilidad en bogotá D.C. el caso de la política de empleo. RIPS. Revista de Investigaciones Políticas y Sociológicas,

When examining urban issues, the diverse range of perspectives from various academic fields makes it difficult to apply experiences and models from one city or country to another, this is also true even within the same city over a span of 30 years. The conditions of Bogotá in the 90s that arrive at its contemporaneity are the two distinct backgrounds in which this investigation —interested in productive articulations between artistic practices in community and collective action— identifies and recognises the evident heterogeneity of agents, institutions, resources, spaces and discourses that converge in the mentioned articulation. Such circumstances involve the citizen exercise that, in the name of art, identity, territory and, in general, in the name of cultural rights, achieved important social revindications and recognitions in diverse socio-artistic processes throughout the 21st century.

The possible causes motivating the alluded revindications, derive from the impossibility communities have to access collective goods through regular governmental and institutional channels, as well as from finding in solidarities and cooperation with peers a path for the satisfaction of their needs and the revindication of their rights. Such prolific forms of social organisation and their strategies for visibilisation and action resonate with communitarian initiatives deployed in other parts of the world. Manifestations and repertoires recognised globally, as are the cases with protests against police brutality systematically targeting Black communities in the United States and the *indignados of 15M* in Spain. In the book *La Rebelión de los Indignados: Movimiento 15M:*

6(1),113-127.[fecha de Consulta 23 de Septiembre de 2022]. ISSN: 1577-239X. Disponible en: https://www.redalyc.org/articulo.oa?id=38060108, Fabio Zambrano Pantoja, «De las atenas suramericana a la Bogotá moderna. La construcción de la cultura ciudadana en Bogotá», Revista de Estudios Sociales [En línea], 11 | Febrero 2002, Publicado el 01 febrero 2002, consultado el 04 mayo 2021. URL: http://journals.openedition.org/revestudsoc/ 27463, Rincón-Salazar, María Teresa (2006). Cultura ciudadana, ciudadanía y Trabajo Social. PROSPECTIVA. Revista de Trabajo Social e intervención social, (11), 46-65.[fecha de Consulta 23 de Septiembre de 2022]. ISSN: 0122-1213. Disponible en: https://www.redalyc.org/articulo.oa?id=574261799004, and Contreras Ortiz, Y. (2019). *Renovación urbana en Bogotá. Incentivos, reglas y expresión territorial.* Editorial Universidad Nacional de Colombia.

Democracia Real ¡Ya! [The Rebellion of the Outraged: 15M Movement: Real Democracy Now!] (2011) Raúl Zibechi points out regarding these manifestations that,

> great mobilisations produce signs and symbols that show the distinctive qualities of every cycle of struggle. On the 1st of January 1994, masked and armed natives were the protagonists of the Zapatista movement. Unemployed people with sticks and handkerchiefs were the emblem of the *piqueteros* in Argentina in December 2001; women wearing *polleras, callapus* and *whipalas* came down the Alto to La Paz in October 2003. (…) It is through these symbols that we identify the end of an era and the beginning of a new one. *Puerta del Sol*, as Tahir Square, is part of this long list of places that have been transmuted from spaces/monuments to barricades, or living spaces, by collective action (Zibechi, 2011, pp. 7-8, italics in the original).

Under this premise, the category *collective action* provides a pertinent ample and flexible notion to represent the multiplicity of citizen formations that, in recent years, have been forming within cultural sectors. They recognise in their knowledges, actors, circuits, and resources a set of values that other spheres cannot provide, such as immediacy, specificity, collective production, the capacity for social reproduction, and above all, the real possibility for participation in concrete spaces of the city.

Given that the analysis and perspectives are located in the current social spaces, the discussions that collective action as a category of analysis has produced suggest a vast social heterogeneity. For example, American sociologist Charles Tilly (2000, 2002, 2007) has used indistinctly terminology such as 'collective action repertoire', 'contestation', 'collective action' and 'violent collective action'. Argentinian scholar Marcelo Cavarozzi (1993) and Colombian Professor Ricardo Delgado (2009) both inquire into 'collective action frameworks'. French academic Nicolas Tenzer (1992) delves into the depoliticization of society on the verge of the 21st century, and Seven years later, Italo-Argentinian social researcher Alberto Melucci (1999) explains the actions of contemporary social movements in Latin America, emphasising how they mobilise symbolic cultural projects integrated into their political interests. He places the cultural aspects of collective

action as a central part of their role, showing them as a shift regarding other 'classical' social movements (Melucci, 1999, pp. 25-54). Melucci's mention is important because of his insistence on the central role of culture in collective action, showing this as a critical change compared to past social movements.

However, characterising the heterogeneity of agents, motivations, resources, and modes of urban social organisation in order to establish a sort of differentiation between sectors of the social structure is a problematic endeavour. It is difficult to define a precise composition of the social actors engaged in collective action in contemporary cities, especially in Latin American ones, due to various factors such as the current technological state, market advancements, and the emergence of diverse identities and affections resulting from different life conditions. It is easy to see the scarcity of terminology when referring to new forms of social organisations that have developed from different groups coalescing in the defence of urban common resources. The particularity of such associations is that even though dispersed worldwide, they are interconnected and organised through webs that vary in intensity and political scale, which results in their militance being partial and short-lived. This is because it relies on solidarities that impact the personal lives and affections of the social actors involved, which makes long-term consolidations difficult.

In Bogotá, as in other large cities in Colombia, the process of spatial production is not only driven by economic growth and population increase, but also by the ongoing violent displacement of rural populations to urban areas caused by the country's internal conflict active since the 1930s. This has resulted in Colombia becoming a highly urbanized country, with 85% of the population living in urban areas. Five cities, including Bogotá, with a population of over 9 million, have over a million residents, and three of them have over 2 million. These five major cities generate 40% of

the country's GDP, with Bogotá alone contributing 25%, according to the World Bank.[16] In addition to this, the national statistics institute in Colombia (DANE) reports that the country has 41 medium size cities that oscillate between 100,000 and 1 million people.[17]

Given the circumstances described above, the fragmentation of territories has become unavoidable. As a result, collective action has emerged as a crucial tool for defending and occupying marginal areas on the outskirts of cities. It has also been employed to produce and safeguard common resources, including access to public transportation, essential water network services, sewage systems, and electricity. I argue that collective action has become a key asset for gaining visibility and generating the legitimacy required for local social organizations to challenge the political establishment in the country's capital cities.

For decades, as the cities in Colombia enlarge at the margins, local governments have become specialists in legalising informal neighbourhoods. In Bogotá, the neighbourhoods *Santa Librada* and *Yomasa* located in the *Usme* locality; *Caracolí*, *Arborizadora Alta*, *Sierra Morena*, and *La Playa* in *Ciudad Bolívar*; *Patio Bonito* and *María Paz* neighbourhoods in the *Kennedy* District; and *Libertad*, *Danubio Azul*, and *Nueva Roma* in the *Bosa* one, are all examples of this legalising phenomenon in the south of the city. Together, they host about three million people and represent the complexity of the city's urbanisation.[18] Urban growth global design logics that promote an empty idea of public space and render what Spanish scholar Manuel Delgado, in his book *El espacio público como ideología* [Public Space as Ideology] (2008), calls the 'taming of the social link' (Delgado, 2008, p. 46), has

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[16] Banco Mundial. Población total en Colombia 1960-2021.
https://datos.bancomundial.org/indicator/SP.POP.TOTL?locations=CO
[17] Gobierno Nacional de Colombia, - Sistema Informativo DANE, 'Censo de población 2016'.
https://funcionpublica.gov.co/web/carta-administrativa/-/dane-revela-informe-completo-del-censo-de-poblacion
[18] Alcaldía Mayor de Bogotá – Secretaría del Habitat, Bogotá 2022. https://www.habitatbogota.gov.co

been the predominant way in which the local administrations have dealt with this legalization process.

Research developed by Colombian scholar Alfonso Torres in *La Ciudad en la Sombra. Barrios y Luchas Populares en Bogotá 1950-1977* [The City in the Shadow. Neighbourhoods and Popular Struggles in Bogotá 1950-1977] published in 1993, and *Identidad y Política de la Acción Colectiva* [Identity and Politics of Collective Action] in 2007, outline a map of the complex situation of underprivileged and poor migrant communities in their process of urbanization in Bogotá from 1950 until 2000. During these years, a large number of wastelands were co-opted and, once urbanised, defended through social organisation and protests. Torres's project offers, from a sociological perspective, not only an account of the experiences and confrontations between the new city residents and different government instances but develops a characterisation of the different stages of the production of urban public space. He affirms that, from the 50s to the 60s, there was a predominant presence of interpretations derived from functionalism and marginalisation theories (Torres, 2007, p. 9). In the 70s and the beginning of the 80s, amidst the emergence of new social movements, Marxist urban perspectives, and peripheral capitalism, were the interpretative remarks apprehended by the popular associations in Bogotá (Torres, 2007, pp. 10-11). In the second half of the 80s and through the 90s, academic considerations shifted towards what was called the 'cultural turn', placing at the core of their interest all the urban cultural dynamics and democratisation processes within the frame of the implementation of the 1991 Political Constitution (Torres, 2007, p. 14). He also states that, in the 21st century, in Bogotá, a multiplicity of popular organised experiences emerged, and these have managed to retain their autonomy, legitimacy and alternativity (Torres, 2007, p. 15).

Collective action and its articulations to other agents have been fundamental in the transformation of urban micro spaces in cities like Bogotá and Medellín. The creation of space is understood as the process of producing public spaces that have a wide-ranging ability to assign significance to urban areas while also generating and protecting communal assets. This is why social organization, along with its various actions and cultural strategies, is primarily concentrated in the public spaces of the Colombian cities mentioned above. These public spaces are where the central process of articulation, which is the focus of this investigation, takes place. As Lefebvre proposes 'the concept of space links the mental, the cultural, the social and the historical' (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 57), he affirms that contemporary spatialities tend to be global and disintegrate smaller scale spaces, as the national or local, following a contradictory logic to the capitalist production. Thus, for this study, it is vital to understand how the actors and agencies that intervene in the urban spaces through artistic practices, in this case, produce space in public areas.

The concept of *commons spaces* highlights the public dimension that specific urban spaces can possess. The notion sheds light on the social processes involved in constructing public spaces rather than assuming that public space is an inherent characteristic of a city. Furthermore, the category critically situates the articulation between a specific territory and a particular citizen action. Under this premise, the concept of *common space* holds a crucial significance in terms of distancing itself from broad and vague definitions of public space, which assume it to be a space constructed for collective enjoyment and interaction, overlooking important specificities such as being concerned with particular communities, being publicly accessible, and being manifested communally (Rabotnikof, 2005). On the contrary, this category includes the public dimension of particular urban spaces that have become meaningful for strengthening identity values pertaining

to neighbourhood inhabitants. The use of this category emphasises the process of emergence of diverse spaces that have been similarly produced in Latin American cities.

In her book *Los Espacios Comunes Como Problema. Sociabilidad, Gestión y Territorio* [Common Spaces as a Problem. Sociability, Management and Territory] (2009), Natalia Da Representaçao proposes the concept of *common spaces* as a way to comprehend the diverse social appropriations that shape urban territories. Da Representaçao argues that these appropriations are driven by identity and difference and are crucial for both the production and management of these spaces (Da Representaçao, 2009). For her, besides allowing for an understanding of the complex processes of territory governance implied, 'the analytic possibilities of the concept of common space allow thinking about the empirical space construction processes, attending the complex structure of actors involved in its uses and management, that sustain differential resources and interests' (Da Representaçao, 2009, p. 124).

Thus far, this section presents two core issues that this investigation is concerned with *collective action*, understood as 'the multiform capacity for collective insubordination' (Gutierrez Aguilar, 2017, p. 18), and *spatial production*, in terms of the public dimension of urban spaces in which a sphere of action is identifiable. Those issues articulate with diverse actors, which deploy strategies for social protests, spatial transformation and cultural resistance towards achieving their 'right to the city' (Harvey, 2008).

When observing social mobilisation and organisation processes in Latin America, two distinct attributes can be identified: the chaotic temper sought for intervention in public matters and the social overflow produced by the insufficiency of the institutionality (Gutiérrez Aguilar, 2017, p. 18). However, the current struggles for the 'right to the city' develop in a different path from the one encouraged by Lefebvre in May 1968, which aimed for the visibilisation of the

relationship between urban fragmented space and capitalist rationality. Today, the aim above anything is for the configuration of a different form of urban life, that opposes the one being imposed by the market and State agents, as David Harvey (2008) insists: 'To claim the right to the city in the sense I mean it here is to claim some kind of shaping power over the processes of urbanisation, over the ways in which our cities are made and re-made and to do so in a fundamental radical way' (Harvey, 2008, p. 2).

In the midst of the tensions arising from the impact of government interventions and private actors on different parts of the city's geography, this study introduces an additional element: contemporary communitarian artistic practices. The main objective of this study is to problematize the cultural and artistic practices capable of metropolitan impact. This involves considering the current influence of the production, dissemination, and social appropriation of artistic interventions in urban spaces; their role in the current political conflicts in spaces not designed for the circulation of art; their contribution to the construction of the public sphere in specific urban spaces; and the transformation of identities and representations of art by social organizations, activists, and other cultural agents interested in co-producing communal resources for their socio-spatial transformative initiatives.

The wavering notion of public space in international contexts

The task of identifying the ambiguity of the cultural and political meaning in the notions of public space that have repeatedly emerged in Latin-American cities, enclosed by the markets and global design logics that mediate the social spaces for living of the majority of the people, is central to the purposes of this investigation.

The typical sterile representation of public space provides an understanding of it being developed primordially for the encounter of people. However, this notion masks the real possibility that many individual and collective subjects have found for being in the city in other ways that, in turn, have generated alternative spatialities. In opposition to the economic forces exhibited in benches, parks, sidewalks and plazas that private enterprises have co-opted through different strategies, a specific action of organisation and collective power occupies and appropriates these spaces. These occupations enable city dwellers to break the undisputed market and global design logics, which Michael Hirsch defines as 'the metaphysics of the public space' (Miessen & Basar, 2009, pp. 25-26). Through such challenges and ruptures, this time explicitly referring to Colombian cities, the emergence of different political subjects and identities can be observed. Through their gestures and actions, they have accomplished undoing that supposed attribute that locates public space beyond the political, social, cultural and economic realms. Their presence in public spaces breaks the 'metaphysics' discussed by Hirsch.

It would be pertinent to say that the vast amount of popular, artistic and cultural interventions in the public spaces of cities like Bogotá, Cali and Medellín are still far from being finished, coherent and inclusive processes. This particularity becomes evident, especially when considering the tensions that have surged amongst diverse social and artistic organisations, between artists and residents, artists and public institutions, and the political contradictions of the agents participating in their production.

In Colombia, public space is understood the same way as in many other countries: the natural space for encounter with others bestowed with political and citizenship dimensions. This notion has been legitimised through periodic normativity and also laws that regulate and define a space's possibilities. This apparent complexity and amplitude have encouraged the diverse actors

interested in the production, defence, study, and appropriation of the spaces in the city to be in constant dispute for their extent of reach and meaning.

Sergio Fajardo, former Mayor of Medellín and three-time presidential candidate, recognised as an expert in urban renovation in Colombia, affirms that 'it is inside the public space and in education where fundamentally we meet, and from there, other links are established' (Bertran, 2009, p. 172). In a similar direction, in the book *Espacio Público y Formación de Ciudadanía* [Public Space and Citizenship Formation], Colombian researcher Carlos Yori (2007) sees public space as a central point for the collective construction of a city, as it incorporates political legitimacy and cultural hegemony, and in this way, offering citizens a role in the reconfiguration of their territories (Yori, 2007, p. 37).

Yori from an academic field and Fajardo from a political one, reveal the discourse that, from the final decade of the 20th century incited by the new constitutional configuration, has permeated institutions, behaviours, meanings, and imaginaries of the city. A discourse which has been at the heart of the transformations in Colombian cities. The point of convergence of their ideas (and the heart of the 1991 Political Constitution) is the role of culture in the possible strategies to deploy when establishing meaning and extent of reach of the public arena, the generation of citizenship, and the recognition of civil, social, political, and economic rights from the active participation of civil society in the construction of the public sphere. Furthermore, they can serve as examples of what Colombian curator and researcher Victor Manuel Rodríguez (2016) has noted about the strategic importance that cultural management has had in governance processes in Bogotá. Rodríguez refers specifically, to the collective dimension of thinking, being and feeling that as a discursive practice, culture assembles (Rodríguez, 2016, pp. 65-74).

From a different point of view, a relentless amplification of public space has been described primarily from the second half of the 20th century by contemporary art theory. Even though historical tradition presupposes an apparently stable relationship between urban spaces and their denotation through commemorative statues, once the meaning and fashion of the urban spaces produced in the current state of advanced capitalism are transformed, these relationships become complex and critical. In the catalogue for the exhibition *El Derrumbe de la Estatua. Hacia una Crítica del Arte Público 1952-2014* [The Falling of the Statue. Towards a Critique of Public Art 1952-2014] (UNAM, 2014), Mexican researcher José Luis Barrios has identified that, in the current context, the apparent stable function between public space and art, which he refers to as *public art*, has become unstable due to 'the fact that the forms of the so-called public art are unidentifiable as sculptures or monuments, but as artistic practices that interact in different ways with public matters both politically and socially' (Barrios, 2014, pp. 7-8). He acknowledges a historic move from the broad concept of public art to an even wider, more specific 'artistic practices' that respond to the nature of new productions. He follows these lines with a further explanation:

> In this sense, public art is linked to the modes of producing places, occupying spaces and generating situations. In its extended meaning, we will understand that public art is related to an intervention in the space for social or political exchange, either through volumetric material objects or through the development of actions or interventions, in the political and social space (Barrios, 2014, p. 8).

Barrios seems to define these new artistic practices as an expansion from a previously accepted form of art to a relationship of political and social exchange. His definition of these practices includes the potential for the actual production of places by generating presence, actions and consequences.

From a different perspective, commenting on the nature of 'public space' in her book *Evictions. Art and Spatial Politics* (1998), Rosalyn Deutsche concludes that, historically, public space

surges as a way to institutionalise the social conflict that stages the challenges for power, which, in turn, would make public space and the artistic practices that co-produce it, an affirmation of democracy (Deutsche, 1998, p. 295). This understanding would imply that the representations, contradictions, and discontinuities of democracy would configure and are configured through the production of public space. Consequently, if everything that in the name of art and culture — institutions, entrepreneurship, and communities— is added to this configuration, it would be possible to admit that both public space and democracy are the results of an unstable process in constant articulation, challenge and resignification.

Within this framework, public space is linked to every city's cultural and material characteristics and, therefore, to the particular neighbourhoods' environment. However, as we know, not all neighbourhoods are the same, so eluding a particular neighbourhood's historical, economic, political, social, environmental, and technological changing conditions would imply a futile attempt at understanding its spatiality. The category of public space transits through a triple articulation between sociability, management, and territory. In this way, it could be conceived as a knot between public action and territory. This would mean that there is an implication for the category to construct the *public* and does not take for granted the pre-existence of public space as an intrinsic quality of the city.

The phenomenon of the transformation of the idea of public space is not, however, homogeneous worldwide. In contrast to what has been discussed, it is helpful to introduce a view of the situation in The United States. In his book, *Global Suburbs: Urban Sprawl from the Rio Grande to Rio de Janeiro (Cultural Spaces)* (2006), Laurence Herzog affirms that different to Latin American or Spanish cities, the advancement of globalisation has cornered local control over urban design to the point that, from the 90s, urban space has gone through a process of privatisation in detriment

of urban planning for the public interest. He argues that contemporary urban design in the United States has focused on the creation of

> artificial or simulated spaces —shopping malls, festival pavilions, video game rooms— as the main places where urban dwellers encounter. The computer and its derived technologies, as is the internet, suggest radical forms of urban interaction: for example, cybercommunities and cybercafes (Herzog, 2006, p. 2).

He states: 'Contemporary urbanism —a world of shopping malls, air routes (elevated street webs in between high rises) freeways, television screens, historic districts created by local chambers of commerce and eccentric cities like Silicon Valley— has become ephemeral' (Herzog, 2006, p. 5). For him, a significant cause that has kept people away from the city's physical spaces is the massive impact that the digital revolution has had on daily life for city residents.

Placing the turning point of this change in the theories of postmodern urbanism, Herzog claims that even though these theories have disrupted the limitations of modernist planning, they also legitimised the fragmentation of urban space that placed centralised city governments in crisis and favoured local micro powers (Herzog, 2006, p. 7). This predilection has provided a privileged place for urban planning to private consultants and developers, external agents and intermediaries between public entities and investors, corporate conglomerates, and marketing and public relation enterprises. In this path, according to Herzog, the 'sense of place' was lost in the new urbanisms. With this loss, the traditionally constructed public spaces like squares, parks, or benches for pedestrians, lost their appeal and, above all their role in the social cohesion process in North American cities. His analysis implies that the public field in urban spaces in the United States has collapsed to provide room for spectacular spaces that reflect the aesthetic of television imagery. This attribute that the contemporary public field in the United States has adopted favours digital and evanescent experiences, as opposed to the construction of public spaces in urban conglomerates in the struggle for the right to the city. This phenomenon has facilitated the

emergence of radical ephemeral artificial urban encounters that, however, operate differently in Latin America.

In Latin America, the dissolution —albeit emerging— of the relevance that spaces like squares, parks, cultural districts, or public gardens has been a complex issue because, as David Harvey (1973) has explained, these spaces have become urban symbols and geo-references for the inhabitants of the cities. Furthermore, they also represent the economic, social, political, and cultural forces that cut across the way society thinks about their urban life and the rights of the people. This would seem to be the counterpoint proposed by Herzog to evidence the extent of value of public space has in North American urbanism and how its deficiencies have led to homogenisation and the loss of a 'sense of place' driven by the current technological change and the advance of the 'cultural ideology of consumerism' (Herzog, 2006, pp. 5-28). In this line of ideas, I argue it would be possible to understand urban growth as a result of diverse, asymmetric, and intermittent relations between agents that participate in formal and informal urbanisation processes, and simultaneously, from the omissions or actions from local, regional, and global institutions, and the agencies that are responsible for territorial management and order.

Urban concentration processes derive from the territorial growth a city experiences, associated with diverse considerations. As Harvey would suggest, the economic considerations are practically determinant, for in the end, what the different instances of urbanism represent, are the modes of capital production (Harvey, 1973). In connection with this concern, Spanish researcher Ramón Fernández Durán, in the book *La Explosión del Desorden: La Metrópoli Como Espacio de la Crisis Global* [The Explosion of Disorder: The Metropolis as the Space for the Global Crisis] (1993), affirms that the crisis of the global economy and the Welfare State is a 'crisis not only of the developmental model but also of the ways of producing cities' (Fernández Durán, 1993, p. 57). In

his view, city planners and urban developers are no longer concerned with the regulation of growth but with the 'renovation and recuperation or areas (well localised and profitable) of the existing urban structure' (Fernández Durán, 1993, p. 58).

Contrary to the situation described by Herzog in which the media conglomerates in the United States 'often portray an antiurban message: the streets are the space where spectacular and dangerous events take place' (Herzog, 2006, p. 11), when revising the urban interventions that have occurred in the last decades in Bogotá and Medellín, I argue it is possible to identify the extent of reach of concepts, ideas and their political scope, that seem to be linked to a stable notion of public space. That is event, exposure, interaction, territory, daily living, context, action, social knowledge, the interruption of the everyday, production, situation, citizenship awareness and cultural rights. This notion of public space, I argue, would not only be particular to the spaces of urban design that have been conceived as places for encounter, like squares, plazas, parks and sidewalks but primarily would aim at the notion of *public* in an amplified sense, that is, the public associated to the idea of democracy.

Latin American cities are paradoxical spaces that simultaneously celebrate and resist, almost with the same intensity, the social, economic, political, and cultural processes that sprout from globalisation. In this way, despite how problematic it could be to make this type of generalisation, I argue that the organisation and the logics lived in Latin American cities remain in constant opposition and conflict to the global corporate interests that Herzog denounces, and that seek to 'homogenise and package not only the products of physical consumption but also more broad spaces in which those products are consumed' (Herzog, 2006, p. 27).

Following the idea of public space in relation to democracy, in the book *Contested Public Spaces vs Conquered Public Spaces. Gentrification and its Reflections on Urban Public Space in Istanbul*, Turkish

scholar Eda Ünlu Yücesoy (2008) emphasises the importance of diversity and difference to be represented in the public space. Yücesoy advocates for the alternation and transformation of the rhythms and patterns of use of such spaces amongst different population groups, particularly the ones, that in addition to being established as places of encounter, she claims, should also encourage the constant construction and negotiation of these spaces as 'the only arenas of the city where at the same time exhibits collective conflicts and even countercultures, competing in the urban context' (Yücesoy, 2008, p. 43).

The initial and most apparent cause for this territorial displacement phenomenon is the attraction that cities radiate through the supply of better and greater work opportunities. These 'opportunities', however, have a direct relation to the conditions that the places of origin of the displaced population provide, which predominantly are not able to guarantee the minimal conditions for a dignified living standard in terms of security and well-being resulting from the economic determinations. It is then evident that there is a direct, or symbiotic, relationship between the process of metropolitanization and the accelerating population growth derived from the array of diverse and successive inter and intraurban displacements. In this regard, when defining a metropolitan area or region, according to the parameters of settlement or mass population concentration, special attention should be given to the logics that have motivated the initial displacements to the metropolis that has configured it as such. In this regard, the origin of metropolitan configuration becomes very important if we understand its internal logic, its logic of growth, and spatial production.

In Latin America, it is typical for its cities' metropolitan territory to resemble a mosaic configured by small towns or municipalities interacting with each other. This is evident in cities like Sao Paulo, Mexico City and Bogotá. These mosaic pieces work in interdependent ways

through different levels of government (local, regional and national) and governance processes that can often include international instances. This fragmentation articulates the different dependencies in a sort of web, imposing challenges on governability, mobility, and habitability for governments and residents. Over the last decades, as part of the tendency of economic outsourcing, Latin-American cities have seen an increasing presence of urban conglomerates with amenities similar to those in the developed world. These clusters congregate fragments of modernity in Latin American cities. That being said, they still lack their global models' resources and extent of reach. Often, they become urban objects resulting from the new capitalist order inspired by standards that are distant from their contexts, possibilities and necessities. Paradoxically to the undeniable advance of the capitalist market and its influence in the formation of space in Latin American cities, democracy has likewise advanced in the region's different countries. However, this process has had significant differences from country to country. This can be seen when we notice that Brazil (1988), Colombia (1991), Paraguay (1993), Ecuador (1991, 2008), Venezuela (1999), Bolivia (2009) and Chile (2021) all have approved the generation of new political constitutions.

The situation in Colombia has exceptional particularities due to its internal armed conflict that has been active mainly in its rural territory for over 70 years. There has been an exponential growth of peripheral informal neighbourhoods or slums, especially since the 80s. These have been constituted as spaces of difference and diversity. At the same time, this condition has multiplied the practices and strategies of struggle and social organisation in the frame of the challenges for urban territory in the main Colombian cities. This direct cause for the cities' growth indicates a social crisis in broad social sectors of the country due to subsidiary phenomena derived from political

violence, such as drug trade and paramilitarism. Some of these processes were the ones that encouraged the new and current Political Constitution of 1991.[19]

In this way, I argue that urban space fragmentation, and sustained urban population growth resulting from the violent forced displacement of rural communities that concentrate in different urban centres as a consequence of the internal armed conflict, and the continuous development of economic models deployed in Colombian cities; all of this framed within the complex globalisation processes and the related phenomena of global urban design, compel to question whether there is a direct relationship between democracy and public space. What type of democracy and citizenship has been implicated in the production of social spaces in Colombian cities? Moreover, what resources have been used in these processes?

Public space, the commons and common spaces

The concept of public space can be connected to an idea which gained popularity in the 1990s: *the commons*. The concept originated in economics and politics and refers to a form of social collective organization based on participatory democracy, which emerged in response to crises within the system.

Experiencing the city's spaces on a daily basis enables one to observe how urban design prioritizes the construction of areas for movement that facilitate the continuous flow of goods,

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[19] As mentioned above, the 1991 Political Constitution sought to strengthen the Colombian State in a difficult moment, where the Nation's institutionality was at risk due to the intensification of the war that narcotraffic organisations, guerrilla, and paramilitaries had declared to the country. Numerous administrative and political reconfigurations were made. To the examples described above [part 1], the creation of the Constitutional Court, and the National Attorney General, likewise, the Vice-presidency of the Nation can be added. Moreover, the establishment and guarantees of fundamental rights for Colombians, including the rights of ethnic communities, women's rights, rights for displaced populations, the right to universal health care and others, were created. Worth mentioning was the development of mechanisms for citizen participation and the political aperture to overcome bipartisanship that allowed other political forces to emerge. Lastly, as previously described, it provided the tools for the president to achieve peace with armed groups. All these tools and apertures have been materializing with, at times more, difficulties than others since 1991, converging in the 2016 peace accords with Las Farc-EP after seven decades of war.

people, and information, while also integrating public spaces with private and commercial activities. This is made apparent in the objects which are constructed for the spaces, the mobilisation strategies implemented, and the methods citizens use. It could be said that everything seems to be organised 'under the model of 'neoliberal' governance regarding the process of the 'de-democratisation of democracy'' (Balibar, 2013, p. 12). In other words, there seem to be mechanisms designed for controlling dissenting political demonstrations through selective inclusion measures that determine who is allowed to enter a space in a city and who is not.

Celebrating the use of public spaces in the name of democracy in a country like Colombia is paradoxical. On the one hand, it reflects a positive process of democratization and the attainment of rights by the people. On the other, it overlooks the limitations imposed by the State and the strategies of control employed by those in power (whether legal or illegal) to advance in their own interests. Moreover, it fails to recognise the challenges that city dwellers face in producing their own spatiality, identifying their needs, organising themselves, challenging institutional decisions, and collaborating to defend common resources, amongst others.

The constant intervention of the urban spaces coming from the cultural institutionality in a city like Bogotá is problematic and contradictory. The notion of *'ciudadanismo a ultranza'* [citizenship at all costs] developed by Manuel Delgado (2011) can be useful in discussing the issue. Delgado declares that,

> [c]itizenship today is the ideology of choice of the social-democracy. However, it is also the dogmatic reference of a set of movements ethically reforming capitalism that aspire to alleviate its consequences through the exacerbation of abstract democratic values and the growth of the States' powers to achieve it, understanding, in a way, that exclusion and abuse are not structural components, but mere accidents or contingencies of a system of domination, that is believed possible to be improved ethically (Delgado, 2011, pp. 21-22).

In the same way that public space is not a given, nor a natural attribute of cities, the commons, also need to be formed. Thus, in Colombian cities, Delgado's 'citizenship at all costs'

implies the collective value assumed for public space and the governance strategies implemented for the control of urban territories. An example of this are the policies of management and promotion of *urban art* in cities like Barranquilla, Cartagena, Cali, Manizales, Pereira, Medellín and Bogotá that continue to magnify hegemonic representations concerning art, public space and the city. Representations that, even though revised and transcended by the theorizations and the artists themselves, seem to be part of a city model being implemented in the country.

In Colombia, local governments have shifted efforts toward the positioning of city brands. They aim to become culturally attractive cities, promoting tourism and leisure services with products associated with art, material heritage and festive celebrations. The assumption for establishing their *local brand* is that culture can contribute to strengthening cities and provide them with an international projection, especially when they embrace Delgado's notion of citizenship (2011). However, in Colombia, the public dimension of urban spaces has been at times affected negatively, and the commons barred, as expressed by Raquel Gutiérrez Aguilar 'to reach specific objectives almost always related with securing and protecting the conditions for the collective reproduction amidst the drastic threat of evictions or grievance' (2017, p. 73).

Following Aguilar, a way to understand the commons would be as a set of cultural and material resources belonging to and having an effect upon a local community. She describes them as a 'particular and concrete associative dynamic, situated temporally, geographically and historically' (Gutiérrez Aguilar, 2017, p. 73). This would imply that in the relationships developed within their ecologies, the commons are not necessarily 'things' or material entities but a set of socio-ecological, interspecies relations (Federici, 2019, pp. 93-94). More than a resource, this understanding can see the commons 'as a social practice and ongoing commitment held between entities inhabiting ecosystems' (Badano, Percival & Schuppli, 2023, pp. 162-163) that manage the

subsistence and care for the well-being of the community as well as administering the material components that constitute them in collective ways. The commons, thus, can be acknowledged as unstable social 'sites of resistance' (Badano, Percival & Schuppli, 2023, pp. 162-163) emerging essentially from localised relationships that indicate associations of reciprocity with a responsibility for the propagation of collective wealth.

In *The Future of the Commons*, David Harvey (2011) indicates the scopes to which the State can control and manage resources for vast portions of the population, compared to private sectors and social organizations. He points out that concerning the commons, imposition is never the way. On the contrary, the participation of grassroots social organisations is fundamental, especially when considering that governmental strategies often rule them out because of their scale. Harvey says that Elinor Ostrom,

> shows that individuals can and often do devise ingenious and eminently sensible ways to manage common property resources (CPR) for individual and collective benefit. These case studies "shatter the convictions of many policy analysts that the only way to solve CPR problems is for the external authorities to impose full private property rights of centralised regulation" and as Ostrom argues, demonstrate "rich mixtures of public and private instrumentalities."' (Harvey, 2011, p. 102).

To this, Harvey adds that that which is seen 'as a good way to resolve problems at one scale does not hold at other scale': thus, good local solutions do not translate to good global ones (Harvey, 2001, p. 102).

A common resource is different from a public good. Paraphrasing Ostrom (2007), Chilean scholar Jorge Vergara Vidal (2012) remarks that a common resource 'corresponds to a resource shared by a group of people and often vulnerable to social dilemmas'; however, its ownership is not shared. On the other hand, a public good is 'a good available for everyone, and its use by one person does not reduce the use of another' (Vergara, 2012, p. 43). Under this premise, it is possible to apply to specific circumstances of urban space the concept of common resources, which include

industrial and residential components and also elements of the environment. Vergara calls this the 'urban commons'; and adds that the common control of the urban, an organic action of the urban commons, whose production is held by communities, allows to suppose that citizens can develop the capacity to exercise their rights (Vergara, 2012, p. 43).

On this point, Lefebvre (1975) developed special attention to *spatial planification.* He was right in asserting that this would be the notion that the cities of the future would be debating due to it condensing flows and connections and because of being an economically supported area. Vergara notes that 'there is a common context in the city and in urbanisms that does not debilitate with the property regimes that they have regard for, and it is understood as a shared and common resource' (Vergara, 2012, pp. 43-44). In other words, there is a relationship between the right to the city proposed by Lefebvre and the right for the common property and its components in relation to the urban commons, as suggested by Harvey and Ostrom.

Even though Latin American cities are enclosed by contradictions and disparities in their urban spaces, it is possible to identify new strategies for contesting, for social struggle, and above all, for the survival of those who remain in inequality and without the right to the city (Reguillo & Godoy, 2005, p. 17). Amidst such vicissitudes, contemporary artistic practices, artistic practices in community, and culture, in general, have played a crucial role in mobilising and redistributing resources amongst the diverse and differentiated social actors that they summon in the public spaces; that is, public spaces in the expanded sense as mentioned above.

In Colombia, artists since the 90s have inserted in urban circuits different from the artistic. As expected, the central concerns of the artistic projects engaged with urbanisms have assumed the risk and even the responsibility implied when taking the floor, attempting to speak with others, and influencing decisions that impact the micro-spaces of the city. Put differently, with *expert knowledge,*

or better yet, with *ways of doing* accumulated by the contemporary artistic practices, an artist today can identify with tactical precision the types of discourses and resources coming from different institutions and organizations, whether public, private, social, or economic, that they can place at the service of the causes of their projects, of the communities, and the organizations which they collaborate with or join.

Earlier in this section, the concept of *common spaces*, as proposed by Natalia Da Representaçao (2009) and the workgroup of *El Instituto Conurbano de la Universidad Nacional General Sarmiento* in Argentina, was mentioned. The term originates from an investigation concerning urban phenomena located in the periphery of the Buenos Aires Metropolitan Area. Through the problematization of the category of *public space*, the workgroup found that the conventional understanding of the term did not achieve transiting between the spatial conditions of the contemporary city. In other words, the intersectionality between sociability, management and territory. To counteract the shortfall of the category, the group proposes *common spaces,* a category that, on the contrary, is able to account for specific construction processes of the public and the common, without assuming that public space exists or that there is a given right over the urban common resources.

In order to define the general notion of public space, the category of common spaces is presented as having a micro-spatial scale. Da Representaçao (2009) explains that 'the concept of common space allows us to think about empirical processes of spatial construction addressing the complexity of the actors involved in its uses and management, which represent differentiated interests and resources' (Da Representaçao, 2009, p. 123). She indicates that the territory implied in the investigation was assumed as a space subject to multiple appropriations, such as the ones coming from minoritarian groups and their strategies for visualising their identities. Such

interventions, as with the commons, alternate between the public and the private. Through the analysis of real situations, the category (common spaces) attempts to contribute,

> to a conception of urban management, incorporating the co-constitutive idea of actors from the State and from civil-society, and the possible implications of using terminology such as territorial governance and its articulation with the construction of citizen demands in terms of rights (Da Representaçao, 2009, p. 123).

From such assumptions, the author proposes particular issues regarding common spaces that she reveals inside neighbourly organizations or in the neighbourhood spaces where the actions take place as devices that produce and reproduce representations of the city and, simultaneously, of the ideas that underlie their causes for struggle and social mobilization (Da Representaçao, 2009, p. 124). In essence, the category (common spaces) does not reduce public space to a container or the materiality of an urban intervention developed by any social actor. On the contrary, it demands that the spatial production in question be characterised and studied as detailed as possible. Thus, the use of this category in case studies (as the ones presented in part 3), allows explaining the relationships established between the spaces and the social actors in the production of the public. Moreover, it accomplishes demonstrating the importance of visibilising the conflicts and challenges concerning the everyday urban experience of the actors implied in the organization of social struggles in the spaces of the city.

The way in which public space can be analysed and understood is central to the purposes of this inquiry. In general, public space is assumed as inherently being part of a community, and furthermore, it is often understood as preceding that community. The problem with such restricted assertion is that it excludes the causes and motivations that led to establishing a particular spatial order. The institutionalisation of the term public space risks minimizing the intrinsic conflicts of social organisations that struggle for or with it. These are the conflicts and struggles that common spaces examine, which due to their scale, demand greater detail that other categories of socio-

spatial analysis cannot provide, such as territory or metropolis. In the end, as it identifies the multiple appropriations that spaces are subject to, it is a flexible category to explain the issues pertaining to this project.

In cities like Bogotá and Medellín, there is an observable incorporation of social actors that had not previously been part of governance processes to the production and management of common spaces. These have joined by contributing resources and possibilities to social organizations and collective processes supported by cultural and artistic practices. Such micro-spatial transformations can only be identified through the mentioned socio-spatial analysis.

From a different standpoint, there are many cultural projects deployed in Latin America whose purpose is the transformation of the place where they locate themselves and the life conditions of the community participating. For example, *Cultura y Transformación Social* [Culture and Social Transformation], a publication edited by VIVA Trust that convenes diverse urban and rural experiences in Argentina that influence social processes. Amongst them, the project led by *Asociación Civil el Culebrón Timbal* which operates through carnivalesque appropriations of public space used as instruments to strengthen neighbourly action in the peripheral greater Buenos Aires. A more traditional approach would be the famed action known as *El Siluetazo*, which occurred in the 80s during the Argentinian military dictatorship. On a similar path, political art collectives such as *Colectivo Etcétera, Arte en la Calle* or *Grupo Arte Callejero* articulated to the demands and demonstrations from emerging political movements of the time, which rendered common spatialities, as was the case with the multiple manifestations of collectives such as *Madres y Abuelas de la Plaza de Mayo* and H.I.J.O.S (Expósito, 2009). In Bogotá, H.I.J.O.S formed a local version that has disrupted the demonstrations and manifestations organised by civilians victims of the State and other armed groups in the streets of the city.

The resources of the participants in the production of common spaces through the artistic practices mentioned above include the city, the community, and the political, also, art and cultural imaginaries that respond to and reproduce the ideals of their causes of struggle and organizations. In other words, strategies and visions of art and culture do not mobilise or reproduce communitarian visions of the artistic and the cultural by themselves. However, they do participate in their social production. The same is true when artistic practices get involved in the struggles for spatial justice, housing rights, and dignified living in Latin American cities.

Spatiality, the right to the city and emergent citizenships

The analysis of the interaction between contemporary artistic practices, urbanisation and urban planning forms the general structure of this part of the investigation. For this, specific categories of socio-spatial analysis, such as the *production of social space*, *public space*, *the commons, common spaces*, *urban common resources*, *right to the city*, and *collective action*, are pertinent to discuss. It is fundamental that the discussion proposed remains contextualised, mainly because of the conceptualisation and the description of the context in which a number of artistic practices emerge and articulated to collective actions have reframed urgencies and produced other spatialities in Colombian urban conglomerates.

This part emphasises on the public dimension of urban spaces in Medellín and Bogotá, which is constituted at the same time by different tensions between the local, the national, and the global. It is not possible to consider the processes of urbanisation and urban planning in Latin American cities without understanding the current conditions of globalisation, and the advance of capitalism that affects the extent of reach, the impact and the governance of common urban

resources, the modes of social organisation in micro-spaces in the city, and the emergence of alternative spatialities.

From 1998 to 2000, Enrique Peñalosa was the Mayor of Bogotá. In the course of his time in office, in a controversial moment due to his proposals regarding public space, he wrote that:

> [a]n egalitarian city is one in which public property is more sacred than private. The invasion of public space by informal vendors produces unemployment because they bring disorder and insecurity, likewise devaluing and abandoning of commercial zones. To recover the city's centre for the children of Bogotá and the rest of Colombia, we advance in the construction of the *Tercer Milenio* park, which aims for the rehabilitation of an ample sector in which social deterioration has allowed for the existence of places like the so-called *Calle del Cartucho*. Here, we will build a 20-hectare park, the equivalent of 20 times the *Plaza de Bolívar*,[20] or five times the *Parque de la Independencia*, that will contribute to giving back to the city's public space that currently is in deficit, while Buenos Aires has 18 square metres of public space per inhabitant, in Berlin 18, London 17, and Lima 7, in Bogotá, we have only 2.8.[21]

His image as an urban renovator grew exponentially between his first and second governments, the latter from 2016 to 2019. This was partly due to the mediatic amplification he had amongst global circuits of urban developers concerning metropolitan infrastructure projects,[22] part of which was the failed[23] *Tercer Milenio* park and the mass transport system *Transmilenio*. The *Tercer Milenio* Park has had a very low influx of people from its completion. The high insecurity levels are constantly being blamed without further explanation on the numerous homeless people around the area, many of them with drug addiction complications, that try to get money from the sporadic passers-by. As for Transmilenio, the transport system's perception from its daily users is of over 90% of unfavorability, in part due to insecurity, coverage, cost, infrastructure, frequency,

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[20] Central Square in Bogotá.
[21] In, Enrique Peñaloza (1999), 'La Urbe Prometida. La Bogotá por la que lucha el Alcalde'. *La Rebeca, Revista de la Cámara de Comercio de Bogotá* No.107, November 30, p. 12.
[22] See, https://www.ted.com/talks/enrique_penalosa_why_buses_represent_democracy_in_action?language=en
[23] See, López, M. J. (2013). *Parque Tercer Milenio: una política distrital de renovación urbana que olvidó los principios de la seguridad humana*. Recuperado de: http://hdl.handle.net/10654/11024 and Herrera De la Hoz, C. (2011). *Evolución del concepto de espacio público en Bogotá desde la perspectiva de análisis de las políticas públicas 1990 - 2006 Estudio de caso: el Parque Tercer Milenio.*

and environmental impact.[24] It is essential to note that the 2019 the largest and most prolonged protests in the history of the country initiated because of an increase in transport system fare.

This image of Bogotá at the start of the third decade of the 21st century does not seem to correlate with the city's outstanding national and international image due to the constant betterment of living standards achieved since the 90s. The city had been recognised as a 'miracle city'[25] and turned into a model for urban management and renovation.

Be that as it may, in contemporary Bogotá, there are growing contrasts that should be considered between the wealthy sections of the city; these, which could be seen as cosmopolitan, having a vast network of services, ways of transport and communication, apparent street security, clean pavements, and luminous public spaces; and the city formed by a large number of peripheral neighbourhoods in the most densely populated localities,[26] these, vulnerable and with much less urban basic infrastructure, unsafe, and with the majority of its dwelling spaces, edifications and public spaces constructed in substandard conditions.[27]

Under these conditions, the excluded contemporary urban subject in Bogotá emerges as a subject of rights, a consequence of a long socio-political process from the 16th century until today. In the book *Emergencia del Sujeto Excluido. Aproximación Genealógica a la No-Ciudad en Bogotá* (2008) [Emergence of the Excluded Subject. Genealogical Approximation to the No-City in Bogotá],

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[24] www.bogotacomovamos.org

[25] See, https://razonpublica.com/bogota-ise-esta-acabando-el-milagro-i-anatomia-del-milagro/, Piña, William Alfonso (2009). El milagro de Bogotá. Desafíos, 21( ),197-205.[fecha de Consulta 21 de Septiembre de 2022]. ISSN: 0124-4035. Disponible en: https://www.redalyc.org/articulo.oa?id=359633166008, and Williams Montoya, Jhon. (2014). Bogotá, urbanismo posmoderno y la transformación de la ciudad contemporánea. *Revista de geografía Norte Grande*, (57), 9-32. https://dx.doi.org/10.4067/S0718-34022014000100003

[26] A Locality is an administrative-territorial unit that the Office of the Mayor of Bogotá has to decentralise its government.

[27] See,https://repository.javeriana.edu.co/bitstream/handle/10554/38001/Arti%CC%81culo%20Proliferacio%CC%81n%20de%20 Asentamientos%20Ilegales%20en%20Bogota%CC%81%20%20D.C.%20%282%29%20%281%29.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed =y, Gómez Diana, Serna Adrían (2016). Procesos de construcción de ciudad y vivienda informal. El caso de las barriadas informales de los cerros orientales de Bogotá, Colombia. Cuaderno Urbano. Espacio, cultura, Sociedad, Vol.20, No. 20 pp 95-118.

psychologist and left-wing politician Ángela Robledo together with scholar Patricia Rodríguez describe this process in four historical periods that they call: the dual city, the mestizo city, compact city, and fragmented city.[28] The authors identify different stages in which a 'split' subject emerges, that despite daily commuting in the urban spaces of Bogotá, is relentlessly excluded from the life of the city. That is, from the economic, social, civic, and political rights, that should be assured in their condition as citizens. Nonetheless, this excluded split urban subject in Bogotá 'because of its position in the city, is visibilised as a subject that must remain isolated, confined, overseen, attended under special conditions' (Robledo & Rodríguez, 2008, p. 197).[29]

On that account, it would be safe to assume that the marvels mentioned above and the transformation Peñalosa promoted did not necessarily happen in equitable or comprehensive ways. This is observable in the articulation that the national and local governments developed around the global discourses for urban transformation. In contrast, when considering the macro data, such large-scale urban interventions (as the mentioned park and transport system) can be said affected the life of the majority of the population. For example, noticing the metropolitan impact of the construction sites of the bus transport system or considering the transformation of the urban landscape that the users of the system recognise every day. This is possible only if perceived on a larger scale.

It is because of phenomena like this often seen in Latin American cities that the right to the city, following the ideas developed by Lefebvre regarding France in the 1960s, which involved the right of urban citizens to build the city and make this a privileged space in the struggle against capitalism, has found today a new air in the debates proposed by David Harvey, concerning socio-

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[28] Robledo Á. and Rodríguez, P. (2008). *Emergencia del sujeto excluido, Aproximación genealógica a la no-ciudad en Bogotá.* Bogotá: Pontifica Universidad Javeriana.
[29] Idem.

spatial and political issues. Not promoting the revindication of the working class —which within the contemporary outsourced economic environment is further blurred everyday— Harvey (2008), proposes to involve all the alterities, the differences, and the possible forms of exclusion that individual and collective subjects emerging at the margins of the central cities and countries have had to endure.

Harvey (2008) has expressed his conviction about how urban anti-capitalist movements become a real possibility for the transformation of the city into a common good, that is, into a non-capitalist city, and like Iris Young in the book *Justice and the Politics of Difference* (1990), recognises in 'insurgent citizen practices' the possibility for urban spatial production alternative to the capitalist appropriation of space (1990, pp. 13-25). Edward Soja (2008) agrees with Lefebvre and Harvey regarding the same concern for the right to the city. His principal contribution to the discussion is that he understands the organisation around the attainment of that right to the city, as a re-empowerment of civil society and as the strengthening of civil rights that emerge in the crevasses of urban space and go beyond the struggle against capital. With Young, he concurs that many powers hold social injustice and inequality persistent in forms of discrimination by gender, race, age, and religious belief, amongst others (Soja, 2008).

A suitable example that could make it easier to visualise the reflection upon the right to the city coming from artistic practices could be the work *Mi Casa Mi cuerpo* [My House My Body] by Colombian artist Oscar Moreno. The project was developed between 2006 and 2016 in the Bellavista neighbourhood located in the upper part of *Soacha* in the southern limit of Bogotá that borders the Ciudad Bolívar locality. The core of the project was placed around the complex understanding of the phenomenon of progressive 'self-construction' of homes. A phenomenon

commonly seen in informal neighbourhood settings developed by people and families victims of violent forced displacement.

Through oral narrations, collective gatherings, and writings made by the people living under these conditions, a visual archive was built in which diverse spaces and temporalities converged. This process enabled the community, together with the artist, to create a description of the spatial situation of their current houses, which led them to collectively reconstruct the memory of their old rural homes in an effort for every family to visualise their 'dream house' through architectural models.

In the project's publication (Moreno, 2014), the artist calls these three moments *Casa de la Memoria* [House of Memory], *Casa Bellavista* [Bellavista House], and *Casa de la Imaginación* [House of Imagination]. Each had specific narrative platforms that used photography, video, field diaries, objects and models which circulated in exhibition spaces and conventional artistic and investigation events. Moreno has expressed an interest in establishing relationships between art, academia, and social contexts, aiming for a cultural acknowledgement of peripheral urban territories coming from within. He narrates the experience as follows:

> [a]fter the sharp irruption of diverse forms of violence, abandonments, and uncertain journeys, families have attempted to rebuild their lives in this city bordering the mountains for over ten years. Their histories are bonded with the histories of thousands of other Colombians. Families and population groups in forced violent displacement and migration situation. A circumstance that requires to be heard and recognised, through their own voice. Employing words and images, we worked together to rebuild the histories of a house extending in time, inquiring memory and opening paths to the imagination (Moreno, 2014, pp. 19-20).[30]

The socio-spatial relations described by Moreno are not exceptional to Colombia. In the current globalised world, territories, their natural environments, and the cultural and social process

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[30] In, Moreno, O. (2014). *Mi casa Mi cuerpo: Migración forzosa, memoria y creación colectiva.* Bogotá: Uniersidad Jorge Tadeo Lozano.

that have been forming in them have suffered radical transformations that, Harvey, Soja, Lefebvre, Young, Rodríguez, and Robledo have explained. Notwithstanding the prevailing conditions of massive urban conglomerates around the world, it is crucial to insist on the specific consequences and effects that globalisation has had in Latin American cities. Colombian scholar John Williams Montoya (2006) in the book *Cambio Urbano y Evolución Discursiva en el Análisis de la Ciudad Latinoamericana* [Urban change and Discursive Evolution in the Analysis of the Latin-American City] states that,

> the particularity of Latin American urbanisation and, in that sense, the urban processes experienced by European and North American cities and the impact of new technologies, a fashionable discourse to interpret multiple urban realities, does not express either qualitatively or quantitatively in the same way in these cities.
> Those particular conditions are also the outcome of homogeneities in the process of urbanisation inside the Third World. Such homogeneities are found in the colonial past and the peripheral present that continues to condition their development to the demands and evolution of the developed countries (Montoya, 2006, p. 79).[31]

Chilean scholar Horacio Torrent has also proposed the idea of a particularity regarding Latin American cities (Torrent, 2005, as cited in Mattos *et al.,* 2005, p. 173). Adding to Matto's argumentation, he notes several areas of change in the Latin American metropolis. Worth mentioning are, the visual change of the urban landscape; the change in the urban structure due to the new metropolitan organisation; the changes in the operation and organisation of the cities; and the increasing offer of real-estate capital. Such changes would be aided by the rapid economic transformation processes in the region, whose most visible spatial consequence is urban growth.

Once again, the reflections elaborated by David Harvey on urban processes can help explain from a global perspective the situation described. Harvey argues that if society, in general, is marked by the conflict around the adequate definition of the mode of production in line with its

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[31] In, Montoya, J. W. (2006). *Cambio ubano y evolución discursive en el análisis de la ciudad latinoamericana: de la dependencia a la globalización.* Bogotá: Universidad Nacional.

historical circumstances, an ideal mode of production would thus not exist. Hence, urbanism ought to be considered a social formation, which is explained in the way it spatially divides labour and hierarchically orders all the activities relative to the dominating mode of production: that of advanced capitalism (Harvey, 1973, 1982).

This indicates that there is a direct relationship between the city as a constructed structure and the dominant mode of production. In other words, even though enormous urban conglomerates with the same or similar services seen in the developed world have been built in Latin America, these do not have their extent of reach, power, or resources. They could instead be understood as scaled models, a consequence of the new capitalist order that, according to Peruvian sociologist Patricio Navia and American scholar Marc Zimmerman (2004) in their book *Las Ciudades Latinoamericanas en el Nuevo (Des)orden Mundial* [Latin-American Cities in the New World (Dis)order] could function as creators of 'instability, ungovernability, fragmentation, disorder and even opposition for its own survival and expansion (…) generating new spaces of opposition that could radicalise' (Navia & Zimmerman, 2004, p. 31).

In Colombian central cities, the changes brought about by the transformation of the urban and landscape image, the functioning and organisation of neighbourhood logics, and likewise, the economic activity within them is evident. Many of the localities and urban spaces in Bogotá have constructed an elaborate network of metropolitan services that represent the mentioned global economy. In many cases, such transformations have strengthened the communities traditionally settled by providing tools and strategies for their political action in the negotiations they have been sustaining for many years with the city's government. In many other cases, this has not happened. This dual outcome, I argue, suggests that global design spatialities represent the sustained advance of economic, political, social, and cultural dynamics over fragmented urban territories that are not

articulated operationally and effectively with each other. The impossibility of these *mosaics* achieving a functional articulation of their parts in a city such as Bogotá is in the current reality of its territorial ordering plans.[32] Simply put, the public sector's tools, which in theory, should be capable of resolving vulnerable communities' inclusion to the network of metropolitan services, do not function with the desired force, and at times, are not even possible to be deployed due to the established conditions by the state of advanced capitalism. Therefore, this impossibility will continue to fuel the dispute that diverse, marginal, and emergent social actors can put forward contesting the Bogotá described by the former Mayor above.

Collective action. Between resisting and institutional co-option

The contemporary city is a space created by an accumulation of all sorts of contradictions. Simultaneously, it can serve as the space where all these contradictions and their corresponding contestations emerge. The paradox consists in that it functions in unison as the centre for the organisation and disposition of the modes of hegemonic production. That is, the ones represented by urbanism, and, at the same time, it is the epicentre for uprisings against the established power and the logics of privilege, characterised by its unequal spatial distribution, as established by Harvey back in 1973. For whom, both the city and the notion of urbanism are 'systems of stabilisation of a specific mode of production' (Harvey, 1973, p. 219).

Supposing there is an agreement upon which every social group can build its own spatiality would suggest that a probable consequence would be the persistence of communitarian or collective spatial self-determinations. These types of *roadblocks* permanently resist and negotiate the

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[32] *Plan de Ordenamiento Territorial (POT)* [Territorial ordering plan] is a fundamental instrument defined by law 338 of 1997 by which the municipalities and districts of Colombia plan their territorial organisation.

intraurban borders between the different spatialities that clash, communicate or sympathise to develop micro-territorial prerogatives in the city's spaces. In the book *America Latina: Periferias Urbanas, Territorios en Resitencia* [Latin-America: Urban Peripheries, Territories in Resistance], Uruguayan political theorist Raúl Zibechi (2008) affirms that, on the one hand, there is an emergence of homogeneous territories 'centres of vertical and authoritarian power' (2008, p. 89) coming from big capital. On the other hand, there are diverse and complex territories of societies which can only prevail in coexistence with their context, 'centres of heterogeneous social relations, that in occasions become emancipatory territorialities' (Zibechi, 2008, p. 89). The scope of reach and meaning of Zibechi's 'emancipatory territorialities' have a close political horizon to Harvey's (2012) 'insurgent citizenships'. Both concepts entail urban micro-spaces or communitary spaces that are dispersed in the city.

To further define the approach of this inquiry, it is essential to highlight this idea of space, as this notion allows us to 'observe power relations from the analysis of different systems, objects and actions' (Mançano, 2011, p. 42). From another perspective, Stravos Starvides (2016), in the book, *Towards a City of Thresholds*, affirms that space functions as a type of 'education system' capable of configuring social identities that reproduce a socially regulated web of concrete social practices. He insists that such identities 'not only constitute a series of beliefs but are integrated to the social context and have influence in different lifestyles and practices, by which they also affect the material field' (2016, p. 21).

Urbanism organises social relations and corresponds in formal and spatial terms to a dominant mode of production. In the current state of capitalism, the State has placed efforts in the contraction of its apparatus, which has paved the way for free markets and global corporations to implement urbanistic models. This implies that the State's role, regulating the participation of

certain agents and instances, providing infrastructure and resources amongst others, and 'appropriating the urban production which includes social movements' (Harvey, 1973, p. 263), is paramount in the insertion of global designs for economic growth, city planning, or the privatisation of the urban commons.

Despite all this, there are still options for action and social mobilisations that resist the advance of capitalism. Navia and Zimmerman (2004), when referring to globalisation in Latin American cities, declare that 'globalisation, even though unequal, it is not a one-way street' (2004, p. 31). 'Unequal' would mean here that the stage of action utilised by social movements and subjects in the production of their own spatialities, through their necessities, causes, and under their own terms, is modest but real. Ultimately, this sort of provocation is what holds the seeds of the uprisings against the established order, the central powers, and the logics of privilege conventional in urban spatiality. On the other hand, it also holds the impossibility for collective action to establish autonomy with respect to the other social actors with whom they share their territory and common resources.

In the appropriation of urban territories, collective action has taken advantage of all sorts of ideas and imaginaries regarding ethnicity, age, gender identity, and the betterment of material life conditions. This can be observed in the case of the *paracaidistas* [skydivers] or the *sin techo* [roofless] in the peripheries of Mexico City and Lima, the *villa miseria* [misery town] in the greater Buenos Aires, and the *cinturones de miseria* [misery belts] in Bogotá.[33] In other cases, social organisations have established political agendas to confront other actors that obstruct the

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[33] See, Massidda, Adriana Laura; Elinbaum, Pablo La representación urbanística de los espacios informales. Las villas miseria de Buenos Aires (1947-1965) [1] Revista Bitácora Urbano Territorial, vol. 30, núm. 1, 2019 Universidad Nacional de Colombia, Colombia, CAMELO MAYORGA, ALBA STELLA, POSADA TORRES, MARTHA DEL SOCORRO, & ARRIETA SÁNCHEZ, ABELINO ANDRÉS. (2019). Identidad y construcción de comunidad en la población afrocolombiana de la localidad de suba, Bogotá. *Tabula Rasa*, (32), 271-288. https://doi.org/10.25058/20112742.n32.12, and Murillo Poveda, D. K. (2015). Paisaje hibrido, recualificación de espacios para lo colectivo en asentamientos de origen informal barrio Bosque Calderón Tejada Chapinero Bogotá. Retrieved from https://ciencia.lasalle.edu.co/arquitectura/216.

procurance of what they consider to be fair, which could be public or private, legal or illegal, and at times overcoming fear and violence as has occurred in different sectors in Colombian cities such as Cali, Bogotá and Medellín which have a shortage of dignified homes.

An example to illustrate how organisations established their political agenda for transformation could be the *Centro de Expresión Cultural – Fe y Alegría* (CEC) [Centre of Cultural Expression – Faith and Happiness] in the *Santa Librada* neighbourhood on the south side of the city, part of the Usme locality in Bogotá. CEC was a pastoral initiative led by the *Carmelitas de la Caridad Vedrunas* religious community. The community merged the principles of the theology of liberation and popular education, derived from the II Vatican Concilium and the influential Episcopalian Conferences in Latin America that took place in Medellín and Puebla in the 60s and 70s. The religious community arrived in the area in 1977, helped by the Jesuits of the *Fe y Alegría* Foundation, which was already present in the neighbourhoods since 1971. By the end of the 70s, the larger part of Usme, especially the *Santa Librada* neighbourhood, was immersed in an accelerated process of informal popular urbanisation.[34] By 1988, led by Sister Pilar Alonso, the *Carmelitas* configured the CEC, aiming to create a space for the education of children that were not part of the formal education system.[35] As the community centre was being built, the religious community, simultaneously, inaugurated a school, a communitarian library, and a medical centre. In other words, they raised buildings that eventually became landmarks in the sector.

The project began with four teams that promoted artistic and cultural work led by and for youths that concomitantly would support the children's educational process in the school. By 2004,

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[34] See, Cano Malaver, D. (2017). *El paisaje periurbano: transformaciones, complejidad, percepciones e imaginarios en la localidad de Usme.*
[35] Federación Internacional de Fe y Alegría. https://xdoc.mx/preview/fya-colombia-federacion-internacional-de-fe-y-alegria-5de02a843f8f4

there were over 140 teams,[36] this was possible due to the area's growth and funding obtained from the neighbourhood community, NGOs such as *Niños de los Andes* [Children of the Andes] and multilateral organisations such as the Interamerican Bank for Development (IBD). This process of urbanisation and later of regulation of the neighbourhood and the locality would slowly begin with the incorporation of what had been the *Usme* municipality to the then District Capital in the 50s.

The CEC became a reference for communitarian work focused on artistic formation in the locality. Its members, learners and tutors would have greater visibility in other city circuits, including the local government.[37] Jaime Barragán (2011), one of its oldest members, would say that 'betting on art brought forward the possibility of contemplating artistic activity as a life project, with the capacity to influence social transformations' (Barragán, 2011, s.p.).[38] A productive articulation was developed between the informal urbanisation process and the strengthening of social organisations articulated to art and culture.

Up to this point, the spatial approach this investigation proposes has been defined. Likewise, the place of urbanisms and its relationship with the reproduction of social identities and power relations, and the role of communitarian organised action, communitarian leaders, and external social actors that get involved in spatial justice processes that affect particular places in the city. In this sense, a reflection on collective action in Bogotá becomes necessary. Beyond reiterating that cities grow and that residents organise, the question remains: What compels people to operate tactically and flexibly to survive and act in a space they must share with others?

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[36] Idem.

[37] Victor Murrillo (2012) 'Proceso de reflexión-acción en fe y alegría Colombia, En busca de la nueva partitura' Bogotá: Corcas Editores: .file:///Users/camiloescobar/Downloads/FE_Y_ALEGRIA_FE_Y_ALEGRIA_FE_Y_ALE_GRI_A.pdf

[38] In, Barragan, J. (2011). 'El CEC y su influencia sobre mi hacer cómo artista. Teología de la liberación, Educación Popular, Vida en Comunidad' in *Catalogo MDE11. Encuentro internacional de arte contemporáneo de Medellín.* Medellín: Museo de Antioquia.

From this question, others emerge. What type of ideas and imaginaries of the city encourages the tactic operation of organised urban residents? What sort of controls have metropolitan governments deployed for not conceding governance over their jurisdictions? What type of influence instigates permanent change in the shape of the city? Are other social actors different from the communities and the government representatives involved in urban spatial production? Who are they?

In the book, *Horizontes comunitario-populares. Producción de lo Común más allá de las Políticas Estado-Céntricas* [Communitarian Popular Horizons. Production of the Common beyond State-Centralised Policy], Mexican Professor Raquel Gutiérrez Aguilar (2017) has observed how in different countries in Latin America, there has been a resurgence of the 'collective capacity to intervene in public matters, through chaotic and energetic social demonstrations that challenged and overflowed the institutional apparatus of the procedural neoliberal democracy' (Gutiérrez Aguilar, 2017, p. 19). Perhaps, due to the heterogeneity in their composition, diverse identities, resistance to establishing hierarchies, and impermanent subscription to ideological postures that contemporary collective action contains, she recognises a disorganisation in the current social mobilisations, putting aside the relative stability of the 'classical social movements' (Gutiérrez Aguilar, 2017, p. 19). This capacity for intervening in public matters recognised by Gutiérrez Aguilar in the mobilisations and struggles on local, regional and national scales translates into their capacity for challenging, through non-violent strategies, State political decisions that negatively affect the collective life of people. The cases of CEC and *Mi Casa Mi Cuerpo* mentioned above could serve as examples of this.

On the other hand, collective action has been read by the governmental institutionality in favourable terms as consensus, that is, not as an emancipatory collective action with the capacity

of a real confrontation with the powers of the State, private enterprises, or any other social actor capable of affecting collective life negatively. From this perspective, collective action would be a consequence of citizen agency to transform themselves but not the reality in which they are immersed. This can be deduced by what is discussed in the document *Acciones Colectivas e Intervenciones Estatales* [Collective Action and State Intervention] where academic, politician and current planning secretary of the Mayor of Bogotá Adriana Córdoba (2009) affirms that 'a compound of State actions can be interpreted as a public policy when a collective problem (or a necessity) is detected, and a systematic task is developed to solve it' (Córdoba, 2009, p. 214). Córdoba is referring to the implementation of programs framed within the *cultura ciudadana* [citizenship] policies of the Mockus administration of Bogotá. She supports her argument using an example that pretends to justify the reduction and reversion of the implications of collective action by signalling an action that would achieve a benefit for all, as is the need for people to pay taxes so that collective social investments can be made (Córdoba, 2009, pp. 226-227).

Despite Córdoba's discussions defending collective action as an organic instrument of a city's government, this investigation finds it pertinent to reorient this debate. From an opposite perspective, Stavrides (2016) affirms that in their operations, collective action encourages imagining ways in which to resist domination and the control of urban space, even by, at times, capturing resources that the State places at the reach of the population (Stavrides, 2016, p. 16). This could be said to be the basic emancipatory principle that collective action has held throughout the different cultural processes of the current century across cities like Bogotá and Medellín, developed by virtue of their actors and not the governments. Therefore, it is essential not to mistake cultural micro-interventions for the betterment of specific parts of the city with high marginality, violence, or insecurity indicators, promoted by governmental instances; with collective actions

controlled by the citizens, despite them also intervening in micro-spaces of the city, deploying resources, and establishing goals distant from governments.

Urban Activisms in Bogotá

The social recognition of the transformative potential that cultural actions can produce could be said to be the heart of the first administration of Antanas Mockus as Mayor of Bogotá from 1995 to 1997. Concomitantly, this would be the engine that brought forth successive changes over the following four administrations. The strategies deployed by his administration were geared towards establishing what could be understood as a collective normativity of cultural nature. Examples of these strategies are successful policies such as the voluntary payment of an additional 10% of city taxes; the wilful disarmament that would decrease the homicidal rate of the city by over 50%, from 4.452 homicides in 1993 to less than 2000 in 2001; the self-regulation of alcohol consumption, which in six years dropped the deaths in accidents related to driving under the influence by half; and the voluntary water consumption reduction part of the saving water program.

Mockus has recognised John Elster's strong influence on the policies developed in his administration. Particularly his theory of rational choice and the ideas around local justice and transitional or post-conflict justice, which in 2016 obtained a particular relevance on behalf of the peace accords reached with the insurgent Marxist guerrilla, Farc-Ep. Mockus recognises in 'the regulatory strength of culture' a great capacity to pressure citizens with the compliance of social norms, and the regulation and self-regulation of the behaviours, to promote the development of collective action (Mockus, 2006, pp. 41-58).

Together with Colombian researcher Freddy Cante, Mockus defended the functioning of his administration, in which a series of cultural policies aimed to configure a type of 'institutionalised civil resistance' (Mockus & Cante, 2006) were implemented. Their defence emphasised the socio-political context. At the time, armed actors had made substantial gains in Colombian cities, and urban residents were living under the threat of different armed organisations: massive kidnappings in city limits, attacks on the electrical infrastructure of the country, and the bombing of the water pumping system of Bogotá, are only a few examples of the situation. In this context, Mockus and Cante elaborate a rationale of the general attributes that a civil resistance movement in a country with such characteristics ought to have in a setting where:

> [a] constitutional democracy still does not exist in Colombia (this understood as the monopoly of justice by a legitimate State controlled constitutionally by the citizens). This implies that the norms (laws) are unstable and subject to negotiation, and justice has become a reputational product (supplied to the highest bidder). Despite the existence of a formal democracy (a written constitution), political power in many zones around the country is operated by a private protection agency or illegal armed groups that behave in many cases as mafias and offer coercive forms of justice (Mockus & Cante, 2006, p. 61).[39]

From this perspective, the former Mayor leads several civil resistance actions in defence of communal goods like water and electricity. This caused him to receive credible life threats that he converted into a strategic cultural symbol that allowed him to denounce, protest, and reason both socially and in mainstream media. When the threats to his life were made public, Mockus decided to permanently wear on top of his suit a bright white bulletproof vest, with the additional detail of a cut-out heart shape on the left side of his vest, right on top of his own heart.[40] Simultaneously, he established collective cultural norms that encouraged citizens to change and self-regulate.[41]

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[39] In, Cante F. and Mockus, A. (2006). 'Hacia una acción colectiva de resistencia civil' *Accion colectiva, racionalidad y compromisos previos.* Bogotá: Universidad Nacional de Colombia.
[40] Antanas, Mockus. 2015. 'El arte de cambiar una ciudad' The New York times. https://www.nytimes.com/es/2015/08/11/espanol/opinion/el-arte-de-cambiar-una-ciudad.html
[41] This was achieved through social programs focusing on specific issues. To the above examples, others such as implementing pedestrian crossings and teaching drivers to use seatbelts through pedagogical actions with mimes; painting black stars in the

When comparing the collective actions articulated to artistic practices in community that this investigation is interested in, there is a sort of opposition to the restricted view of collective action as explained by Mockus and Cante. This can be identified when considering that the listed examples above were designed and promoted by a local public administration that functions and operates in vertical and asymmetric ways regarding the people that they govern. Such policies would correspond instead to the imposition of public policy generated through governmental action in order to solve particular problems, seeking to ensure, above all, the governability of the city. However, for this inquiry, the characterisation of the general socio-political context of the country, and in this case Bogotá, is valuable. Given that, the enormous challenges faced in providing security for the citizens, the incapacity of the State to control and have a presence in all of the national territory, and the constant pursuit to ensure the continuity of basic communal goods, were confronted with specific resistance to the implementation of public policies coded as culture.

In the book *Identidad y Política de la Acción Colectiva* [Identity and Politics of Collective Action] (2007), Alfonso Torres establishes a genealogy of the emergence and transformation of social movements in Bogotá. He identifies and historically places the conceptualisations utilised over the last 40 years by social research on collective action in Colombia. For example, he places dependant urbanisation, urban social movements and peripheral capitalism in the 70s and 80s (Torres, 2007, p. 29). He highlights that the attention in the 90s was on urban cultural dynamics, collective identities, popular association processes, and urban settler participation in democratisation processes that were denominated in new social movements (Torres, 2007, p. 46). Torres insists that the process described had differentiated versions from the ones in other major Latin American

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streets where a deadly car accident had happened; restricting alcohol consumption to 1:00 am, and giving residents *thumbs up and thumbs down pallets* to use as a resource instead of violence could be added.

cities; and describes the singularities of the urbanisation dynamics tied to Colombia's urban struggles in the second half of the 20th century, that include, the persistence and escalating nature of political violence, the paradoxical stability of democratic institutions, or, as Mockus would call it, formal democracy, the proliferation of popular and social independent organisations outside of workers unions or political parties, and the significant political transformation caused by the 1991 Political Constitution (Torres, 2007, pp. 9-14). His conclusions specify these particularities as sustained urban developments that primordiality affected four cities in the country: Cali, Barranquilla, Medellín, and Bogotá.

There is an observable pattern in the successive processes of urbanisation developed from the 50s that Torres identifies (2007, p. 20). It begins with the abrupt arrival of violently displaced campesino families to the cities. Following this phenomenon, occasionally, families found limited temporary local governmental support that supplied transitory housing for some. Others have had to source their own accommodation, which usually means dwelling in deteriorated occupancies in the peripheries distant from urban services like transport. Subsequently, there is a convergence with other settlers under the same conditions for the procurement of land to build their homes. Afterwards, the process in which living spaces are constructed begins, and with this, the establishment of all possible strategies to equip the houses with the necessary essential services. Throughout this journey, ephemeral social organisation processes are elaborated when confronting authorities or the owners of the occupied land. Finally, albeit not in every case, once the land is legalised, that is, when the legitimisation of the settlement as a neighbourhood by the local government has been achieved, a formalisation of the collective organisation follows, in which the *Juntas de Acción Comunal* (JAC) [Communal Action Boards] are constituted. JACs are the entities

responsible for facilitating and making viable the construction of places of encounter and cultural representation, and at the same time, grammar schools, churches, and parishes (Torres, 2007).

However, according to Torres (2007), Bogotá seems to have an added phenomenon in the process of informal development that has not been so prevalent in other Colombian or Latin American cities. Land procurement has been primarily organised by what has been known as *urbanizadores pirata* [pirate developers] (Torres, 2007, p. 119). These function as a sort of intermediaries between the new city settlers and the owners of the land, also between the original owners of the terrain and armed groups with a presence in the city, or between the owners of the land and politicians that, through clientelist strategies secure electoral support for their administrative roles (Torres, 2007).

In the book *La Ciudad en la Sombra. Barrios y Luchas Populares en Bogotá* (1993) [The City in the Shadow. Neighbourhoods and Popular Struggles in Bogotá] Torres insists that an important aspect allows differentiating the modes and objectives of collective action in the 60s, 70s, and 80s. He asserts that between 1958 and 1974, Bogotá went through the most significant number of illegal land occupations in recorded history. This phenomenon contributed to unleashing an urban protest supported by neighbourhood organisations that converged in the first great civic strike of 1977 (Torres, 1993, p. 14). The civic strike of 77 surpassed other demonstrations in the city in scale and intensity. It included pacific demonstrations, roadblocks, and resistance to evictions from occupied terrains (Torres, 1993, p. 163). Saying that the strike materialised the consolidation of urban social movements in the city that articulated with other urban social actors external from their neighbourhoods would not be an exaggeration. However, the situation from the end of the 20th century until now is different due to the political, social, and cultural changes mentioned above that converge in the 1991 Political Constitution. Today, this can be seen particularly considering

its implementation has yielded the de-escalation of the internal armed conflict through the peace accords with Las Farc-Ep. Conversely, there has been a re-accommodation of the illegal actors still in arms to these new conditions.

Considering the risk involved and the potentiality of their proposals, the most interesting collective actions take place in urban spaces with a high concentration of young people. This is the case of the biggest cities in the country, however, with greater mobilisation seen in Bogotá. Perhaps, the reason lies in the changes brought by the 1991 Constitution and the urban transformations led by the Antanas Mockus administration. Some of the differentiating elements in relation to past moments in the social and cultural history of Colombia would be the expansion of information and communication technologies, that apart from opening new forms of cultural consumption, have also opened new modes of social activity promising freedom of expression, and development of bonds of trust amongst young subjects. Oscar Aguilera sees this phenomenon as a 'new space for conflict' (Aguilera, 2011, p. 22), which is organic of collective actions, with the capacity for developing possibilities that challenge the reading of social codes and the assembly of collective political projects. An effect of the proliferation of the mentioned new elements has been the strengthening and radicalisation of identity processes. Favourably, this has led to the consolidation of civil society, and negatively, it has aggravated the social violence already present in the country (Aguilera, 2001, pp. 29-30).

Colombian scholars Humberto Cubides and Patricia Guerrero mention in their book *Política Como Relación. Prácticas de Agrupaciones Juveniles en la Ciudad de Bogotá* (2011) [Politics as Relation. Juvenile Group Practices in Bogotá], the capacity of such initiatives to establish innovative connections, fluid clusters, the defence of heterogeneity, affective bonds with specific urban spaces, pedagogical dimensions, and originality and effectiveness of their tactics (Cubides &

Guerrero, 2011, p. 74). Amidst these occupations, appropriations, and struggles for the urban spaces, different *identities* and *political subjects* that organise themselves to be present in the different spaces where the *urban* is generated have emerged. They arise, in the words of Jean Bazant, as quoted by Blanca Ramírez, from associations that take place in 'small portions of land in which day by day throughout the year they agglutinate to the city' (Ramírez, 2008, p. 39) These spaces, as mentioned before, are isolated from the effective control of the local administrations, a situation that would make clear the reasons for the unstoppable fragmentation of the urban territory. Melucci (1999) further discusses this:

> [t]oday, the usual 'movements' situation is a network of small groups immersed in the everyday demanding people's involvement in the experimentation and the practice of cultural innovation. These movements arise only with specific purposes, such as the great mobilisations for peace, abortion, nuclear policy, against poverty, etc. Although composed of small, separated groups, the immense network is a system of exchange (people and information circling throughout the network, some agencies, such as independent local radio stations, libraries, and magazines that provide some unity) (Melucci, 1999, p. 74).

In this order of ideas, the political subject in emergence would not only be represented by the homeless population of Bogotá, but according to what has been described thus far, it would be represented by the poor, the unemployed, the victims of violent forced displacement, the demobilised,[42] and also, vulnerable populations like the youth, LGBTIQ+ communities, women, and peripheral dwellers. This diversity of subjects could be categorised as the producers of the informal city of Bogotá, who, with their presence and actions in different urban spaces, have led to reframing the relationships between instances of governmental decision-making, the private sector, the communities, and other social actors. This, I argue, becomes a way to affirm the current conditions of public space in Bogotá; a public space that different to other regions outside of Latin America, operates as an arena for political dispute, in which there is a constant struggle in terms

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[42] former members of armed groups that now seek their future as they try to reintegrate society in the cities, after the end of the armed conflict

of meaning, emancipation, participation, and representation of its actors and producers, and in which increasingly, the struggle for its control is generated through the field of culture.

New Actors in the Colombian Urban Social Sphere

In Colombia, few demonstrations of artistic projects with interest in an associative and collective practice that aimed to impact the political context were found. Two exceptions are Taller 4 Rojo [Workshop 4 Red] created in 1971, a collective which developed graphic image work, mainly posters and images for magazines and leaflets. Their images addressed the political reality of the country. They responded to social struggles for civil rights and the international ideological disputes at the time.[43] The other *El Sindicato* [The Union] formed in 1976. An artistic collective whose interests were based not on the revindication and struggle for social demands or mobilising political agendas but rather on promoting dialogue across the reframing of the relationship that the observer could have to the artistic institution and art in terms of spaces for exhibition and circulation of artistic experience.[44]

No evidence indicates a robust production of artistic projects concerned with their context and even fewer artistic practices in community produced in Colombia in the 1970s and 1980s. This suggests a critical difficulty in promoting, calling and gathering faced by artists, artistic collectives, curators, critics, and researchers to join efforts for experimenting with collaborative attitudes and collective processes.

This situation would transform completely from the 90s. There has been a fast shift in the meanings that the concept of *cultural* can have in Colombia, its academic representations, and its

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[43] https://www.artnexus.com/es/magazines/article-magazine-artnexus/5d6404d590cc21cf7c0a356d/86/taller-4-rojo

[44] www.arteinformado.com, n.d.

acknowledgement as an essential object of study by which other disciplinary fields have established. Over the last 30 years, being more visible in Bogotá and Medellín, these changes in the cultural practices and their meanings have promoted the development of a more ample institutionality in the cities, and likewise, a more robust academic debate, some of which has been discussed. In the same way, within the spaces of everyday living, different and diverse groups and social movements have found a place to mobilise their political agendas and appropriate their representational identity through culture.

Under this premise, specifying a concept of culture and amplifying the implications of its definition would mean addressing the specific characteristics of the relationships created between social groups and individuals concerning institutions, material conditions and historical representations. As mentioned before, the relationships between the State and culture in Colombia have multiplied, especially when a discourse pretending to deploy culture as a mechanism for the attainment of peace was established in the Political Constitution of 1991. One of the visible institutional and public policy effects of this discourse was the creation of the Ministry of Culture and the *Sistema Nacional de Cultura* (SNC) [National System of Culture] in 1997. Organisms that articulate a web of instances, procedures, and chains of command implemented, aiming to strengthen of the cultural field, the existing institutional framework, and the generation of new social organisations with the capacity to develop and organise cultural policies.

The SNC is set in place in order to break the persistent logic in Colombia, by which the preferences and the cultural consumption of the nation would fall into the hands of the governing president. Usually, the political class was represented by a person from the centre of the country. By this, I mean one of the major cities, such as Bogotá, Medellín or Barranquilla. Cultural programs and projects funded with public money often had little or no impact representing no

benefit for most of the population. The same was true when considering participation systems. Colombia was such a centralised country that all decision-making would come from the capital. In other words, the Political Constitution of 1991 reconstructed the duty of the State regarding the promotion, relationships fostered, articulations developed, and deployment in all territories of the country related to culture, which, as a result, provided spaces for participation of the organised civil society around culture.

A visible result of this is the document *Politicas Culturales y Distritales 2004-2016* (2005) [Cultural and District Policies 2004-2016] published by the Bogotá Mayors' Office. The document was developed to provide robust social-cultural well-being while encouraging the redistribution of public resources amongst the whole population. The document was the first of its kind in the country. It stated that,

> In the last decade, culture has played a predominant role in the social and political transformation of the city through the creation and strengthening of associative links, civic participation, development of institutional trust, solidarity, the free exercise of citizenship rights and responsibilities, and the dialogue between citizens and the State. This perception of culture as a structuring axle of social life is expressed in the achievements made regarding the increase in compliance to basic coexistence normativity, the betterment of security, and the pride that many people feel today for their city (Alcaldía Mayor de Bogotá, 2005, p. 23).

Bogotá and Medellín are the two cities in Colombia that have established, with greater strength, public political policies for art and culture that go beyond entertainment and the enjoyment of artistic and folkloric events. Governments of both cities have managed to translate various necessities into their governance. This has proliferated the number and type of cultural agents that articulate or not with social movements. These agents and organisations have established contact and communication channels with public servants and researchers in public and private academic institutions. Expectedly, these lines of contact have raised conflicts as the number of social spheres that demand cultural policies as a platform for the visibilisation and

legitimation of their struggle for rights increase. Nevertheless, even though the meanings, the scope of reach, and use of the term, the tool, and the place of *culture* have multiplied, which causes its meaning to constantly explode, it can be affirmed that the residents of Bogotá have achieved to provide an ample and complex sense to citizen participation through the vehicle of culture.

One year after the publishing of the cultural policy document in Bogotá, Mexican Professor and researcher Eduardo Nivón describes in the text *La Política Cultural. Temas Problemas y Oportunidades* [Cultural Policy. Topics, Problems and Opportunities] (2006), culture as 'the totality of the learned experience by a community, its conventions and values whether economic and productive as legal and religious: moral, familiar, technological, scientific and aesthetic' (Nivón, 2006, p. 20). This definition would be in line with the 1950 UNESCO Conference that proclaimed culture as a human right, placing culture 'in the whole field of human activities' (Unesco, 1970, p. 15).[45] These two definitions, which are over fifty years apart, agree on the inexistence of a totalising and homogenous meaning of culture and the impossibility of a 'best' cultural policy.

Countries in Latin America have experienced differentiated socio-political processes. However, it would be feasible to accept that the region's nations also share similar problems: inequality, poverty, institutional weakness, corruption, economic dependence, and political subordination from central developed countries, amongst others. Observing this phenomenon, Nivón (2006) sees a tendency in the subcontinent over the last 30 years: an increased processes of democratisation and the search for alternative strategies for coexistence and social inclusion in the region (Nivón, 2006, p. 45). However, I argue that some of the strategies urban communities have used to achieve recognition have tended to stage and exaggerate their cultural features. This can be seen in certain practices that, for example, overemphasise identity in their methods. I argue that

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[45] https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000001194?posInSet=1&queryId=a4ebebf6-bc78-4ca2-8005-d9f3a5a8e266

such strategies have the danger of provoking a vacuum of meaning in the activities and practices used to promote their causes. Despite that, regarding the practice of identity staging, George Yúdice (2003) would say that, at times, there is a need to 'wear the feathers' (2003, p. 12) in order to be recognised by the cultural institutionality.

Even though evidence seems to agree with Yúdice, the consequences and problems that have surged from identarian exaggeration are visible in cases of cultural tourism projects in Bogotá and Medellín. An example of this is the initiative *Graffiti Tour*,[46] developed by a Canadian and Australian partnership and promoted online as part of the international tourism industry in Bogotá. It can be inferred from its name that the tours are developed, written, and delivered in English. They also include recommendations for cafes, restaurants, nightclubs, and bars. However, there is no certainty as to whether any portion of the income gathered by the tour guide, which takes their clients through the streets of the centre of Bogotá in the search for murals, benefits in any way the artists and collectives that created them, or even the communities that live around them.

In Medellín, a similar project called *The Original Medellín Graffiti Tour* is carried out in the Comuna 13[47] and organised by the collective Casa Kolacho.[48] The tour is synchronised with the spirit of the city that the regional establishment has helped construct: the most dangerous city in the world that transformed itself through art, culture, and the drive of its people. This initiative, however, seems to be different from the one in Bogotá. According to information on their website and the tour guide's explanation, all profits are reinvested in the artistic education of the children

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[46] http://bogotagraffiti.com/
[47] 'Comuna 13' was one of the most violent areas in the city; it began its construction at the end of the 70s decade, absorbing forced displaced and marginalised population. During the 90s-decade urban militias of Las Farc-EP and the ELN sought to control the *urban invasion territory* and the drug trafficking networks established in the prior decade. By the 2000s, Paramilitary groups enter this conflict in the Comuna 13. Battles among the groups already mentioned, drug traffickers and the National Army, in which the population always resulted being the victims, happened daily. There were two heavy military operations in 2002 and 2007, where over 1500 soldiers were deployed, and 57 people were killed. After 2010 the security situation had improved, and a critical institutional effort was made to promote social integration, reconciliation, and social back-building through cultural appropriations.
[48] https://www.toucanspanish.com/es/medellin-tours/medellin-graffiti-tour/

in the neighbourhood. It can be assumed that the main concern regarding the cultural dimension of these projects is directed to the recognition achieved and the type of representation it implies for its participants.

The study and the problematization of cultural practices and policies should be developed through the combined lens of the role of the State and the everyday life of the citizens. On the contrary, focusing only on the role of the State would mean that day-to-day practices would not be considered. In the same manner, studying artistic practices without considering other forms of significant cultural practices, such as cultural memory or heritage protection initiatives, would sidestep different novel approaches that are vital to the communities that put them into practice. Therefore, beyond considering the UNESCO guidelines as an intromission in the functionality of States, it can be seen as a powerful instrument for promoting the democratisation of culture.

The consequences of this resizing of art and culture in Colombia can be seen in the vast increase in its cultural production.[49] This overflow in the field of art has promoted strategies and tactics developed by artists and collectives that have articulated with urban spaces. These have transformed epistemologically what was known as art, its paradigms, discourses, and extent of reach. However, social inequality, poverty, and spatial marginalisation have soared in Colombian urban conglomerates. This would suggest that intercultural dialogue is still something yet to be seen as urgent for its governments. To counterweight what could be referred to as a global tendency, in 2008, Spanish artist, professor, and cultural critic Marcelo Expósito proposed to,

> stop considering artistic and cultural activity as an exception in the range of production and social relationships in order to be able to think the forms of action from which the field of cultural production ventures for a critical reorganisation of labour and the production of everyday goods (Expósito, 2008, p. 21).

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[49] A list showing the exponential increase in open calls and institutional initiatives that promote and disseminate cultural policy in the country can be seen in: https://www.culturarecreacionydeporte.gov.co/convocatorias/historicos

Despite the tendency of homogenisation and trivialisation of social groups and their cultural and artistic practices shown by cultural policies that are promoted by governmental institutions, it should not be taken for granted that culture does not play an essential role in the interaction between identities in conflict and the cultural values disputed. Nor that the State, at least in the Colombian scenario, play a relevant role in the visibilisation of cultural processes that take place at the margins of the city. It is true, as Colombian Professor and Musician Ana María Ochoa states in *Entre los Deseos y los Derechos: Un Ensayo Crítico sobre Políticas Culturales* [Between Desires and Rights: A Critical Essay on Cultural Policy] (2003), that 'culture on its own does not solve the whole social reconstruction framework' (Ochoa, 2003, p. 12). On the other hand, the same can be true about what Yúdice says in the introduction to Ochoa's book (2003), insisting that culture 'replaces politics when the latter lacks efficacy and applicability' (2003, p. 13). Thus, I argue that it is between the tensions and complexities of the possible symbiotic articulations or not amongst the different actors in the entirety of the public social sphere and the institutionality, that cultural policy, its scopes of reach, scale, and totality in direct proportion to the diversity and meanings of all the cultural activity, can strengthen and foster the emergence of socio-political processes.

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From artistic practices to artistic practices in community: Twenty years of contemporary artistic practices in the city [1991-2011]

In the same way that the different forms of organising, thinking and building the city overlap across scopes, such as urban planning, or how the constant social, political and economic changes from the second half of the 20ᵗʰ century have shifted the understanding of public space, artistic practices in the city, have also transformed —in many parts of the world—, especially since the 60s. There has been a transit from monumental and commemorative sculptures, created in traditional artistic materials such as marble, bronze, or limestone raised in places especially constructed for their emplacement, without being part of the architecture or having a particular use, to inconspicuous artistic practices that arise in the spaces of the city. These practices emerge in smaller places, at times even marginal, side by side with communities and artistic collectives. In many cases, there is not a defined object, and their emplacement in the neighbourhoods, streets, communal centres, and political manifestations contrary to its monumental predecessors is ephemeral.

The shift seen in the strategies artists and collectives have deployed articulating to the spaces in the city has also transformed epistemologically what was known as art. Today, it is far more typical to access texts mentioning collaborative work, the everyday, social and communitary engagement, the right to the city, or political action when referring to the ample category of public art than material gestures, beauty, mastery, or genius as it was in the past. Consequently, the institutionality of art, that is, museums, galleries, curators, cultural promoters, formative organizations such as universities and their professors, researchers, and the governmental instances

in charge of stimulation, circulation and promotion of these types of practices, have revised their narratives, categories of analysis, conceptual frameworks, artistic contents, and cultural policies that protect and guarantee the dissemination of the new practices in mention. As a result, the discourses —for and against— related to the right to the city, citizenship and urban renovation present in the two main cities in Colombia have opened numerous lines of work and have problematised the aspects concerning this type of public art.

It is possible to find an abundant amount of literature from as early as the 60s coming from North American and European authors and the 80s and 90s from Latin American ones that have discussed a fatigue in the meaning of many practices, objects and discourses that repeatedly associate to the spaces of the city and art, that in general lead to reductive meanings of the idea of public art (Szmulewicz, 2012, pp. 15-61). The main concern of the most critical stances pertinent to this investigation is whether the *public art category* can contain and denote socially what is implied by the public dimension of the urban spaces produced in Latin American societies in the name of art. This category is stretched to its maximum expression when from expert discourses, public space is associated with notions such as communitarianism, direct action, spatial intervention, democratic culture, production of space, everyday living, social knowledges, popular cultures, participation, and above all, the right to the city (Stimson & Sholette, 2007, pp. 1-17).

This situation partially explains the displeasure coming from part of the cultural establishment regarding the fracture in the notions related to public art projects seen in the new genre denominated site-specific art, as it is uncritically incorporated into its discourses and institutions (Kwon, 2004, pp. 1-9). This fracture is expressed in the replacement of the wide and specific notion of public art for more complex terminology such as community engaged practices, commitment art or new public art, amongst others. These new terms have been used with greater

frequency to note certain artistic practices that, even though linked to public art, have undoubtedly, been established as common resources and crucial strategies in diverse processes of city building that are led by social actors different to the artists themselves (Blanco et al., 2001).

The projects mentioned in this thesis can be framed within the extended field of public art mentioned above. This is because they are practices that react creatively to the contradictions particular to the social, economic, historical and cultural processes derived from urban transformations. Also, because they are encouraged by diverse revindications and political interests, that in their processes of intervention and insertion have become concrete spaces of social life; and, additionally, because they can be understood as an expression of cultural governance, and in this way, are spatial productions that temporarily transform the accustomed power relations amongst social urban actors.

In order to understand the scope of reach and connections made with the urban spaces in which contemporary artistic practices emerge, it is crucial to address the concrete socio-spatial processes that are produced by the different artistic practices within the city spaces. These connections are not only produced because of their location inside a city or because city dwellers participate in them but, likewise, are established due to the capacity for cultural transmission that certain ways of doing or artistic repertoires achieve when mediating between art expert knowledge and social knowledges that make part of communities. In the struggles for space, these repertoires imply political resistance and confrontation against other social actors, which include the State, which paradoxically provides the political framework for the actions and actors through the establishment of cultural policies for both the artists and the communities (Claramonte, 2001, pp. 360-365).

Similarly, communities, social organizations, activists, and city residents that integrate such ways of doing articulated to artistic repertoires, into their socio-political processes, have irrupted in their self-representation, their forms of organization, and strategies for negotiation against the power structures in the territories in which they live, defend and 'manufacture' as explained by De Certeau (Blanco, 2001, p. 396). Apart from the local and national governmental representatives, the power structures are also configured by clientelist politicians, corrupt public servants, private sector representatives, illegal armed organisations, and organised crime groups.

In Colombia, the emergence of artistic practices connected to urban phenomena is observable from the last decade of the 20th century. The period immediately following that, from 2000 to 2011, could be characterised due to its lack of limits, the unconcern for formal expression, and the substance of its processes and most significant results, as a formless territory (Zalamea, 2014, para. 1). It is possible to accept that in terms of cultural rights, and especially in the main cities, the democratic process in Colombia has strengthened. This political ideal that strives for the deepening of the democratic process seeks for such amplification to be also reflected in the urban spaces of the country. In other words, pursuing that which many theorists have stated before: that democracy and public space are directly related in both scale and intensity.

Struggle for meaning, resources and circuits

Within the possible realm of articulations between art and contemporary artistic practices that assemble in urban contexts, over the last two decades, there is a case that has been growing mainly in the central Colombian cities (Bogotá, Medellín, Cali, and Barranquilla) with visible strength. It has amassed important resources and funds from private and public sectors and a substantial diffusion in traditional media and social networks that have promoted a social

appropriation of it and secured its circulation and propagation. Due to its flexibility and capacity for response and marking of urban spaces, it has emerged in ways that apprehend activist initiatives and social criticism discourses. At the same time, there is a growing interest coming from private corporations and State instances to capture it. Moreover, it has fostered new artists and art collectives that have yielded a vast repertoire of implementation and generation of strategies for articulation in local, national, and international networks. This practice can serve as an example to examine the struggles for meaning, resources, agents, and circuits of an artistic practice in contrast with the traditional idea of art.

Beyond technical valorisations and formal analysis of image characteristics and the visual impact of such interventions, the reflection proposed is concerned, instead, with valorisations around the political dimension of the urban interventions, how these contribute to the construction of public spaces and the role they have in processes of political transformation. The practices referred to are urban murals and all the practices derived from graffiti art. Such practices allow for the examination of ambivalent notions and strategies such as collaboration, participation, assembly, governance, collective work, localities, politics, and the public dimension, amongst other components that make part of this investigation.

The political assumptions of urban art in the central Colombian cities, with all the counterculture and opposition imaginaries they promote, have simultaneously reproduced the most conservative hegemonic representations of art, the city, and public space. There is, however, a paradoxical condition to this phenomenon concerning the artistic sphere that is important to mention. The paradox lies in the fact that the theory of artistic creation had previously incorporated these representations. Nevertheless, graffiti production in the contemporary moment has articulated in other ways.

Most visibly, it has been object to new social applications. It is plausible to believe that such representations have been incorporated through their process of social appropriation into the *city model* being implemented in Colombia, which, amongst others, constitutes imaginaries of frivolous and festive urban patrimonies. These imaginaries are deprived of any critical quality and, on the contrary, are reproducing global architectural and leisure stereotypes styles. This cultural appeal has become *city branding*, a process that oscillates between cultural industries and orange economies under the assumption that to establish a city brand, culture effectively contributes to the consolidation of cities as mechanisms for the international projection of the entire country. The internationalisation mentioned often implies a bureaucratic organisation of different demographic and entrepreneurship sectors.[50] Capitalising on common notions such as think local that unifies self-representations. This sort of practice can be seen in international events in which artists and cultural promoters participate not only representing their country but their city too, and, thus, entering a circuit precisely because of their apparent local roots. The merger of these strategies is reflected in how cities have created support webs of so-called brotherhood, promoting and exchanging cultural initiatives. A Colombian example of this would be the Medellín-Barcelona convergence, in what has been called the *Barcelona Model* for urban development[51] that the Colombian city has implemented over the last three administrations with the aid and support of Catalonian experts in the matter.

El Dorado Avenue in Bogotá is an artery avenue that partitions the city in half from north to south. It starts at *El Dorado* International Airport. It goes straight into the centre of the city where

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[50] See, https://ajuntament.barcelona.cat/relacionsinternacionalsicooperacio/es/cooperacion-barcelona-ciudadesde-colombia
[51] See, Duque Franco, I. (2020). Medellín-Barcelona: redefiniendo las formas de cooperación y la circulación de políticas urbanas (1995-2017). *Iberoamericana XX*, *74*, 101–124. Retrieved from file:///Users/camiloescobar/Downloads/CooperacinMedelln-Barcelona.pdf., https://www.aecid.org.co/?idcategoria=3324, https://www.kreanta.org/catedra-medellin-barcelona-un-proyecto-de-cooperacion-ciudad-ciudad/

the institutional heart of the country, that is, where the local and national governmental institutions are located. Between 2012 and 2015, Bogotá's administration promoted a series of interventions in many walls parallel to *El Dorado* Avenue. The interventions consisted of urban murals and graffiti projects. As expected, the walls chosen for the intervention were not pristine walls of the city. On the contrary, they had previously been intervened with graffiti, as the avenue is host to a large number of protests and demonstrations since it serves as a strategic corridor that is used by social manifestations not only to disrupt traffic from the west of the city toward the centre, but the avenue itself leads to the government offices representative of the national institutional powers.

In the publication *Arte en Espacio Público. Intervenciones en Bogotá 2012-2015* [Art in public Space. Interventions in Bogotá 2012-2015] published by the Bogotá Secretary of Culture in 2015, we can read:

> In this way, more than public art, we seek to promote the art of the public. The difference would settle in the pursuit of fostering mechanisms that relate artistic creation in the public space with the preeminent social construction. Without a doubt, art ruptures, it is its essence, and for this reason, cultural policy is called upon to manage these aporias. The competitions motivated the contestants to transcend traditional conceptions of commemorative sculpture to explore an expanded notion of the creation and insertion of public art, in which the proposals were placed in dialogue with the historical, cultural, and social contexts. Undoubtedly, Bogotá is already positioned as an exciting city in the public art movement. The enormous existing activity claims a universe of research actions, independent participations, normativity upgrading, investments, and intersectional understandings. It is an artery vein that opens if public space is sought as the place where liberties are manifested and values are written, where the conceptions of the many emerge. (2015: p. 13).

The fragment reveals the cultural policy underlining the institutional interventions that impacted this avenue and, in general, the policies promoted by the city's administrations from the nineties regarding the cultural and artistic field. As mentioned above, the amplification of the cultural field began with the creation of a local system of art, culture and patrimony, through which a guarantee, establishment, and protection of different spaces of production, legitimation and

circulation of the practices being developed by cultural actors and artists in Bogotá were sought. This became a new channel of dialogue with the city's government, from which policies, programs and projects that impacted their production were launched.

Some of the consequences of these policies have been the productive articulation between artistic practices to the contemporaneity of their spatial, political and economic contexts. Furthermore, the multiplicity of spaces for artistic creation, which as a by-product, has amplified the field, and finally, a wave of plastic and visual arts students and teachers that mobilised interests towards the city, which affirmed a renovated relationship to it. This new relationship of emerging artists with the city went beyond assuming the city as an artistic theme. On the contrary, this relationship became, in a word, political. Establishing the city as the place and material of their artistic practices, this new wave that overtook the city encouraged artists and cultural promoters to identify, seek, and explore alternative cultural circuits, extending channels of communication for artistic exploration in non-traditional contexts as could be popular neighbourhoods and localities.

The scopes of many of these formations and creative artistic practices did not necessarily circumscribe to artistic knowledge and spaces. The impulse began to involve politically effective practices like collaborations, participation, self-organisation, self-governance, collective work, affirmations of the local, approaches to specific local communities in the neighbourhoods of Bogotá, and interdisciplinary projects. The term relational art had not been coined at that moment. Artists at the time were encouraged to integrate actively into the city's construction. All this happened in harmony with the 1991 Political Constitution and the pedagogical political project of the Mockus administration in Bogotá. This description, however, does not mean to cloud the numerous tensions and contradictions that stretch the interventions in the spaces of the city and the collaborations with non-artistic subjects.

At this time, an observable breaking point in artistic labour is recognisable. A new map of artistic practices was created beginning in Bogotá, amplifying the entire country's artistic field. The consequences of this can be seen today. An example of that could be the first public open call organised by the Mayor's Office and the *Instituto Distrital de Artes* [District Institute of the Arts] (IDARTES) for the realisation of urban murals on the walls of *El Dorado* Avenue between the years 2012 to 2015, a project that today continues to exist.[52]

On the surface, this program, part of the schemes funded by the city's government every year, would seem like a natural expansion of the dimension of circulation and social appropriation of artistic practices. However, looking further, when revising the motivations and conditions of the open call, it is possible to understand other aspects that play a role in graffiti practice.

The *Consejo Distrital del Graffiti* [District's Graffiti Council] is part of the District's Cultural System. Since 2015, it has been a space developed for citizen participation seeking to guarantee, coordinate, and regulate what Bogotá's Mayor's Office called 'responsible graffiti practice'.[53] It sprouts from a regrettable and complex situation. In August 2011, a police officer shot and murdered Diego Felipe Becerra as he painted a column under a bridge north of the city.[54] The 17-year-old was known as *Trípido* amongst urban artists. There were attempts to cover up the crime by the officer that fired, and other officials declared that the artist was a delinquent. After years of investigation and circumventing judicial obstacles, the situation cleared up in favour of the artist

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[52] See, https://bogota.gov.co/en/node/2807, https://www.idartes.gov.co/es/noticia/750-millones-para-intervenciones-de-arte-en-los-puentes-de-bogota, and https://sicon.scrd.gov.co/site_SCRD_pv/publicar.html?id=1004
[53] See, https://www.idartes.gov.co/es/transparencia/participa/comite-grafiti?field_documento_ano_value=2022, https://bogota.gov.co/servicios/guia-de-tramites-y-servicios/autorizacion-de-lugares-para-la-practica-responsable-del-grafiti, https://cartelurbano.com/colombia-grafiti/asi-se-organiza-la-practica-del-grafiti-en-bogota-desde-las-mesas-locales, and https://www.bogotadistritografiti.gov.co/bienvenida
[54] See, https://www.elespectador.com/actualidad/grafitear-el-riesgo-es-morir-article-293674/, https://www.elespectador.com/bogota/ese-no-es-delito-para-merecer-la-muerte-article-293703/, and https://www.infobae.com/america/colombia/2021/08/23/asi-fue-el-asesinato-del-grafitero-diego-felipe-becerra-diez-anos-de-un-falso-positivo-urbano/

and his family. The officer who shot the artist was sentenced to jail, and other accomplices still face trial.[55]

In 2012, the city's government created a worktable with social representatives that had pronounced their non-conformity with the crime and abuse of authority coming from the police. The table's significant achievement was the discussion of the 482 Accord of December 26, 2011.[56] The agreement would establish normativity for graffiti in the District Capital. In 2013 the Mayor of Bogotá signed decree 075, which promotes the responsible practice of graffiti in the city. This bureaucratic instrument regulated the previous agreement and established definitions of graffiti, public space, and patrimony.[57] The decree also created the route for a policy that would promote and design strategies around the graffiti practice in the city spaces. Its most visible effect was the public open call mentioned above.

This characterisation of the case in Bogotá can evidence that there is an institutional side concerned with a global homogeneity for spaces and ways of art. At the same time, it suggests advances in terms of cultural rights and citizenship in the city. That is, there are well-differentiated possibilities around the ideas of art, its meaning construction, the relativity of its circuits and resources, and the diversity of the social actors it can gather.

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[55] For a comprehensive historic line of the case concerning the assassination of Diego Felipe Becerra see, https://www.elespectador.com/judicial/existieron-irregularidades-en-la-justicia-penal-militar-en-proceso-del-grafitero-judicatura-article-313986/, https://www.elespectador.com/judicial/familia-de-grafitero-denuncia-maniobras-dilatorias-en-el-proceso-article-319752/, https://www.elespectador.com/judicial/patrullero-implicado-en-muerte-de-grafitero-fue-enviado-a-la-picota-article-325613/, https://www.elespectador.com/judicial/oficiales-de-policia-habrian-manipulado-escena-del-crimen-en-caso-grafitero-article-344192/, https://www.elespectador.com/judicial/subdirector-de-policia-estaria-vinculado-al-caso-grafitero-article-344702/, https://www.elespectador.com/judicial/por-manipular-escena-del-crimen-de-grafitero-a-interrogatorio-tres-uniformados-article-354443/, https://www.elespectador.com/judicial/coronel-estaria-involucrado-en-manipulacion-de-pruebas-en-caso-grafitero-article-358588/, and https://www.elespectador.com/bogota/caso-diego-becerra-sentencian-a-22-anos-de-prision-a-coronel-de-la-policia-por-alterar-escena-del-crimen/
[56] https://www.alcaldiabogota.gov.co/sisjur/normas/Norma1.jsp?i=45018
[57] https://www.bogotadistritografiti.gov.co/sites/default/files/2020-01/Decreto%20075%20de%202013.pdf, https://www.suin-juriscol.gov.co/viewDocument.asp?id=1016628

Even with this, there is a risk that public institutional strategies that lack a concerted cultural policy obstruct cultural differences, or in other words: obstruct everything else. By this, I mean the formal discontinuities of the artistic practice, the political ruptures, the unexpected appropriations of artistic practices by communities and social organisations, and the subversions to the public space regulations, amongst others. In the end, this blockage means that, all the fissures that facilitate the emergence of other political subjectivities remains concealed. Moreover, with them, the main objective of recuperating possibilities and meanings of historical narratives is obstructed in the urban spaces. Put differently, the dispersion of urban graffiti and mural practices through the epistemological amplification of art and the understandings regarding the concepts of urban, cultural, and citizenship have entered a more expansive social public space, that makes evident its ethical stands and sheds light on the implicit power relations in the places where the notions of the artistic and the public are resolved in our times. On the other hand, they unveil that excessive and enforced citizenship —contested by Manuel Delgado in the book *Espacio público como ideología* [Public space as ideology] (2014, pp. 62-66)— presumed collective value upon public space, and governmental strategies established for the control of urban territories, are three examples of the problematic articulations and contradictions between graffiti artists, the public, and the cultural institutionality.

From the previous examples, it can be seen the ambiguity of the conditions from which citizenship emerges in Colombian cities. On the one hand, there is a persistent effort coming from diverse clusters of citizens exercising their rights and simultaneously demanding that those rights need to be provided at an apparent distance from the institutional rhetoric. On the other, there is an evident institutional strengthening that promotes the city with art, culture, and patrimony as their

forefront selling points, which, in the context of a post-peace-agreement, considering what can be observed, will probably end up intensifying the logics of the global markets.

Art as social intermediation

A central part of this investigation is concerned with the dimension in terms of reach and assumptions given to artistic practices. According to American curator Rita González (2008), the concerns in the art world regarding identity, the political, direct action, and issues associated with gender and sexuality have opened a crucial institutional space over the last two decades. She calls this 'conceptual art in urban form' (González, 2008, p. 26). Although she does not clarify this term conceptually, she differentiates this form from other strategies that intervene in urban public spaces. Despite the differences she finds, in the end, both would employ their presence and circulation in museums, galleries, independent spaces, photographic, video, sound records, and documents.

González's affirmation seems to be related to what Dutch-American sociologist Saskia Sassen has denominated as 'global cities' (Sassen, 2001). In the current public urban space production conditions, I argue that the situation described by Sassen has been seen with greater frequency in Latin American cities. In them, urban growth, but more predominantly finance capital, has configured a sort of mosaic configured by fragments of modernity represented by museums and contemporary art galleries, metropolitan parks, shopping malls, highways, and sophisticated cultural centres that are juxtaposed, configuring what could be called disconcerting landscapes, to other urban fragments resulting from planning improvisations, economic precarity in different social ranges, historically sustained violence, and a widespread corruption expressed in

forms of clientelism and chiefdom. In any case, both types of fragmentations result from the advance of global capital.

Considering a different side of contemporary art that intervenes in the urban spaces outside of the conventional circuits of art, George Yúdice reviews the political interest that mediates this transformation responding to statements made within *American Canvas*, an initiative developed by the National Endowment of the Arts (NEA) in 1997 to foster a dialogue by reaching communities and meeting not only with leaders but with a plurality of representatives of all aspects of social life in the United States. His comments emphasise on the commodification of art and culture in the United States (Yúdice, 2002, p. 25),

> The arts not only restricted to the sanctioned cultural spheres, will spread literally throughout the whole civic structure, finding a place in the diversity of activities dedicated to the service of the community and the economic development —from youth programs and crime prevention—, to professional training and racial relations very far from the traditional aesthetic functions of art. This expanded role of culture can be seen, likewise, in the new and many partners that artistic institutions have accepted over the last years: school districts, parks and recreation administering bodies, convention centres, chambers of commerce, and an amplitude of social welfare organisations, that all serve to highlight the utilitarian aspects of the arts in contemporary society (Larson, 1997, pp. 127-128).

To this description, I would like to add the narratives —and how these are sustained, defended, and explained— of the different postures that artistic initiatives intervening in urban spaces developed by governmental administrations, national or international corporations, and activist or organised groups. That is, it is pertinent to consider not only the unexpected results, a common attribute of the arts, but also the discourses and representations of art and culture that artists, activists, art managers, politicians, sponsors, researchers, teachers, and communities, in general, put forward. It is also pertinent to consider, in the same way, the discourses and representations of art and culture coming from the cultural establishment, to which the actors of the field, at times, oppose and at other support. Perhaps, this could serve as the conditions of

possibility for the mentioned above 'conceptual art in urban shape' that, depending on the locus of enunciation of the said actor, can be denominated as urban, public, participative, committed, relational, collaborative, dialogic, collective, resistant, or street, amongst other locations. It is important to remember that this terminology implies, for the different agents of the cultural field, the definition of a positioning with respect to the institutionality of art and, at the same time, the degree of their commitment to social transformation in urban micro-spaces.

Regarding the specificities of Bogotá and Medellín, it can be observed that in recent years, from a public policy perspective, contemporary artistic practices have involved very defined dimensions of creation, circulation, research, formation, and appropriation that allow understanding the complexity of the current artistic production, and, as the *Instituto Distrital de Cultura y Turismo* of Bogotá has pointed out, the 'participation of different cultural agents and legitimisation instances, different to the artist' (Instituto Distrital de Cultura y Turismo, 2005). From a different perspective, it can also be affirmed that the discursive production derived from these dimensions has, time and time again, with greater strength, enabled the encounter of habitual social practices involved in the production of spaces that propose other relations between social power and the everyday. Offering as an alternative to the strategies frequent in the art institution —that is, the historical accumulation of knowledges, circuits, techniques, spaces, ways of doing, socialisations, reach, materialisations, and conceptualisations— the tactics and social knowledges that any subject or collective, in adversity, emergence, or inequality against institutional power, in this case, the urban context of Bogotá and Medellín, can use for their causes.

Simultaneously, it can be seen that other artistic practices have attached themselves in line with the political agenda of social, cultural, and activist organisations, aiming to represent through another language their objectives and revindications in other spaces external to the circuits of art

and with strategies different to the ones performed in social protests. Some even appropriate languages coming from social and political organisations to produce new cultural artefacts (*works of art*) that circulate exclusively in artistic circuits and never articulate themselves with the organisations they affirm to support. The point that I argue is that the articulations between artistic practices and collective action multiply in every case depending on the suppositions around art, culture, politics, and public space, from which the artists, the social organisations, the activists, the social, political, cultural, and artistic researchers, that develop discourses and claim different meanings on the role of art and politics, act, in every case.

The genealogy proposed on the historical relationship between art and politics, with a particular interest in the second half of the 20th century by the Chilean cultural theorist Nelly Richard (2009), is a great tool to expand the discussion. Her contributions are significant here because they stand as an alternative to the hegemonic conceptualisations coming from the centres of the art world. Academic sectors in such centres have attempted to understand artistic practices within their multicultural contexts. Nonetheless, placed in the socio-political framework of the last four decades, it would have little in common with Latin America. Richard distances herself from theoretical considerations that she understands as detached from the Latin American historical processes.

From the fields of theory and history of art, authors such as Hal Foster (2001), Lucy Lippard (2001), Nina Felshin (2001) and Suzane Lacy (2003) have been fundamental in the North American cultural turn postmodern discussion. Their concerns, however, seem somewhat distant from the questions proposed by Richard. On the contrary, Richard's theory is closer to authors such as Rosalyn Deutsche (1996), Miwon Kwon (2002), and especially Clair Bishop (2004) when addressing the 'complex multi-dimensionality' of cultural activisms within the advance of

capitalism. Likewise, with the metaphoric notion, 'a spectre that haunts it', as proposed by Sholette & Stimpson (2007, pp. 1-15) when referring to the reactive relationship between artistic collectivism and capitalist globalization.

Richard's reflections have been a breeding ground for a permanent reflection in the region regarding cultural and socio-political transformations. An important result from her work worth mentioning is the recognition of localised genealogies of the articulation between art and politics. Brazilian art researcher and curator Andre Mesquita has traced a trajectory and categories of artistic practices in several Brazilian cities that relate to the public in political ways. In the book *Insurgéncias poéticas. Arte Activista e Açao Colectiva* [Poetic Insurgencies. Activist Art and Collective Action] (2011), he establishes that it is possible to analyse artistic practices in the region with common observable categories. Mesquita proposes, however, an unusual angle: spatiality as a necessary condition central to artistic practices beyond their artistic or aesthetic value (2011, p. 16). According to Mesquita, the specificities and the cultural difference recognised in artistic practices manifesting in urban spaces are fundamental for the emergence and the signification of the phenomenon of the political (2011, p. 102). These practices would not be simple derivatives or specialised representations of the social order but essential to constructing that social order. This supposes a political stance that operates in a multiplicity of ways.

When revising the Colombian case, it is observable that artistic practices have articulated themselves to other types of resources and agents, setting forth specific strategies from their repertories deployed by citizens in order to develop challenges, resistances, or solidarities with the State, its modes of government, and with the cultural establishment, as presented above.

Returning to Richard, she identifies four stages that follow one another from the 60s until now in Chile. It is plausible to understand that, the geopolitical conditions common to Latin

American countries allow seeing the transformation in the articulations between the social, the artistic and the political beyond a single country's experience. However, it is important to reiterate that these stages do not imply an idea of progress and are not understood as temporary assumptions chained over time. On the contrary, they are seen here as independent lines of thought that, in general, can still be present in the discourses and practices of art today. The stages identified by Richard are the following: Commitment Art, Vanguard Art, Advance Art, and Situation and Act.[58]

Commitment Art would correspond to the ideologised context of the 60s overtaken by a revolutionary spirit. The committed artist would not only engage with their own labour precariousness but would also be involved with a social transformation endeavour, displayed throughout the representation of the historical subject: the people. The artist would then take the voice and place of the people, guided by the conviction that art can and should influence society. For this purpose, the artist is identified and also identifies as a cultural servant (Richard, 2009, para. 2).

This denomination supposes a subordination of the work of art to the political discourse. That is, the function, nature of being, and conditions for the emergence of the work of art are contingent on the ideological co-optation from the political organisation that instrumentalises it. This tendency would lose strength over the next decade, as nationalistic and populist discourses were contested by the emergence of the dependency theory and by hippie and anti-Yankee movements (Richard, 2009, para. 5). The presuppositions of the articulation of art-politics-society were questioned, as the supposed legitimacy of the artists speaking in the name of the people, was given to them not by an emancipatory social revolution, but instead, by the same status-quo

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[58] Richard, Nelly (2009). *'Lo político en el arte: política e instituciones'* Revista Hemisférica No. 62 Cultura + Derechos + Instituciones. Nueva York: The Hemispheric Institute of Performance and Politics.

cultural establishment which the artist claimed was fighting against and that at the same time, held power over the people.

Vanguard Art responds to the efforts made after May 1968. This stage is more in line with ideas of 'radical democracy' rather than a revolutionary transformation of the whole system (Hirsch, 2009; Richard, 2009): 'a multiple and differential articulation of particular struggles (class, interests, and groups) that no longer strive for a universal representation of the collective will, but the transversal connection of diverse sectorial revindications' (Richard, 2009, para. 8). This notion assumes that art —as was projected by the artistic vanguards in the first half of the 20th century— would be at the forefront of any social transformation project. Where art would precede and forecast social change, and its emergence would play a vital role as a tool in the confrontation between activists and the hegemonic discourses of power held by institutions. In this stage, the instrumentalisation of art would go no further than attempting a transformation through the use of images that correspond to the aesthetic trivialisation of politics and the everyday. This, functions as a type of *pamphletarian* gesture that neutralises articulations between art and life and become attractive design images that capture *popular* aesthetics.

Advanced Art corresponds to three aspirations that Richard mentions (Richard, 2009, para. 11), which are: 1) a total politicisation of art; 2) a formal radicalisation, that is, not only a radicalisation of the place where the work of art is produced, but also, of the materials and processes used in the production, and even its dematerialisation; and lastly, 3) critical experimentation (Richard, 2009, para. 11). The place of the three aspirations would correspond to the body: that is, the social body, the artist's body, and the city. This articulation between art and life, proposed in the project of the political left, placed its wager aside from transversal activisms related to non-political struggles, embracing instead singularly cultural ones that, as explained by German

researchers Marianne Braig and Anne Huffschmid (2009), presented different intensities in relation to citizenship. The scholars assure in the book *Los Poderes de lo Público. Debates, Espacios y Actores en América Latina* [Powers of the Public. Debates, Spaces and Actors in Latin America] (2009) that in Latin America, the average social conditions correspond to what they call a 'low-intensity citizenship' (2009, pp. 19-20). By this, they mean a social group or collective that is not entirely conscious of its rights and the governmental capacity for the execution of the democratic powers it has been given. They discuss that this 'low intensity' can transform momentarily to a 'high-intensity capacity' (2009, pp. 19-20), and one could imagine it could be done through artistic ways.

In this process, there is a struggle between artistic practices with the intention of transforming the material life conditions of communities and individuals and the capture of the same artistic elements for the annulment and further instrumentalization by the institutionality. Examples of gentrification or urban renovation processes in many Latin American cities that have instrumentalised artistic gestures can be seen in graffiti and even as public sculptures. Despite that, some artistic practices still intend to transform the everyday life of people and communities in the cities. It is remarkable that this intentionality still emerges under the right circumstances regardless of the artistic practice's tendency toward institutionalisation, professionalisation, and homogenisation. However, this new situation makes it increasingly difficult to revise the political in art, which, as Richard would comment, is not the same as speaking about 'art and politics', for the latter, corresponds to a stage within a specialised art tradition (Richard, 2009, para. 21-22). However, even though there are observable efforts for the denominated 'art and politics' to pass as being political, careful observation in order to separate the two is essential since this investigation is concerned with the former, which creates possibilities for social transformations. In contrast, the latter would instead constitute forms of spectacle.

The last category, *Situation and Act*, entails placing the 'living body' in the public space. According to Richard, it is the highest political action a citizen can aspire to (Richard, 2009, para. 23). In Latin America, the possibility of 'acting in situation' would correspond broadly to a *tactical junction*. A strategic hyper-localised operation, a radical contextualism, and a precise placement that responds to a non-globalised paradox. That is, a political and ethical condition that, despite being nourished by global economic, political, ideological, technological and cultural currents, attempts to act exclusively locally. Here, it could be where its radicalness lies.

Through these four lines of possible articulations developed by Richard between the social, the political, and the artistic; in other words, art as a mediation of the social, it could be established that the articulations of structures, practices, places, discourses and political agencies, —part of the contemporary cultural, artistic practices— more than affirming the correspondence between art and the everyday, they reiterate that art, as a field of cultural production, is the outcome of a heterogeneous collective construction in permanent dispute. The four lines also affirm that artistic practices, as John Downing would say, are 'radical means, that in different ways and, generally, in a small scale, express alternative visions to politics, priorities, and the hegemonic perspectives' (Downing, 2001, p. v).

A preliminary example in Medellín of articulations between artistic practices and a hyper-localised community: *'La piel de la memoria'* (1997 - 1999)

Towards the end of the 90s decade, a project called *La piel de la memoria* (1997 - 1999) was an artistic project that functioned as a social intervention that sought to develop processes concerning collective memory construction, mourning, and social reconstruction coordinated by Colombian anthropologist Pilar Riaño and American Artist Susanne Lazy. The project was not

framed within the traditional artistic knowledges or institutional spaces. At the time, relational art was not a term that had been created. However, the project embraced artistic intentions based on collaboration, participation, the affirmation of the local, while working with communities. It was developed with the community of the neighbourhood *Antioquia* in the city of Medellín, Colombia. A stigmatised zone usually related to crime, drug trafficking, and paramilitary violence. It is a space with a high record of violence where most of the young community members have been direct victims of the internal conflict.

The neighbourhood began its construction in the 1920s. In the 50s, during the political violence of the time, it received most of its population. In this decade, the neighbourhood is declared a *Zona de Tolerancia* [Tolerance Zone] (Jaramillo & Spitaletta: 2011, 91). In Colombia, tolerance zones refer to a lawful figure that city Mayors can implement and allow them to create special districts to limit *high-impact activities*[59] to be practised in specific commercial zones of the cities. It is a tool for the regulation of prostitution. In 1995 the Constitutional Court of Colombia, in sentence T-620,[60] declared prostitution legal and created a mechanism to regulate the practice under tolerance zones, which would limit sex work and related activities to commercial zones with no residential units. However, this, was not the case with the *Antioquia* neighbourhood in Medellín, which, as mentioned above, started as a residential borough and was then declared a tolerance zone 45 years before a legal regulation existed in the country. This particular situation provoked a complicated social impact.[61]

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[59] https://www.alcaldiabogota.gov.co/sisjur/listados/tematica2.jsp?subtema=20133
[60] https://www.alcaldiabogota.gov.co/sisjur/normas/Norma1.jsp?i=97946
[61] See: Riaño, Pilar; *"Por qué a pesar de tanta mierda este barrio es poder?" Historias locales a lal luz nacional*, Revista Colombiana de Antropología, Vol 36. enero-diciembre, 2000. And, Jaramillo Correa, Mary and Spitaletta Hoyos, Reinaldo, *The social conflict that an unplanned administrative decision can generate in a a community: the case of Barrio Antioquia in Medellín,* Reflexión Política Año 13 No. 26. Diciembre, 2011.

Once the zonal measure was taken, soon after the declaration of tolerance, brothels, taverns and pimps began moving into the neighbourhood. Added to this, criminal groups that controlled the contraband markets settled (Jaramillo & Spitaletta, 2011, p. 91).[62] In time, the neighbourhood became the epicentre for drug trade in the city. All this context throughout decades peaked with the social degradation and violence in the 80s when local gangs and other forms of organised crime were having a territorial war. This urban confrontation caused in 1993, the violent death of over two hundred young people in the neighbourhood due to the prevailing social conflicts (Riaño, 2000, p. 74).

Pilar Riaño is an associate of the *Grupo Memoria Histórica* [Historical Memory Group] and the author of the book *Jóvenes, Memoria y Violencia en Medellín* [Violence and Memory of Young People in Medellín] (2007). She has been working in the neighbourhood since 1997. At the time, rival gangs operating in the area had ended the peace agreements that had been implemented through a collective memory construction program (Riaño, 2000, pp. 77-78).[63] She argues that,

> the emphasis on the institutionalised social representations that characterise the neighbourhood as dangerous, marginal, deviant, sick, depraved, and violent at the time had silenced the traumatic and painful experiences and memories of the inhabitants (Riaño, 2003, p. 29).

The social conflicts that the neighbourhood had faced for decades arguably created fragmentations and destabilisations in the social construct, hindering the capacity for collective processes of all types. The community was broken, and thus the urgency for an action in which a reconstruction of the social bonds could emerge.

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[62] Jaramillo Correa, Mary and Spitaletta Hoyos, Reinaldo, *The social conflict that an arbitrary administrative decision can generate in a community: the case of Barrio Antioquía in Medellín,* Reflexión Política Año 13 No. 26. Diciembre, 2011.

[63] Riaño, Pilar; *"Por qué a pesar de tanta mierda este barrio es poder?" Historias locales a lal luz nacional*, Revista Colombiana de Antropología, Vol 36. enero-diciembre, 2000.

The project presentation booklet is a document which describes the whole process of development, the stages of execution, the objectives and strategies, important dates for the project, scopes of acting, organisations involved, associates, results, management, budget, impact, evaluation, and the analysis of the complexities in the realisation. [64] Riaño (2005) explains how she spent time researching the historical process, memories, and possibilities for the social articulation of the communities living in the neighbourhood. Later, she continues describing how she began to organise a multidisciplinary group conformed by Suzanne Lacy, the Colombian historian Mauricio Hoyos, the also Colombian activist Sebastian Vargas, and other collaborators, which included anthropologists, social workers, architects, and other non-academic subjects, to develop a cultural and artistic project that could promote processes of collective memory and social reconstruction with the community (Riaño, 2005, pp. 1-8).

The group had the support of the *Corporación Región* [Regional Corporation][65], a human rights independent non-profit organisation, and the *Corporación Presencia Colombo-Suiza* [Colombian-Switzerland Presence Organisation], an NGO founded in 1983 by a partnership of Colombian and Swiss citizens working for social causes in Medellín. The core of the project was concerned with the strong connection that memory has with situations of pain and silence that the group identified were present in the neighbourhood (Riaño, 2005, pp. 230-233).[66] In an interview for *Art Journal* in 2006, Riaño and Lacy discuss how the idea of the project was to develop an artistic proposal seeking to activate memory and imagination, connecting the residents to their identity and history (Riaño & Lazy (2006) Medellín Colombia, Reinhabiting Memory. *Art Journal, winter 2006,* pp. 110-112).

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[64] http://www.catedramedellinbarcelona.org/archivos/pdf/31-BuenasPracticas-LaPieldelaMemoria.pdf
[65] http://www.region.org.co
[66] http://www.catedramedellinbarcelona.org/archivos/pdf/31-BuenasPracticas-LaPieldelaMemoria.pdf

The proposal functioned as a public cultural intervention that sought to recover the neighbourhood's history, exploring the relationship between memory, reconciliation and mourning, and the production of social awareness that could activate a conscience. A proposal so that neighbourly spaces for the reconstruction of memory and bonds of trust through long-duration projects could emerge. The project also created collective spaces for reflecting on the past and thinking about a different future. According to Riaño, in the book *Arte, Memoria y Violencia. Reflexiones sobre La Ciudad* [Art, Memory and Violence. Reflections upon The City] (2003), it was 'a space that allows for the production of individual and collective mourning from the present moment, in order to look at the future, with a glance that supports coexistence and reconciliation' (Riaño, 2003, p. 39).

The first action of the intervention consisted of a group of young men and women that approached the neighbourhood residents asking for donations of symbolic objects related to their memories. An attempt at finding material traces of pain generated as a result of loved ones killed. The donations were photographs, combs, religious imagery, neckless, bracelets, hair pins, tools, letters, ragdolls, and others. All sorts of precious objects and belongings of victims that families have cared for as treasures and have become *sacred* for those who guard them. The objects, being all that remains of the victims, embody the lost loved one. They have become significant objects holding a symbolic charge that link the present moment with the past when the departed were still alive: an inseparable link between the absent person and the item. For the unaware observer, such things would be nothing more than commodities developed for mass consumption. However, these particular ones had now mutated from their state of repetition and achieved their singularity. Assigning value to things can assist in this transmutation. Walter Benjamin (1969 [1935]) assigned a 'cult value' to those things that possess an *aura*. In contrast, to those things that lacked one, he

assigned an 'exhibition value' similar to the value of commodity exchange. He wrote: 'The authenticity of a thing is the essence of all that is transmissible from its beginning, ranging from its substantive duration to its testimony to the history which it has experienced.' (Benjamin, 1969, p. 79). This designation can be found in a hairpin, a mug, a river and a mountain. The singularity achieved by these objects is designated precisely by their testimony. That is, what makes them different to the eye. They have become much more than everyday things, different to all the other copies of that same object in the world. They mean something, and they have become sacred.

The donations were displayed in a dark room, where the only thing illuminated was a showcase presenting objects inside [Fig.1]. A community fringe of grievances. In its darkness, the room shed light on something everyone in the community shared: insecurity, fear, trauma, and loss. However, at the same time, they also shared the urgency for the recognition of complex histories in order to reconcile collectively. I argue that, apart from collecting the objects, the members of the group also became listeners and recorders of the narrations and stories of pain represented in the objects donated: scapulars that saved lives, utensils that preserve the memory of a lost friend or family member, toys, keys, photographs, rings, love letters. An archaeology of meaningful objects that provides a space for collective memory construction and mourning, offering a narrative different from that of museums and public institutions.

The project used an alternative circulation strategy. Some of the objects collected were displayed in a *museum-bus* explicitly designed for the exhibition [Fig. 2]. The bus drove around different parts of the neighbourhood and parked around the *metro* stations in the city. The museum-bus received over four thousand visitors in ten days (Riaño, 2005, pp. 233-234). In this way, the vehicle became a dynamic ground of collective and individual memory. Likewise, it evidenced the conflictive and challenged character of these memories.

Fig 1. Pilar Riaño and Suzanne Lacy. *La piel de la Memoria*. (1997) Photography: Museo de Antioquia, retrieved from: https://www.museodeantioquia.net/

Fig 2. Pilar Riaño and Suzanne Lacy. *La piel de la Memoria*. (1997) Photography: Museo de Antioquia, retrieved from: https://www.museodeantioquia.net

The second part of the project sought to overcome the mist of suspiciousness and hostility amongst the neighbours by creating a communication channel to think about the future collectively. The residents that had donated objects and the visitors of the museum-bus participated by writing a letter that included a wish for an unknown neighbour and another for the future of the neighbourhood. Approximately fifteen hundred letters were received (Riaño, 2005, p. 234). Some letters were displayed on the museum-bus. On the last day of the occasion, a carnivalesque event with street celebrations that included ensembles, musicians, storytellers, performers on stilts, and other participants that walked and danced around the neighbourhood streets with the objective of honouring and celebrating the inauguration of the museum of memory. Simultaneously, they distributed the letters giving one to every home.

The *Corporación Región* [Region Corporation] continued to call young people to work on the collective project in the neighbourhood until 2001. Persisting in the construction of collective theatre plays and urban interventions drawing from the stories of pain that could help recover the meaning of absence and violence in the borough. *La piel de la memoria* gathered forces and resources from human rights activists, members of the community, public organisations, artists, intellectuals, and non-artistic subjects (Riaño, 2005, pp. 233-234) to produce a complex work that contributed to the inclusion of urgent social issues, such as the construction of civil society, and the exploration of public art, as an element capable of political and social transformation. When a society has been through a historical marginalisation and social depravation process, in which people did not have the space for grieving or collectively doing anything, the act of collective mourning that offered the possibility for an emergent empathy, made visible in the form of recognition of the suffering and loss of others, is a powerful transformation.

La piel de la memoria addressed relationships between art, memory and violence from the perspective of different disciplines. The project is an important reference concerning memory construction processes in contexts of social discontinuity and the institutional vacuum that is generated by the consequences of the absence of assassinated and missing people in a particular community. The project leads toward a reflection regarding artistic gaze and representations of violence and death. Moreover, about the ways of seeing and representing human experiences of mourning, loss, and pain, through art, ritual, and collective commemoration, in contexts where untrust and the impossibility to exteriorise such memories of absence and violence have prevailed.

Comparing this project to other artistic events occurring at national and regional levels, such as the biennales organised by the Museum of Modern Art [MAMBO] or the *Salón Nacional* [National Salon], amongst others, allows for the recognition of a shift in the operations proposed by artists and collectives. The establishment of a new map, including artistic practices in community, that amplified the field of art in the country in the aftermath of the declaration of the 1991 Political Constitution began to emerge. A project such as *La Piel de la Memoria* revised the fast transformations in the national artistic field that, 'in the current context (of control and security zones proliferation) we should not forget that the aestheticization of politics is a characteristic that accompanies the establishment of authoritarian regimes' (Zalamea, 2004, p. 254). Zalamea's quote refers to the siege that in the 90s, cities like Bogotá, Medellín and Cali had been suffering because of confrontations between the National Armed Forces and the drug cartels, which included numerous bombs and assassinations that kept the country and especially the cities in a permanent State of emergency.

The fragmentation seen at the time in the country's social body can also be seen as a struggle for the *public*. This fracture continues to be present. Even though urban societies in

Colombia have strengthened their participation in governance processes due to progressive measures that have yielded cultural rights and technological advances, paradoxically, amidst globalisation, the social disparity between the urban and rural areas has deepened. This is why establishing the problem of the *public* represents a great challenge. Luis Roniger affirms that the notion of *public* makes part of the conditions in which social relationships and their cultural meaning are spatialised in a specific context (Braig & Huffschmid, 2009. pp. 71-93). Under this premise, the conditions of the 90s decade in Colombia, which created the context for the process of a project such as *La Piel de la Memoria*, established meanings and values regarding artistic practices linked to public space and community engagement that are yet to be discussed further. It is possible to say that Riaño's project, in terms of experience, engagement and interdisciplinary proposal, has encouraged reproductions and similar projections throughout time in the national artistic practice.

Contemporary artistic practices that relate to specific spaces in the city

Over the recent decades, Bogotá has seen the development of artistic and cultural, collective and collaborative projects that have emerged between the crevasses of social, economic, political, and cultural inequalities. Artists, cultural promoters, audiences, and other social actors have been proposing non-convectional strategies to reinvigorate the city's established cultural capacity. In the same way, there has been an activation of public space intervention tactics that have opened and multiplied the reach and range of artists in the city. In some cases, such interventions have been endorsed in the name of *civic culture*, the right to the city, or the betterment of public space, without necessarily having a clear path to their undertaking.

There is a vast universe of initiatives that, in some ways, have been able to articulate artistic and cultural practices and collective action. Some of the most interesting cases are the ones that do

not exclusively circumscribe to aesthetic and artistic spaces and knowledge but rather involve issues such as collaboration, participation, self-governance, collective labour, sexuality, the affirmation of the local, environmental activism, anti-globalisation tactics, feminism, youth identities, and radical ideological stances, amongst others. All of these engage in the development of dialogues, problematising the relationships with the *political* and the *social*. The practices recognised in Bogotá do not have a typical homogeneity. On the contrary, they differ in the strategies deployed in order to insert themselves or articulate to non-artistic circuits and in the relationships established with cultural promoters or activists.[67] The same is true for the strategies that they have implemented to locate themselves critically with respect to the institutionality and local governments, the ideas that they reproduce on the political, the social, and the artistic, and in the representations of the artistic field, that they employ to intervene or appropriate different resources.

It should not be disregarded, however, that currently, all the versatility demonstrated by artistic, cultural, and other practices that originated from the use of specific public spaces, the evident political force they mobilise, and the social values demonstrated in their apprehension and reception by the communities, have systematically been appropriated. They are tamed by the same

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[67] The list of practices and initiatives that exemplify an articulation between cultural and artistic practices and collective action is ample, heterogeneous and diverse. This list of identified collectives, by no means represents the totality of efforts that are operating in the country, however, some examples are: Territorios-Luchas https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC6mShBlg8Fb8GThLo46vAsw/videos?app=desktop&view=0&sort=dd&shelf_id=0, Arquitectura expandida https://arquitecturaexpandida.org/, La Direkta https://ladirekta.com/, Antena Mutante https://www.youtube.com/user/antenamutante, Bogotrax https://bogotrax.xyz/, Mujeres al Borde https://mujeresalborde.org/, Centro Comunitario Distrital LGBT http://ccdlgbt.blogspot.com/, Udiversia http://redlgbti.blogspot.com/2010/07/udiversia.html, MINGA https://www.cric-colombia.org/portal/la-minga-de-resistencia-social-y-comunitaria-la-unica-forma-de-salvaguarda-de-los-derechos-colectivos-de-los-pueblos/, La Mesa de los Cerros Orientales https://mesacerros.wordpress.com/, Trinchera Ganja https://www.flickr.com/photos/trincheraganja/, El Eje Centro Cultural https://www.elejecc.com/, La Redada Miscelánia Cultural https://www.plataformacultural.org/la-redada-miscelanea-cultural/, Casa entre comillas http://casaentrecomillas.blogspot.com/, Comuna Universitaria https://comunauniversitaria.wordpress.com/, Interferencia https://interferencia-co.net/, Observatorio de Poeticas Sociales https://www.utadeo.edu.co/es/micrositio/observatorio-de-poeticas-sociales, Caldo de Cultivo https://caldodecultivo.com/, Proyecto Circo Ciudad http://elcircociudad.blogspot.com/, H.I.J.O.S. https://hijosbogota.org/, Las Tamboreras del Cauca https://connectamericas.com/company/asociacion-tamboreras-del-cauca, Las Antigonas https://museodememoria.gov.co/arte-y-cultura/antigonas-tribunal-de-mujeres/, Las Tejedoras de Majupan https://www.comminit.com/derechosposconflict/content/mujeres-tejedoras-de-mampuján, AMOR http://amoroa.blogspot.com/, Magdalenas por el Cauca https://museodememoria.gov.co/arte-y-cultura/magdalenas-por-el-cauca/ - :~:text=Magdalenas por el Cauca es,las orillas del río Cauca.

institutions participating in and co-producing the local, national, and international cultural spheres: museums, universities, galleries, art fairs, banks, ministries, cultural institutes, NGOs, private collectors, and others. Explanations for the surge of this practice can be found in economic, geopolitical and social contexts. The global labour divide and socio-spatial segregation have impacted the phenomena. Once again, Yúdice (2009) can offer us some arguments from the transformation in this regard observed in the United States that, as expected, have repercussed in Latin America:

> Cultural wars, for example, take their shape in a context where art and culture are considered fundamentally sided. To an extent that these mobilise a specific performative force, (…). Conservatives or liberals are not willing to mutually concede the benefit of the doubt that art is beyond all interest. (Of course, the majority of left-wingers, following Marx or Gramsci, already thought that culture is a political struggle). Conservatives rather saw these differences as incompetence's or moral rollbacks (i.e., the "culture of poverty" attributed to racial minorities or the libertarianism of the sexual preferences and practices of gays and lesbians), that delegitimises their claims and the rights to public providence (Yúdice, 2009, p. 26).

As a result of this global scale transformation, the evidence suggests that the tactics used by artists and the institutional strategies to contain them or, at least, control their significance through their circulation have suffered a sort of fatigue from all dimensions implied in their production, insertion and reception. On the other hand, in the dispersion of the cultural, political, economic, and social sectors, the most radical artistic practices have entered a more complex but also more public space. In this, they have raised their ethical stances, which implies making visible the economic power relationships implicit in the places where they unfold.

There are never ideal conditions, but all things being considered, artistic practices promoted by the social field, besides implying specific techniques and knowledges, should also supply connections between the activists, the participants, and the artists. This could be achieved through a sustained reflective tendency with respect to the collective, and through a critical spirit

of solidarity, in concrete local, regional, national, and international scenarios. This expected reflection from the actors in the field, developed by practices, resources, discourses, and representations of the artistic and the political that are different from the status quo, would imply a production of spaces and circuits that assumes a constant revision of the ideas of art, artist, research, and management, that is commonly accepted. In other words, under ideal conditions, it is expected from the actors and practices that configure the cultural field, an artistic work concerning political and social action that offers a true option, to the dynamics, ideologies, representations, and hegemonic practices of art, culture, the political, and social change.

Under this premise, and as an exercise, it is possible to categorise and develop different sets that can provide a clearer picture of the referred practices. If focusing on the social field where the cases originate, that is, their context, three main groups could be organised:

i) Artistic practices that proceed from the artistic field and are concerned with social and political disputes. However, their practice does not go beyond the artistic field itself. That is, they circulate and function within the artistic circuits.

ii) Artistic practices that surge from social movements and organisations. These propose an instrumental relationship with certain practices they consider artistic from the beginning. Usually, they illustrate the ideologies of such organisations and movements but are not articulated to the political project of the social organisations.

iii) Artistic practices resulting from a very clear wager from the political agenda of movements and organisations that converge with the practices that provide effective forms of communication outside of the established circuits of art and beyond the communication repertoires that the social movements mobilise.

Another approach to a categorisation can be made if we focus on the disciplinary or social point of departure and the directions that the practices take:

i) Artistic groups with clear interests in social transformation. In their doing, these groups approach social organisations and movements and articulately support the revindications they share with the organisations through their artistic practice.

ii) Social organisations and collectives that have established an artistic agenda as one of their forms of action and seek artistic collectives or artists to develop concrete initiatives in organic ways.

A third option can be identified. This category includes the complex articulation between artistic practices, social movements, and social creativity. This is different from the options above in a central point: they include social practices and knowledges that the former did not integrate in clear ways. The concept of 'transculturality' proposed by Cuban anthropologist Fernando Ortiz in the 40s, employed to describe the process of merging and converging cultures, can be a way to understand this.[68] Ortiz insists on the variability, instability, relativity and difference implied in the triple articulation in question, which has been described by Mexican writer and literary critic Liliana Weinberg in Szurmuk and McKee (2009) as,

> [a] creative interaction between the different cultural entities that meet, and as a result provides selection, transformation and creation processes amongst both, to arrive even at the generation of a new entity that creatively includes elements of the two instances prior to contact.
> The traits associated with the process of transculturation are then, amongst others, dynamism, historicity, complexity, creativity, situationallity, diversity in the ways, levels, asymmetric heterogeneous times of interrelation, of a kind that supposes differential losses and acquisitions from the cultural groups placed in contact, in a tension that never allows for the abolition of asymmetry nor difference, and at the same time, it always supposes a creative dynamic, re-signifying and re-functionalising (Weinberg & McKee, 2009, p. 275).

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[68] Ortiz Fernando, 1941, *Contrapunteo Cubano del Tabaco y el Azúcar.*, by F. Ortiz. *The Hispanic American Historical Review*, *21*(3), 459–461.

From this perspective, the articulation of *artistic practices - social movements and/or organisations - social creativity* can lead to specific differentiated locations of non-artistic subjects. Subjects in power of specific social practices related to historical, social, economic, ideological, political, environmental, cultural, and creative processes. This triple articulation can lead to thinking of other possible links between art and politics that cultural theory has been insisting on over the past decades. From this premise, three possibilities that this investigation identifies can be proposed.

i) Artistic practices that open new areas of dialogue with other social, political, and cultural spheres. They establish other spaces for social intermediation.

ii) Social movements and organisations or collective action that clearly articulate with artistic components to their agendas establishing horizontal and asymmetric relationships at different times, depending on their capacity for social transformation, their strength regarding political challenge, and the efficacy of producing identity process amongst the participants. These are artistic practices articulated to cultural actions and processes in community.

iii) Social organisations that use artistic tools or practices without transparently visualising such articulation. The appropriations formed through artistic tactics are not explicit; however, in the end, they materialise in the social organisations' new and effective communication processes. This implies the understanding of artistic practices and collective action as useful knowledges.

The political agenda that these initiatives mobilise has concrete tendencies and objectives regarding specific social issues. There is a coherence between objectives and actions. In this way, the revindication of the victims, and the memory of the disappeared (missing) from the internal conflict, youth initiatives, gender identities, LGBTQI+ activisms, feminist movements, marginal rhetoric, and popular communication, are the large groups in which the practices concerned with this investigation could locate themselves.

Artistic practices allow for the encounter of everyday social practices engaged in the production of spaces that propose alternative relationships between social power and everyday life. Offering as a alternative to the strategies coming from the art institution, the tactics that any given subject (individual or collective), in adversity or emergence in a Latin American city, can apprehend. Nonetheless, regarding this context, Carmen Hernández insists that it is impossible to address artistic productions as a homogenous set interested in similar problems, for 'it is possible to observe that within the same field, powerful discursive tensions, struggling to re-orient the production lines, the modes of circulation and reception of the projects are conceived' (Mato, 2002, s.p.).

To finish this section, it could be added that the divergent stances evoked by artistic practices in order to transcend their natural or established niche provoke in academic sectors the demand for a more rigorous critical language and a sustained reflective practice regarding their political dimension. For example, the requirement of a contextual specificity of the conceptual work that is attached to the practices. Hernández continues to argue that art, as a discipline, should be studied 'as part of an agenda oriented to re-dimension its possibilities from a contextualised perspective that benefits a wider social action' (Mato, 2002, s.p). Her stance calls for the need to upgrade the tools, perspectives and frameworks that address the discourses of art. The political wager implied in this consideration is the amplification of social creativity due to the intervention of the artistic. However, this wager finds the revision of such practices from strictly aesthetic or artistic categories limited, since, generally, they ignore or disregard the social knowledges that the said practices are developing dialogues with. Finally, it cannot be ignored that this premise is not without a questionable outlook, as it places the responsibility of these practices in art. This is problematic because, more often than not, the social and political meanings mobilised by

organisations tend to be crushed due to the prevalence of artistic and aesthetic values and categorizations.

Artistic Practices in Community

The proposals in this category of artistic creation (Artistic Practices in Community) work towards strengthening community processes and participating through experimental and coexistence modes of knowledge exchanges. The notion of *community* here is related to a sense of place, a communion of solidarities and affects around particular situations or events, singularities that find resonance under a common sensitivity. This social dimension finds, in communitarian aesthetics, possibilities for developing interventions in specific communities. The motivations could vary, from mobilising communitarian efforts for particular purposes that impact the community to potentializing a given community's sentiment or revindicating representational needs. However, we live in a time where the common is in crisis. Contemporary political parties, unions, and nationalisms attest to this predicament. Forging genuine collaborative processes and working collectively is full of complications. Nonetheless, the social crevice in which communitarian artistic practices attempt to insert themselves would suggest that there are still possibilities for exchange, debate, and dialogue that, even though not free from conflict, manage to promote a desire for social work that can generate experiences and sensations centred around this common sharing.

Artistic practices in community, understood here as an intertwined act between life, social creativity, and action, propose potentialities of social relationships in which the questions and the relations come from the community and not as the result of an artistic gaze. Hence, they become

devices that act in the processes of representation of particular identities. They could be understood as communitarian cultural resistance.

The development and experiences of communitarian artistic practices and the strategies generated by artists, collectives, and organisations that at times articulate, condense critical elements of an observable transformation towards more diverse ethical and formal components. Art here assumes new roles associated with the figure of the mediator or cultural organiser, but without centralising the attention upon itself or the meaning of the project that seeks to facilitate social processes. Art, in this way, functions as an action generator, a tool, a collaborator, and useful knowledge, so that the communities and social movements implicated can participate in the construction of themselves through networks of solidarity, cooperation, and artistic creation.

Artistic practices in community are then understood in this investigation as a category of analysis. In this order of ideas, the following four characteristics are present in their projects.

i) The re-positioning of the relationship between the author (artist) and the community implicated. The disintegration of the author/artist in collaborative practices is the most radical and politically complex element. The challenge proposed is for an artistic practice that explores the common and considers the *political* from the dissolution of both subjects: the author and the community.

ii) The transcending of the artistic object. Non-objectual artistic practices utilise objects and spaces as intrinsic to the creative process, for they are occupied, captured, or incorporated into the project, where the artistic experience happens despite the object. Projects that subscribe to this notion are not concerned with producing objects that will face transcendental contemplation. At

times, some experiences do not require an exhibition setting but rather an experience of transformation into a collective in which empowerment processes can emerge.

iii) The configuration and generation of alternative spaces for circulation. We are talking about non-institutional spaces that distance themselves from the artistic tradition's preciousness and formality.

iv) The interest in social transformation. This is the heart of the projects in this category. Artists with such interests can see in art a social disruptive force.

This by no means constitutes the only characteristics that artistic practices in community could have, nor are they the only concerns the projects and participants address. They do, however, represent instances that are being problematised by artists in their communitarian projects. Artistic practices in community can bring forward a new articulation between artistic production and the dispositions concerning its use and formalisation. This aims to foster relationships between individuals (artists and non-artist subjects) from the interaction between art and life, between the aesthetic experience and the everyday experience, that are proposed as encounters in the modes of relation. The specific dispositions that generate interrelations pertaining to the cultural and social spaces in which the relationships occur are then adjusted, consequently enabling the creation of sensitive agents.

1. **Artistic practices that open new areas of dialogue with other social, political, and cultural spheres, establishing other spaces for social intermediation.**

Ciudad Kennedy Memoria y Realidad (CKMR)

Local Context

On the 17th of December 1961, the President of the United States, John F. Kennedy and his wife, Jacqueline Kennedy, arrived at the Techo airport in Bogotá. Alberto Lleras Camargo, President of Colombia and his administration committee, together with thousands of Colombians wanting to participate in the official visit, received the presidential couple.

Kennedy had travelled to Colombia to place the *first brick* of a new neighbourhood called at the time *Ciudad Techo*. This act was the initial event that would set in place The Alliance for Progress in the country. The alliance, was an agreement between the United States and Latin American countries that pretended to stop the advance of communist ideology in the region. It was initiated by President Kennedy on the 13th of March, 1961 and was based on economic cooperation. The alliance, called for a set of political reforms and economic policies that included price stability, more equitable income distribution, land reform, economic and social planning, amongst others to be funded in cooperation between the United States and Latin American countries (Smith, 1999, pp. 150-152).

Colombian media covered the events that followed the presidential visit. The image of President Kennedy placing the first brick of the first house to be built in a popular neighbourhood had a massive impact on national and even regional public opinion.[69] The media distribution of

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[69] https://www.elcolombiano.com/blogs/casillerodeletras/presidente-kennedy-en-colombia/7842 and
https://www.senalmemoria.co/articulos/john-f-kennedy-en-bogota-y-la-alianza-para-el-progreso

this event contributed to the understanding of this moment as having mythical qualities and fostered the creation of the *foundational myth* of the new urban development. From its birth, the neighbourhood carried a specific political imaginary. This gave the housing project a sense of identity, as a product of the political ideology enforced throughout the region at the time. Raúl Cristancho, (CKMR) project's director comments that elevating President Kennedy's image and influence to a mythical level in a new popular neighbourhood in Bogotá 'was a particular fact that conferred a particular historical identity' (Cristancho, 2006, p. 84). Moreover, it operated as the assimilation of foreign ideologies into local realities.

The first stage of the *Ciudad Techo* project was organised through processes of self-construction and communitarian assistance between the beneficiary families and the national and local agencies that opened shops and convenience stores to provide low-cost construction materials. Once the first stage was completed, the houses, which were more facade than construction, were assigned to families by lottery and delivered without access to water or electricity (Fortich, 1998, p. 120). Utility services took around six more months to be installed, and the roads years to be paved. Once in possession, and depending on financial capability, every family transformed their houses based on their specific needs (Fortich, 1998, p. 142). Today there are still many houses that have the original configuration.

Within the discourse of modern development, this new historical identity colonised the previous ones. Past identities had been constructed through local memories of colonial times and the original native communities to which the settlement's name referred to. Every house and road built in this new space was immersed in a historical node created by international and local geopolitics, with political, cultural, and social elements that manifested a particular moment of the recent past. Cristancho comments on this historical weight and value initially given, saying that it

'has transformed throughout time in the amalgamation between myth and history, official and popular imaginary, memory, and reality' (Cristancho, 2006, p. 5).

After the assassination of Kennedy in 1963, neighbours of the project gathered and decided to change the housing development's name to *Ciudad Kennedy* as a tribute to the founder of the urban development. Currently, *Ciudad Kennedy* is one of the biggest and densest popular neighbourhoods ever built in Colombia.[70] Over 1.2 million people live in the zone, making the neighbourhood bigger than most cities in the country.

Amongst this context, the project *Ciudad Kennedy Memoria y Realidad* sought to create a space for the convergence of different life experiences through observations of a phenomenon devised from direct communitarian dialogues. For Cristancho, the multiple transactions conducted in any place, the dislocations and displacements, migrations, and exchanges of all sorts, are the forces that energise and likewise can transform the notions of belonging to a place (Cristancho, 2006, pp. 11-12).

The initial approximations were spread over various sectors, from administrative bodies like local councils to neighbourhood organisations and churches. The participants located and sourced access to diverse types of archives. For example, an examination of the disproportionate number of people compared to other city registrars that had been baptised with the name John or Jackeline was a starting point (Cristancho, 2006, p. 14). Months later, the team is introduced to founding neighbours. Senior citizens that are part of the identity of the neighbourhood, for they were present from the origins in 1961. Some of which had had contact with the representatives of the Colombian government and the Kennedy family. They, were the protagonists of the history of

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[70]https://old.integracionsocial.gov.co/anexos/documentos/2018documentos/12092018_Kennedy%20diagn%C3%B3stico%202017%20-%20SDIS.pdf

Ciudad Kennedy. Their testimonies narrated the complicated entanglements in which they were involved that, in many ways, have genealogically branded an entire community and operated as a point of tension and negotiation for their construction of memory and identity.

There was a need for a strategic insertion from the project team in the social and political realities of a neighbourhood. A vicinity developed by the specificities in which a community, for reasons beyond themselves, ended up building their own homes. A process of memory creation where myth, reality and the desire for a better life merge and develop a sense of belonging to a community. This offered an opportunity for a mediation process that allowed for these articulations to connect across the notions of collective and individual uses and processes of memory, exploring the myriad of realities in which the citizens of Ciudad Kennedy live. The project was initially designed as an investigative, artistic practice. The team was directed by Raúl Cristancho, and formed by the Colombian artists Catalina Rincón, Luis Carlos Beltrán, Ricardo León, Camilo Martínez, Miler Lagos, Michael López, Jaime Barragán, Máximo Flórez and Fernando Cruz.

The project began by trying to find and formulate different and experimental ways for public space artistic interventions, operating through direct work with the neighbourly communities. For this purpose, the team first identified and later articulated a stage of action based on a historical and a social perspective. This operation implicated a historical re-reading of the district in Bogotá by questioning and fostering new nodes of relation to memory, representation, and culture. The initial action placed efforts in addressing urgencies that the team had identified through the preliminary research regarding neighbourhood genealogies, which had been created from notions of collective memory and identity, fictions that dwelled in the community's imaginary, and how these memory constructions, articulated with real everyday life.

The project sought to generate a space where different experiences of the Kennedy neighbourhood and its history in Bogotá could converge. It originated from the construction of dialogue and bonds of trust, developing direct contact with the neighbourly community, and observing particular phenomena derived from their everyday practices and living experiences in the borough. The project pursued an activation of memory in the neighbourhood residents, generating a public space that could open questions regarding its possible relationships to the community embedded in a contradictory and confusing formation process. A place that, due to its specificities, myth and reality are difficult to tell apart. At the same time, the project interrogates the processes by which social imaginaries agglutinate and the interpretations, meanings, and fictions that can be produced for a particular place through the ideologies of an individual, a group, or a community. It operated as a collective testimony of a specific community's social, political, cultural, and economic development. *Ciudad Kennedy Memoria y Realidad*, reveals the interaction of these social forces in a specific context through the strategy of unfolding and visibilising historical processes, such as the adaptation of an imaginary upon another, the influence of the United States in the region, the accommodation of foreign ideals onto local realities, and the imaginaries that emerge from these relationships. Through the documentation and creation of new archives and new readings of existing ones, the actions/projects developed functioned as devices for self-appropriation, self-understanding and self-representation inside a space beyond the physical place, aiming to get closer to that nuclear space in which the community still exists.

With attention to the neighbours and their context, the team explores the urban project's original architectural designs, enabling them to see the transformations the neighbourhood had undergone over the decades. Family albums were shared with them, and photographic testimonies of personal and shared experiences of neighbours were central to the moments and places where

it all began. This was the case with Argelín Plazas, a community member who, together with his family, was crucial in the propagandistic machinery developed by the Alliance of Progress in which the foundational myth of Ciudad Kennedy was created (Cristancho, 2006, pp. 14-15). Through interviews and meetings, Plazas narrates to the coordinating artistic team the story of the time he was invited to the United States as part of a committee of Latin American officials, adherers of the Alliance of Progress.[71] He also shared considerable amounts of documents, texts, photographs, and letters that, upon his return, he began to archive. Part of his archive, decorated his living room: photographs of trips, newspaper cuttings of the inauguration, President Kennedy memorabilia, the discourses of both the Colombian and American presidents read on that day, and other events related to the neighbourhood, made all part of the archive Mr Plazas had created in over forty years. The different items were preserved as historical pieces protected by a museum; Cristancho points out that:

> this living room is a true installation with historical and aesthetic value. Mr Plazas displays an almost religious devotion for Kennedy that, in its own way, allows him to maintain the foundational memory of the neighbourhood alive. At the same time, he has constructed a personal mythology. Articulating elements from history and his life. This place holds all the conceptual elements the project is grounded on (Cristancho, 2006, p. 16).

The team encountered a flow of information. A series of political and social connections to the United States and the re-appropriation each family and individuals had made of the events were shared with them. This information sharing was a recurrence, and several households showed similar museistic adaptations of family histories, remembrances, and souvenirs to the coordinating team. Reinterpretations and re-significations of everything associated with the Kennedys, and them, as a symbol of progress and even social prominence, were the basis of the relationship built by the community, that the team identified in their search for memory and reality.

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[71] https://issuu.com/fernandocruzflorez/docs/7sobrelasobras

One year was assigned for fieldwork investigation.[72] Part of the methodology contemplated providing enough time for understanding the symbolic world and the idiosyncrasies specific to the community. After this time, through a collective effort, the team of artists, in some cases coordinated, in others, organised, reorganised and assembled all the shared experiences with the community for the creation of artistic manifestations. These were presented, in the neighbourhood public spaces where the community would relate and apprehend the projects through their daily routines and patterns of urban movement, also, in artistic events organised in the cultural and community centres of the neighbourhood. Events where the attending friends and families would recognise themselves in the work presented, and were confronted with their history, their reality, and the articulations between past, present, and future, but also confronted with other possibilities of articulation and narration, different to the established ones. An array of artistic manifestations testifies to the community's conflicting and enigmatic social development in Ciudad Kennedy, revealing the diverse way memory and identity have been constructed in the urbanisation and indicating contradictions between utopia and reality. The projects put forward the notion that the *minor* experiences, the everyday routine and the struggle for a better life are the ones that make and shape the spaces of meaning beyond objective truth.

The projects

The presentation of the projects happened simultaneously in the neighbourhood public areas and inside a house constructed in the first stage of the neighbourhood. This decision emphasised the visual discourse that placed the project's central theme on the living spaces in the urban sector. The house in question had been converted into a public library, which was also the

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[72] https://issuu.com/fernandocruzflorez/docs/6elproyectoysuprocesocreativo

meeting place of the *Junta de Acción Comunal*.[73] This form of organisation implied that the project

had a *private* side and a *public* one. The analysis of the following projects will then be divided, first

considering the ones in the original home's private space and later those in the neighbourhood's

public areas.

Fig 3. *Ciudad Kennedy Memoria y Realidad.* 2003, Cristancho, Et al. Façade of original house where the exhibition was hosted and installation inside. Bogotá, Colombia. Photography retrieved from exhibition catalogue (2005).

Upon entering the house, two life size silhouette dummies of the Kennedys (Fig. 3) were

placed as inviting the visitors to enter the exhibition. Once inside, the observer was confronted

with a humble living room decorated with furniture with a 1960s design style. Photographic

albums, a jukebox, and images of the American presidential family were the first objects seen by a

guest. Local residents had donated all the elements inside this living room (Cristancho, 2006, p

15)[74] that simulated a common living room setting of a neighbourhood home. However, there were

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[73] *Junta de Acción Comunal* (JAC) is a social and civic communitarian organisation developed from solidarity and non-profit nature. However, JACs simultaneously operate as legal entities that depend on superior institutional instances for their financing and support. JACs have become a key element for popular and neighbourhood organisations in Colombia. Even though their extent or reach has a small scale, establishing relationships with the JACs has become a crucial governance prospect, for they channel the popular demands coming from local territories. The struggles that informal neighbourhoods have promoted for their right to urban utilities such as water, electricity, and sewage have often been channelled through their local JAC; in fact, the creation of a JAC is considered a first step for an informal settlement to obtain legal status.

[74] https://issuu.com/fernandocruzflorez/docs/7sobrelasobras

two television monitors dominating the scene. Their screens, facing each other, were playing parts of the footage developed in the research stage such as, interviews with the residents, together with documentary film material. The room was set out to be a dialogue of tv monitors in which diverse and, at times, contrasting opinions were being discussed.

The installation generated an intimate domestic space, reproducing the character of a lived family place. The paintings and photographs on the walls emphasised this idea giving the space a home feeling. Ricardo León was the artist that created a realistic oil painting of the Kennedy family that replicated a photographic image that was published in Life Magazine at the time of the visit. Overlapping between the frames and the glass protecting the image, placed informally, were photographs of some of the families that lived and built the neighbourhood (Fig. 4). The image suggested an opposition and a difference in the ideas of family, privilege, and class between a family like the Kennedy family, and the families of the *Kennedy* neighbourhood.

Fig 4. *Ciudad Kennedy Memoria y Realidad.* 2003. Ricardo León. Bogotá, Colombia.
Photography retrieved from exhibition catalogue (2005).

Raúl Cristancho developed another painting. The piece also references the undertones that the image of the Kennedys has created in the neighbourhood. Portraits of John and Jacqueline were screen printed on the top corners of a canvas over a dark colour path. Between them, the screen-printed portraits of other Johns and Jackelines can be seen. However, Colombian ones this time. Neighbours that shared their personal image, the names below the portraits read John Moreno, John F. Rodríguez, Jackeline Martínez, and so on. Familiar names in the country that can indicate how profound the Kennedy couple's influence has been in the neighbourhood's collective imaginary.

Fernando Cruz and Luis Carlos Beltrán coordinated a project that had two operating parts: the first part was called *'Fachadas'* [Façades] (Fig. 5) and the second one *'Interiores'* [Interiors] (Fig. 6). The first part of the project captured through photographs the public side of the houses in the Kennedy neighbourhood, and the second, their corresponding private side. The pictures show how shape, colour, and space have been modified, adjusted, and refurbished to serve the desire and improve the living conditions of the owners. The photographs were exhibited as a frieze on a wall. The observer was confronted by a very long strip of 15 x 20 cm photographs one after the other, from which, a testament to the alterations that the houses have had and the self-constructing nature of the neighbourhood were evidenced. In a way, the display of all these photographs of the outside and the inside of the homes constitutes an archive of historical transformations that confront the homes that remain in their original form to the ones that have been amended, operating as a witness to the neighbour's aesthetic manifestations sustained through time, and the economic and social development of the community.

Photographing facades is one thing, but photographing someone's private and intimate space is a different endeavour. The artists in charge of this part of the project had to consider the conflicts of going inside people's home with expensive and heavy equipment. The generosity of the

Fig 5. *Ciudad Kennedy Memoria y Realidad. Exteriores.* 2003, Fernando Cruz and Luis Carlos Beltrán. Bogotá. Photography retrieved from exhibition catalogue (2005).

Fig 6. *Ciudad Kennedy Memoria y Realidad, Interiores.* 2003, Fernando Cruz and Luis Carlos Beltrán. Bogotá. Photography retrieved from exhibition catalogue (2005).

community that invited them inside their homes and the respect that had to be placed in the private spaces demanded that the photographic process be developed inconspicuously. Fernando Cruz

and Luis Carlos Beltrán, experienced photographers, took photographs under difficult light conditions to prevent invading people's intimacy (Cristancho, 2006, p. 11).[75] The result rendered documentation of everyday living in a popular neighbourhood. The spatial conditions, furnishing, decoration and disposition of images all refer to functionalities, necessities, and deficiencies. The images created cautious signals for precarious existences and simultaneously exalted the dignity and decency in which life in popular suburbia flows.

Las Jackelines [The Jacquelines] was a project coordinated by Catalina Rincón (Fig. 7). In this proposal, photography takes a different outlook than the documentary perspective examined above. Working with the narrations of women, some of whom were children, albeit present, at the time when the American first lady came to the inauguration ceremony. Using photographic images of the event in the 60s as a reference, Rincón reproduced the attire worn by Jacqueline Kennedy in Bogotá, to be later worn by several women as they posed for the artist. The success and beauty of these photographs are set in what we cannot see but is evident: the complicity and playfulness of the women seeing themselves as *Jackeline models* in a private space in which artists and models are all sharing and enjoying a moment prior to the photoshoot. This relationship that Rincón had established with the women in the Jackeline photographs was strengthened through a second project, in which collective participation was much more active.

Using embroidery patterns of a caricature used at the time the neighbourhood was being promoted in the country, that shows a hand offering a house (Fig. 8), a collective quilt was weaved (Fig. 9). The participants were encouraged to apply their own aesthetic sense to every piece of the quilt. The result can be seen as a gesture that serves as a metaphor for a collective effort that speaks about women's participation in the construction of the houses.

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[75] https://issuu.com/fernandocruzflorez/docs/7sobrelasobras

Fig 7. *Ciudad Kennedy Memoria y Realidad, Las Jackelines.* 2003, Catalina Rincón. Bogotá. Photography retrieved from exhibition catalogue (2005).

Fig 8. *Ciudad Kennedy Memoria y Realidad.* 2003. Image used in 1961 for the promotion of the housing project, where there is a hand as if giving a house. Photography retrieved from exhibition catalogue (2005).

Fig 9. *Ciudad Kennedy Memoria y Realidad.* 2003, coordinated by Catalina Rincón, collective quilt. Bogotá. Photography retrieved from exhibition catalogue (2005).

Luis Carlos Beltrán, Miller Lagos, Máximo Flórez, Camilo Martínez and Ricardo Leon worked together on a project. An interactive installation (Fig. 10) was presented in the house where the *Junta de Acción Comunal* functioned. Once the observer entered the room, an image of President Kennedy placing the first brick was projected on the wall. On the floor and very close to the wall, a fraction of a brick structure was constructed, which created a disparity between the virtual JFK and the real brick. Continuing with the same wall, a mural portraying a birds eye view blueprint of the neighbourhood had been drawn, and architectural models on top and likewise on the sides of the map were placed. In addition, above all this composition, the original name, Techo, could be read in large capital letters. An empty podium with a microphone was placed on the side a few meters away from the projected image. In this place, once the observer moved closer to the stand, a movement sensor would activate a clear, distinct audio of a part of the inaugural speech read by Kennedy back in 1961. The speech had been edited so that the visitor would hear a loop of the same fragment that repeated:

> la Alianza para el Progreso calls for a vast and immediate effort from the workers, the campesinos on the farm, and the women who toil each day for the welfare of their children, for a decent roof over their heads, for transforming their reality, to all, we bring a message of hope from the United States of America to this great cause.[76]

It is possible to see how President Kennedy's words in 1961 saying, that this was an announcement 'of hope from the United States' that the initial settlers of the neighbourhood —and likewise the rest of the country— heard, amidst the specificity of context lived, generated an understanding of an unwavering commitment from the United States that saw Colombia as an ally. However, hearing such words repeated in the 21st century and within the context of *Ciudad Kennedy* today could function as a juxtaposition of opposites. The recording of the speech is placed

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[76] The original speech can be seen in: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ag7RXjNxF04

in conversation with the reality and the actual living conditions of the people in the borough in which it is being emitted, where the disparity between what was promised and what was delivered is questioned. The elements used in this proposal insist on the relation between the fictional and the documental. They shed light on the colonial notions of progress that the *Alianza para el Progreso* fostered, its direct interventionism and its function as a mechanism for the fight against communism in the hemisphere. Furthermore, the project opens a dialogue in which space to think about the historical processes lived and what the community decides to remember can be discussed.
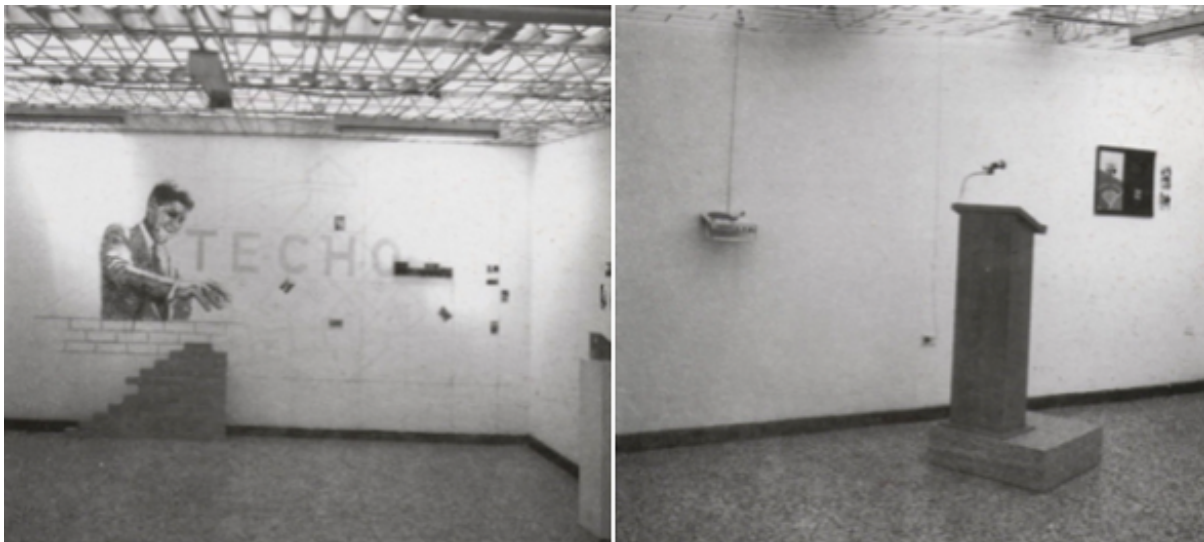
Fig 10. *Ciudad Kennedy, Memoria y Realidad.* 2003, Luis Carlos Beltrán, Miller Lagos, Máximo Flórez, Camilo Martínez and Ricardo Leon, Installation, Bogotá. Photography retrieved from exhibition catalogue (2005).

As mentioned above, the artistic interventions had a public side and a public one. Miller Lagos coordinated *La Visita* [The Visit], a public art intervention consisting of two life-size images of the Kennedy couple. The images were part of a personal archive and were printed in black and white and cut out as dummies (Fig. 11). Lagos obtained the images through interviews with neighbours, photographic documentation, and archival images of the neighbourhood, that were

found both in personal family albums as well as public archives (Cristancho, 2006, p. 18).[77] The

dummies were placed in different parts of the public space: a commercial street, a butcher shop, a

pawn shop, a beauty salon, and a clothing store, floating around space for specific amounts of time,

provoking instant interactions with passers-by.

Fig 11. *Ciudad Kennedy, Memoria y Realidad, La Visita.* 2003, Miller Lagos, Bogotá. Photography retrieved from exhibition catalogue (2005).

The project, aimed simultaneously for the re-presentation and visibilisation of the

constructed mythology around the inauguration of the urban settlement, and, the North American

presidential family's *visit* and their apparent influence in the development of the zone. A

presidential family's memory in black and white that acts as ghosts visiting from the past. However,

they are placed in a reality in colour, in which they somehow find themselves unable to socialise,

associate, or mingle with the working-class people that live in the *Kennedy* neighbourhood. A

dissonance was created. A visual short circuit, where something seems to be out of place. Beyond

what the pictures can show us, I argue that in the ephemeral presence of the figures and their

mobility across the neighbourhood, they behave as a sort of transient monuments, and as

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[77] https://issuu.com/fernandocruzflorez/docs/7sobrelasobras

monuments often do, generating a tension that contrasts past, present, and reality to the antagonisms and syncretism natural to the construction of realities.

Fig 12. *Ciudad Kennedy, Memoria y Realidad, Invitational poster.* 2003, Bogotá. Photography retrieved from exhibition catalogue (2005).

To promote the exhibitions, the coordinating artists developed invitational posters to be placed on the walls and light posts around the area. The image presented in the poster (Fig. 12) showed a smiling President Kennedy in a position that could be either placing or taking a house with his hand, under a text that reads: 'Kennedy said: A man is not really free until he has a roof'. Considering the very few days in which some of the posters were allowed to stand, it would be possible to assume that a controversy was created around the image presented (Cristancho, 2006, p. 17). The removal of the posters suggests an anti-American sentiment, at least from part of the residents. The poster sparks the discussion or the opposition to the discussion of the acceptance or rejection of the Kennedys and their influence on the construction of memory. Such reactions and contradictions coming from a diverse place with populations of multiple generations that would

respond for and against the articulations around memory and identity proposed by the project would be, to a certain degree, expected, since anti-American sentiments in popular working-class neighbourhoods in Latin America are not out of the ordinary.

Fig 13. *Ciudad Kennedy, Memoria y Realidad.* Photography
retrieved from exhibition catalogue (2005).

Raul Cristancho and Fernando Cruz coordinated *Ventanas* [Windows]. The project was an urban intervention existing in the liminal space between the private and the public (Fig. 13). The intervention was configured through a series of photographs showing the interior spaces of the neighbour's homes: kitchens, bedrooms, bathrooms, and living rooms that were photographed, at times being empty, and at others with the people that inhabit them. The project contemplated a process of selection, where the photographic images, together with some texts and other pictures coming from newspapers and archives, were chosen collectively between the owners of the houses

and the artists. The newly constructed images were processed and printed in colour on translucid acetate and placed on the windows in a way that the whole window frame and the grid it had, were completely merged with the photographic images (Fig. 14).

Fig 14. *Ciudad Kennedy, Memoria y Realidad, Ventanas.* 2003, Raúl Cristancho. Bogotá. Photography retrieved from exhibition catalogue (2005).

The windows operated in symbolic and, at the same time, in real ways. The images that would show private instances of families would now be presented to the public, serving as windows to the past, of the stories that built the neighbourhood and the people who have seen and lived the changes. At the same time, the private and now public images operated as genuine windows, as translucid separations between the home and the street. Only this time, the limit between the public

and the private was done through private images of the people that dwell inside. The project articulates notions of the family's private memory to ones of public construction through the window space, an iconographic element mediating the public and the private spaces.

Fig 15. *Ciudad Kennedy, Memoria y Realidad.* 2003, Jaime Barragán. Bogotá. Photography retrieved from exhibition catalogue (2005).

Other projects were, for example, the ones coordinated by Jaime Barragán, which consisted of a series of photographic projections made at night-time over some of the house's façades (Fig. 15). The artist, collectively with a group of young neighbours, developed an investigation based on the observation and organisation of family portraits. The results of their inquiry, apart from the archival recollection of images, also involved narrations from older neighbours and family members about their origins, resulting in the understanding and recognition of the campesino roots

from some of the families involved. The projections made on the façades referred to their adaptation to the city in the past, overlapping with their presence in the present, discussing the realities of the urban landscape and the history of those who constructed it.

Luis Carlos Beltrán, Máximo Flórez and Miller Lagos coordinated a public intervention in *Plaza la Macarena* [Macarena Square]. A public square constructed in the first stages of the urban settlement. Initially, the public square was designed to host a monument. For this, a section of the plaza was constructed with a pedestal and a stepladder structure. However, nothing was ever placed in the assigned space, creating a sensation of incompleteness as if the square was still under construction after decades.

A *Monumento Virtual* [Virtual Monument] was proposed for this space. The intervention consisted of the horizontal placement of a photograph on top of the empty pedestal showing President Kennedy's bronze bust. A bust, however, that had been placed in a different part of the city. A red carpet was unrolled and guided the passers-by to the image. The photographic picture, covered with a plexiglass sheet refuses the traditional verticality and materiality of public monuments that honour and celebrate personalities. The experience generated by this sculptural body was only possible when walking to the pedestal, standing next to it, and looking *down* directly at the top side of the plinth, where the honoured figures ought to stand. The photographic image on top of the pedestal flattened the bust's sculptural element, inverting the axioms of the monument. It functioned as a monument to gaze with your head looking downwards and as if the American President was looking up at the observer.

The team of artists coordinating the projects identified a series of historical and ideological tensions condensed around the foundational myth. These tensions shed light on the relationships between the centre and periphery and the discourses of power and progress. In the flow from local

to global, they problematise local and specific memories and articulate national socio-cultural phenomena that can easily be identified in different zones of the country.

Ciudad Kennedy: Memoria y Realidad was a project based on an experience generated through the strategic approach of a micro-community in a specific place, in which the importance rests in the opening of spaces through the collective reorganisation of archives and the relationships built with the community. This artistic practice in community stimulated processes for the reconstruction of memory and self-representation. It attempted the development of articulations between symbolic urban memories to encourage possibilities for the transformation of realities. Reflecting on the experience, Cristancho (2006) points out that,

> they spoke to us about a moment in which the country, tired of violence, was trying to change or play by a different set of rules and spoke about a city that was trying to accommodate (…) forcibly displaced people from across the country without a place to live. I am left with a neighbourhood linked to human experience, to small histories of anonymous people, inscribed in a grand ideological global discourse, of dominant international politics that decides over the life of living beings (Cristancho, 2006, p. 26).

These reflections can situate us in a space where culture is seen as a process, not a single event of entertainment or political platform, but rather, a living element, a potentiality of what can be and that which is still yet to happen: an imminent event. Under this premise, the cultural process is then always manifested through conflict. By conflict, I am referring to a multiplicity of nuances since culture has a fluctuating nature. This can be seen, for example, in the conflictive process of the use and development of public spaces and, likewise, in how public spaces acquire symbolic meaning. Naming where you live and constructing your future, for example, *Ciudad Kennedy,* replacing the original proposed name, one closer to the historical meaning of the land the neighbourhood it was built on, accuses a conflict.

The human experience in the *Ciudad Kennedy* neighbourhood has been carved through a globalising ideological process over which the international political establishment of the time had

a determinant influence. Culture has emerged in that conflicting environment that interweaves the global and the local narrations of progress and scarcity when building your own home and the symbolic meanings that the public spaces have acquired in the daily tensions. These processes manifest in the body intergenerationally. In the book, *The Idea of Latin America*, Walter Mignolo (2005) speaks about the 'colonial wound' (xii). He describes it as,

> [p]hysical and/or psychological, (…) a consequence of *racism*, the hegemonic discourse that questions the humanity of all those who do not belong to the locus of enunciation (and the geopolitics of knowledge) of those who assign the standards of classification and assign to themselves the right to classify (Mignolo, 2005, p. 8).

A body that has lived through violent forced displacement, and, when trying to settle being thrust into a geo-political narration and discourse, I argue functions and manifests as a traumatised and harmed body. Humiliation and violence would then be established in the body of those who have faced it, those who have lived it, and those who, generations later, come from these modes of experience. The moment when art articulates this conflictive cultural process is a conflict in and of itself since, at this point, the question of the importance of beauty is announced. What can beauty seek in a traumatised and harmed body? Attempting to soften the hardness of reality, perhaps? Presenting pain in different forms? The recognition of pain and ruin through photographic images of the inside and outside of houses, through portraits of women dressed as the American First Lady, by means of publicly projected images of past campesino origins, and through the revision of how memory has been constructed, I argue creates a diversion, allowing us to see pain and ruin without confronting them. In an interview with German Professor Tomas Girst (2017), Colombian artist Juan Manuel Echavarria implies that art as the shield of Perseus allows us to see reality without being paralysed (Girst, 2017, p. 6).[78] Artistic practices in community, can deflect the pain of ruin in order for us to see ourselves in our reality. Furthermore, while operating outside the

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[78] https://jmechavarria.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/TEXTE-ECHAVARRIA-GIRST.pdf

institutionality of art, generate a process that activates a collective potential and dissolves the idea of authorship, where communities can develop tools that can open spaces for the construction of their own spaces, meanings, and actions.

2. **Artistic practices and collective action articulated to cultural actions and processes in community**

Ex-situ/In-situ Moravia. Prácticas Artísticas en Comunidad

Local Context

Ex-situ/In-situ Moravia. Prácticas Artísticas en Comunidad was a communitarian artistic practice that articulated to different forms of collective action in order to develop cultural actions/experiences and participatory processes in the neighbourhood of Moravia, in Medellín, Colombia. The coordinating team was composed of the historian and visual artist Carlos Uribe, artist and researcher Fernando Escobar and cultural manager and curator Juan Alberto Gaviria.

Medellin is a city that, throughout its history, has developed numerous social interventions with the purpose of improving the living conditions of vulnerable and economically challenged communities. There has been a decided effort and sizeable social investment that has created an undeniable transformation in the physical spaces of the city. Infrastructure and urban planning have created parks, libraries, public escalators, schools, hospitals, and other public spaces.[79] This official response has also promoted a transformation in some of the residents' life in general and

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[79] See, https://arquitecturapanamericana.com/proyecto-urbano-integral-pui-nororiental-comunas-1-y-2-areas-de-influencia-sistema-metrocable-medellin/, https://www.cideu.org/proyecto/proyectos-urbanos-integrales-pui/, https://riunet.upv.es/bitstream/handle/10251/180943/Infante%20-%20Regeneracion%20Urbana%20en%20Medellin.pdf?sequence=2, http://ingenieria.uncuyo.edu.ar/catedras/medellin-es-solidaria-y-competitiva1.pdf, and https://revistas.ucr.ac.cr/index.php/revistarquis/article/view/25404

ways of being in particular. In 2004 the Mayor's Office included, as part of its development program, the *Moravia* plan 2004-2011.[80]

The plan contemplated a comprehensive intervention in the neighbourhood and its area of influence. That intervention, accompanied by the construction of cultural centres, schools, and public spaces for gathering and transiting, would also provide the city's administration control over an area close to the city centre. At its core, the macro-project of intervention unfolded a preconceived idea for improving living conditions. The scheme intended to dismantle the homes that occupied the area and relocate the community to a peripheral part of the city.

For this purpose, the city's administration negotiated with the community by offering and providing new social housing units to some neighbours and old social housing that had a similar monetary value to their homes to others. At the same time, a declaration of public calamity was issued, recognising that the subsoil of *El Morro* neighbourhood was made by the accumulation of decades of waste that for over forty years had been pilling.[81] The Medellín *Secretaría de Cultura* [cultural office], developed an ambitious plan to accompany the residents of Moravia through the generation of cultural policies that promoted community strengthening and training for underprivileged populations. The plan aimed to create suitable spaces to recognise the population that would be relocated through participative actions through cultural experiences.[82]

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[80] Plan Moravia 2004-2011 Alcaldía Mayor de Medellín:
https://www.medellin.gov.co/irj/go/km/docs/wpccontent/Sites/Subportal%20del%20Ciudadano/Planeaci%C3%B3n%20Municipal/Secciones/Informaci%C3%B3n%20General/Documentos/POT/PPMORAVIA%20D%20TECNICO%20COMPLETO%20DEFINITIVO.pdf
[81] https://www.medellin.gov.co/es/sala-de-prensa/noticias/con-atencion-integral-la-alcaldia-de-medellin-ejecuta-orden-de-evacuacion-en-el-morro-de-moravia/#:~:text=%E2%80%9CEn%20junio%20de%202006%2C%20el,por%20encima%20de%20par%C3%A1metros%20normales.
[82]https://www.medellin.gov.co/irj/go/km/docs/wpccontent/Sites/Subportal%20del%20Ciudadano/Planeaci%C3%B3n%20Municipal/Secciones/Informaci%C3%B3n%20General/Documentos/POT/PPMORAVIA%20D%20TECNICO%20COMPLETO%20DEFINITIVO.pdf

In 2008, a local initiative that sourced institutional support saw the construction of the *Centro de Desarrollo Cultural del Barrio Moravia* [Moravia neighbourhood Centre for Cultural Development] with this initial purpose in mind. It was conceived as a neutral space to gather all the cultural projects developed in the neighbourhood. Its ethos was the crossing and interchange of knowledge between communities and artists to construct public spaces for dialogue, visibilisation, and pedagogical relations and to activate collective creative processes within the existing communities.

In this context and from a social reconstruction approach, particular to the necessities, urgencies, and realities of the communities in the neighbourhood, the *Ex-situ/In-situ Moravia Prácticas Artísticas en Comunidad* project was created. The objectives of the project were intended to contribute to de sociocultural development of the community from an artistic perspective, and for the manifestation of the collective construction of the public, through the development of artistic proposals that would gravitate around the ideas of the re-foundation of the city, historical memory, social knowledges dialogue, cultural imaginaries, network formations, and the entrenchment of communitarian pedagogical practices (Uribe, 2010, p. 4). It was a project that amalgamated public and private resources from an array of entities and initiatives.

The curatorial team invited twenty-one artists from distinct parts of the country to develop proposals that, through artistic means, would articulate the intention of fostering and energising cultural dynamics with the capacity for social impact on the existing Moravia community collective organisations. The proposed timeline was from 2008 to 2011. Given that the projects were generated through the collective efforts between artists and members of the Moravia community and that such proposals were specific to the urgencies and the pressing necessities current at the time, this investigation sees pertinent the examination of the context in which the social unrest and

political abandonment that the communities of Medellín, and specifically of Moravia, have historically endured.

The neighbourhood is constituted by forcibly displaced *campesinos*,[83] victims of political violence since the 60s. It is a community built by single mothers, Afro-Colombians, native communities and *reinsertados* [re-inserted] —groups of people that, at some point in their life, were members of a guerrilla, paramilitary, or organised criminal organisations and decided to leave behind their belligerent or subversive activity and *return* to civil life—. This diversity in the settlement can be seen as a consequence of the abandonment of rural Colombia.

In this urban space, people live trapped between the multiple abandonments from the State and the fact that, according to Colombian artist, writer, and Professor Natalia Echeverri,

> [t]hey are still residual neighbourhoods; not only have they been constituted on top of waste, but they continue to be recipients of all the conceptual waste from Western culture, and even though the communities question and want to transform such realities, they are unable to because they are still in disadvantage (Echeverri, 2007, pp. 24-25).

This situation of absence, shortfall, and inadequacy sheds light upon actions of territorial control that the campesino communities and other rural populations have historically suffered. Perhaps because of the adversities that the communities have had to endure or how the minorities that have arrived have articulated, Moravia is known to be a dynamic, resilient, and solidary neighbourhood. Simultaneously, it has also been a victim of stigmatisation in the city.[84] Places like Moravia are recipients of the cultural and historical memory of thousands of families who have

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[83] Campesinos, women, and ethnic minority groups in Colombia, according to the Comisión de la Verdad [Truth Commission] have suffered a disproportionate amount of violence in the conflict compared to other social groups. The use of the word in Spanish *campesino* refers to a collective and individual subject of rights situated in rural zones and municipal zones associated with these, with diverse forms of land holding and social organisation, that harvests for self-sustenance and the production surplus which then sells in the local, regional, and national markets. The most common translation to English is peasant, which, because of its colonial and feudalist middle-age tone, does not represent what is meant by *campesino*.

[84] See, https://dialnet.unirioja.es/servlet/articulo?codigo=6309611, http://bibliotecadigital.iue.edu.co/bitstream/20.500.12717/955/1/iue_rep_pre_psi_ca%C3%B1as_2018_representaciones_sociales _art.pdf, and https://revistas.pucp.edu.pe/index.php/anthropia/article/view/11240

had to escape from their homes trying to find ways and spaces to live around the country's large cities. A phenomenon that generates a complex turmoil entangled with historical, political, social, and economic interests, power struggles and territorial dominations that make it a knot difficult to disembroil.

Moravia has been, for many years, a marginalised sector of Medellín. Its inhabitants face problems in the areas of health, social cohabitation, security and public order, crime, and a lacking education system unable to cover juvenile and infantile populations.[85] This situation causes a direct impact on the deterioration of the quality of life in the area. Overcrowding and scarce job opportunities have often created coexistence conflicts among neighbours. According to the city's planning agency, Moravia's public space is one of the smallest compared to other large and middle size cities in the country.

Economically, it has been associated with recycling cultures and narco-traffic.[86] This diagnosis, together with the absence of social investment, high contamination risk (being that the neighbourhood rests on top of what, until the 80s, was the city dump), the informality of estate property or territorial appropriation, and their population mainly being configured by forcibly displaced and dispossessed subjects, make it a place abundant in misery and exclusion. In forty years of unplanned urbanisation, Moravia harbours over forty-two thousand inhabitants.[87] This makes the zone the biggest informal settlement in terms of population density in the country and one of the biggest ones in Latin America. Today, it comprises eight sectors: *Moravia*, *El Bosque*, *Fidel Castro*, *Los Llanos*, *Milan*, *La Playa*, *La Montaña de Basura*, and *El Oasis*.

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[85] Departamento Administrativo de Planeación Medellín.
https://www.medellin.gov.co/irj/go/km/docs/wpccontent/Sites/Subportal%20del%20Ciudadano/Planeaci%C3%B3n%20Municip al/Secciones/Plantillas%20Gen%C3%A9ricas/Documentos/Regularizacion%20Predios/EBICOMUNICACIONES.pdf
[86] See, http://repositorio.unal.edu.co/bitstream/handle/unal/64760/moraviaresiliente.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y and https://rua.ua.es/dspace/bitstream/10045/77695/1/Quaderns-de-Cine_13_09.pdf
[87] https://repositorio.unal.edu.co/bitstream/handle/unal/6879/GAE-MORAVIA.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y

Four influential processes were identified in the development of the Moravia neighbourhood: the construction of the Antioquia railway station of Moravia in 1963; the Medellín river exploitation, an operation that had a vast river sand extraction for construction purposes which in turn catapulted recycling activities in the sector; the creation of the mountain of garbage and the recycling and foraging processes that came with it; and the road infrastructure built by different local administrations that connected the sector to the city's centre.

As mentioned above, the 1970s brought a violent displacement phenomenon of campesino communities from rural lands into the big cities that increased the urban population density. Added to this, Medellín also attracted people because of its textile industry. The process exponentially cornered migrants into peripheral areas without order, planning, communication, or education infrastructure. As with almost all unplanned urban peripheral settlements in Colombia, Moravia was constituted through a process of *invasion* that marked a foundational milestone for the neighbourhood. This process often involved fighting off both the police and other displaced people from their settlements. Consequently, this created an *illegal* neighbourhood. The new settlements were secured through methods of fierce defence, for they constituted the only territory the communities had been able to capture after being forcibly displaced from their land.

What had started decades back as a peripheral illegal settlement, became in the 1980s an integral part of the city. By 1983 the mountain of trash was too big to ignore, and the city declared a sanitary emergency. The first plan to rehabilitate the zone and the 320 families that dwelled in it began.[88] In this stage, there were two relocation processes: one created and constructed by public initiative, the other constructed by the drug lord Pablo Escobar. However, there was a substantial

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[88]See,https://www.medellin.gov.co/irj/go/km/docs/pccdesign/medellin/Temas/PlaneacionMunicipal/Programas/Shared%20Content/Documentos/2018/Planes%20Parciales/Moravia%20Pol%C3%ADgono%20Z1_MI_4/DTS_TOMO_I_DIAGNOSTICO.pdf and https://centroculturalmoravia.org/moravia-resiste-por-el-mejoramiento-integral-de-barrios/

number of people that did not participate in the relocation projects. Instead, they decided to stay and began creating and organising without the support of any public institution or social neighbourhood organisations to provide basic necessities and education for their children. By 1999 the density of the illegal settlement is impossible to continue to overlook by the local administration. The Moravia Plan was created soon after. El Morro, an urban precarious and rudimentary labyrinthian space, was arguably the sector where the settlement was most uncontrolled. The plan scheduled it for dismantlement, and the communities that lived there for relocation.

The process of awarding housing subsidies to the first couple of hundred families began in December 2006.[89] This marked the beginning of the procedure where families living in *El Morro* would give up their self-made homes to be relocated into newly built social housing projects.

The new households they traded their homes for, were open-plan single-space environments, which could be refurbished to up to four rooms. The apartments had electricity, water and gas connections, laundry space, a kitchen and a bathroom. The first urbanisation was comprised of five-story twenty-four apartment blocks with two apartments per floor.[90] In 2007, seventy-two families were relocated to a different sector called *Ciudadela Nuevo Occidente*. It made part of several other urbanisations in a large amount of land that represented 45% of the available soil for urban expansion of the city. This resettlement process brought forth different social tensions. Furthermore, it caused the transformation of the collective and individual worldviews of many of the area's inhabitants, that, in an instant, went from living in self-constructed structures predominantly horizontal to living in vertical apartment blocks.[91]

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[89] https://isvimed.gov.co/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/decreto_1958_2006_plan_parcial_moravia_.pdf
[90] See, https://bdigital.uncu.edu.ar/objetos_digitales/13417/07ortiz-proyeccion13.pdf and https://centroculturalmoravia.org/renovacion-urbana-las-incertidumbres-del-futuro-cercano/
[91] Idem

This change in their dwelling conditions also meant a mental and practical alteration involving new modes of life, socialisation, and new informal economies, which as a result, implied losing their sense of belonging, identity and the bonds created with the original neighbours. More than addressing a social problem, these urban developmental strategies multiply the artifices of global design in the social fabric. Currently, the appropriation of the private spaces and the communal areas of the new apartment block units have generated behavioural transformations in the old *Moravia* neighbours. They now see themselves confronting other spatial, economic and social limitations in this new place. The relocation process and its implications have blurred the Moravia identity that was once recognised. Opening a chasm between the proposed socio-economic practices by the municipal administration and the solidary practices, that had been built and maintained in Moravia through neighbourly ties and communitarian organisations.[92]

Under this premise, the urban intervention project could be evaluated as a failure. However, at the same time, it also had important success stories that improved aspects of the quality of life of the *Moravia* inhabitants. This, however, is not under discussion. The studies made by the local governmental administration, at the time led by Sergio Fajardo, regarding the neighbourhood to be resettled prioritised housing over everything else. Ignoring that the people living in *Moravia* were part of a day-to-day economy and obtained their daily living expenses from collected recycled material distributed close to their dwelling spaces. With the money received from these activities, food supplies for their families were purchased in the local market. Removing the people from their everyday spaces in legalised housing far away from their areas of influence and commercialisation could have solved their housing problems. However, it also broke their sustenance economic dynamics. Furthermore, it broke their everyday dynamics, networks of

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[92] See https://elpais.com/elpais/2016/02/19/seres_urbanos/1455865200_145586.html,
https://dspace.tdea.edu.co/bitstream/handle/tdea/1195/CAPITULO%203.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y

affectations and socialisations: schools, church, communal and health social networks. Added to this, they now had to account for transport costs, an issue only needed after the re-localisation due to Moravia's strategic positioning.

Programs like the Moravia plan make part of global design dynamics illustrating how they understand and regulate urban space. For the particular Moravia case, this would mean considering the social, cultural, political, and economic implications of a frenetic and anarchic urbanisation made for urban survival. However, the project attempted to produce a particular social and urban ordering and implement urbanistic approaches that are distant from the complex social realities of neighbourhoods in the sector. Urban administrative intervention projects like this one dimmish the complexity of a neighbourhood, and the solutions offered have urbanistic and statistician perspectives that overlook the complex communal and neighbourly realities responsible for the configuration of many of the neighbourhoods in Colombian cities.

The above narration of events can lead us to believe that Colombia's political, economic, social, and territorial contingencies have been constructed over social and territorial mobilisations and the decentration and displacements towards the great cities. Violent and non-violent displacement of campesino communities and ethnic minorities, and the abandonment of their homes into the urban conglomerates, has generated a phenomenon of uprootedness, or lack of centre in their ways of life, their forms of living, and modes in which they inhabit and see the world and their culture. This violent displacement generates not only a new way of living but also a new way of thinking with confusing sets of values and beliefs.

The Projects

The challenges of creating cultural projects that articulate to communitarian processes being led by collective action, promoting engagement and producing an impact in a population with the characteristics described above, required a strategic proposal in order to open other ways for multiple dialogues coming from art with the community. For this, a complicity had to be fostered. According to the project director Carlos Uribe a,

> complicity between curators, artists, and neighbours that face the transformative approach of art as a challenge that encourages recognising the other, —in the neighbour—, in a socially difficult atmosphere, an aesthetic dimension in order to potentialise collective creation processes (Ex-situ/In-situ Moravia, 2010, pp. 3-4).

From Uribe's words in the exhibition catalogue, we can infer that there is a radically different understanding of art and the relationships it can generate when articulating to a specific community and its collectives. The project presents the transformative potential of art as uncontested and a force to reckon with. However, the transformation art ought to activate in the community is concerned with how they assume, think, and understand themselves since it is the recognition of the others 'aesthetic dimension' (Ex-situ/In-situ Moravia, 2010, pp. 3-4) that becomes the force that can potentialise 'collective creation'. Thus, in order to do different, that is, to thrust communitarian creativity into other ways of doing and relating to one another, art functions as a medium that allows seeing and thinking differently first.

The intention was for the artists invited to revise the processes *from* and *with* the people and collectives of Moravia (Ex-situ/In-situ Moravia, 2010, pp. 4-5), without imposing any lines of action or specific objectives. An opportunity to find collective possibilities that could care for the neglected and invisibilised urgencies of the community. Projects of this magnitude need time and, thus, cannot be parasitical. Time to recollect data, map, get to know the community, create bonds

of trust and mutual respect and understanding of life, the everyday, and the characteristics of the territory and its dwellers were required.

The name of the project *Ex-situ* refers to the part of the population that had been relocated and decontextualised into peripheral areas. However, their memory, identity, and representation were still part of Moravia. And *In-situ* as the approximation to a subject and/or collective within its natural space. The project was developed with two axles of meaning: Existing imaginaries and urban intervention actions (Ex-situ/In-situ Moravia, 2010, pp. 3-4).

The proposals procured to delve into the dichotomy between progress and development. They attempted to question urban developmental models that still operate in developing nations. Where architectures, neighbourhood dynamics, communitarian organisations, knowledges, aesthetics, identities, bonds of spontaneous neighbourly solidarity, and memories are destroyed. It is a consequence of progressive visions to displace local communities from where they have fostered a sense of belonging through the implementation of planned urbanisations that homogenise all, disregarding that, which had been already created and previously lived. These processes of social development enforced by official institutions impose formal ideas of society over informal everyday communities and civilisational models over spontaneous action. They are repealing all possibilities of dialogues between knowledges. They ignore or pretend to do so that it is in the struggle for the permanent re-foundation of the histories and memories, the communal construction of the neighbourhood, the places of transit and spaces for work —that the modern discourses of progress invalidate— where meanings for the places that are lived are formed.

From these invisibilised and silenced spaces, neighbourly organisation leaders and communitarian leaders that disavow the institutional strategies for controlling the public space feel reticent to concerted constructions of possible solutions, from where to recognise and establish

value judgements and arguments from both stances and visions of living. The projects in *Ex-situ/In-situ Moravia* strived to articulate these situations together with the community collectives. They sought to create mechanisms to generate a constructive conversation from cultural practices, starting from the planning and constructing of public spaces for dialogue and encounters between the artists and the communities.

Artistic practices in community place themselves at the centre of the struggle mentioned above. They insinuate themselves as a communicating and mediation bridge that connects the communities amongst themselves and their environments to generate processes of social reconstruction. In the essay *La Piel del Morro* [The Morro's Skin] (2007), a participant in *Ex-situ/In-situ Moravia*, Natalia Echeverri, understands *Moravia* from a cultural, territorial and aesthetic perspective:

> [g]iven that one of the functions of art is to develop an archaeology of the everyday, of the ways of being and living, I understand the analysis of territory as an artist that dialogues with another emerging discipline as is the epistemic construction of a habitat. Here, the participation of culture is considered the possibility of citizenship creation, where identity is questioned, diversity is cared for, creativity is promoted, and spaces for decision-making are consolidated (Echeverri, 2007, p. 15).

Two critical notions are discussed in Echeverri's quote. On the one hand, the dialogical nature that art is said to have, which through a horizontal approach, operates as an equal epistemological field with 'the epistemic construction' of a living place. On the other hand, the artist understands the cultural dimension in artistic practices with community as a possibility, as mentioned above, as the possibility of the imminent. Culture as something yet to happen that has the potential to create spaces for citizenship.

Under this premise, this could lead to thinking that culture, here seen as a dynamising factor of the social and urban developmental processes (that are never a solidity but, on the contrary, always a possibility of the forthcoming) is transiting through a profound objective and

subjective resignification that can lead to alternative meanings of what is understood by cultural practices. This would amplify and produce horizons for understanding those who configure it as citizens and members of a community.

The project made art an instrument for social transformation that is symbiotically related to Moravia's social, cultural, and productive spaces to create alternative spaces for encounters and dialogue for residents and artists. According to the catalogue, projects were focused on analysing local memory. Moreover, in the interrelations between the diverse cultural groups living in the borough. Campesinos, Native and Black communities, and youth groups played a vital role in getting involved through musical projects that reflected their living conditions. The operational logic of the project sought, above anything, to incentivise other ways of doing and generating approaches between the artists and the collectives and the neighbours of the community in reciprocal modes based on mutual trust. For this purpose, horizontal relationships were built through the contributions of common visions for the collective materialisation of the projects, sprouting from the subsistence or social necessities that the community would be interested in promoting. In a space with very complicated environmental and social problems going through a planned institutional transformation, art aspired to contribute through creative elements in an alternative process of urban spatial configuration.

Presencia Negra y Quieto Pelo [Black Presence and Still Hair] was a project coordinated by the Colombian artist Liliana Angulo. Her work is concerned with the identitary processes of the Afro-Colombian culture. She engages with issues of exploitation and domination, past slavery and contemporary dependency forming dialogues and interactions with communities and their memories. The project had two fronts of action (Ex-situ/In-situ Moravia, 2010, p. 92).[93] The first

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[93] https://archive.org/details/exsituinsitu/Ex-situ%20In-situ/page/n93/mode/2up

one was interested in exploring the idea of *black presence* and *absence*. For this, she began a process for the development of bonds of trust with the black communities in Moravia, reaching a point where she began collecting images from personal and public archives (Fig. 16) and stories and testimonies that were used to generate maps revealing levels of presence that would allow for the recuperation and the strengthening of memory processes in Black communities living in Moravia.

Fig 16. *Ex-situ/In-situ Moravia, Presencia Negra, Quieto Pelo.* 2010, coordinated by Liliana Angulo. Medellín. Photography retrieved from project brochure, 2010.

The characteristics of a neighbourhood formed by a community coming from all areas of the country that had been forcibly and violently displaced made Moravia a powerful place for approaching and inquiring about the displacement conditions of Black communities in the country. Inside the neighbourhood, the artist found their stories and histories, examples of how the communities have organised collectives, utilised resources, and developed solidarity networks

which sourced support for migrating subjects in areas such as work, education, housing, and their everyday.

The project originated through the collective work articulating with a group of *vecinas* [women neighbours] and the support of the *Red de Mujeres Afrocolombianas* [Afro-Colombian Women's Network]. Based on the stories, testimonies, and shared understandings established through gatherings and meetings. Fragments of texts, sentences, statements, and meaningful parts of personal histories were reproduced in silk-screen printing workshops attended by the same women participating in the deliberation process.

Different phrases were screen printed on the posters. For example, one said '*Mamá había vendido todo lo que teníamos allá en el Chocó, pensamos en devolvernos. No volvimos porque era un retroceso*' [Mum sold everything we had in Chocó, and we considered returning. We did not because that would have been a throwback]. This phrase (Fig. 17) would seem to be taken from a conversation. An instance where a person is telling their story when they were being forced out of their home and contemplating returning to where they came from. An occasional Colombian observer that would encounter this poster anywhere on the streets or in their neighbourhood would immediately know that these were the words of a Black person. This is because there is a reference to Chocó. Chocó is the most extensive department on the Pacific coast of Colombia. 82%[94] of its population is configured by Black communities, of which, according to the DANE, 63.1% live under multidimensional

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[94] https://www.dane.gov.co/files/censo2018/informacion-tecnica/presentaciones-territorio/190806-CNPV-presentacion-Choco.pdf

Fig 17. *Ex-situ/In-situ Moravia, Presencia Negra, Quieto Pelo.* 2010, coordinated by Liliana Angúlo. Medellín. Photography retrieved from project brochure, 2010.

poverty.[95] As mentioned above, Black communities in Colombia have been victims of stigmatisation and racism coming both from institutions and society.[96] This process has created a racialised vision of the country's Pacific Coast. The mention of the territory carries with it other ideas like poverty, neglect, corruption, violence, and deficient and challenging conditions of

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[95] See, https://www.dane.gov.co/index.php/estadisticas-por-tema/pobreza-y-condiciones-de-vida/pobreza-monetaria, https://www.dane.gov.co/index.php/estadisticas-por-tema/pobreza-y-condiciones-de-vida/pobreza-multidimensional, and https://img.lalr.co/cms/2021/09/03041919/presentacion-rueda-de-prensa-pobreza-multidimensional-20.pdf.

[96] See, Camargo González, Moraima (2011). Las comunidades afro frente al racismo en Colombia. Encuentros, 9(2),51-60. [fecha de Consulta 16 de Septiembre de 2022]. ISSN: 1692-5858. Disponible en: https://www.redalyc.org/articulo.oa?id=476655976004 and Claudia Leal. "Recordando a Saturio. Memorias del racismo en el Chocó (Colombia)". *Revista de Estudios Sociales*, no. 27 (2007): 76-93. https://doi.org/10.7440/res27.2007.05

existence. The private words made public could be said to map their presence by tagging the neighbourly spaces. In this way, the observer would be geographically situated and culturally predisposed when reading the poster. The second part of the phrase is also telling. Here, it would seem that the person speaking provides their opinion that going back to *Chocó* would be a throwback. This is linked not only to the living conditions that communities must experience in Chocó but also to how these conditions have direct and indirect ties to the culture of racism the country has had and ignored for so long. Furthermore, since the words are in plural, the phrase entails that the person speaking is a member of a family that does not live in Chocó, and one can assume that, in this case, they live in Medellín. This decoding suggests the presence of Black communities in the city, not only in the spaces where colonial and racist imaginaries have located them.

Another example is the phrase *'ser negro no es ser de piel oscura'* [being black is not having dark skin]. This short phrase (Fig. 18) alludes to poverty, lack of opportunity, classism, misogyny and stratification in Colombian society.[97] However, since no territory is mentioned, there is no geographical location. Instead, the phrase talks about the particularities, meanings, and imaginaries that the word *negro* [black] means and has acquired in a racialised context in Colombia.

As mentioned above, the community said, recorded, and curated these phrases in the gatherings with the collective of *Red de Mujeres Afrocolombianas*. The phrase seems to suggest the flattening of the social and cultural situation in the Moravia community. Where, it would seem that, the word black has transcended race and has acquired meanings of marginalisation, poverty,

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[97] See, Flórez Fuya F. (2020). ¿Una imagen es más racista (o clasista) que mil palabras?: "los otros" desde un enfoque semiótico cognitivo y fenoménico. *Revista de Antropología y Sociología: Virajes*, *22*(1), 37-57. https://doi.org/10.17151/rasv.2020.22.1.3, Valenzuela, Luis Carlos (1999). ¿DONDE ESTAN LAS ELITES? «EL PROBLEMADE COLOMBIA». Estudios Gerenciales, (72),33-36. [fecha de Consulta 16 de Septiembre de 2022]. ISSN: 0123-5923. Disponible en: https://www.redalyc.org/articulo.oa?id=21207203, and Rafael Gutiérrez Girardot, "Estratificación social, cultura y violencia en Colombia", *Revista de Estudios Sociales* [Online], 07 | 01/09/2000, Online since 10 December 2018, connection on 16 September 2022. URL: http://journals.openedition.org/revestudsoc/29018

and exclusion. Under this premise, it would be possible to assume that everyone in Moravia is, or at least could *feel*, Black. The posters suggest that poverty and segregation are more visible than skin colour and, as such, equally exclusionary. Moreover, they suggest that the binding social phenomena in the neighbourhood are notions related to struggle, fighting, resisting, invisibility, neglect, ostracism, and dismissal experienced by the community.

Fig 18. *Ex-situ/In-situ Moravia, Presencia Negra, Quieto Pelo.* 2010, coordinated by Liliana Angúlo. Medellín. Photography retrieved from project brochure, 2010.

The posters placed in public spaces in the city's neighbourhood and other zones function as collective and cultural imaginary *visibilisers* that alter the aesthetic normativity of urban spaces. Considering the posters were not located in the normative assigned spaces for advertising signs, instead, everywhere else, these fragments of conversations and personal stories establish a presence in the everyday inside the metropolitan area. Enabling self-representation processes that unveil the communities' factual circumstances of life, related to the places of origin and the problematic situations that led them to where they are, which have been historically hidden by intransigence and indifference.

Fig 19. *Ex-situ/In-situ Moravia, Presencia Negra, Quieto Pelo.* 2010, coordinated by Liliana Angúlo. Medellín. Photography retrieved from project brochure, 2010.

The second front of action was concerned with an ancestral tradition. The project brought together Black hairdressers that specialised in creating traditional braids and hairstyles. In addition

to visualising the hairstyle technique and the aesthetic cultural representation the styles imply, the project also aimed at mapping the tradition (Fig. 19).

The history of Black hairstyle is deeply related to resistance, as suggested by Colombian writer and journalist Dominique Rodríguez in her book, *Obraviva 2006- 2011: Arte en Comunidad: Programa Nacional del Banco de la República* (2012). Hairstyles were often used by enslaved people that had escaped as route maps to find hidden gold that could be used to buy a person's freedom or to serve as a map to locate seeds in order to grow food. Likewise, they worked as social manifestations, as the styles used by widows or single women would differ when taking part in community celebrations (Rodríguez, 2012, p. 64).

Angulo's interest in hairstyling is based partly on the fact that it articulates the actual and active moment with a permanent recreation of traditional processes. Hairstyling is a social and communitarian ritual. Hair salons function as places of encounter that share the meanings of the cultural history of an ethnicity that has been marginalised in all aspects of society in Colombia. There is a performativity to them, which functions as a daily practice and has been taught and passed down by generations. The project operates as an invitation to recognise and acknowledge aesthetic codes linked to a community's individual and collective body. It enables spaces for reflection and dialogue between cultures that can work towards understandings of diversity that question how the notions of Black culture have been instituted.

'Putting the pencil to work' is a loose translation of the original in Spanish, *Echando Lápiz*. This project is coordinated by Colombian artists Graciela Duarte and Manuel Santana and has been active since 1993. *Moravia* had its version in 2009. It has seen versions in different cities in Colombia and around the world in Sao Paulo, Barcelona, and Mexico City. For the artists that developed this project, there is no notion of authorship. Art here is employed as a tool that

celebrates dialogue and communication. The project is oriented towards observing and drawing

plants from the everyday environment of the participants and residents of the places where the

program has developed. More than developing experiences for the assistants, the project aimed for

everyone to expand or even create a personal sense of art cultivated from an individual's sensible

experience and not from academic or 'specialist expert' understandings (Ex-situ/In-situ Moravia,

2010, p. 86).

Fig 20. *Ex-situ/In-situ Moravia, Echando Lápiz.* 2010, coordinated by Graciela Duarte and Manuel Santana. Medellín.
Photography retrieved from project brochure, 2010.

The exercise is simple. Every participant has a field diary, a pencil, and a support board.

The guidelines asked the collaborators first to find a place where plants could be seen. Typically,

this place would be an everyday space with which the person is acquainted. Once the space has

been decided, there ought to be a consideration of the characteristics of the plants within the space,

such as colour, texture, proportion, and shape. Lastly, if there is known information like the name

of the plant, whether it has medicinal or ornamental use, write this next to the drawing, the date and observations, or even conversations taking place at the time of the drawings.

The project operates as a modest and quiet urban botanical expedition (Fig. 20) that aims to stimulate the observation and awareness of our surroundings. Hoping that through drawing, the participants can nuance the understandings and relationships they have with their environment, and, if possible, add findings in the form of meaning and symbolism for example, to the local context in which the realities of the collective are then shared, and a broader narration of memory and belonging could be made possible.

Colombian artist Nicolas Cadavid coordinated *El Morro es Suyo* [The Morro is Yours] in 2008. It was a project that reflected on urban planning and the construction of large, standardised surfaces for public spaces. It questioned the imposition of homogenising ways of living, public behaviour, and transit (Ex-situ/In-situ Moravia, 2010, p. 77).

When engaging with the community of El Morro, the artist recognised in the residents an existing dissatisfaction with the situation. Especially with the fact that they were never invited to participate in the plans and designs of the construction of the spaces planned for development and even less invited to contribute to how they would be relocated (Ex-situ/In-situ Moravia, 2010, p. 77). Having been disregarded all their life by the institutionality of the State, it was no different at the moment when there was a bureaucratic eye observing their living conditions. Instead of them being empowered to change their spaces and conditions of livelihood, all efforts were focused on them not being able to inhabit their space anymore.

Over several months the project collected over 185 opinions, ideas and desires that had never been asked. These were reduced to single words: *'colegios, hospitales, policia, vivienda, parques'* [schools, hospitals, police, housing, parks] (Ex-situ/In-situ Moravia, 2010, pp. 77-78).

Fig 21. *Ex-situ/In-situ Moravia, El Morro es suyo.* 2010, coordinated by Nicolás Cadavid, Medellín.
Photography retrieved from project brochure, 2010.

Fig 22. *Ex-situ/In-situ Moravia, El Morro es suyo.* 2010, coordinated by Nicolás Cadavid, Medellín. Photography
retrieved from project brochure, 2010.

They were made visible through the ironic use of public billboards and screen printed by the residents over fluorescent green and orange fabrics reminiscent of the ones used by developers in construction sites (Figs. 21 & 22).

The words screen printed in fabrics raised as flags were testimonies of the social scarcities of the neighbours that, in the dialogue promoted by the neighbourly collectives and the artist, were able to emerge. The community decided to use the bamboo posts that the Mayor's office had installed as symbols of the recuperated zone, that encircled the area to be relocated. In this way, the symbol used by the city government of the captured territory of *El Morro* was appropriated through an intervention that gave a symbolic voice to their rights never respected, and their shortcomings never surpassed.

Colombian artists Andrea Solano and Argentinian artist Ludmila Ferrari coordinated a project with Moravia's a collective of hip-hopers and rapper residents. They called it *Moravia: Alto Voltaje* [Moravia: High Voltage]. The project worked with musical groups, mainly from *El Morro*. Youngsters who had been the first line of resistance when the government's bulldozers arrived (Fig. 23). In order to be able to approach the collectives with a proposal for an artistic experience that could work as a political intervention, Solano and Ferrari initially mapped the places where these resistance movements and actions had taken place (Ex-situ/In-situ Moravia, 2010, p. 98).

Hip-Hop as a cultural phenomenon had been apprehended by the young residents of the neighbourhood. Their lyrics, however, at the time were generally related to random situations. The proposal coming from the artists was to think of Hip-Hop from the realities of *Moravia* and use the collective's musical practice as a vehicle for the expression and manifestation of their experience in the process of relocation and urban transformation. A process that many of the collaborators in the project came to see as a second forced displacement that they were facing.

Fig 23. *Ex-situ/In-situ Moravia, Alto Voltaje.* 2010, coordinated by Andrea Solano and Ludmilla Ferrari, Medellín. Photography retrieved from project brochure, 2010.

The methodology of the project aimed to create spaces for reunion, talking, sharing, composing, organising artistic-academic events, and support groups to strengthen the community (Ex-situ/In-situ Moravia, 2010, p. 98). Also, living the everyday in the spaces of the neighbourhood that are walked, talked, and lived, creating bonds of trust. According to Ferrari, it was through the reflections in these encounters that the collective spirit of the project developed: 'creating communitarian art does not consist in doing art with a community, but in a way, to become part of that community, though an artistic mediation' (Ex-situ/In-situ Moravia, 2010, p. 98). This

premise made it difficult for the project to be established and, initially, to be received with enthusiasm by the young collectives. The artists found resistance and distrust in any institution or outsider wanting to reach the communities inside El Morro. After a life of exclusion and marginalisation, the development of trust needed much more than good intentions. Moreover, neighbourhood rivalries persisted, a reality that the project decided to address (Ex-situ/In-situ Moravia, 2010, p. 98). The initiative took two years, and much of it was trying to lay a foundation solid enough so that different collectives from rival areas, and the artists wanting to articulate with them, could create an atmosphere of trust in order to be accepted and then find ways to work collectively.

After months of building spaces of trust, they decided to produce a magazine. It was printed through alternative media called *Ecos entre Huecos* [Echoes in between Holes], where the youths created a space to manifest their reflections through drawing, photography, and writing. To achieve this, creative writing and photography workshops were organised before the first publication (Ex-situ/In-situ Moravia, 2010, p. 98). The photographs of the hip-hopper collectives in the publication called much attention in the neighbourhood. As a result, they decided to print posters and place them around public spaces where the groups would assume their identity through their poses, their attire, their symbols, and the relationships that they had established with the spaces where they lived, as places of resistance and identification. They produced a CD with proposals from different musical collectives that had been past rivals and organised a concert for the neighbourhood residents centred around the notions of relocation. The process generated moments and places to have a space and talk about memory before the disappearance of the neighbourhood. Soon after, 35 years of community efforts were scheduled to be bulldozed. Only the memory imposed by the State would be the one to remain.

The project *Burrukuku Tejiendo Identidad* [Burrukuku Weaving Identity] was coordinated by Colombian artist Paola Rincón (Fig. 24). It was a project that focused on working with native groups residents of Moravia. A multiplicity of discriminations confronts the realities that the members of native communities face in Colombia. The communities are discriminated against for being indigenous, poor, doing different, speaking their language, and having their cosmology. Added to this, women also face discrimination for being women. This range of discrimination comes not only from the institutionality but also from the general population.

Institutionally the native peoples of Colombia live in a legally blurred margin. They represent 3.5% of the population of the country. According to ACNUR, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, they have been involved in a growing tendency of the displaced indigenous population from their territories to the cities.[98] This phenomenon is predominantly a violent process due to the internal conflict.[99] Their reality concerning legal rights, respect, and legitimisation of their territories and cosmologies is still a struggle that they battle daily.

In September 2007, the General Assembly of the United Nations approved a declaration over the Rights of the Indigenous Communities that had over twenty years of deliberations.[100] Colombia was the only Latin American country that abstained from voting and, together with Canada, New Zealand, and Russia attempted to change the declaration's content concerning wording as sensitive as self-determination. In 2016 the country voted for the resolution, only to clarify to the Nation that the United Nations resolutions are not legally binding.[101] Socially, the sentiment in Colombia is still permeated with colonial attitudes towards indigenous communities.

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[98] https://www.acnur.org/fileadmin/Documentos/RefugiadosAmericas/Colombia/Los_indigenas_y_el_desplazamiento_forzoso_en_Colombia.pdf

[99] https://www.dane.gov.co/index.php/138-espanol/103-grupos-etnicos

[100] https://press.un.org/en/2007/ga10612.doc.htm, https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/declaration-on-the-rights-of-indigenous-peoples.html

[101] https://revistaartefacto.usta.edu.co/index.php/univer-citario/78-colombia-no-reconoce-el-derecho-a-la-autodeterminacion

There is a persistent distrust and animosity against their beliefs and the communities not being part of the catholic normativity. They face rejection and marginalisation in the cities. Generations from all communities are growing up in cities uprooted from their cosmology, and children are growing up with Spanish as their language (Tascón, 2007).

Fig 24. *Ex-situ/In-situ Moravia Burrukuku Tejiendo Identidad.* 2010, coordinated by Paola Rincón, Medellín.
Photography retrieved from project brochure, 2010.

Considering this situation, Rincón began by finding ways to communicate and approach the native families, some of whom had arrived decades back to Moravia. She contacted the *Cabildo Chibcariwak*, a social organisation dating back to when the country was a colony.[102] The association is configured by indigenous authorities and manages all communitarian projects. It represents all the members that live outside of the communities' territories. With their help and guidance, they embarked on the arduous task of identifying all the native community members living in the area, suggesting that their condition of invisibility was extraordinarily strong.

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[102] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3vqTXKTbibQ,
https://www.medellin.gov.co/irj/go/km/docs/pccdesign/SubportaldelCiudadano_2/PlandeDesarrollo_0_15/InformacinGeneral/Shared%20Content/Documentos/instrumentos/PLAN_DE_VIDA_CHIBCARIWAK_MARZO2012.pdf, and
https://www.onic.org.co/comunicados-regionales/3029-comunicado-a-la-opinion-publica-del-cabildo-chibcariwak-de-medellin-antioquia

Fig 25. *Ex-situ/In-situ Moravia Burrukuku Tejiendo Identidad.* 2010, coordinated by Paola Rincón, Medellín. Photography retrieved from project brochure, 2010.

The initiative was received with interest from the members of the *Embera Chami* community. They were surprised to be considered precisely because of being indigenous. In the past, the only organism that had expressed interest in fostering and strengthening their ancestral traditions and costumes had been the Cabildo (Ex-situ/In-situ Moravia, 2010, p. 95). The first approach was developed around the exchange and generation of traditional practices of the community. The process was supported by the visit of the spiritual leader Taita Domingo Cuantindio of the *Inga* community as part of an effort to reinforce ancestral ceremonies. Gatherings that celebrated through chants, traditional cleanings, and sharing knowledges from other communities, remembering the harmony they historically have had were organised. Children also made part of the project. Even though the communities live very close to the riverbanks of the Río Medellín, the pollution circumstance of the river at this part has not allowed them to have a symbiotic relationship with it as they normally do in their territories.

A trek to the river source up in the mountain was organised. Children, together with their families, organised a traditional dance ceremony and an offering to the river (Fig. 25). Slowly, the project began to be about creating spaces within an urban setting for the community to be able to be themselves and self-represent as members of a native community that live in a city. While these spaces were opening, weaving workshops were organised, led by the elder women that spoke the native tongue. Children that had not been able to learn their language were taught in their native tongue the name and significance of animals that have cultural meaning to their community. Likewise, taught to weave representations of them. The name *Burrukuku* given to this artistic project means *spider* in *Embera Chami* and relates to weaving identity.

Recognising the collective rights of indigenous communities in Colombia is a reaffirmation of a cultural reality. Where identity processes are established and developed based on being part of and belonging to a specific community, the acknowledgement of native groups as *peoples* is the starting point for broader recognition of autonomous understandings of their contemporary situation, which can allow for a rebuilding of their identity, and the unwavering guarantee of economic, social, political and cultural rights.

Colombian artist and Professor Alejandro Araque coordinated *Susurros* [Whispers]. This artistic and documentary project aimed to produce a visual and sound archive that would help recover thirty-five years of the Moravia neighbourhood through narrations and stories told by the residents. The starting point was an approach to the neighbourhood focusing on the context corresponding to the relocation of the residents of *El Morro*. It also considered the urban transformation of the city. It was an ample project that lasted from 2008 to 2012, developed by the articulation between youths, social leaders, and elders.

The project was centred on the visibilisation and the recuperation of neighbourly stories told by the protagonists of such histories (Ex-situ/In-situ Moravia, 2010, pp. 80-81).[103] Aiming to share the collective experiences with the entire community of *Moravia* using digital and audio-visual media, the action aimed to *whisper* fundamental constitutive stories of the community through artistic devices and proposed the opening of spaces for reflection, understanding displacement, violence, and social exclusion from a local point of view.

The histories narrated by the young hip-hoppers and rappers unfold the realities lived and understood by all.[104] The project articulated with *no2somos+*,[105] a media laboratory created in 2007 by a group of young minds interested in inquiring about social and communitarian themes through the spaces where technology, education, and art entangle. The project ends up revolving around three axles of intervention: one, the production and development of workshops with hip-hip communities for the use of free software tools (Fig. 26), this, in the interest of creating musical compositions and audio-visual editing that could strengthen local communitarian artistic processes and amplify their reach through digital media. Two, the realisation of roundtables aiming to generate reflections across communication, local economies, neighbourhood memory, collective creation, self-determination and media activism. And three, the creation of musical proposals written and performed by the community youths, inspired by their perilous realities and reflections on social, political, economic, and cultural contexts. These axles of intervention produced a series of micro-documentaries that narrate the collective history of the neighbourhood through the

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[103] https://archive.org/details/exsituinsitu/Ex-situ%20In-situ/page/n81/mode/2up?view=theater
[104] See: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_hKmO9wjcmI
[105] For more information see: https://repositorio.unal.edu.co/handle/unal/78369 and
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a7pIG1ViwKc

residents' personal stories, the processes they went through from their places of origin, the displacement they were subjected to and the arrival and rooting in Moravia.[106]

Fig 26. *Ex-situ/In-situ Moravia, Susurros.* 2010, coordinated Alejandro Araque, Medellín. Photography retrieved from project brochure, 2010.

Moments of violence, invisible barriers, missing persons, disappeared and absented loved ones, social mobilisations, campesino displacement, urban struggles, cultural diversity, places of encounter, imagined histories and strengthening communitarian bonds were all discussed by the community in the roundtables held (Ex-situ/In-situ Moravia, 2010, pp. 80-81). The workshops brought up notions of associative work, shared authorship, and collective property. They

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[106] See: https://www.youtube.com/c/AlejandroAraqueMendoza/videos

functioned as laboratories for social cohesion that, together with the project, created an interest in the community about their histories, music, and art.

Pila Social / Bloque La Huerta y Milpedazos [Social Pillar The Garden Block and A Thousand-Pieces] was the project coordinated by the Colombian artist Manuel Zúñiga. It was a proposal interested in a practice from and with the community that could operate as a support mechanism for enhancing creative processes in non-artist subjects that could open possibilities for access to cultural rights (Ex-situ/In-situ Moravia, 2010, pp. 112-113).[107]

Opportunities to work with collectives inside marginalised communities are often found in the crevasses, and frequently it is there where the project develops. Subtle steps are taken to avoid contacting and working with a community from a position of power that the outsider conceived as saviour/expert in part, given through the status of authority with something to teach can have. Avoiding these perceptions of verticality is challenging. The malleability of a project developed prior to the initial contact that can adapt and transform accordingly to the needs and collaborations with the community, that central to its ethos, is an empathy capable of uniting diverse cultural contexts and backgrounds is crucial. As with other examples in Moravia, trust is the primary notion that a communitarian artistic project must develop. Only through trust can a genuine interest in becoming part of a collective ability to promote a cultural experience be attained.

Through deliberations, the project ended up having two ramifications: the first one, *Social Pillar*, consisted of the visibilisation of the language and a cultural grammar[108] that had culturally developed in the communities (Ex-situ/In-situ Moravia, 2010, pp. 112-113). Using the word *Pila*

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[107] Catalogue: Ex-situ/In-situ Moravia. Prácticas artísticas en comunidad. Medellín, COMFENALCO, 2010.

[108] Understood by cultural grammar is a system that structures social relations and interactions; it encompasses all the aesthetic normativity and behavioural codes that determine the object's representations in what is perceived as socially convenient and ordains the multiple daily rituals of a society. In: Blisset, Luther., Brunzels Sonja. Grupo autónomo A.F.R.I.K.A. 'Manual de la Guerrilla de la Comunicación'. Barcelona: Virus Ed., 2000, p. 235.

[Pile] as a reference, the participants would gather found objects in their daily dwellings. Bricks, stones, paper, and other objects were piled in different columns (Fig. 27). Depending on the number of objects per column, the corresponding alphabetical letter was assigned. In this way, ephemeral object-words were placed around public areas and in front of their homes.

Fig 27. *Ex-situ/In-situ Moravia, Pilar Social, Bloque La Huerta y Mil Pedazos.* 2010, coordinated by Manuel Zuñiga, Medellín. Photography retrieved from project brochure, 2010.

The second ramification, *Mil pedazos,* was developed with relocated families. The premise considered was that a community separated from its place of origin loses visibility and acknowledgement (Ex-situ/In-situ Moravia, 2010, p. 114) and that these notions are recuperated once the community that still preserves bonds gathers once again, even if this encounter is in a different or temporal place. The initial idea of collectively constructing a public sculpture from found objects of their landscape morphed into an audio-visual production in the discussions. It ended up being a documentary where the residents were the protagonists of their own story.

Through narrations, testimonies, and stories of the neighbourhood's origins, they commemorated and made miniature models of the first houses (Fig. 28) they built when they arrived decades back. The documentary featured a representative of the building society responsible for the urbanisation project. It argued how urban planning ignored, neglected, and undervalued the dynamics of relationships that people experience and foster with the territory. In the eagerness for progress and development, cultural aspects were demolished, and the collective that had been forming was now atomised.

Fig 28. *Ex-situ/In-situ Moravia. Mil Pedazos.* 2010, coordinated by Manuel Zuñiga, Medellín. Photography retrieved from project brochure, 2010.

De descarte [Of discard] was a project that aimed to articulate pedagogical, ecological, and artistic processes that consisted of developing training workshops for creative recycling and sustainable design, hoping to create an economy in the community that could help with the family's sustenance. Coordinated by Colombian artists Natalia Restrepo and Natalia Echeverry, the workshops were centred on learning how to create toys, lamps, jewellery, and book bindings made from materials seen as trash otherwise.

El futuro está en la basura [The future is in the trash] was how workshops were referred to by the community (Ex-situ/In-situ Moravia, 2010, pp. 89-91). Most of the collaborators, having a recycling background, saw other ways to relate to 'garbage'. Opening a space that, instead of commercialising in bulk as they had done previously, would now be done through their creative output, was a program that strengthened their collective. *El Morro* had been built by an accumulation of sediments, and its residents struggled to open and create spaces for metropolitan survival for decades. In the constant construction and deconstruction of dwellings, houses were built, and spaces were appropriated, invaded, and produced. This perpetual transformation was not only physical, but the inhabitants coming from all sorts of cultures and whereabouts had created a pluricultural environment that cohesively and organically mutated upon the urgencies and necessities that the everyday would bring.

It can be seen that the projects in *In-situ/Ex-situ Moravia: prácticas artísticas en comunidad* raised processes that generated a recognition of marginalised ethnic communities and stigmatised sociocultural practices, while others, somewhat more belligerent, sought to achieve symbolic revindications by articulating to cultural actions and processes in the communities. However, I argue that the project's most potent contribution to Moravia's sociocultural development was the inquiry and permanent dialogue created between the artists, other agencies, organisations, and the

communities, through knowledge exchanges and the collective construction of public spaces. These new spaces of encounter were possible due to the encouragement of the revision of memory, the dialogue between social knowledge(s), cultural imaginaries, the creation of networks, and the establishment of communitarian pedagogical practices, through collective elaboration, all of these carved through the work developed for the procurement of trust.

The process of collective elaboration requires a strategy of social immersion. As such, I argue that the projects of *In-situ/Ex-situ Moravia: prácticas artísticas en comunidad* could be understood as social igniters. They were activating social debates, questioning development processes, imposed living conditions and desired ways of being and doing. They fostered and encouraged local resistances from an array of different artistic devices. Operated based on the community's urgencies, generated articulations, and social interactions, built networks of trust that allowed for a more expansive conception of their community and promoted collective re-appropriations of spaces and construction of others.

Everything was generated through mutual responses between artistic creation, collective action and social manifestations. The projects were able to visibilise ways of feeling and dwelling, past histories, and cultural origins. They collectively coordinated and were not limited to developing representations of realities or artistically triggering reflections about specific circumstances. Instead, they were active constructors of new realities and ways of being in governmental and institutional vacuums.

Moravia lived in a process where the community was left in the diaspora through overwhelming exclusion methods. However, through the *In-situ/Ex-situ Moravia* project, the community and its collectives articulating to artistic practices was able to find mechanisms that allowed them to revindicate their space in the city and, in the same way, generate collaborations

with local social and cultural organisations and academic sectors too. I argue that it is precisely in this liminal space that limits the modern city and its planned urbanistic models with the *comunas* [slums] in Medellín, a space, which in this example is Moravia, where the *In-situ/Ex-situ Moravia* project was deployed, is the space where artistic practices in community operate as mediators that articulate to cultural actions in communitarian processes. In their mediation operation, they become a communication and relationship bridge in the centre of the conflict described above, connecting communities in their memory and identity fields to other forms of social, cultural, economic, private, public, governmental, and academic organisations.

3. Social Organizations that articulate with art subjects using artistic tools to develop communication devices and useful knowledge.

Práctica Artística en La Grieta

Local Context

Práctica Artística en la Grieta was a communitarian artistic practice project that began in 2007 and continued until 2011. The project was conceived as Ludmila Ferrari's proposal for a Visual Arts degree dissertation at Pontificia Universidad Javeriana of Bogotá. Her interest was located in exploring the limits of contemporary artistic practices in the violent context of Colombian society. As explained by the Argentinian artist, the project departs from her disenchantment with art as a privileged institutional discourse and examines possibilities for generating a politically artistic practice (Ferrari, 2014, p. 25). The project was divided into two main fronts of action: *Tejedores de Historias* [Weavers of Histories] and *Cultus.*

Práctica artística en la Grieta aimed to awaken, revive, and give value to the social, cultural and ethical forces profoundly obliterated by violence, displacement, and dispossession through the development of cultural practices by means of an artistic mediation. It attempted to find possibilities for such artistic practices to empower subjects facing adversity, such as the refugee communities and victims of the internal conflict.

The project was developed in alignment with people forced to leave their territories that had arrived at Ciudad Bolívar between 2007 and 2011. Ciudad Bolívar is a peripheral area and the 19th District of Bogotá, whose territorial formation has been historically arranged through a long series of internal migrations going back decades.

The 19th District has been constructed and continues to be constructed through successive captures and recaptures of land. As a peripheral urban settlement of Bogotá, the district has had particularities in its construction, both in a tangible sense and in an amplified social space pertinent to observe. Under this premise, understanding the context of landownership and forced displacement in Colombia can help locate the questions raised by a project like *Práctica artística en la Grieta* in a dimension beyond immediacy and allow for the disclosure of its historical ramifications.

As mentioned in part 1, since the 19th century, there has been a slow-burning process that reached its peak in the first decade of this century concerning land in Colombia. On the one hand, the Colombian armed conflict is a consequence of an extended class struggle that emerges as a response to the perpetuation of oligarchical structures and the concentration of land and power (Tobón, 1979, pp. 42-69). Conversely, the current displacement dynamics result from a complex entanglement between armed conflict and agricultural development (Bello 2003, 2004). Claiming

that territorial dispute and the contestation of space is one of the roots of the Colombian conflict would not be a stretch.

The settlement in Ciudad Bolívar has historically been formed by migrating rural populations into the city. Most cases are related directly or indirectly to the presence of armed actors in their places of origin (Bello, 2004, pp. 1-3). Its origins date back to the 1940s as an informal settlement. The first *invasion* neighbourhoods were formed in the periphery of Bogotá due to the displacement caused by *La Violencia* (see part 1). By 1980, 250,000 people were living across numerous neighbourhoods.[109] A decade later, the area was accepted as part of the capital city and became the 19th District. Despite being a part of Bogotá, a condition that grants the inhabitants legality of settlement and access to the economic, political, cultural and social policies of the city, the measures and approaches implemented by the governmental institutionality have been demonstrated to be inadequate. *Invasion* is still the dominant way to construct new neighbourhoods in the area.

Ciudad Bolívar is one of Colombia's most extensive receptors of violently displaced communities. Its population growth reflects this. In 2020, 776,531 inhabitants were estimated to be living in the area.[110] This situation makes it one of the most significant informal settlements in the country. Out of the 256 neighbourhoods configuring the district, only 146 have been legalised.[111] Added to this, many houses have been categorised as in *incomplete residential state*. Amongst other things, this classification implies that health and safety conditions are extremely limited. Furthermore, insecurity is exceedingly high, and the leading cause of death in the district

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[109] See, https://www.ucl.ac.uk/dpu-projects/Global_Report/pdfs/Bogota.pdf
[110] DADP (Departamento Administrativo de Planeación Distrital), a branch of the Strategic Planning Secretary of the government of Bogotá. http://portal.dapd.gov.co/noticias/bogota
[111] Idem.

is *violent death by firearm*.[112] Observing the national data, Ciudad Bolívar could be seen as an allegory for the country's history: an area constructed through successive displacements, violence, and territorial dispossession. It continues to be a silent witness of the failures of the State and the insurmountable human costs that the decades-long war continues to create.

The urbanisation of Ciudad Bolívar can be divided into three main stages. All of them have been generated as a direct consequence of the armed political conflict in the country. As mentioned above, the first stage took place in the 1940s. At the time, the country was amidst *La Violencia*, and confrontations in rural areas created mass displacements. A phenomenon that especially affected the departments of Tolima, located southwest of Bogotá and Casanare, Northeast of the capital. The first settlers came from these areas and founded the first neighbourhoods at the mountain skirt. The second stage was between the 1960s and 1970s. These years developed a two-fold migration. To the one germinated by political violence, another one was added coming from industrial and labour efforts made by the national government. Settlers in this decade built their homes in the middle part of the mountain. The last stage developed in the 1980s, when large numbers of displaced and dispossessed populations, this time not only from rural areas but also from other cities in an urban-to-urban migration, arrived at the upper part of the mountain.

This informal beginning of the urbanisation and the socioeconomic context that the arriving populations were facing conditioned the urbanisation process of the mountain. The precarity of the materials used to build their homes and the deficit or lack thereof of public utilities made the population's livelihood conditions less than satisfactory. Decades passed, and many neighbourhoods were constructed. The mountain that hosted the displaced communities became their source of livelihood. What was once green and exuberant in natural resources had

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[112] Secretaría Distrital de Salud de Bogotá: http://www.saludcapital.gov.co/

transformed into a massive building material mining operation responsible for the accelerated growth that Bogotá had at the time, turning it into the mega city we see today.

The mining operation and subsequent deforestation brought to the area severe environmental problems. Added to this, the mines diverted the rivers in order to exploit their beds. The mountain lost the natural support for the absorption of rainwater, which meant that during the rainy season, the rivers would flood, reclaiming their natural course, and families would see their homes with a metre of water inside. Moreover, the population developed respiratory problems, and the river became highly contaminated.[113] Today, Ciudad Bolívar is still a mining zone. In 2000, a project to legalise and configure an industrial mining operation was approved due to studies[114] indicating that the soil is rich in mining commodities like clay and other building materials. Paradoxically, close to 1 million people live in or near an area where the soil holds an estimated 889 million tons of resources, however, communities live in either relative or absolute poverty.[115]

In 2001 the government approved law 685, proclaiming the area to be land for extractive mining and declaring it of national interest, which prevents any natural or legal person from being opposed to the operation.[116] The law allows mining companies to have rights over the surface land and the subterranean soil, fostering the privatisation of the resources for exploitative reasons.

Against this tension coming from national and local governments, articulated with national and international private mining corporations, popular social organisations have struggled to save

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[113] See, https://noticias.canal1.com.co/noticias/habitantes-de-ciudad-bolivar-dicen-que-contaminacion-estaria-causado-afecciones-respiratorias/, https://www.semana.com/actualidad/articulo/la-car-prendio-las-alarmas-por-mala-calidad-del-aire-en-ciudad-bolivar-bogota/202216/

[114] Ingeominas, https://www.sgc.gov.co/

[115] https://www.dejusticia.org/column/la-desigualdad-que-respiramos-en-bogota/, https://www.rcnradio.com/bogota/ciudad-bolivar-y-usme-las-dos-localidades-con-mayor-pobreza-en-bogota, La Rotta Latorre Marcela, Torres Tovar Hernando Mauricio. 2017, *Explotación minera y sus impactos ambientales y en salud. El caso de Potosí en Bogotá.* Saude Debate, Rio de Janeiro V.14, N112, pg. 77-91.

[116] https://www.anm.gov.co/sites/default/files/ley_685_2001_0.pdf

their natural resources and demand better living conditions. Several organisations aware of the problematic situation, like *Amawta*[117] have articulated with *La Red Distrital en Defensa del Medio Ambiente y el Agua*[118] [District Network in Defence of Environment and Water] to strengthen spaces for communication and visualising their actions. Together, they have developed proposals and activities in the territory seeking the revindication of their rights. The *Red Distrital en Defensa del Medio Ambiente y el Agua* is a local public agency that serves as a support institutional body for social, popular or neighbourly organisations cooperating in the diffusion of the work developed by the groups.

The projects

Considering the narration above, the project did not originate from a question of what artistic production could be done *for* a place like Ciudad Bolívar. Instead, it inquired and researched how to articulate an artistic practice *from Ciudad Bolívar*. According to Ferrari, *Práctica artística en la Grieta* was developed through the understanding of the artistic practice as a complex act that oscillates between the two denotations of the word *representation*: in the artistic sense of presenting again (re-present) and in its political use 'being in the place of', 'being representative of' (Spivak, 1988, p. 276).

As part of the prerequisites to obtain a degree in Colombia, every last-year student in all faculties must participate in a social program called *práctica universitaria social* [undergraduate social practice].[119] Students are either encouraged to find a suitable social organisation to work for or,

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[117] https://tuamawta.com/tag/colombia/
[118] https://justiciaambientalcolombia.org/que-es/
[119] See, https://www.javeriana.edu.co/web/practicas, https://www.javeriana.edu.co/hoy-en-la-javeriana/tag/practica-social/, https://www.javeriana.edu.co/documents/15838/6764463/Pr%C3%A1cticas+sociales+en+la+PUJ%2C%20Elab.+OFRSU%2C%20may+2015/03a04ff5-b318-4430-a1c6-a51091a4d89b, and

through the university, register with one of the social organisations that already has projects with the academic institution. In 2007, as part of the social program, Ferrari was introduced by the university to a centre for social services. Such centres serve as communitarian spaces in neighbourhoods with challenging social and economic circumstances in Bogotá. They are often used for council and informal meetings that deal with all sorts of essential necessities. This particular one was being used as a reception centre for newly arrived violently displaced families and as a space to gather and find support and information on how to start a new life in the city. It was located in the *Caracolí* neighbourhood in Ciudad Bolívar and made part of *Vidas Móviles*[120] [Mobile Lives], a project led by *Universidad Javeriana* dedicated to internal refugee and vulnerable population characterisation in the district. It was centred around providing medical attention to the people arriving in the borough and extended to the Potosí and Jerusalén neighbourhoods.

According to Ferrari (2014, p. 37), she had difficulties understanding her role as an artist in this project. Initially, she was responsible for retrieving data regarding the refugee population arriving daily in the district. There were two main strategies for this task: one would be to go knocking door to door around the neighbourhoods, and the other was to travel to concrete points like central squares or invasion neighbourhoods within the district, that according to the *Unidad de Atención y Orientación* [Attention and Orientation Unit], a governmental organisation for the care and guidance for victims of displacement, new arrivals would go seeking shelter.

After some necessary negotiations, she managed to get the approval for a proposal of a cultural intervention that implied an artistic experience to be developed in the context of her social service (Ferrari, 2014, p. 39). The initiative was further developed and detailed after months of

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https://www.mintrabajo.gov.co/documents/20147/59926232/PROYECTO+RESOLUCION-
+CONDICIONES+EJECUCION+PRACTICAS+LABORALES.pdf
[120] https://vidasmoviles.weebly.com/, https://www.javeriana.edu.co/compromiso-social/vidas-moviles

working in the centre for social service. The interviews she made permitted her to realise that the majority of the people she talked to were women; many of them were single mothers, and many others were communitarian mothers.[121] Most had arrived to Bogotá because of violent and forced displacement (Ferrari, 2014, pp. 37-38).

The recollection of information in homogenised formats allowed Ferrari to see the partition between data and everyday life (Ferrari, 2014, p. 38). A division that goes beyond the manifested necessities like economic support, possibilities for social insertion, work, education, and well-being that displaced populations have. There was an infinity of non-explicit or instrumental necessities that required equal attention. I argue these were urgencies rather than priorities. Complex necessities, that questioned the structures of power absorbing the refugee population as victims of war.

Being violently displaced means arriving at a place that one *is not* from. Being a stranger. Additionally, they are no longer the subjects that they had been since now, they were seen and assigned the label of *victims*. Victims became a signifier they had to *inhabit*, as it identified and represented them. A circumstance that generates a palpable urgency in people's identity. It was under these circumstances and through actual involvement with the community that the initial idea emerged. The first project aimed to reach a point of understanding of the specificities of the context in order to, as far as possible, propose a medium for the narration of how the community imagined and represented themselves. For this, a permanent space for collective conversation was opened and slowly nourished with tools. This led the participants to find a place to narrate their

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[121] Communitarian mothers is a system of early childhood care where working parents can leave their young children in community houses while at work. Similar to day-care, however, the idea of communitarian motherhood started as a collective effort in order to provide care and a safe place for young children without any institutional support. For many years the *mothers* would work voluntarily and get no compensation. The program has been institutionalised today, and mothers are paid half the minimum salary for full-time work. See, https://www.eltiempo.com/archivo/documento/CMS-12222504 and https://www.icbf.gov.co/programas-y-estrategias/primera-infancia/acerca-de/madres-comunitarias#:~:text=Las%20madres%20o%20padres%20comunitarios,de%20Hogares%20Comunitarios%20de%20Bienestar.

past lives and the way they lived in their places of origin, simultaneously, a place to discuss their new life in the city.

Their histories were told through a series of maps developed in a range of patchwork quilts. In the unsettled space between that which was manifested and that which could not be voiced, an opening for the problematisation of the category of *victim* appeared. A terrain for the negotiations of identities broken by violence and displacement took shape, and a territory for the pursuit of self-recognition as historical subjects loomed. It is in this liminal space where *Práctica artística en la Grieta* was able to emerge.

The following words by Yara Cristina Castro can help illuminate the two main reasons the workshop for *testimonial cartographies*, one of the primary axles of *Práctica artística en la Grieta, Tejedores de historias* [Weavers of Histories], had at their base,

> I really like to capture our feelings on the fabric, to declare
> where we come from, who we were… We did not come from disposable homes or a slum…
> That is what people would like us to feel… No! We want people to feel and see that we…
> had land (Castro, cited in Ferrari, 2014, p. 38).

On the one hand, the project responded to the constant spatial component in many of the life narrations of the participants. Such histories that were constructed through memory, at times collective at others personal, were made of descriptions of the place and position of their homes regarding the church, the river, the chicken coop, the distance from their home to the neighbour's house, the village, the town, and later the city (Ferrari, 2014, p. 51). On the other hand, the idea of constructing personal maps engages the drive to generate ways of seeing and representing, opposing those imposed by the hegemony of consensus and the muted supremacy of common sense (Gramsci, 1994, pp. 215-221).

The workshop on testimonial cartographies can unfold the use and meaning of the word geography. Stretching it from a polysemantic and broad definition that epistemically means earth drawing to a notion that sees it as an open possibility to develop multiple *drawings of the earth* from every perspective and every visual choice. The workshop encouraged the participants to create personal maps derived from their experiences and imaginaries. These maps functioned as maps of the unknown, charts of diasporic processes, paths taken, and the hardships encountered on the routes, where the representation domain gets confused with the domain of reality (Ferrari, 2014, p. 57).

Fig 29. *Práctica Artística en la Grieta, Tejedores de Historias.* 2008-2011, coordinated by Ludmilla Ferrari. Bogotá. Photography by Ludmilla Ferrari.

Through collective deliberation, a participant proposed the maps to be made through patchwork quilts (Fig. 29), as they were familiar with the technique. This entailed several benefits

for the project (Ferrari, 2014, p. 47). Most importantly, there would be no instance where artistic instruction would be necessary. The participants did not have to learn a skill in order to be able to give way to their expressions. Other benefits would be the fabrics' mobile character and the work's modular nature. Initially, twenty participants, women, children, and men, met every Tuesday and Thursday. Within the structure of the project, the nature of the workshop was never one in which a technically taught artistic experience would be generated. No *expertise* was being transferred. There was no notion of student or teacher. The objective was to find ways in which muted narrations would encounter possibilities to become visible through the collective production of knowledge, using a piece of fabric as material support for recording the personal histories that had taken each of them to Ciudad Bolívar (Ferrari, 2014, p. 48). The project would have over one hundred and sixty participants in three years.

The second strategy developed by the artist was the project *Cultus* (Fig. 30). It strengthened the processes of cultural memory of the participants in the conversation centres mentioned above. Since most of them were campesinos, violently displaced from their territories, a powerful exercise would be the production of a space where their knowledge would be used and reproduced among the group and, if possible, spread through the neighbourhood. This action would generate a sense of empowerment, allowing the participants to emerge as new political subjects facing adversity.

For this, they found a vacant lot that was being used as a debris deposit which they adapted as a vegetable garden. They sourced and received assistance from the Botanical Garden of Bogotá, which provided fertile soil, seeds, and the technical support of a botanical engineer. They constructed an organic vegetable and flower garden in the *Caracolí* neighbourhood. In the project's first stage, a group of 15 people, together with the engineer, created workshops of knowledge exchange specific to the type of weather, altitude and humidity related to the garden's location.

The experience of the collective was that for every recommendation and scientific method suggested in order to achieve or improve something that emerged, three empiric methods were proposed for the same objective by the participants (Ferrari, 2014, p. 40).

Fig 30. *Práctica Artística en la Grieta, Cultus.* 2007-2011, coordinated by Ludmilla Ferrari. Bogotá. Photography by Ludmilla Ferrari.

They organised themselves to care for the garden, distributing chores, and developing watering, planting, harvesting and pest control schedules. In the second stage, they constructed the seedbeds and nurseries, the ditches were dug, and the first seeds were planted. By 2008 more than

22 different vegetable species were being cultivated, and some flowers too. The garden became a way to produce food for their homes. They could acquire the seeds for the garden's sustainability and even managed to commercialise the surplus articulating to the community through the *Caracolí* central market.

The vegetable garden awoke some of the social forces numbed by violent displacement: living together in a community, working, and being able to transform their environment and becoming. *Cultus* was the epicentre of *Práctica artística en la Grieta* (Ferrari, 2014, p. 43). It was the space that consolidated bonds of trust with the refugee population. It worked as a territory in which communitarian land was again possible. In its micro space, unexpected articulations were created, stories were shared, relations were cultivated, and knowledges were honoured. *Cultus* was a place where objects were not part of the background, making the processes and the collective communitarian articulation the primary attribute, what Stuart Hall would call signifying practices (1997, pp. 257-268).

On another front, artistic practices developed by and from a community of non-art subjects, as in *Cultus*, activate an occupation. A spatial appropriation in opposition to economic encirclements. It can visibilise the emergence of new identities and representations of political subjects, generating real possibilities for other expressions of municipal survival: to be and become a different way.

Its operation is a multiplicity of becomings that is not tied to the singularity of an author (artist), but rather, a plurality, where the nature, direction, and thought process of the project in real-time were collectively addressed. In the senselessness of violent displacement, *Práctica artística en la Grieta* created agency for a collective self-representation. The project transformed and

reorganised the principles of representation that conditioned the communities' social development and ruled their cultural space.

Tejedores de historias continued going simultaneously. The project received support from *Fundación Gilberto Alzate Avendaño* [Gilberto Avendaño Foundation], a public cultural organisation (Ferrari, 2014, p. 52). With this, they were able to establish different spaces in three different neighbourhoods, *Potosí*, *Caracolí* and *Jerusalén*. Between 2008 and 2009, the project received support from the *Centro de Perdón y Reconciliación* [Centre for Forgiveness and Reconciliation], allowing them to have the necessary funding for two more years. In 2009 paramilitary groups threatened them, and later that same year, the project won the award for *Nuevas Prácticas Artísticas* [New Artistic Practices] granted by the Ministry of Culture.[122]

By this time, two collaborators that had been involved since the beginning, Sara Castro and Laura Romero, were leading the project without the direct participation of the artist. They established the *Aprendiendo a Pescar* [Learning to Fish] cooperative, through which they were able to commercialise the quilts that allowed them to retain the spaces where they met and began organising and helping the people that even today arrive every day to the neighbourhood, as refugee victims of forced displacement.

Perhaps the emphasis on memory and self-representation and the insistence on the identity of concrete subjects in a situation of forced displacement bring *Práctica artística en la Grieta* closer to the practices of 'situation and act' that Nelly Richard (2009) relates to the current moment of citizenship and artistic practices, in which *art* is not the end goal. On the contrary, artistic practices and the imaginaries of art are efficient ways of cultural administration and empowerment of some

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[122] https://vlex.com.co/vid/recomendacion-designado-seleccionado-65545592

actors against other actors —local in this case— and the role of the artist is a type of mediation between the artistic, political, and social spheres, and the spatial impact it supposes.

4-
Shaping Urbanisms

Artistic Practices, Collective action and the production of public space

As suggested above, it is possible to see how Latin American cities share problems like poverty, inequality, institutional weakness, low governance, corruption, economic dependence, and political subordination. Nonetheless, cities in the region also have differentiated socio-political processes. However, it is possible to identify a tendency that has emerged over the last three decades. Although this does not necessarily bind them in a homogenous group, according to Eduardo Nivón (2006), there appears to be a democratisation process and the pursuit of diverse strategies for social inclusion and coexistence that have exponentially increased in the subcontinent (Nivón, 20006, p. 45).

As already discussed, many of the democratization processes Nivón is alluding to are mediated or encouraged in unprecedented ways by artistic and cultural practices, as has been the case in Colombian cities such as Medellín and Bogotá. Despite the urgency manifested in such actions, there are many strategies for social inclusion used by communities that tend to exaggerate and stage their own cultural and identity attributes, as suggested by Yúdice in the examples discussed in part 2. On the other hand, the forms of social organisation around the common urban resources have been affected not only by the urban transformations but also by new technologies and the proliferation of cultural alterity and difference discourses. These aspects hinder, to a large

extent, long-term temporalities and fixed ideological adscriptions as the one's classical social movements were said to have. However, I would like to argue that it is possible to understand the emergence of new socio-political subjects amidst the identified decentration currently happening in Latin American societies.

In the conceptual path that moves from the category of *art* into *artistic practices in community*, the socio-historical process of the post-war years dissipated the ontology of art to assume it as immersed in the unstable and changing social field, formed through asymmetric power relationships between institutions and agents. The dissemination of circuits, and the possible locations in the social sphere, reveal a political decentration with the capacity of influence over institutional and citizen formations. The constant rhetoric appearing in current artistic and activist practices and narratives concerning autonomy and emancipation, which many grassroots social organisations have appropriated for their causes, can, in this way, be understood. Despite this, it is possible to recognise that these are essential engines of tactical tools and city policies, whose vehicles are artistic practices in community articulated to collective action, as shown in Fig. 31, that develop in urban spaces and have been presented throughout the investigation. In her study *Las Prácticas Artísticas y su Relación con la Ciudad y sus Políticas* [Artistic Practices and their Relationship to the City and its Policies] (2003), Colombian scholar Adriana Urrea sees this collective impulse as a potential of radical change against the establishment: 'artistic practices', she writes, 'despite their strong links to the economic and social powers, have consolidated as an important transgressor force' (Urrea, 2003, p. 148).

The relationship between artistic practices in community and their capacity for social transformation attests to their political dimension that shows multiple articulations between art, culture and places for everyday living. It would be helpful to characterise certain artistic practices

in community that are articulated to collective actions in which the political horizon, the participation, and the central role of art is dislocated or redefined. Since these no longer function through assumptions assigned to the historical relationship between art and politics or the transformative power of art. On the contrary, the ideas and imaginaries encircling the role of art are decentred to direct attention to the spaces in which they happen and to the agents that participate and reproduce such articulation.
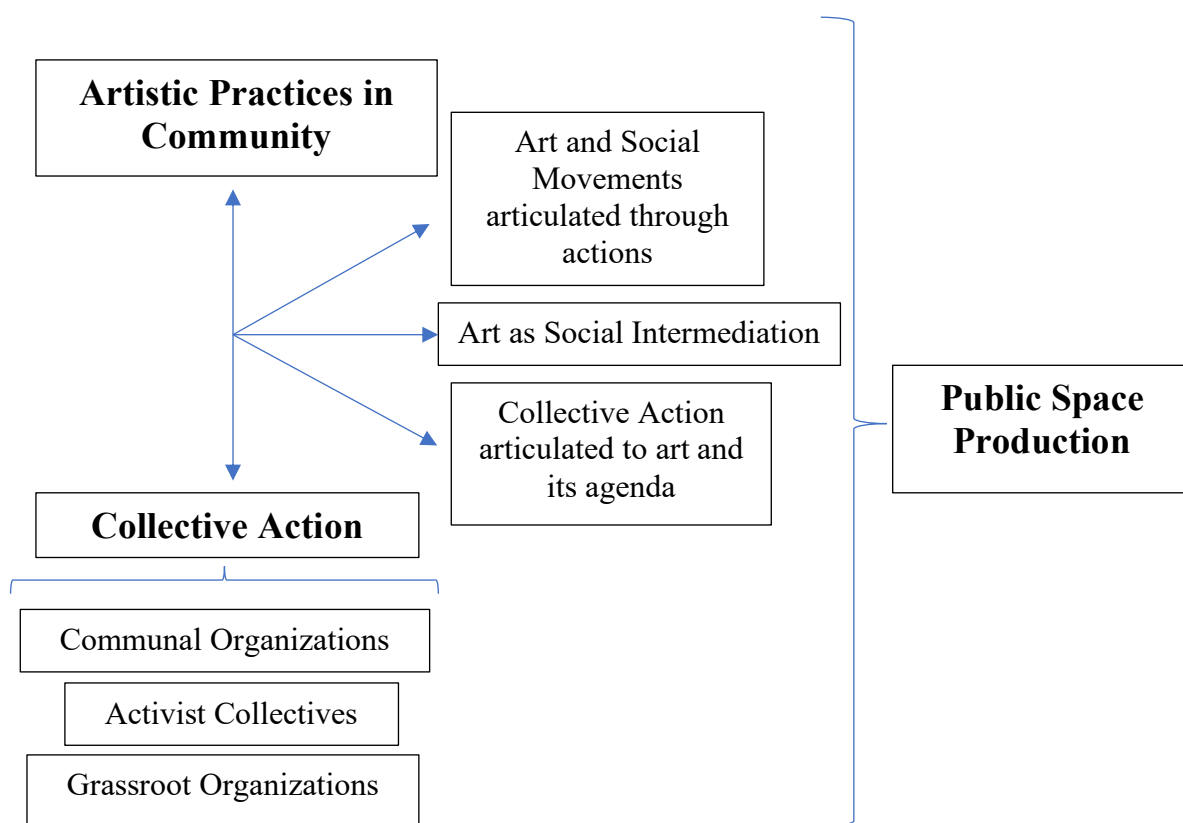
Fig 31

Many are the forms in which the ideas and imaginaries around identity, ethnicity, age, social condition, and gender are employed as resources in collective actions seeking appropriations of urban territories. Throughout the long democratisation process that has been occurring in Colombia, the numerous citizen collective action initiatives have, in specific ways, established a

political agenda to confront other actors, both public and private, interfering in what they consider to be fair, and subverting the meaning around what was thought of the potential reach of social organisations. I have argued that in projects like *Ciudad Kennedy: memoria y realidad, In-situ/Ex-situ: Moravia* and *Práctica artística en La Grieta*, one can see examples of the communitarian, popular and activist dimensions that seek the amplification of their visibility and their claims for justice.

Urban transformation and spatial production through artistic practices

The examples specified in part 2 of this document present the social actors that intervene in the management and relationships of production, circulation, and social appropriation of projects inscribed in contemporary artistic practices articulated to spaces in the city. Additionally, an analysis of their meanings —that are always open—, their conditions of production, and their employment of urban common resources. The notion of common spaces reveals these practices as collective interventions, oscillating between the public and the private while simultaneously incorporating the interests of all the actors involved and recognising the resources and the capacity for intervention at stake in a particular moment. Such practices build relationships between different actors, such as artists, city residents, local governmental representatives, managers, and promoters that represent the interests of private companies.

Under this premise, a political contradiction that should not be ignored can be identified. There are certain types of spatial practices that, operating in the name of culture and art, are incorporated into processes that are, in fact, detrimental to the interests of the residents of a sector. Examples of these phenomena are gentrification processes and the economic or socio-cultural restructurations of urban spaces. The case of El Dorado Avenue in Bogotá that was analysed in part 2 and the cultural interventions articulated to urbanistic interventions produced what I would

like to describe as gentrifiable spaces. That is, spaces configured by residential zones that can be rehabilitated or even replaced. In both cases, this process generates a capital gain in land and property, often in zones where low-or-modest-income residents live and can be displaced, especially if they happen to be renters and not owners (Checa, 2011, p. 7).

To balance this dilemma, it is possible to accept that the agreements reached by the communities, the governmental institutions and representatives, traders and business people, and members of civil or religious organisations, amongst other possible social actors, suppose the emergence of alternative governability modes in the form of strategies for the exercise of power, that are the result of non-permanent economic, social, or electoral alliances. However, since the possibility of the alliances breaking, for reasons such as breach of agreement, or inadequacy to fulfil challenges that may inadvertently occur, is strong, these alliances should be made more robust.

In his book *Territorios posibles. Procesos, Lugares y Actores* [Possible Territories. Processes, Places and Actors] (2009), Argentinian social researcher Horacio Bozzano believes that these agreements for action tend to be simultaneously contradictory, conflictive, complementary, cooperative, and cohesive (Bozzano, 2009, p. 101). He understands them as having real possibilities for social change and, on the other hand, working for the interest of the State and the market economies (Bozzano, 2009). As mentioned above, resources coming from different actors can, at the same time, stem from different public functions, private investments, social communication media, religious organisations, activist collectives, NGOs, unions, and social organisations. This implies that the agreements can seek different environmental, religious, economic, social, pedagogic, and/or cultural priorities. Thus, according to their objectives, other forms of *governance* could be established in specific city areas.

Cultural governance recognises the emergence of social actors in its configuration. In light of governmental vacuums or as a measure to alleviate a sentiment of social unrest produced by socio-spatial exclusion through different strategies, cultural governance succeeds in intervening institutions and cultural discourses in the process of territorial organisation, as shown in the specific cases studied in this investigation. Hence the importance of recognising the impact, the organisational capacity, the power of assembly, and the knowledge produced in their acting, that artistic practices in community articulated to forms of collective action can have.

The projects studied in this investigation were selected based on their complexity in terms of the extent of reach and impact that communitarian artistic practices can have on the ideas of the public. These projects indicate how artistic practices articulated to collective action have opened spaces in procuring the right to the city and strengthening citizen processes. Indeed, the lengths that these perspectives can encompass are modest and seek not to establish a general theory on the matter. This smaller scope, however, recognises the capacity of influence under the right conditions on a larger metropolitan scale.

The dissimilar interests that cultural organisations defend in the different neighbourhoods in Colombian cities can be explained if seen through the lens of the multi-faceted internal conflict the country continues to endure. Within the seventy-six-year armed conflict, from the end of the 90s, there has been a process of mass rural territorial abandonment by campesino communities, native communities, and afro-communities that, to save their lives, have had to find shelter in the cities. Thus, the name 'war urbanisations' that Colombian anthropologist Pilar Riaño gives to the slums that have emerged in the cities of Colombia in the book *Geografías del Desplazamiento, Territorialidades y Movilidades Urbanas* [Geograhies of Displacement, Territorialities and Urban Mobility] (2006) would seem to be accurate.

It is because of these conditions that some community organisations in Bogotá have chosen, in recent times, to develop artistic and cultural practices as ways to obtain State recognition and as an efficient tool to operate short and middle-term social transformations in their neighbourhoods. At the same time, the cultural, educational, and artistic fields have gained recognition in the institutionality of the city on their role in metropolitan construction. This can be seen by the recent interest from the private sector in appropriating cultural circuits that additionally seek to strengthen such enterprises through lobbying legislation and public funding.

As mentioned above, this investigation identifies and presents some cases of articulations between artistic practices and collective action in Colombia. As seen in the discussion proposed above, the primary wager of the artistic practices in community presented consisted in occupying, enunciating, representing, and/or coproducing public space. However, this capacity to cluster and reproduce social, political, and economic resources that artistic practices in community hold to promote the production and transformation of public space can, on many occasions, produce contradictory effects, as could be, for example, homogenised spaces that are presented as organic and harmonious productions, that do not display conflict or resistance from social actors and the institutions involved in its production. This situation is more usual than we are happy to accept and diminishes the political dimension that defines *public space* as a socio-spatial production in permanent conflict.

It is easy to see how an active interdisciplinarity in the research becomes necessary for studying and explaining these situations and the conditions of artistic practices and social actors. The complexity of the specific historical, cultural, economic, political, environmental and technological conditions assembled in an urban conglomerate cannot be explained through an independent study area. This discussion is not new. Authors such as David Harvey and Milton

Santos have offered clarifying points on the restrictions that exist for most of the population for accessing expert knowledge and resources in the new stage of globalisation.[123]

Holding on to rigid and questionable compartmentalisations on knowledge fields, different to the ones represented by the place of enunciation of a researcher concerned with urban issues, restricts the possibilities of contrasting vacuums of knowledge on contemporary phenomena. This is especially true in Latin American cities. The immediate consequence is the functional reduction of the problems in question, thus upholding the knowledge vacuum that could have motivated the indignation. The dialogue between knowledges could be the most significant task that can be observed for artists, intellectuals, cultural managers, and committed actors. David Harvey (1985) affirms that the imperative job of all of the specialities would consist in articulating spatial shaping and social processes in the city; 'we should harmonise our thinking of them', he writes, 'on the contrary, we will continue creating contradictory strategies for solving urban problems' (Harvey, 1985, p. 20).

In the book *Entre los Deseos y los Deberes* [Between Desires and Duties] (2003), Colombian scholar Ana María Ochoa indicates that, the imagination and ideation of the role that art can have in the revindication of cultural rights for minoritarian and marginal groups have today transformed to the extent that it resembles the ones of politics, since it strategically can obtain interventions for the betterment of neighbourhoods (Ochoa, 2003, p. 23). Nonetheless, it is essential to recognise that even though public cultural policy has resulted from citizen participation, they are also part

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[123] See Santos, M. (1974). Geography, Marxism and underdevelopment. Antipode, 6(3), 1–9, (1979) The shared space: The two circuits of the urban economy in underdeveloped countries. London and New York, Methuen, La Naturaleza del Espacio. Técnica y Tiempo. Razón y Emoción. Barcelona: Ariel; and Harvey, D. (1973) Social Justice and the City, The Urbanization of Capital (1985), Spaces of Hope (2000), and Rebel Cities: From the Right to the city to the Urban Revolution (2012)

of the crisis. Paraphrasing Brazilian urban planner Jaime Lerner[124] in Latin America on several occasions, the city has been the problem, not the solution, for its inhabitants.

In Bogotá and Medellín, current cultural policy has surpassed the notion of artistic field strictly as the matter of their action. Cities have succeeded in translating many of the necessities of the inhabitants that often surpass what is commonly associated with culture into tangible instances and support networks. They have also recognised the central role that culture plays in conflict resolution, the proposal of agreements, democratic governance strengthening, and likewise, as a tool for defending the rights of all social organisations.[125]

In this scenario, particularities and differences in identity have been uncovered as essential arguments for mobilising political agendas from minorities that have established their ethnicity, gender, or age as their primary vehicle of social visibility. Today in Colombia, the cultural and the artistic are understood and employed as valuable means and operational tools against the State and other hegemonic powers present in social life.

To close this chapter, I argue that artistic practices assumed in an isolated manner with respect to culture and the other spheres of social life cannot play a relevant role in the transformation of an urban conglomerate. Strategic and permanent articulations are necessary on different scales for political, economic, and social processes. The complexity, number, and extent of the relationships between the different actors can illuminate paths to effectively influence the construction of the public. It is urgent, then, that cultural actors continue to advance in the

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[124] https://elpais.com/diario/2005/07/31/cultura/1122760804_850215.html

[125] See Duque Franco, Isabel. (2015). La cultura como estrategia de transformación y promoción urbana en Bogotá y Medellín. *Revista de geografía Norte Grande*, (61), 25-43. https://dx.doi.org/10.4067/S0718-34022015000200003, Arteaga Arredondo, Isabel, y "De periferia a ciudad consolidada Estrategias para la transformación de zonas urbanas marginales." *Revista Bitácora Urbano Territorial*, vol. 9, no. 1, 2005, pp.98-111. Redalyc, https://www.redalyc.org/articulo.oa?id=74800909, and Alguacil, Julio. (2008). 'Public space and political space: The city as the place for participation strategies'. *Polis (Santiago)*, *7*(20), 199-223. https://dx.doi.org/10.4067/S0718-65682008000100011

construction of the public and the common spaces in the neighbourhoods so that a transformation of the socio-spatial relations in the city is made possible.

New cultural actors, ways of doing, social, and cultural articulations, and forms of meaning

Every social group has particular modes of doing. That is, every community develops cultural processes, ways of behaving, living, being, seeing, saying, thinking, and relating to one another in different circumstances —relationships that materialise in private and public contexts— behaviours that go from specificities in particular moments as could be a funeral, a wedding, or a date of the year in which a form of celebration is manifested, to the everyday, and its reality occurrences. Under this premise, it is feasible to accept that communities can construct their own spaces, which would mean that a group is able to self-determine their own spatiality. This affirmation supports the continuous struggles for meaning, representing, controlling, tagging, or appropriating the spaces of their everyday.

In this context, it could be feasible to understand spatialised social relationships in city neighbourhoods as a reflection of vertical power exercises and their corresponding resistances. This understanding implies that, to a more significant spatial heterogeneity, there is greater intensity, social heterogeneity and *flexibility* in the social relationships. Colombian sociologist Orlando Fals Borda refers to these heterogeneous spaces as 'flexible containers' (Fals Borda, 2000, p. 41). In his book *Acción y Espacio: Autonomías en la Nueva República* [Action and Space: Autonomies of the New Republic] (2000), he states that 'these flexible containers we shall designate them as "spaces of the people" since it is there where the main popular resistance and intellectual struggles against globalisation articulate' (Fals Borda, 2000, p. 41). In this passage, Fals Borda refers to the defence

of popular spaces and foundational values of Colombian ethnic, cultural, and natural diversity. Thus, considering and strengthening territorial entities, the communities, the resources they can gather, and the ecosystems and biospaces they inhabit (which implies protecting and, at the same time, potentialising the regional and national public roots) constitutes a form of resistance and a strategy for collective survival. On the contrary, territorial homogeneity would be explained by the effective exercise of 'vertical powers and authoritarianisms of big capital' (Zibechi, 2008, p. 89). The cases presented are good examples of heterogeneity, flexibility, and intensity of the social actors.

The exercise of mobilised cultural differences in the ways of doing is the source of the heterogeneity. Culture, then, or cultural practices —which include artistic practices in community— have acquired a certain emancipatory power. The cases of *Ciudad Kennedy: memoria y realidad*, (2001-2003) and the projects *Práctica artística en la Grieta* (2007-2011) and *Ex-situ/In-situ Moravia* (2008-2011), I argue, evidence that force. The relationship diagrams presented in this part aim at differentiating the, at times, numerous social actors involved and the resources that they mobilise or bring on to action in their ways of doing for the production of other and new public spatialities (Fig. 32, 33, and 34).

As already mentioned, the recognised heterogeneity of the case studies is represented by the cultural, political, and livelihood complexity specific to them. Likewise, in the different locus of enunciation, that are possible to recognise of the actors involved. These entail an implicit productive dialogue between social wisdom and expert knowledge from a diversity of disciplines and an evident wealth of artistic resources deployed to materialise the initiatives.

Despite the adverse conditions and according to what has been observed in Bogotá and Medellín throughout the investigation, it is possible to say that one can still find a diversity of

cultural practices, amongst them artistic practices, that have allowed many communities to resist the exertion of power, coming from State and private actors. For example, the violently displaced women in the *Potosí*, *Caracolí*, and *Jerusalén* neighbourhoods that participated in the project *Práctica artística en la Grieta*, Women facing what could be called a double-edged adverse condition. That is, being displaced by political violence from their places of origin and, at the same time, discriminated against because of being women in a predominantly masculine power environment. I argue this case is able to evidence different modes of organisation, management of resources, rapid response to changing contextual conditions, and the integration to a complex field of relationships conformed by a private university, a social centre, communitarian leaders, public institutions, a public middle school, and illegal armed groups. This case demonstrates the social capacity for appropriating heterogeneous resources that became common when made to be spatially productive. Examples of this can be observed in the outputs of the projects *Cultus* and *Tejedores de historias* that compose *Práctica artística en la Grieta*, in the forms of organic agronomy knowledge, a vegetable plot, artisan entrepreneurship, technical assistance, and all the management tasks that are required when seeking national and local cultural and artistic institutional assistance.

Finally, a critical aspect to mention is the presence of artistic practices in community in the form of strategic mediation that this project presents, and not as a point of arrival or purpose in Ferrari's proposal. The relationships in the diagram below (Fig. 32) show how the artistic practice operates as a mediation between otherwise unconnected national, local, private, social, and neighbourly actors. These forms of heterogeneous relationships allow for the creation, configuration, and organisation of other modes of public space. This can be seen when observing the whole project, that is, *Práctica Artística en la Grieta* in its totality, since this allows us to perceive the possibilities for the amplification of non-tangible spaces as democracy and cultural rights.

However, tangible spatial occupations and configurations are also observable when analysing the projects *Cultus* and *Tejedores de historias* separately.
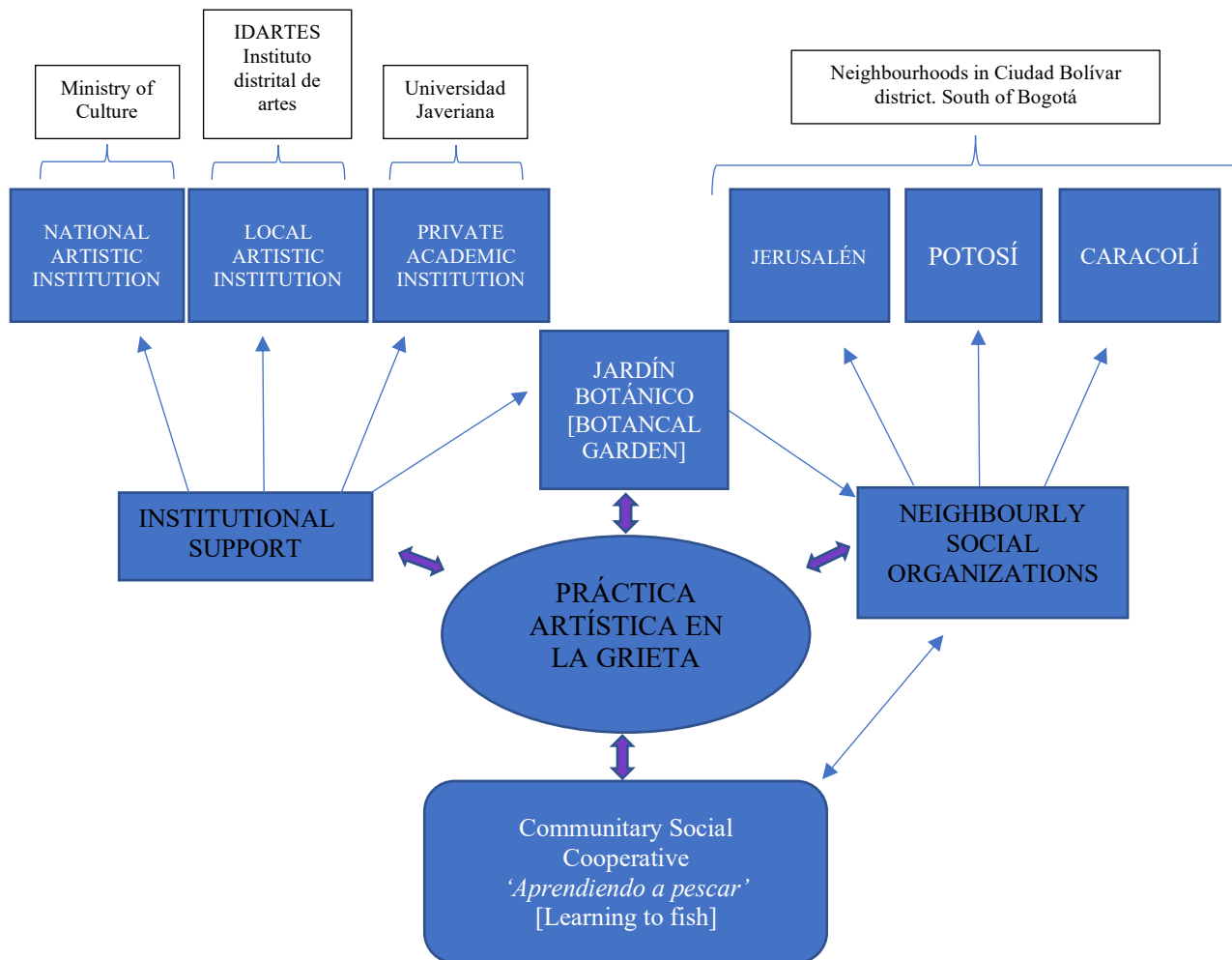

Fig 32. Relationships diagram of *Práctica artística en la Grieta*

Examples of mobilised cultural differences in the ways of doing can also be found in the projects that make part of *Ex-situ/In-situ. Moravia*. The case of the project *Burrukuku, Tejiendo Identidad* [Burrukuku, weaving identity] coordinated by Paola Rincón collaborating with the violently displaced native *Embera Chami* community living in Moravia, that sought to strengthen and foster

identity and memory processes, knowledge exchanges, and the recognition and reaffirmation of their cultural reality. In a similar mode, the project *'Presencia Negra y Quieto Pelo'* [Black Presence and Still Hair] coordinated by Liliana Angúlo in collaboration with Black communities in the neighbourhood, that mapped the presence of Black communities across Moravia and Medellín and simultaneously made visible their stories and heritage. These are other examples of heterogeneous relationships and diverse modes of social organisation that also imply gathering resources and responding to specific changing contexts to create a field of relationships between collective action organisations, and, communities, artists, social, cultural, and ethnic organisations, local businesses, cultural centres, local administration, public and private universities, and urban planning governmental institutions, that were articulated throughout the individual projects.

When observing from a macro-scale, *Ex-situ/In-situ Moravia*, one can also see a complex social heterogeneous articulation that, I argue, was capable of creating public space through the ensemble of all the previously mentioned social forces. The project was developed in articulation between the local governments, a cultural centre, artists, cultural promoters and collective action organisations in response to a metropolitan urban intervention for the demolition of a neighbourhood and the re-location of the inhabitants, which involved processes of change in the uses of the land. As mentioned above, this tendency in urban design toward the homogenisation of public space is inversely proportional to the composition of social heterogeneity that I am discussing. Therefore, this could explain why the diagram (Fig. 33) shows a predominant role of the local governmental institutionality and the artistic institutionality articulated to the socio-cultural neighbourly organisations.
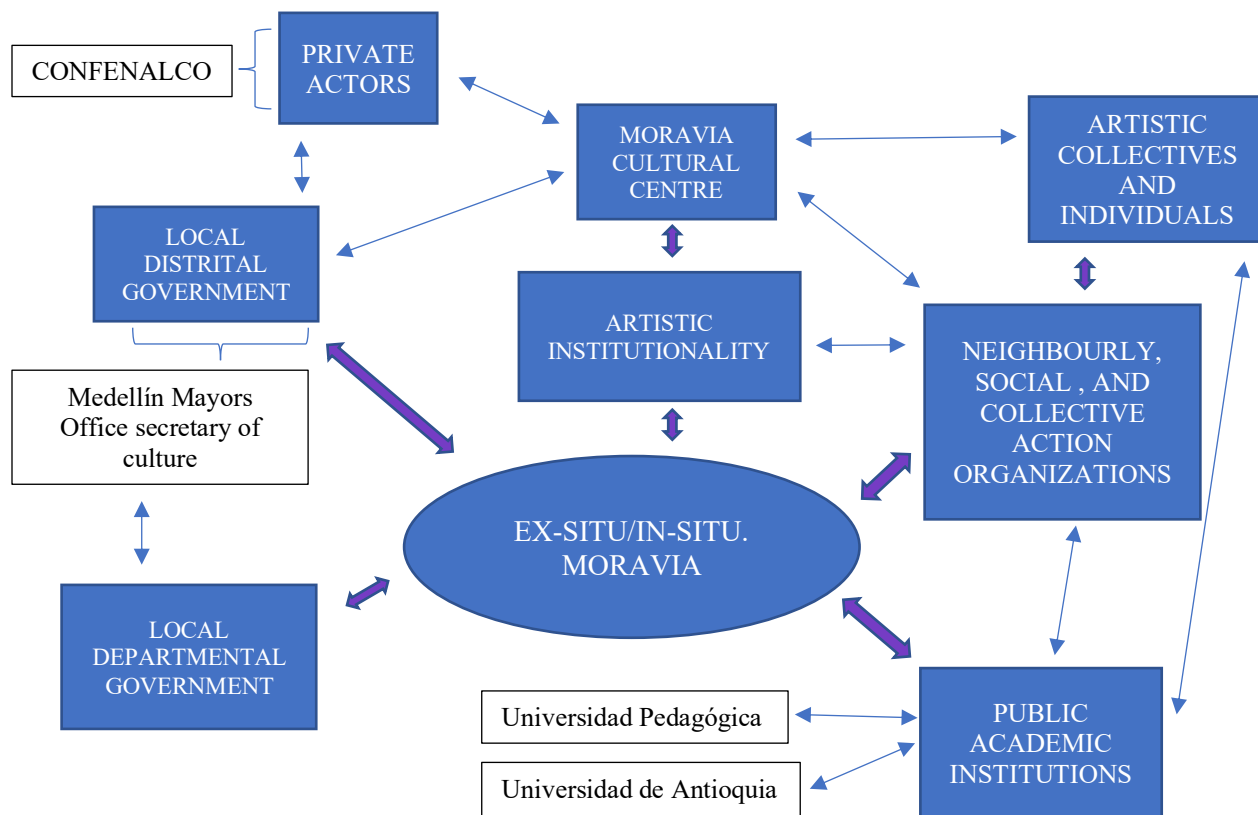
Fig 33. Relationships diagram *'Ex-situ/In-situ. Moravia'*

Lastly, there are observable recognised heterogeneities in the articulations (Fig. 34) in the cultural, historical, social, political, and everyday experiences specific to the neighbourhood's complexity in the case of the project *Ciudad Kennedy: Memoria y Realidad*. A project seeking to discuss historical processes of collective memory and identity construction and the possible articulations and relationships generated by them in daily social life. The projects developed by the artists in collaboration with the neighbours created alternative narrations and possibilities of relating to the past in order to construct and be able to see other possible futures. This process was able to construct new public spaces of collective memory through articulations from a public university,

teachers, artists, local communal and neighbourly organisations, local social public organisations, small businesses and neighbours.
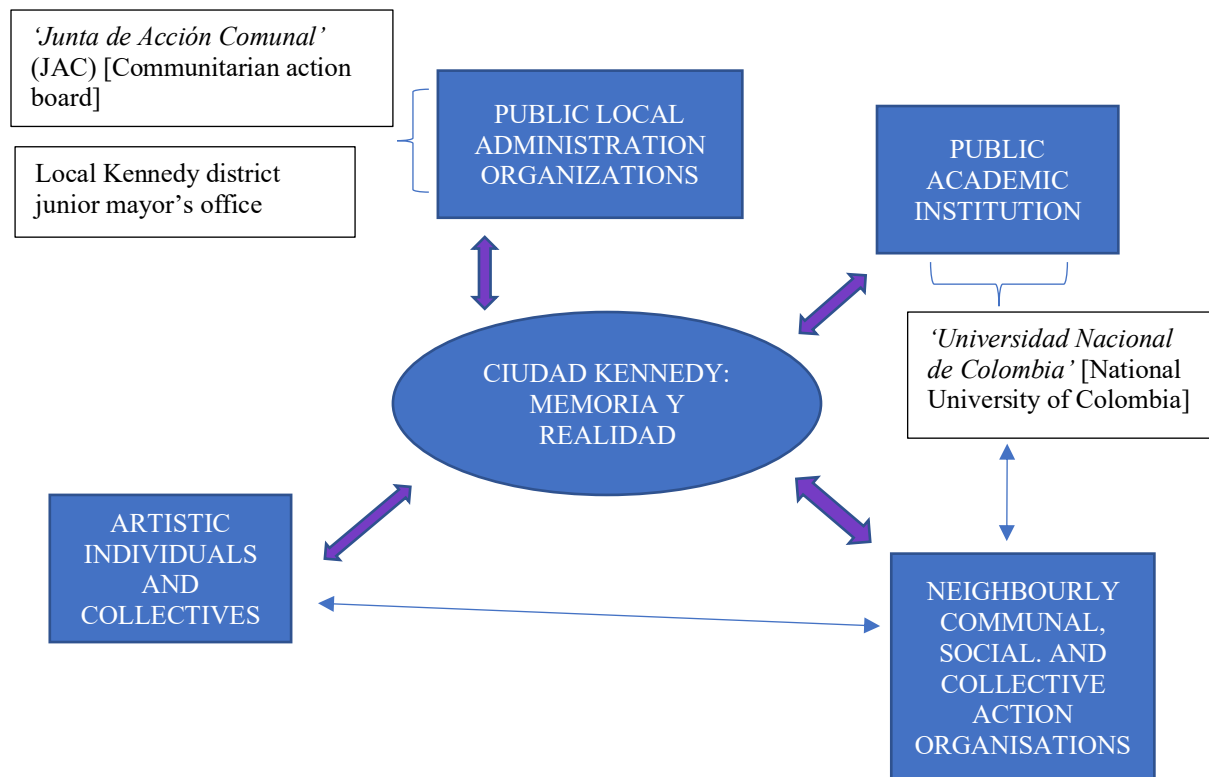

Fig 34. Relationships diagram *'Ciudad Kennedy: Memoria y Realidad'*

Ciudad Kennedy: Memoria y Realidad had no support from prominent local and national governmental institutionality or the artistic institution, with the exception of the National University. Compared with the other two project diagrams, one can see a smaller number of articulations that the project gathered with institutional bodies. This, however, does not limit the project's complexity but rather evidences that the organisation and the mediation that the project gathered was concentrated in the relationships built with the neighbours and the neighbourly organizations. This attribute reveals how the project sought alternative spaces for the circulation and presentation of the proposals, away from the artistic institutionality, seeking other forms of

relationship and dialogue between art and the social, political, and cultural forces living in the neighbourhood that generated other forms of cultural and social articulations and organisations, that is to say, other forms of social intermediation.

Approximations to a given community are a complex and arduous endeavour that can present multiple difficulties. A process of this dimension asks for an important level of adaptation to new fields of action, new limitations, and modes of making that demand different attitudes to the ways in which art is created. Spanish philosopher and art critic Jose Luis Brea details further the implications that we consider:

> [t]here are no works of art. There is an operation and some practices that we can denominate artistic related to the significant, affective, and cultural production and that play specific roles in relation to the *subjects of experience.* However, they are not related to the production of particular objects but specifically to the public impulse of certain circulatory effects: effects of meaning, symbolic effects, intensive effects, and affectations (Brea, 2008, p. 106, italics in the original).

Brea's comments point towards an *operation*, what I, above, called a mediation of artistic practices in a community that collaborates with a meaningful and effective social-cultural production acting in association with 'subjects of experience' (Brea, 2000, p. 106). Communitarian artistic practices can operate from a transdisciplinary plural governance, where different roles coming from multiple fronts are involved, as such, architects, sociologists, anthropologists, artists, non-artistic subjects, private and public institutions, and social organisations, for example, while placing the community as the principal element of the articulation, and their input as the substance from where knowledge is constructed, can attempt to locate the traces of memory, and develop alternative spatialities in both tangible and amplified ways. This accuses a radical transformation of the supposedly unidirectional artistic creation process. Rethinking the relations between the collective subject that produces it, the subjects that consume it, the spaces from which both are enunciated and the frames of meaning implied in its circulation and social appropriation.

Conclusions

In Colombia, there has been a recognizable amplification of the notions of cultural and artistic that has enabled artists to deploy their devices through different approaches in order to reflect upon the national context, originating from the declaration of the 1991 Political Constitution. The thesis identifies, analyses, and explains artistic projects that demonstrated critical potential for the capacity of social and political transformation created between 1997 and 2011. In their field of action, they produced spontaneous dialogues in the networks associated with their own territorialities, convergences, encounters, and differences.

The analysis of three key case studies places them in a different dimension to what has been traditionally understood as art. Their collaborative nature, the decentration of the relationship between the communities and artist, the gathering of resources, their long duration, the establishment of bonds of trust, the solidarities crafted, the empowerment of collectives and subjects, and the social intermediation that they propose locate them in the ambiguous, porous and impermanent category of *artistic practices in community*.

Within the framework of analysis proposed and through the theoretical structure unfolded, it was possible to observe that the interventions created by contemporary artistic practices in community, that at times articulate with collective action, have, in fact, transformed and produced alternative micro-spaces in the cities. The cases of Medellín and Bogotá are significant for the country since the cities muster many complexities, resources and diversities, with contexts that favour the elaboration and deployment of cultural policies.

Every spatial transformation involves a specific assembly of processes and social actors. As such, every social actor involved mobilises differentiated resources, including cultural capital, social knowledges, political representation, legitimacy, expert knowledge, capacity for organization and

management, among many others. Under this premise, it is possible to understand that the modes of doing of artists are in a horizontal intercultural dialogue with the modes of doing of other collective or individual social actors that have the capacity to stand out or to become visible in the urban space.

Throughout the inquiry, there was an insistence on the micro-spatial scale of the transformations. This characteristic suggests that the capacity for transformation that artistic practices in community and collective action can produce is limited. One possible reason for this being the case is the availability and qualities of resources attained by the social actors involved. The question of scale implies that the ensuing transformations are, at their core, fragile since they are encouraged by social actors whose attachment and loyalty are not permanent or stable. On the contrary, they are shown as without political or idealist essentialisms. However, it should not be left for granted that such alternative spatial transformations entail the exercise of the right to decide, exist, and to make oneself visible, by which, even in their ambivalence and problematic uses, the identity and particularity of the individuals and collective subjects involved in their production, are a central attribute and a *common resource* in the socio-spatial productions that are studied in the thesis.

Consequently, the origin of every social actor in the cases studied cannot be overlooked, which at any given point could be represented by one of the following: artists, collectives, anthropologists, activists, social and community leaders, neighbourly residents, public servants, government officials, architects, cultural developers, teachers, private companies, universities, communal action boards, and students among others. Thus, it is plausible to say that the micro-spatial transformations developed do not constitute derivations or abstract representations of the social order, but, on the contrary, they are integral to the spatialised social order. This is the main

reason why it is important to emphasize the diversity of the actors involved and their different locations in the social field. That is, it could be affirmed that the location of an artist, a communal action board, a community leader, a youth organization, and a neighbour, are incompatible, and that their convergence in any initiative could be seen as unimaginable or at least unlikely, that is until the production of a micro-space occurs in the terms that they have been presented throughout this thesis.

I would like to argue that communitarian artistic practices became articulated to collective action beyond their capacity for involvement, broadcasting and dissemination. They also set in motion unique repertoires and specific strategies deployed by citizens in order to challenge, resist, or solidarize with the State, its modes of government and the cultural establishment. At the same time, these repertoires also reproduced communal imaginaries of the *political* and, with greater strength, of the *artistic*, whose meaning, arguably, is not in the hands of either the public artistic and cultural institutions or in the hands of the artists. This can be explained when seeing that the social appropriation of artistic representations, ideas, and practices is one of the fundamental dimensions of culture.

This thesis assumes that the micro-spatialities studied comprehend concrete attributes, such as the cultural, political, economic, and civic, and that these go beyond the formal or aesthetic evaluations brought up normally when referring to *art* or *culture*. Thus, as mentioned in the body of the thesis, these practices ought to be conceived from an expanded point of view of art that allows different articulations with specific collective actions, such as the ones that articulate to the artistic practices in their interventions; the artistic practices and collective action articulated in communitarian processes; and the artistic practices and collective action understood as useful art.

The artistic practices in community studied in the thesis, under the perspective of the analysis proposed, function as tools for critical intervention that reorganizes, at least momentarily, the social relations and the common places that they produce and that involve actors and instances different from the artistic. Their critical and political capacities are as powerful as the discourses through which the communities and collectives have organised themselves.

The importance of these micro-spatial formations rests on the influence they have in the socio-spatial transformations of the spaces in the city as an affirmation of the right to the city from temporary organised citizens. This right to the city is expressed in the appropriation, tagging, mark making, and signification of the places where the actions are deployed: in the mobilization, recreation and reconstruction of the imaginaries and ideals about space itself, and likewise, in the socio-political ideals that are spatialised through the interventions; and, finally, in the emergence, visibility, and possible empowerment of the new social actors.

From a different perspective, the inquiry was also able to identify processes that have been demonstrated to work to the detriment of the interests of the community in specific sectors. The cases studied regarding some graffiti initiatives and the processes that generate gentrifiable spaces that are later suitable for urban renovations were examples of how at times, through governmental policies that are deployed in the name of art and culture, the political and constant state of struggle for the public spaces is clouded. Actors involved in these processes in their advance over the common spaces end up affirming the dominating institutional order. Consequently, projects of this nature that possess normative, financial and political support from government authorities minimize the capacity of neighbourly and communal organizations to produce their own spatiality.

It is recognizable how the different communitarian artistic practices considering how their operational modes have been analysed, are, in fact, involved in the production of public spaces in

general and common spaces in particular. The evaluations that can be made from a first glance to public space, as a space for collective leisure, vital for the strengthening of ideals and values, and the inclusion of social sectors in historical conditions of adversity and inequality, can at the same time contribute to the construction of *urban commons* through micro-spatialities.

The category of common space represents a contradictory and complex amplification of democracy. In the conditions imposed by the current state of capitalism, *common spaces* tend to be expropriated. However, without this condition and the possibility of accumulation and unequal distribution of resources, without ideals and social and expert knowledge characteristic in late capitalism, the construction of common spaces is not possible. In this way, the scale and meaning of the common spaces produced by the micro-spatialities originate from the social relationships that support them and the cultural significance of their contexts since the engine propelling the micro-spatialities is the organised community, informed and/or committed, that struggle for their rights from a diversity of assumed cultural and political identities, well-beyond partisanships.

Common spaces in relation to artistic practices in community in this thesis is understood in terms of the collaborative strategies, knowledge exchanges, the proliferation of social imagination, and the empowerment of grassroots organizations promoted in the projects. A key element of its configuration is that it is not public or private. This characteristic makes it a highly valuable resource for communities and neighbourly organizations in a capitalist context while also making it a worthy asset for the markets.

The other fundamental part identified in the thesis regarding artistic practices in community and their operation is the recovery and production of memory and the spaces for memory and remembrance. Thus, the elaboration of a collective truth has the possibility of becoming a space capable of disrupting the national political order. Therefore, from the strategies

developed by the projects surges the work of memory and the possibility of testimony. Memory emerges as a fundamental necessity for the communities involved in the case projects studied.

Even though Bogotá, especially, but also Medellín, in Colombia, is currently seeing an unprecedented diversity and quantity of artistic output, there has been at the same time a visible increase in social inequality and in the forms of socio-spatial marginalisation that continue to be the great limitations for intercultural exchange. This supposes an opportunity for further co-optation by government instances. For this reason, the urgency of intercultural dialogue between all sorts of knowledge is the most important task for anyone interested in the socio-spatial relationships in cities around the world.

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