

# dpu summerLab

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2013 Edition

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Leveraging *the city as a laboratory* for developing socially responsive design strategies

**MEDDELLIN**

**SANTIAGO**

**ROME**

**LONDON**

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Dream**

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## Acknowledgement

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Without all of your diligence and partnership we are minnows wandering aimlessly through murky waters.

## Credits

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# A Late Summer Lab's Dream

By Camillo Boano and William Hunter

“Swift as a shadow, short as any dream; Brief as the lightning in the collied night”. Just as Shakespeare’s Lysander describes to Hermia how quickly true love can be destroyed, a participant on a DPU summerLab workshop might too find themselves in some state of longing, in this case longing for more time, a next step. Having just began to familiar with their contextual surroundings, or perhaps even felt excitement for the emerging design speculation, the curtain calls. The workshop ends, planes are boarded, reflections are written. But as Italo Calvino suggested “Cities, like dreams, are made of desires and fears, even if the thread of their discourse is secret, their rules are absurd, their perspectives deceitful, and everything conceals something else.” A participant on a DPU summerLab workshop has always a new horizon a new ‘something else’.

When we dreamt four years ago of establishing a roving itinerant workshop series, a traveling laboratory of sorts, we knew that the timeframe we were considering assigning to each workshop would not be a long one. Of course this is not very surprising in itself for a workshop motif, though the kind of scope we were dreaming for each workshop was more akin to something that required time. As it were, the notion of rapidity is at the heart of the DPU summerLab ethos and not simply for a logistical reasoning. Rapidity in urban research and practice may not exactly reveal all levels of a story and there is always a need for repeat visits or testing, but going head-first with speed and uncertainty into a problem can force one to be alert, ready and in a particular state of strategic absorption, qualities that can lead to some interesting and revealing hypotheses. And it is very possible that if these actions are curated in a way that balances the planned and unforeseen, and fosters a truly informed experience, then the outcomes, however untested, can carry a significant weight in reflective potential. In a way we were looking at freshness and rapidity, as well as ignorance and curiosity as strategic value ingredients.

This was our dream. And with any real dream or goal there is a necessary effort that goes beyond the actual workshop week itself. In this case DPU summerLab has become an eye-opening experience of coordination, master-mining and luck. We have been very fortunate, with the energy and help from a mix of collaborators, ex-students, and the emergence of some very small, but timely angel funding to be where we are today, coming off a string of four very successful and concurrent workshops

that constitute the 3rd annual series of DPU summerLab that has, since 2011, involved over 80 participants.

Behind the logistical fever and surplus that planning these labs entails, there has always been a strong conceptual ethos that underpins our desires to initiate and sustain such a series in the midst of financial and institutional challenge. Flowing out of the same mantra in which we predicate the MSc Building and Urban Design in Development at the DPU, a course set on merging of critical theory and practical action, summerLab workshops contain and promote a healthy dose of research-minded methodology in a very DPU style: grounded in actions. Still, the summerLab model does not in itself align with the traditional paradigm of scholarly research, something we are constantly reminded of during departmental meetings and roundtables. The protocols of bringing in legitimate funding as a result of our non-teaching efforts, is by and large our primary job as a faculty. And even with the emergence and re-fostering of notions on design research and other similar strands of juxtaposing scholarly alternatives, the idea to give attention to a program that pins participants and students not of our own out in cities up against a clock with arguably uncertain outcomes does little to help the conventional mode of departmental objectives.

Yet we also see these Labs as a way to promote and continue the healthy tradition of the DPU’s global presence through partnership at a time when the department itself is in the middle of a transition from decades-long establishment and topical niche to a faculty competing with the buzz of social responsibility and education

of future urban practitioners. It is an opportunity for us to align more with mainstream practices of product generation and dissemination but in our own unique manner of approach and ethics. And we felt no shame in doing so for the simple fact that if we stand silent on our morals and opinions without putting them in play, then parade would pass us by. This presented us with the challenge of creating and coordinating Labs that were inherently different in their process and experience for those who participate. And beyond a different kind of experience, we wanted to leave participants with a real sense of the possibilities surrounding reclamation of urban disciplines and action research.

The word laboratory surely sounds like a place for experiments, scientific oriented didactics and bodily-related and a place of applied-research. We devise such ‘moments’ and ‘spaces’ as antidote to the self-sufficient discipline of design (architectural and urban), taking full advantage of the interdisciplinary nature and wide range of expertise and interests of the participants, the partners and the supporting staff. In doing so, we aimed to discovered and reposition design research into a heuristic model where “strolling and discussing, while immersing into urban environments and their everyday life”, conceived in a sort of situationist-remembrance, are part of a wider reflection on urban design method,

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**“Cities, like dreams, are made of desires and fears” (Calvino)**

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especially in states of uncertainty. The rapid nature of the Labs allows for an accelerated dive into complex subject matters in a delicate balance between ignorance and expertise, adopting a more nuanced, yet critical approach of “within and between” grounded in the historical attitude of progressive action-research and practice determination of DPU. The “Labs”, then become an open immersion in both discrete objects and social processes in order to avoid any disciplinary construction or territorial fortresses while suggesting a hybrid, mutable and tactically contextual process of design.

Introduced by Gramsci, the word “tactic,”

was of great significance as it denotes “resistance” within a given urban context allowing the participants to, unlike the radical tools of modernist urbanism, depict and investigate resistance as an outcome of small and continuous urban adaptations. This not only dictates an overall transformation, but also favors incremental change in relation to the context within which it operates and therefore can be used for both “critical assessments” and “the processes of spatial production”. Guided by “curiosity, refusal and innovation” the urban territories we set down in are explored as a gesture of a complex line of movements,

The itineraries for Medellin and London were based on the idea of surveying a very large representational area of landscape and landmark projects in order to grasp the nature of what development forces are at play in the city. In Medellin the landscape has undergone major shifts in modernization and upgrading around large scale infrastructure, specifically the advent two cable car lines stemming from the successful elevated rail lines. While certainly bringing a heightened notoriety and tourist contingent to Medellin, the cable cars are serving a marginalized demographic that had prior been relegated to peripheral mountainside

following prior investigations with various groups bent on maintaining an alternative voice while exposing themselves to the realities of an extremely historical and traditional city center.

Thus the different Labs were testing a new relation with the everyday that challenged its contingencies, its various codes, and languages. Such an “everyday” does not suggest a non-relevance of spatial reference and design expertise with its codified knowledge. It is not meant to destroy, but rather to recalibrate, re-position, and expand in the everyday life, the potential of transforming and changing the world. We claim that all of our experiences contribute to this border pedagogy in a renewed dialectical discourse. Knowledge is exchanged and with such it comes reciprocal learning, the power to act, the potential to release the forces at play to work in places with a design that is sometimes weak in fully understating the complexity and contradiction of the encountered reality. This “weak” design act places architecture and urban design back at the center of social, political and cultural milieu. Moving beyond expert knowledge requires us to care as much as about the process by which places and spaces are produced as they do about the product that emerges as a result of our collaborations. The engagement in collaborative processes requires that everyone make their relevant belief and knowledge vulnerable, including the professional. Inherent is a willingness to risk one’s own worldviews and knowledge in exchange for the ability to see the world differently- to acknowledge the dreams of others.

## **“weak” design acts place architecture and urban design back at the center of social, political and cultural milieu**

a series of spatial storytelling along the edges of the spaces that contain it, composing, like in a musical plot, a series of distinct intervals of silence, emptiness and thresholds. The act of navigating the city through explorations in contour, walking and trespassing has been heavily inherited from meeting and discussions with Francesco Careri (Laboratorio Arti Civiche – Stalker) and his great civic passion and sensibility for performance.

The contemporary urban modernity is totally uncertain. As a rock-solid reality, Andrea Branzi developed the notion of ‘non-figurative architecture’ to refer to ‘an architecture that becomes an urban semiosphere’, surpassing its constructed limits and becoming a producer of im-material qualities that change over time.’ Whilst strolling down many of the streets and alleys in Medellin, Santiago, Rome and London, summerLab participants were forced to (re)-imagine the past and the urban qualities that were changing over time, recreating conceptual maps and re-problematising the spatial nature of the transformations.

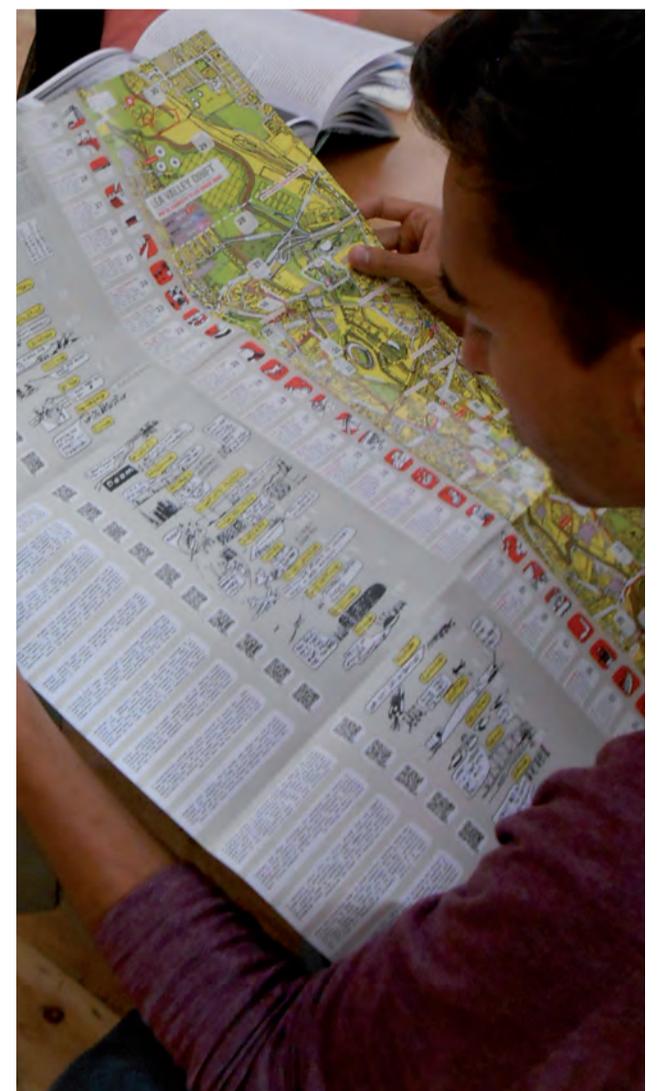
Each Lab sits in a complex realm of borders and often weak territories, between modern and postmodern, politics and aesthetics, truth and lies, here and there, north and south, theory and practice. As such it is a broader conversation that both interrogates and confirms an appreciation for the potential significance of our practice. Acknowledging the complexity and the contradictions in each site of intervention we have learned how to constantly negotiate meanings and positions including where we any disciplinary expertise is located. In refusing a conventional, safer, expert-based (and object-driven) culture, we affirm the power of design to make a substantial contribution to the messy vitality of everyday life in service of equality.

Varying in scope there were similarities in the territorial platform in which the Labs operate.

settlement with lengthy commutes to jobs and life in the city center. The supposed success of the first iteration has spawned plans for a third line in the northeastern quadrant of Medellin, begging the question and critique on the future impact of communities along the planned corridor.

In London we cast our eye on the aftermath of the 2012 Olympics, particularly questioning the themes of legacy and localization. Before focusing on the area of Hackney, we circumvented the new developments in Stratford around the Olympic Park, even pushing our journey to the Docklands and the new Emirates Cable Car connecting the Greenwich Peninsula and the O2 (Millennium Dome) to the Royal Docks as well as hitting parts of trendy Dalston. The future of East London is very much living in the minds of profit-driven individuals while the rest of the surrounding Burroughs engage in the reality of the present day, through grassroots local initiatives and temporary forms of occupation that seek to ensure some kind of sustainable identity and promotion of the area’s history.

On the other hand, the specific locales of Santiago and Rome were examined in a more microscopic manner – through neighborhood regeneration and networks of occupied spaces. Providencia is an area that has already seen a degree of gentrification, yet there are still opportunities to mediate its transformation in ways that encapsulate a more holistic planning mechanism through collated acupuncture tactics. How this area’s transformation relates to other parts of a growing cosmopolis that often forgets its diverse character is rife with debate. In Rome, the phenomenon of a burgeoning regulated occupation network that repels notions of conventional development and social constructs was met with formulations around inclusion into a wider fabric. Here the Lab was



DPU CELEBRATING

60

YEARS

1954 • 2014

In 2014, UCL's Development Planning Unit (DPU) is celebrating 60 years of education, training, research, consultancy and knowledge sharing in urban and regional development policy and planning in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Middle East. DPU's focus on urban development and planning in what is now often referred to as 'the global south' was unique in the UK and abroad at the time of its establishment in 1954, as well as when it moved to UCL from the Architectural Association in 1971. Firmly rooted in our academic obligation to challenge orthodox development agendas, we have chosen to use our 60th anniversary year to reflect on our engagement with the urban global south by looking both back and forward.

We will review the DPU's contribution to planning education and to a range of important international development debates and practices over the past 60 years, both institutionally and by individual members of staff. We will also

critically reflect on the continued usefulness of framing future DPU practices in the context of the notion of the 'urban global south'. The division of 'glocal' urban practices in this way has been challenged from different standpoints in the last 60 years, but the DPU has maintained its particular focus on relatively poor fast urbanizing cities and countries, while critically embracing these debates where they add to our understanding about urban development in the global south. At this point in our history, as global and local forces acting on urban processes are reconstituted in the 21st century, this critical engagement is more urgent than ever as we ponder anew on the question: in the light of both regressive and transformative urban practices in the name of 'development' by governments, civil society and the private sector, what does the notion of the 'urban global south' open up for thinking about and acting upon cities?

There are many ways in which you can participate in our 60th anniversary deliberations in 2014, both directly and virtually, and we invited your involvement both in London and from afar. The following are the activities and events being planned in the year ahead:

### **DPU60 Conference**

Thinking Across Boundaries: Re-Imagining Planning in the Urban Global South (3-4 July 2014)

### **DPU60 Dialogues in Development Series**

Please watch the DPU website for details <http://www.bartlett.ucl.ac.uk/dpu/dpu60>



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Master in Urban and Regional  
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# MED



# WELLEN

# Negotiating conflicting spatial narratives in Medellin

by Catalina Ortiz

Why Medellin remains the most inequitable city in Latin America despite huge public investment and high quality architecture in critical informal settlements? Over the last decade, Medellin has pioneered “Integral Barrio Rehabilitation,” the upgrading of informal settlements through massive public investment on high quality public amenities, the expansion of the transit system to the hillsides, public space, and supportive social and community development infrastructure. The city has gained recognition as “best practice” and remains on the international spotlight. However, despite the significant construction of public infrastructure and social programs in areas with concentration of poverty and crime, the overwhelming inequalities persist.

While innovative transit solutions have been key to the city transformation, the increasing urban growth -mostly displaced population- continues to be one of the most salient challenges for planning in the region. I argue that attuning growth management and transit infrastructure into a systemic territorial strategy requires negotiating conflicting and overlapping spatial narratives. To tackle this endeavour I attempt to depict briefly actor’s power/knowledge to recognize their leverage for reshaping local circuits of planning practice.

The convergence of a strategic location, recent public investment in community facilities, and a strong community organization makes Comuna 8 a unique city sector to engage in a deep transformation. Despite the urban-armed conflict, or because of it, a new political interest in this area emerged in the last years focusing on mobility infrastructure. Comuna 8 is a diverse city sector with more than 155.000 inhabitants (577 hectares) distributed in 18 neighbourhoods and 32 sectors. Comuna 8’ inhabitants are predominantly low-income families and 57% of households lack land titles. Some of the neighbourhoods in the fringes still suffer urban-armed conflict and host at least 15% of the total victims of internal displacement in Medellin. Nowadays, Comuna 8 is the epicentre of the implementation of the metropolitan green belt and a new extension phase of the metropolitan integrated transit system to connect the sector with downtown area.

The case of Comuna 8 in Medellin depicts the multiple purposes of extending the integrated transit system through a new tramway and two cable lines. The new phase of the transit system is portrayed, not only as a way to improve the connectedness to city opportunities, but also as a tool of territorial control. Then, how does the enduring socio-economic condition of Comuna 8 can be improved with transit infrastructure? To explore this question Foucault offers a fruitful framework for understanding the politics of space considering that power/knowledge operates in accepted forms of knowledge defying the dichotomies of structure and agency. That is why power/knowledge is exerted through a web of institutions, discourses, space, and informal practices. I termed spatial narratives to the specific actors’ power/knowledge enactment crystallized in strategies and tactics of urban transformation. This short reflection attempts to illustrate the spatial narratives of the Metro Company, the Planning authority, and the Comuna 8 planning and management council in order to unravel their differential leverage to negotiate an unprecedented proposal of transit oriented development in the city not yet devised.

## Grassroots claims: upgrade + mitigate

Everyday practices of resistance and social mobilization constitute the main leverage

of the Planning and Management Council (PMC). Nevertheless, their Local Development Plan constitutes a legitimate bottom up planning initiative that comprises the claims of the community. Comuna 8’ inhabitants are predominantly low-income families and 57% of households lack land titles and are located in risky areas. Some of the neighborhoods in the fringes still suffer urban-armed conflict and host at least 15% of the total victims of internal displacement in Medellin. That is why the common claims contained in the plan refer to economic development, housing affordability, risk mitigation and secure land tenure. Therefore, a plan crafted collectively capitalizes community power/knowledge expressed in the intimate territorial experience, capabilities of community

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**The new cable cars not only have improved peripheries accessibility, but also they have expanded circuits of slum tourism.**

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organizing and their connectedness with communities facing similar struggles in the city.

Top down approaches to self-produced settlements broaden the formal/informal dichotomies because they hide the complexity, ambivalence and diversity of the urbanization process. In Comuna 8 coexists historical tissue and emergent high speed growing settlements embedded in a territorial reconfiguration of the urban fringes linked to armed-conflict. In this context, ‘Social construction of habitat’ became the main discourse to mobilize Community planning committee’ interests in an attempt to value self built environment and stress the agency of inhabitants breaking the duality of mainstream views on the city. The production

of this particular discourse aimed at framing community claims as citizens' rights to remain in the territory with dignity. That is why, the focus on defend participatory processes and the permanence turn into not negotiable factors.

PMC devised "Integral neighbourhood upgrading" as the territorial strategy to undertake the betterment of their built environment connected to the improvement of their livelihoods. In this way, PMC engaged in several tactics as a product of the Local Development Plan. First, in order to validate community power /knowledge PMC developed a partnership with a local public university (Universidad Nacional de Colombia) to co-produce a spatial narrative about Comuna 8. Second, PMC rallied in several participatory budgeting processes to obtain resources in order to advance risk mitigation mechanisms and public utilities connection. Third, PMC promoted the use of a 'previous consultation', a constitutional tool that mandates a voting process before the construction of public infrastructure, for deciding over the priorities of public expenditures in the area. In this process, PMC corroborated the collective interest of giving priority to neighbourhood upgrading and risk mitigation over infrastructure for mobility. As a result, PMC has been able to position their agenda while expressing their discontent with local government for ignoring pressing issues and community priorities. The grassroots claims show the clashes and potentials between bottom up and top down planning initiatives at work.

## Planning authority priorities: densifying + contain

In Medellin, occupation of its hilly fringes has advanced unchecked for decades, and is compounded by migrants that arrive to the city escaping rural violence and lack of opportunities. The convergence of steep landscapes, environmental fragility, self-help housing, and territorial disputes make conventional urban upgrading and resettlement challenging. That is why the city urges innovative responses that build on its momentum of renown planning interventions. In order to face this challenge the leverage of the Planning Department consist on their technical expertise, the legally binding planning tools, and the capability for setting the agenda of participatory processes. Perhaps the most encompassing planning tool became the Municipal territorial plan where the urban growth management decisions were defined. In this way, the municipality set the boundaries between what is going to be considered formal or informal to enable or restrict not only public investments, but also the type of regulatory mechanisms to

put in place.

While demographic trends still spike in some fringe neighbourhoods, the municipal territorial plan (POT) use the discourse of 'compact city' to advocate for concentrating urban growth in the low lands. Medellin, as the regional centre, has the imperative to address the shortage of land for new urban growth by promoting a

## The embedded politics of space urges to think the coordination of growth management and transit investments through the lenses of power/knowledge.

densification process. The planning department recurs to two discursive practices: a) 'Protection of urban borders to help containing urban growth' and b) 'An inward-oriented growth with emphasis on central areas near the river already equipped with excellent infrastructure'. These discursive practices stress the environmental protection of high lands through the containment of new urbanization processes and increasing density as long-term challenges. However, after more than a decade of the POT implementation few advances have occurred despite renowned public interventions in the peripheral neighbourhoods. For that reason these priorities remain in the planning agenda.

For several decades, the planning authority considered the implementation of a Green Metropolitan Belt (GMB) as a suitable territorial strategy to prevent urban expansion in the fringes. In spite of this, only in the last year the mayor had political interest to undertake the GMB and started to develop it under the assumption that this strategy will reduce and combat new self-built settlements. Simultaneously, the priority to foster density had required a strategy of massive redevelopment to increase density while using land management tools aimed at capturing surplus values of the real-estate development. However, the complexities of these new tools and the reluctance of numerous landowners have probed the implementation to be challenging and less effective. In this context, the planning authority requires to recalibrate their assumptions and expectations of traditional tools employed in an intricate political and social context.

## Metro company purposes: access + connect

The Metro de Medellin is a public decentralized institution well known for its efficiency operating the Integrated Transit System of Valle de Aburra (SITVA). Pioneering the only metro system in Colombia for over

three decades strengthened the technical and institutional capacity of this institution. For that reason, the major leverage of this institution consists on their social prestige, the monopoly over the operation of public transit and the technical and budgetary autonomy. The Metropolitan Transit Plan expresses the institution' power/knowledge. In contrast to

the POT, which was crafted in some degree with citizen participation, this plan did not involve any community feedback. In this plan is displayed the technological innovation that brought about a new aerial cable car system and projected to introduce a tramway lines to complete an integrated metropolitan transit system. Even though, the integration of the several transit modes takes place in a slow pace, the extension of new infrastructure for transit is perceived as effective and accelerated.

The Metro de Medellin has a rooted cultural significance for local inhabitants. In part because their power/knowledge is excreted through the discourse of 'Metro Culture', a set of discursive practices used on a daily basis in the metro system to boost civic manners and adequate collective behaviour. Furthermore, the principle reiterated in all Metro discourses places 'Sustainability' as the main goal for the operation of the transit system. However, rather than incorporating a holistic approach to sustainability the focus is placed on energy efficiency. Following this rationale the latest interventions have been justified using the idea of 'Transit as catalyst for urban transformation'. From a functional perspective the Metro Company considers that transit infrastructure not only has to be built in areas that demand the services but also that they have the capacity to generate the demand after the infrastructure is built. This factor is relevant to evaluate the role of transit in the city's transformation.

The extension of the public transit system to the hillsides privileging enclaves of armed conflict became the linchpin strategy for social inclusion during the last decade. Most of the success story of Medellin derives from the active role of transit in qualifying the peripheries. The foremost tactic was to conceive transit infrastructure as symbol of state presence and territorial control through accessibility. In particular, the use of cable cars as public transit that adapt to geography constitute the Metro company' technological innovation. The new cable cars not only have improved peripheries

## MEDELLIN - Growth in transit

accessibility, but also they have expanded circuits of slum tourism. What amused outsiders is not the landscape of self produced settlements but the strangeness to see poverty from above. While the betterment of travel time and the sensation of inclusion are explicit, the impact on inequality is yet to be unravelled.

### Conditions of possibility for growth in transit

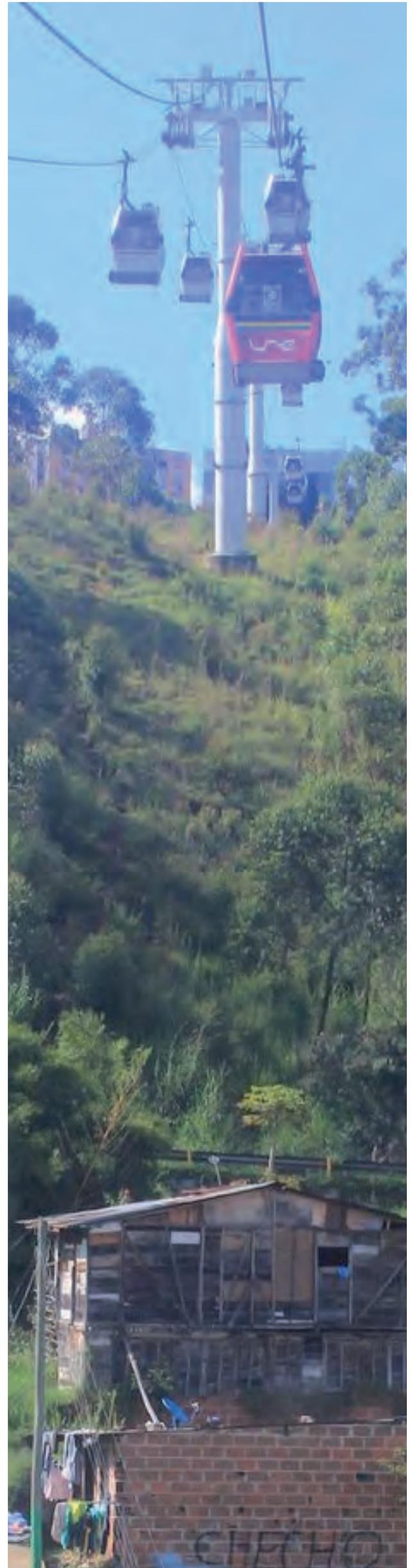
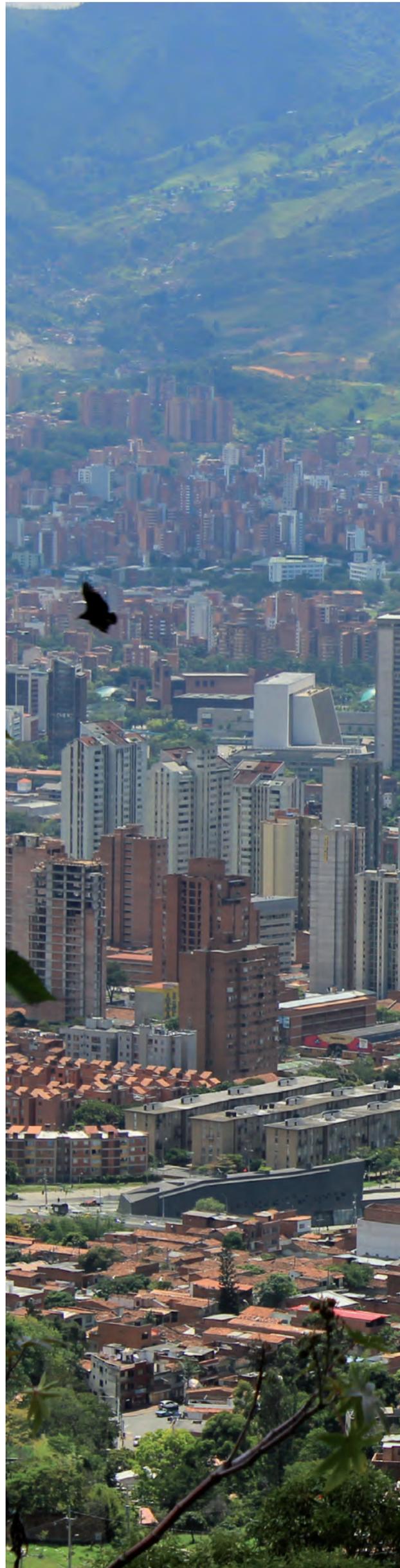
The embedded politics of space urges to think the coordination of growth management and transit investments through the lenses of power/knowledge. This short essay has portrayed the overlapping and conflicting spatial narratives of three key actors involved in Comuna 8 transformation. I have argued that acknowledging these narratives allows exploring how power/knowledge is exerted through discourses and materialized in strategies and tactics. This approach establishes the basis for negotiating a systemic territorial strategy for generating a situated transit oriented development framework. In other words, this negotiation process requires interjecting existing spatial narratives to open up conditions of possibility to this framework to emerge.

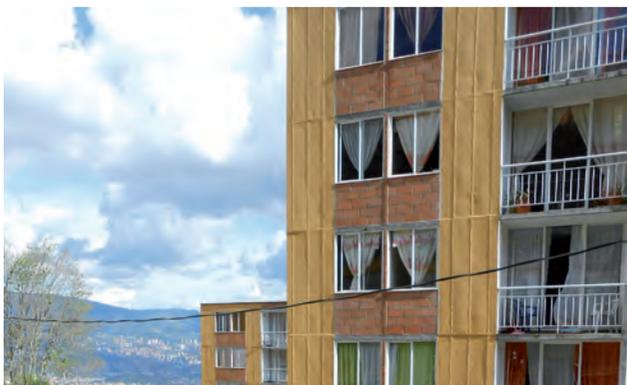
Attuning growth management and transit infrastructure becomes a multidimensional and multi-scalar challenge. A renewed view of transit oriented development in the midst of multiple informalities require to link spatial narratives (Upgrade + Mitigate + Densifying + Contain + Access + Connect) under a broader territorial strategy guided by at least the following purposes:

1. *Prioritize Equity*: a regional system of equitable distribution of land value capture
2. *Build a resilient city*: Mitigation and adaptation to climate change
3. *Generate housing affordability and land provision*: Regional approach to housing policy and secure tenure
4. *Bridge top-down and bottom up planning practices*: coordinate participatory budgeting, community planning and spatial planning
5. *Prepare a post conflict society*: engage in political inclusion and socio-economic driven projects

I consider the city can overcome the dominating environmental determinism and go beyond acupuncture tactics using architecture as spectacle. By following these purposes, Medellin could bridge community expectations and social mobilization with public priorities. Hence, the future of the 'Medellin Model' needs to switch the attention to structural conditions of inequality if the city wants to avoid being trapped as an 'international best practice' and die of success.



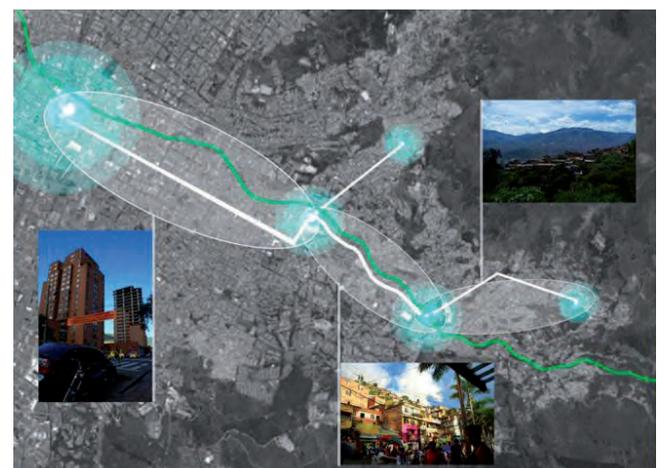
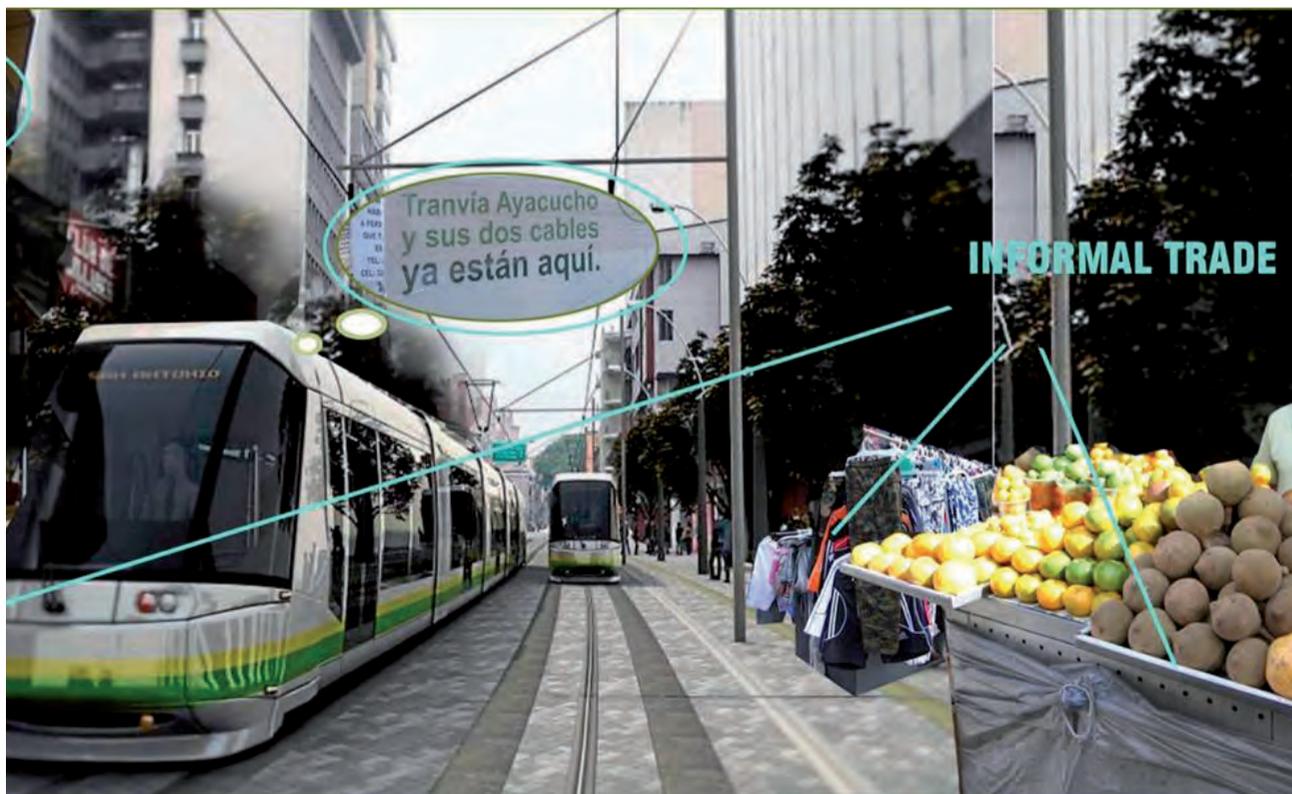
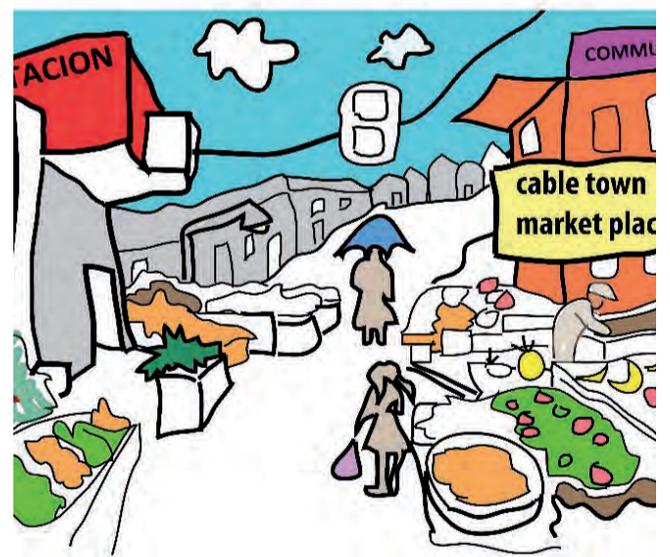
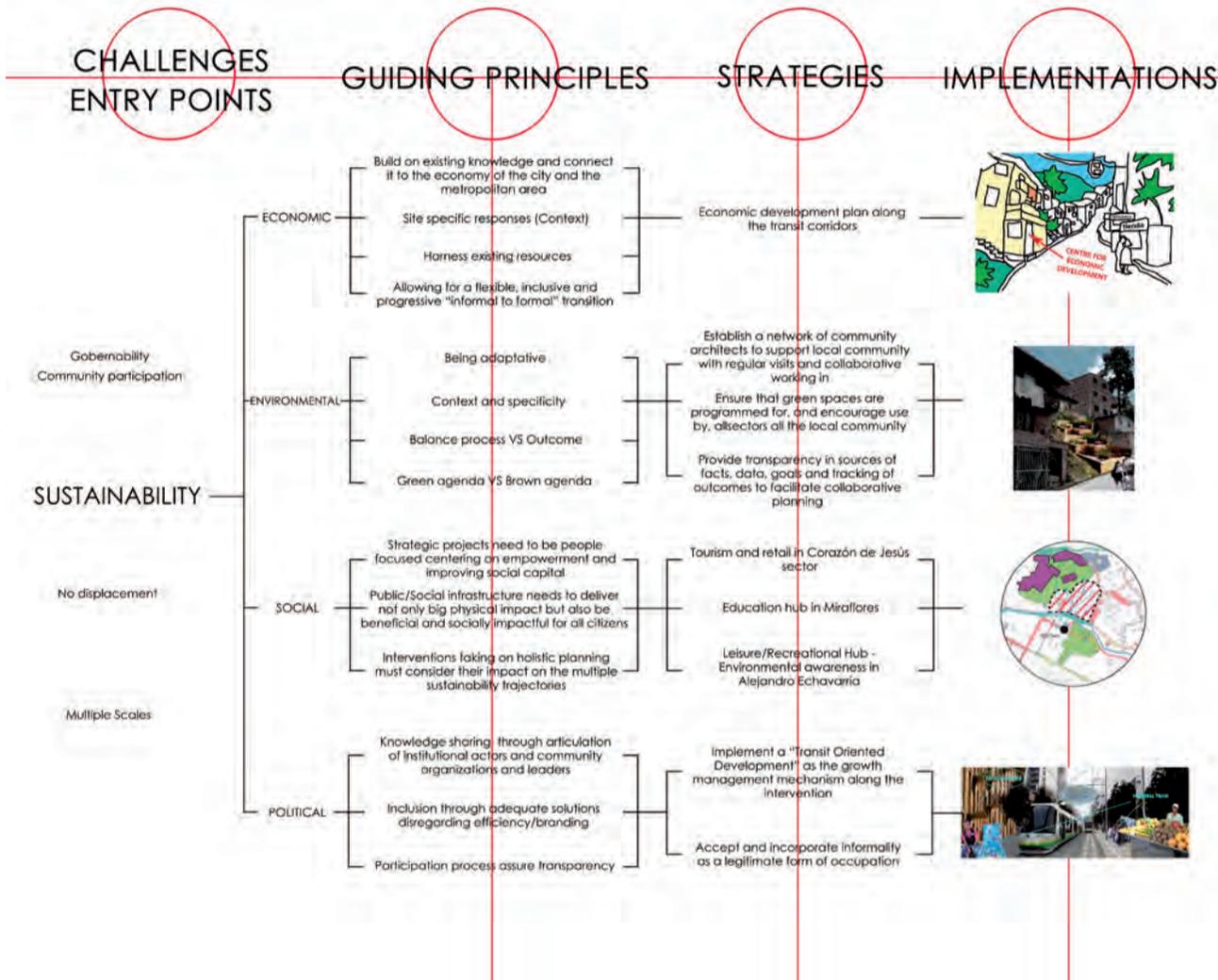






# MEDELLIN - Growth in transit

## METHODOLOGIC PROCESS



# MEDELLIN - Growth in transit

Venders

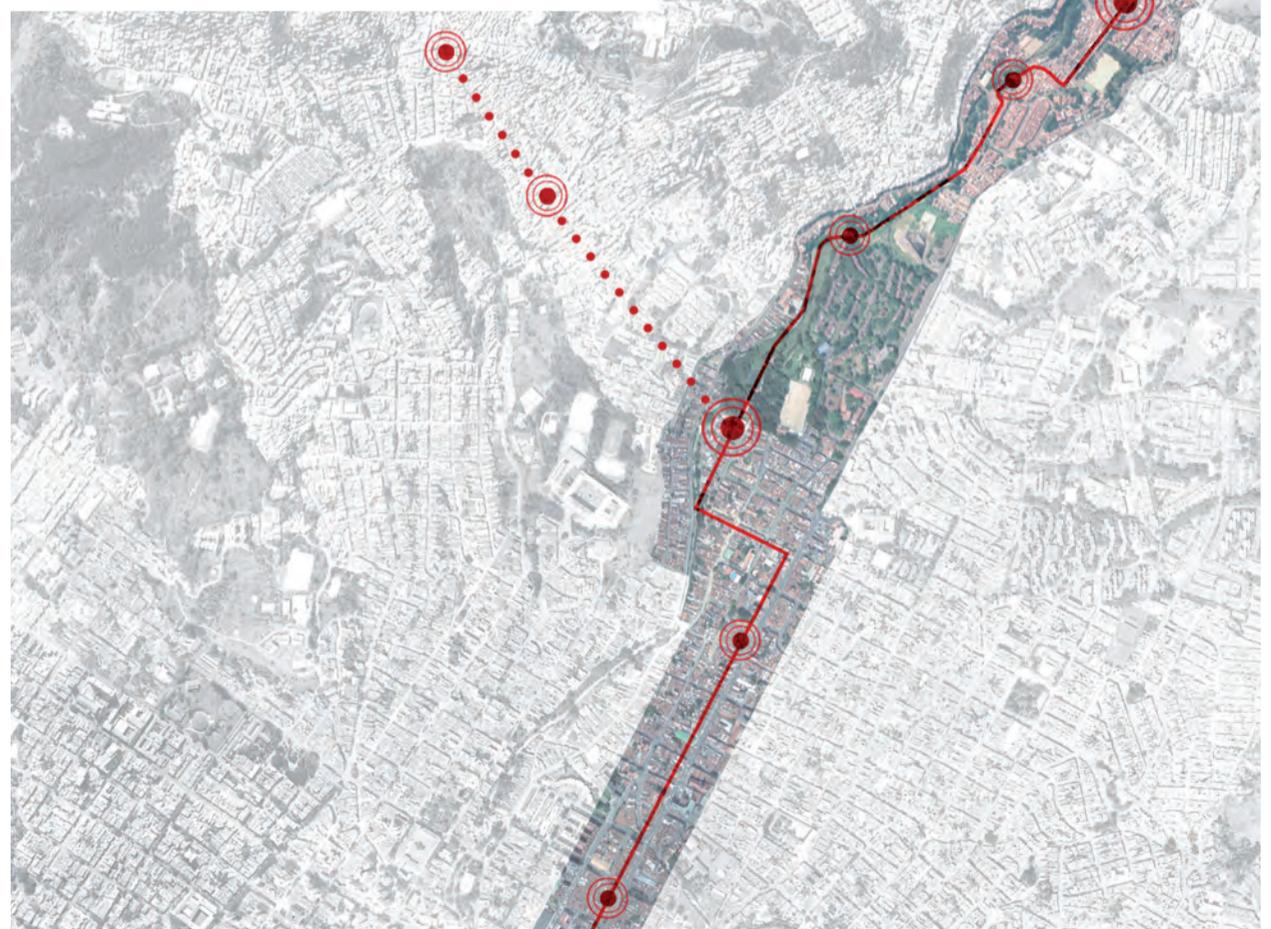
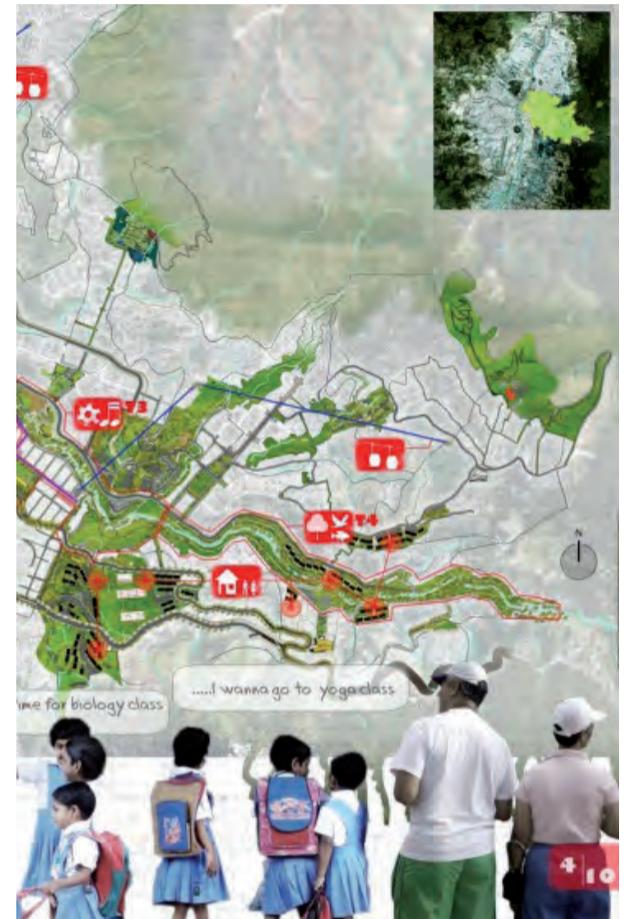
Shops

Painting

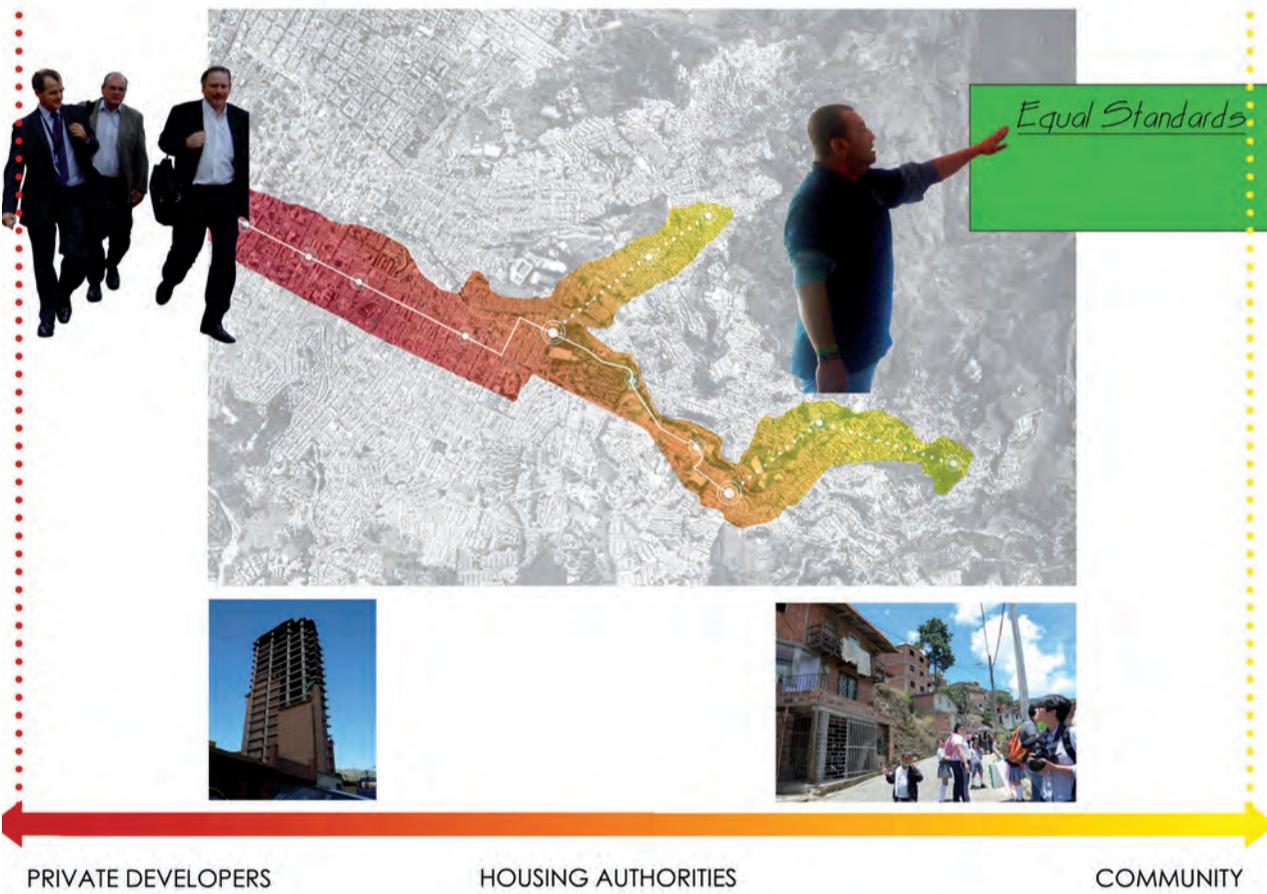
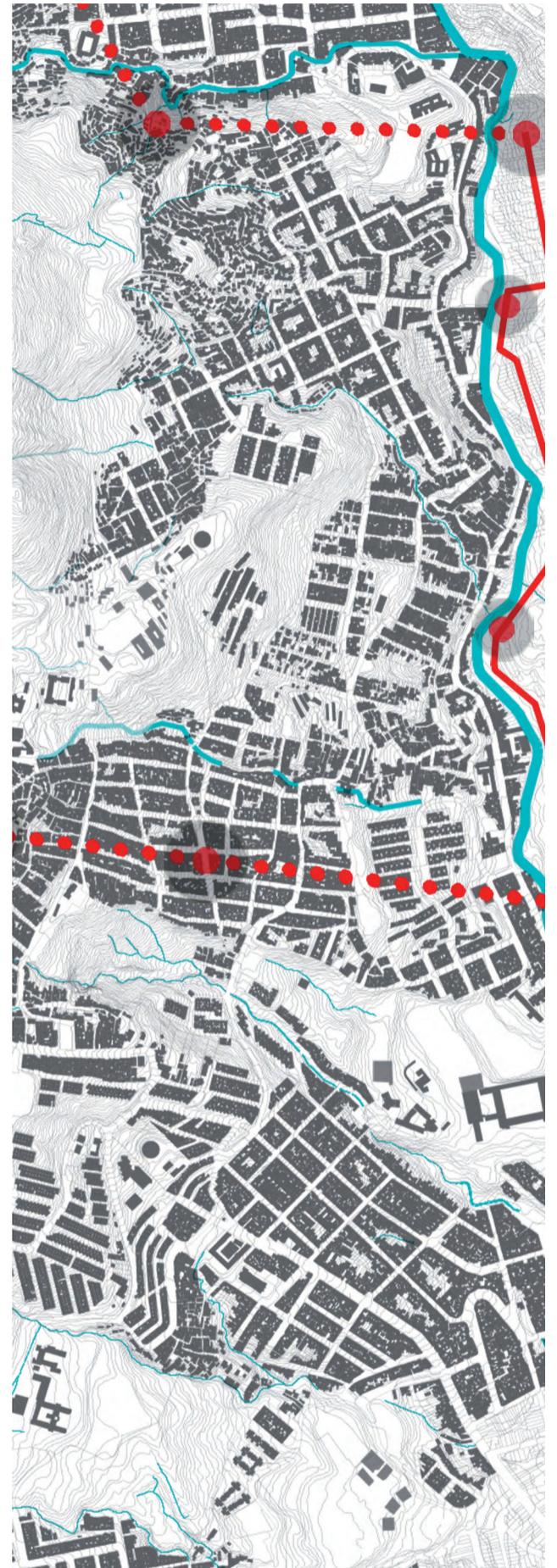
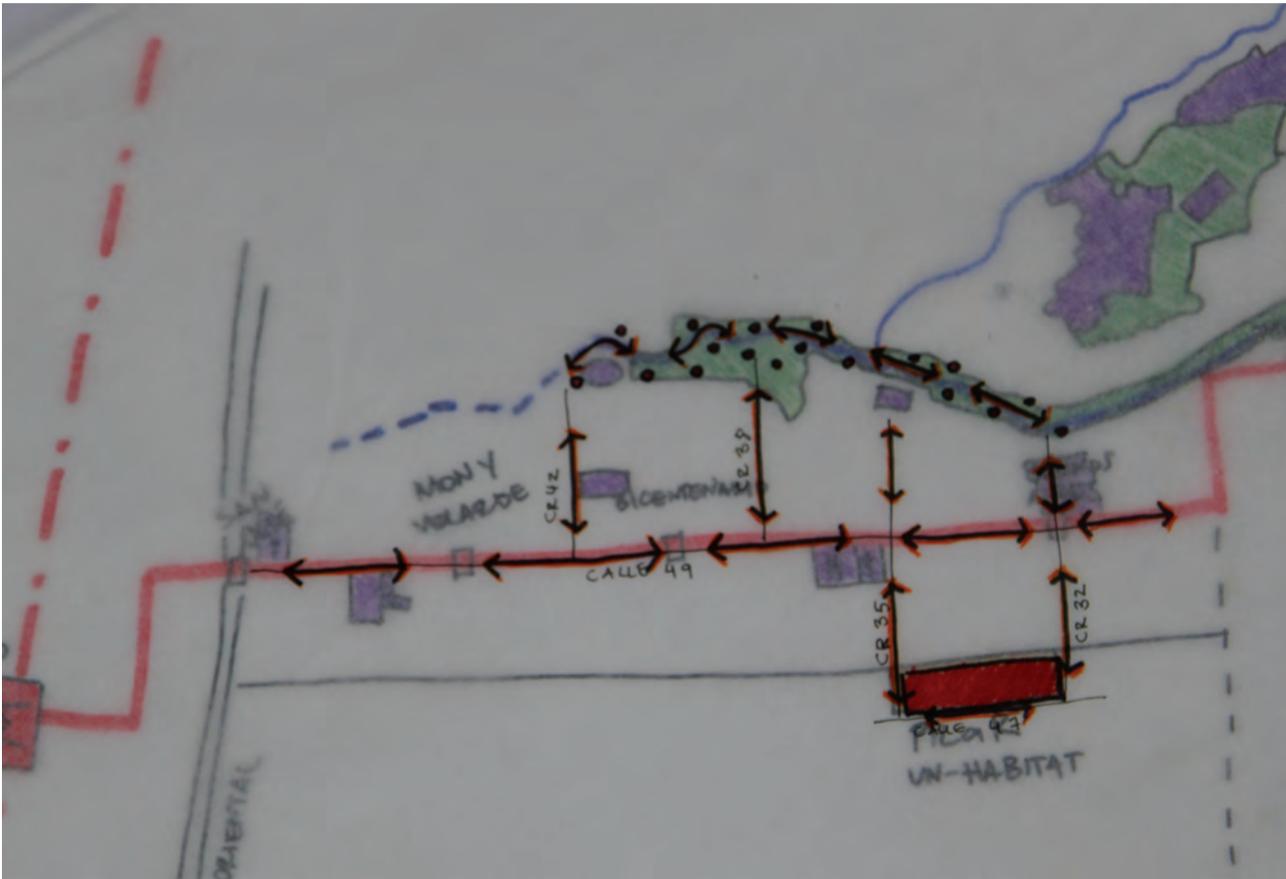
Housing

- Papers
- Activities

Public Space



# MEDELLIN - Growth in transit



# MEDELLIN - Growth in transit



## MEDELLIN - Growth in transit

“ The DPU Summer Lab in Medellin made for a great start to my PhD fieldwork in Colombia. The workshop Growth in Transit was intensely packed with presentations by local stakeholders, including public transport officials and community leaders.

During the workshop, we ventured into locations not usually available to other groups. This allowed us to observe and interact with the locals in an informative way. Medellin was a fantastic location for a transport workshop, with its burgeoning and rapidly expanding public transport systems. In particular, I was inspired seeing the efficiency and simplicity of the bus rapid transit system that boards people quickly and runs through downtown and suburban areas. The bus rapid transit also contributes to the human scale of the streets it passes through.

However, we were also able to see facets of these transport systems that have not been written about in academic or popular media. The workshop allowed us to understand public transport as a redevelopment strategy in Medellin, the benefits and costs, in terms of the effects they have on people, the built environment and natural resources. Our observations in Medellin provided a much fuller picture to the highly visible transport and regeneration projects. Through discussions and observation we learned how these new cable cars or bus rapid transit projects may involve the same problems of gentrification seen in other parts of the world. It was interesting to understand the drawbacks of gentrification in Medellin and see how a progressive city deals with them.

Medellin itself was a fascinating urban laboratory, with a vibrant street life, an intense political activism, a participatory population and a rapid rate of change that makes the urban processes of cities, highly visible.”

**Brian Garcia**

“ Participating in Medellin dpusummerLab 2013 has been a wonderful final chapter to over three academic years of intense research and dedication to urban development and planning. During these three years the city of Medellin appeared repeatedly in numerous articles, debates and talks. I inevitably built an image and developed a sense of familiarity with the city and its transformation which was based on second hand sources. The surprise started when I first arrived and continued to unfold throughout the rest of the week while we were studying growth, urban mobility and poverty in Medellin. I found myself surrounded by the strong presence of high and green mountains urbanised almost to their summits and by the great amount of contrasting images the city was continuously producing. I then understood that the context and reality I had in front of me would add substantially to my understanding of the city.

During this week in Medellin, overwhelmed by the vast amount of information coming from a wide diversity of sources and channels, and struggling to fully reconcile the reality that I was seeing with the “imaginary Medellin” I had created prior to my trip, I decided to purposely blur the former image I had of the city to build a new one – my own – based on first hand information, experiences and impressions on the ground. The workshop proved to be great for this! It provided us with access to a wide variety of contexts and information sources which enabled us to develop a deeper understanding of the city and its complexity. We visited and explored different areas and sites, we had the opportunity to meet with professionals working in the administration (city-hall), hear about their plans and vision for the city, as well as about their perception of it, and to contrast this with how other groups of residents we interviewed (people running formal or informal businesses, students and professionals) perceive and experience the city and its transformation. This process of information gathering, research and engagement lasted a week. This was a very limited time to develop the deep understanding (of all the processes and their interrelation shaping and taking place in the city) required to conceive strategic interventions for tackling the problems and challenges the city is currently facing. However, it proved to be sufficient to acknowledge the complexity of the case study, the context, the interrelation of the factors and processes as well as the multiple faces the reality of the city offers – some of them, the least successful, seemed to have been (strategically?) silenced in the popular image the city has exported.

The workshop allowed me not only to strengthen my knowledge and experience in urban development and planning but also to develop a more complex, and I believe realistic/accurate, image of Medellin – than the one I had before the trip. An image that encompasses both, the great accomplishments achieved by the city and the benefits of its proactive approach, but also, the less successful impacts of the interventions and the significant challenges regarding growth and social inclusion that still remain. The slight difference between my “before and after” image of the city raised a bittersweet feeling and a slight concern. The latter relates to whether the city will continue to work towards improving the life and spaces of its residents in an inclusive manner, or alternatively, whether attracted by its international recognition to date, and the goal of encouraging international investment in the city, it will prioritise global goals to the detriment of the local residents and communities. This trip to Medellin has been a memorable experience due to the city’s countryside, culture, people, vitality and the authenticity of all of them. Hence, I really hope the city will manage to successfully reconcile its local and global agenda retaining its singularity and identity, and progressing in the social inclusion, environmental and economic challenges which still remain.”

**Lola Fernandez-Redondo**

“

Having just completed the MSc on Building and Urban Design, this years DPU summer lab to the city of Medellin, NW Colombia was not only an ideal learning platform from which to test and elaborate on all that we had been reading and debating about all year. It was also a chance to contribute to a current project, on a par to any professional work experience. Walking around Medellin, I was mesmerised as I witnessed first hand the transformation that has received so much media attention in the last few years. The stories about Medellin's 'miracle' and 're-invention' were no longer just abstract accounts of an imaginary. There were real public places that people of all ages were no longer afraid to use; and real cultural spaces of participation. These were not just grand gestures of civic architecture or pioneering public transport systems of cable cars, as impressive as these are. They were projects with noble aims of improving education, making public spaces safe and enjoyable and tackling inequality head on, integrating the once insular and segregated hillside communities rife with poverty and violence. Dig deeper however, and many questions began to arise above the over-emphasised "grand designs" and the branding of "social urbanism": Do we really understand the contribution of public space aesthetics to "social good"? How is the highly designed public realm affecting the environment? And is the community voice really being heard?

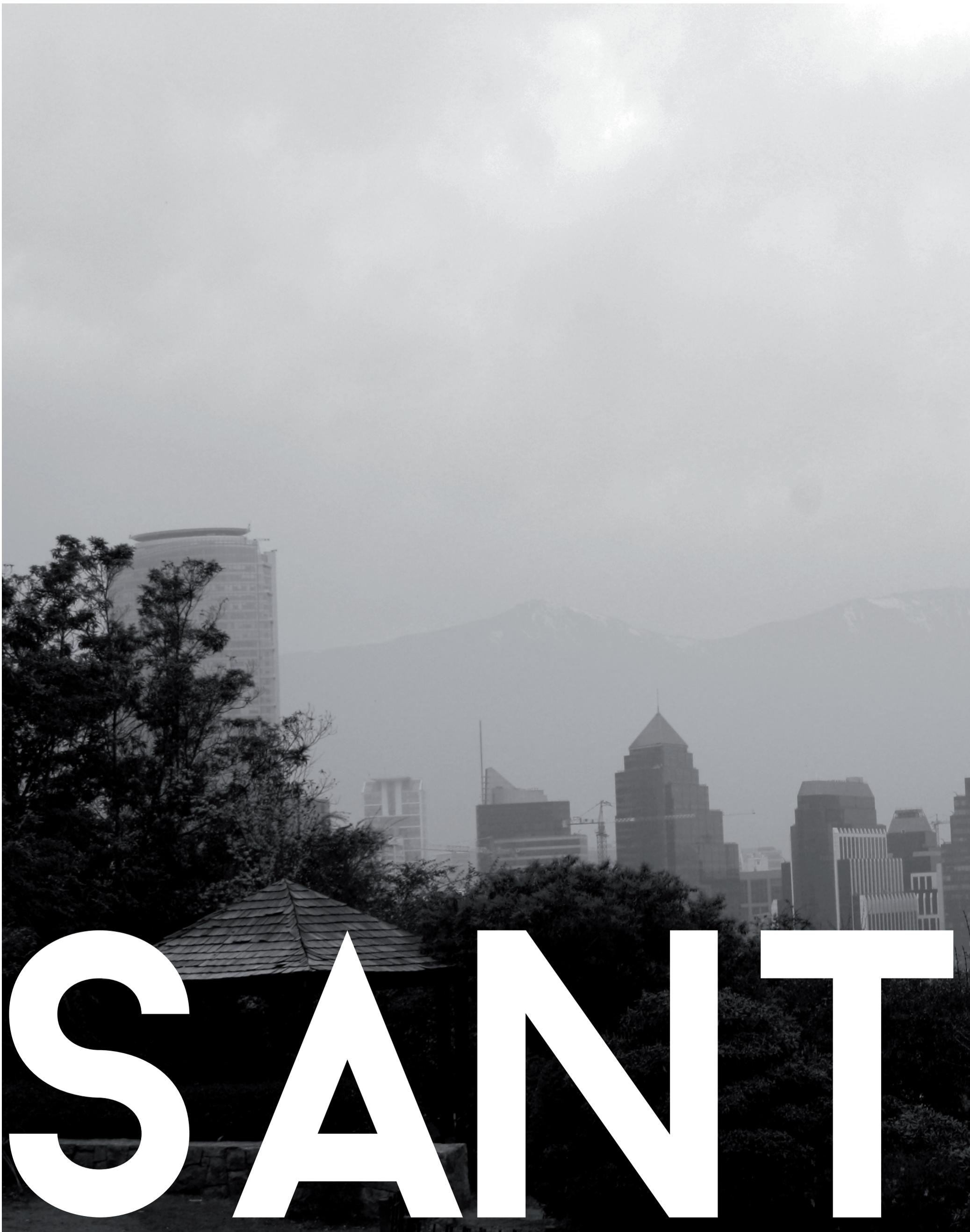
Our work focused on Comuna 8, one of the hillside districts which is now subject to rapid urban renewal. Massive investment is pouring into the area on two further cable car routes and a new tramway. To tackle urban growth and sprawl, the city government is also planning the implementation of a "greenbelt" around the circumference of the upper hillside settlements. Despite the environmental slant of its branding, it is perhaps nothing more than yet another fancy, landscaped urban park. As we tried to get to grips with all the complexities of these "social" projects, as they are often referred to, one was left hoping that Medellin will not be the failure of its own success and continue to blindly deliver the same formulaic approach without really engaging with the specific multiple circumstances of the present. The communities affected by these redevelopments have already started to voice their objections and have rallied up support for alternative plans (e.g. <http://rethinking-urban-fringes-in-medellin.blogspot.co.uk/>). One of the outputs from the summer lab was also an opportunity to propose a few other alternatives and ideas for the communities to consider. A week is, of course, too short to really understand years of history and culture that have played such a significant role in shaping the politics and economics of how Medellin functions. We were all left craving for more and want to continue to discover and unravel the many stories of urbanity that play out day by day.

I can see why today Medellin stands proud and is happy to show the world what it has achieved, and rightly so.

However, there is no space for complacency as their success story is far from complete. Fourteen years after my first visit to Colombia proved that hope is no longer just an expectation, but an unfolding reality. But it is a reality that requires not just improved governance, civic will and vision – characteristics which Medellin can proudly boast of having. It requires that urbanists claiming to design and develop for social good critically engage not just with the aesthetics and mechanics of urban function, but with its physical science and with the different meanings and cultural realities, continuously reflecting on and recalibrating their typical approach to renewal and upgrading through grand schemes of formal urban design.

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**Kay Pallaris**



# SANIT



**in collaboration with  
MPUR Pontificia Universidad  
Católica de Chile, and Ilustre  
Municipalidad de Providencia.**

**IAGGO**

# Inclusive challenges in wealthy contexts in transformation

by Camila Cociña

Entering to someone's house is always an experience, as the private space may speak in many ways about that person, about a culture, about the history of a neighbourhood, of a country, of a family. Entering with a group of 15 people to different houses and listening with attention the personal histories of our hosts, is an amazing source of information to grasp a range of phenomena. Entering to a cultural centre project and talking to their managers about their motivations and constraints while leading the project, is in some way similar to entering to someone's house.

During one week, we were trying to understand the complexity of the transformations taking place in a given neighbourhood, and the role that urban design can play in such a process; to recognise the physical and social relationships taking place in the area, and the role that these relationships have in the transformation of a neighbourhood located on a wealthy district, with a rich architectural and lived heritage, where historically there has been a concentration of elderly, furniture makers and craftsmen; and where the last 10 years a process of intense transformation started with many young designers moving to the area, with a process of branding, and with new infrastructure, universities, and neighbours; the combination of all these factors has implied the emergence of conflicts and potential processes of expulsion of the original population.

This reflection looks to give account of some impressions of a one-week workshop that took place in Barrio Italia (even the name of the neighbourhood is contested, as while working on it we found it was not a consensual one), where we had the opportunity to briefly enter to the life of people, talk with authorities, entrepreneurs, old and new neighbours. The Barrio is located in the wealthy district of Providencia, Santiago de Chile, where a complex process of cultural, social and political transformation is taking place in an environment of intense physical and lived heritage. I would like to share here three brief comments, not with the intention of entirely describing the process of the workshop or fully

give account of the case, but just to share some reflections and ideas that emerged from the experience of exchange knowledge in the area, and that helped to shape the ideas and proposals emerged during the workshop.

## Notions of heritage

We had been listening many interesting things about the neighbourhood; from a city scale perspective, from municipal perspective, from specific projects; many interesting inputs that were helping us to build the puzzle and understand the area. But the puzzle couldn't be completed without the visits and conversation within the intimacy of the private space that helped to complete the circle and gave meaning to the rest of the information. One day, we visited three houses in a walk organised by a neighbours association; in the first one, Pedro told us about the hand-made home repairs, the inclusion of wonderful pieces of hardwood, the importance of the preservation of the beautiful garden, and the construction of three independent lofts which rent became a source of income to him, and home to three young professionals. In the second house, Gabriel and his family talked about the past decades, the changes that the neighbours profile has suffered, and showed us the incredible stained glass and handmade wallpaper, both amazing pieces of artwork in different rooms of the house whose old origins are not clear. And finally Alejandra, a young designer who bought an amazingly big, neat and white house, where

she moved to live with her daughter and son, in the same area where she has her design store and where she set up a new corporation that put together designers and entrepreneurs of the area; one of the main reasons for her to buy the house was to "preserve" the heritage, understood mainly as a physical value of the huge house. The idea about heritage as a concept with multiple notions opened many questions to the workshop participants: what was the common ground, the main values of what should be preserved according to different the actors? How do we calibrate the notion of heritage combining the notions physical and lived one? At the centre of any proposal emerged from the workshop, was the key role of recognising the importance of opening a dialogue about what different groups mean with "heritage", how the diverse notions of value interact, understanding the differences and coincidences as a key information to find paths of sustainable development.

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**The interesting issue that emerges from this idea of temporality and somehow accidental actions, is the transformative potential they have**

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## Cultural transformation vs. expulsion

What the neighbourhood is suffering is a process of transformation; there is no doubt about it. And there is a main component of cultural transformation on it: it's not just about the economic profile of the neighbours and commercial activities, but about the kind of

## SANTIAGO - Providencia in Transformation

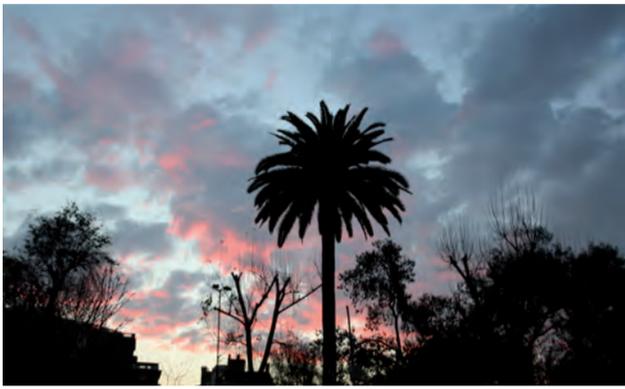
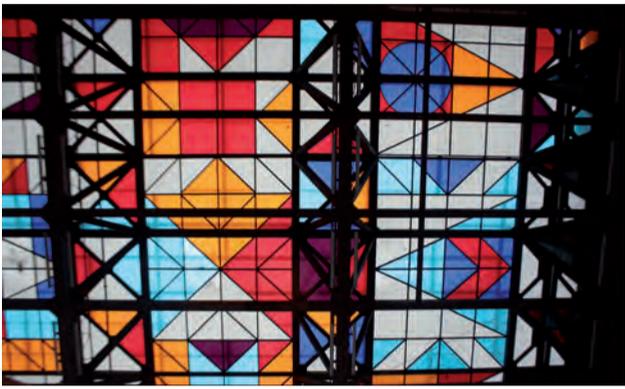
activities, the age of the neighbours, the identity that is built for the locals and outsiders. The main challenge that the workshop tried to face was not how to stop such a transformation, but how to avoid processes of expulsion as a consequence of it, and how to ensure that the changes will be able to recognise and preserve the diversity existing in the area. This concern about inclusiveness implied awareness about three particular challenges that emerged from the discussion with different people: the land speculation as a threat that should be taken seriously; the importance of collaboration among private developers, authorities and the community; and the key role of planning, understood as the collective way to think about the future of the area. The proposal and ideas that emerged from the workshop put on a central position these three axes as indispensables to face the transformation in an inclusive way.

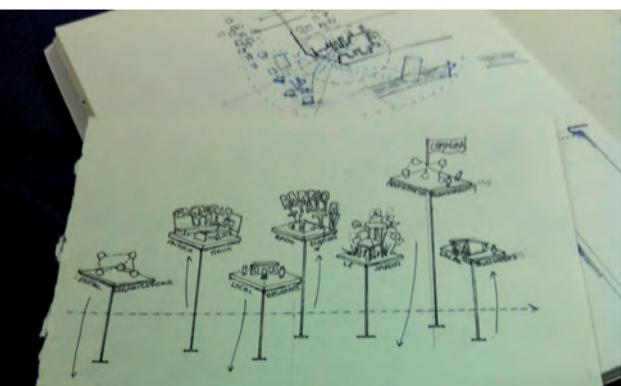
### Temporality vs. irrelevance

One of the most interesting inputs we received during the workshop was to know from first source what was going on in a key piece within the area: A series of projects are taking place in a former factory, the same plot where a new development project will be built, and which future is creating a lot of uncertainty for neighbours. These projects emerged as a way to give use to the buildings that are waiting to be transformed in the new development. They have been operating for some months; one of them, called MilM2, have given space for diverse independent activities as workshops, exhibitions, concerts, lectures, and meetings; another space is used by a pop-up restaurant/garden; these projects share space with more formal activities as the heart quarters of a presidential campaign and design offices. All these activities have been from the beginning with a dead line: their promoters even refer to that fact as the inevitable “dead” of the projects. The interesting issue that emerges from this idea of temporality and somehow accidental actions, is the transformative potential they have on the area: temporality is not synonymous of irrelevance; on the contrary, this kind of activities may contain the force to trigger long term processes of sustainable development. In particular, what is happening in the factory plot, has been an opportunity to imagine possibilities and open envisions about how the development of that particular project could be, not just for the temporal promoters, but for the distrustful neighbours and future developers.

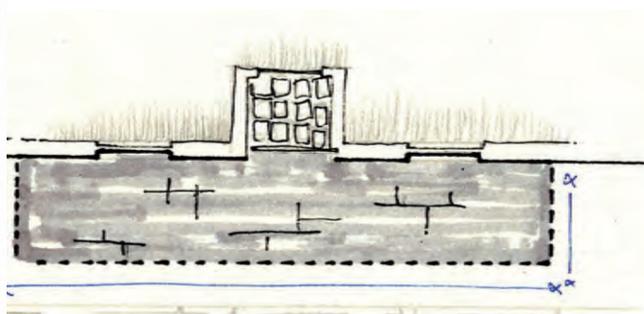
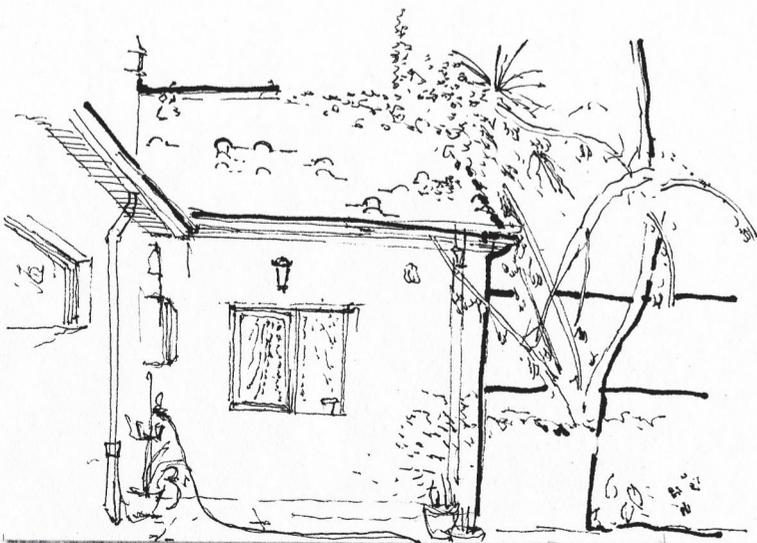
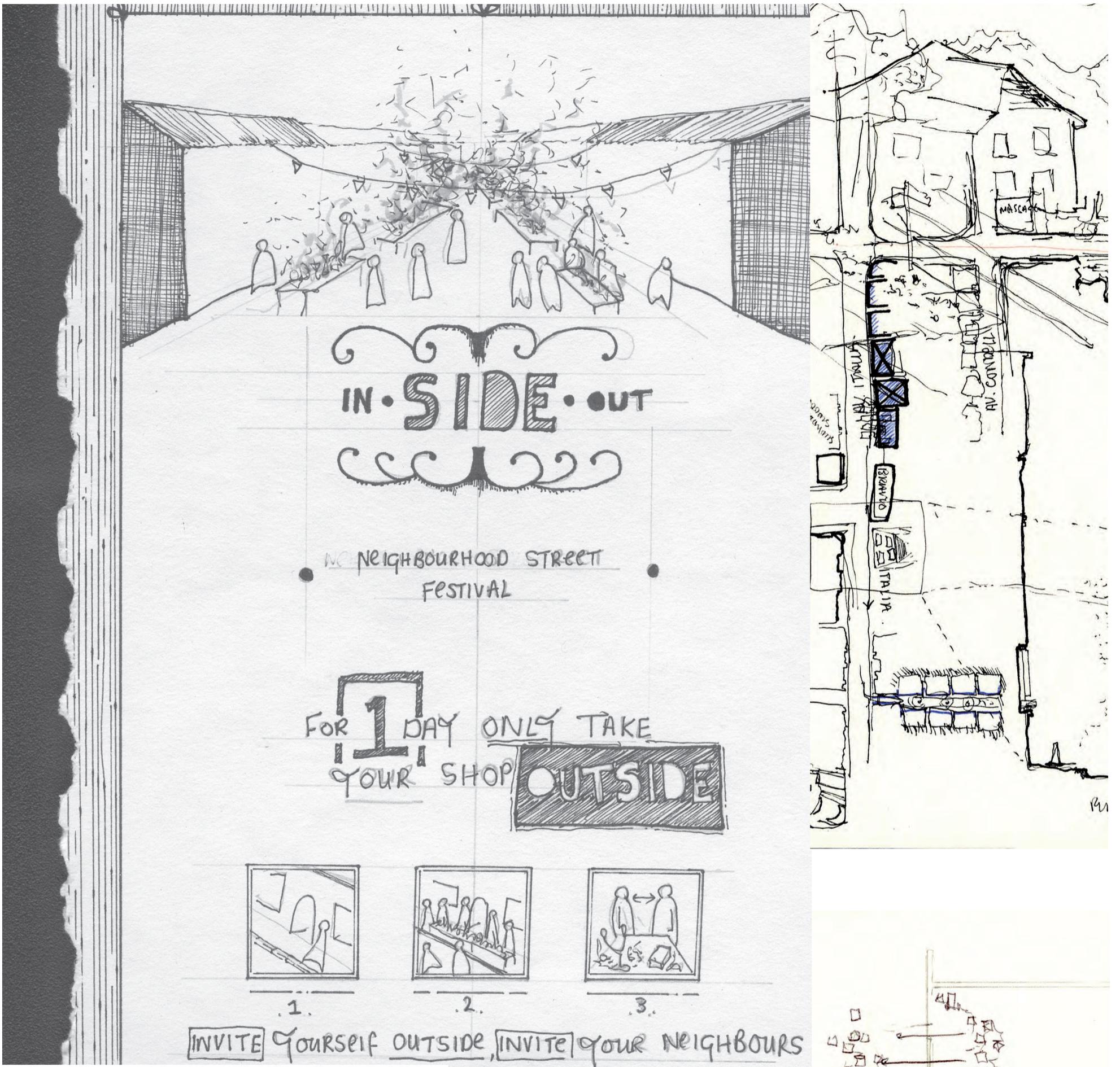
The idea of temporality, and the role of design triggering new prospects in spaces somehow sentenced to death, was at the core of thinking possibilities of a neighbourhood that couldn't be grasped as a static picture, but as a dynamic area in which new prospects are opened by collective action at different levels.



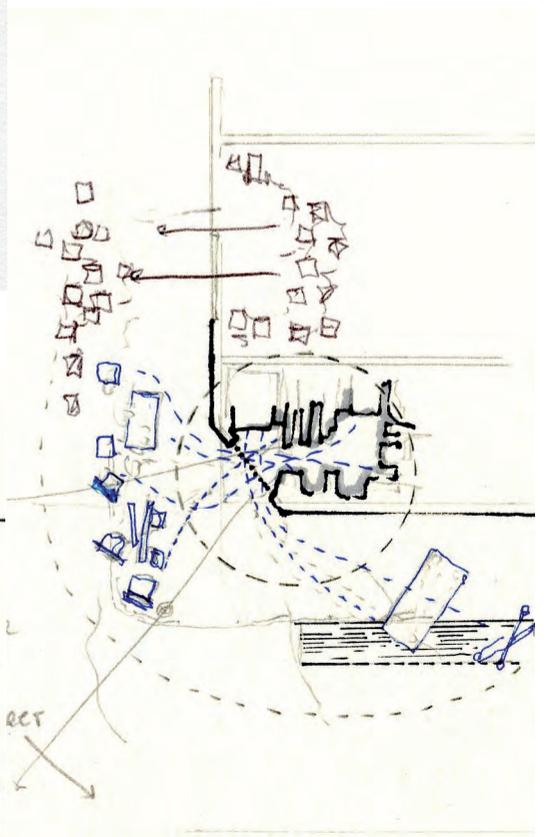




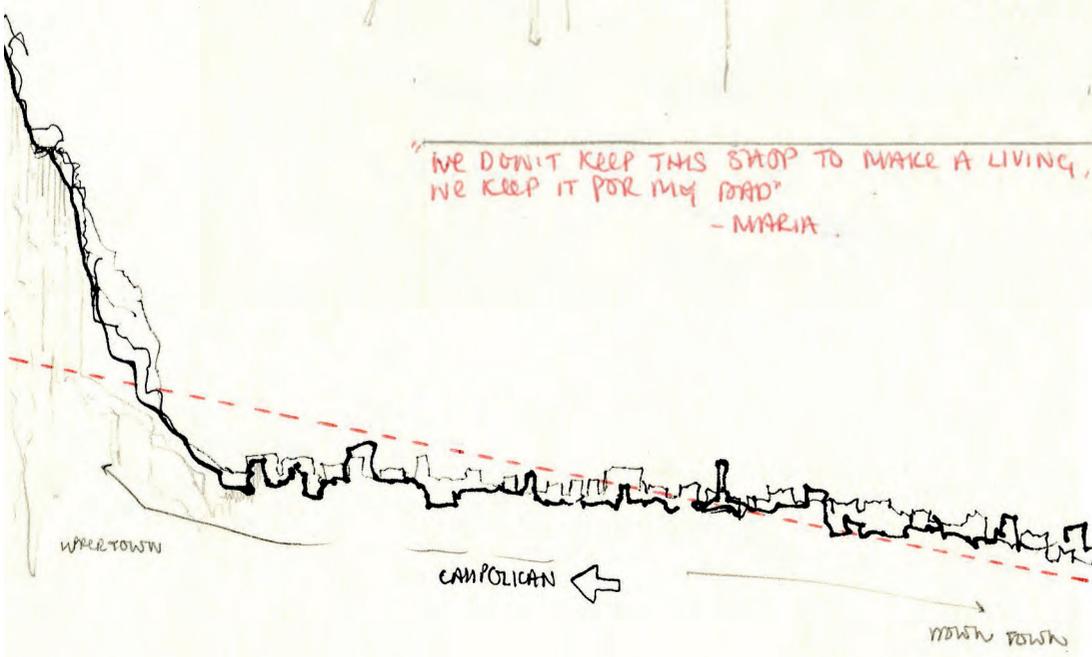
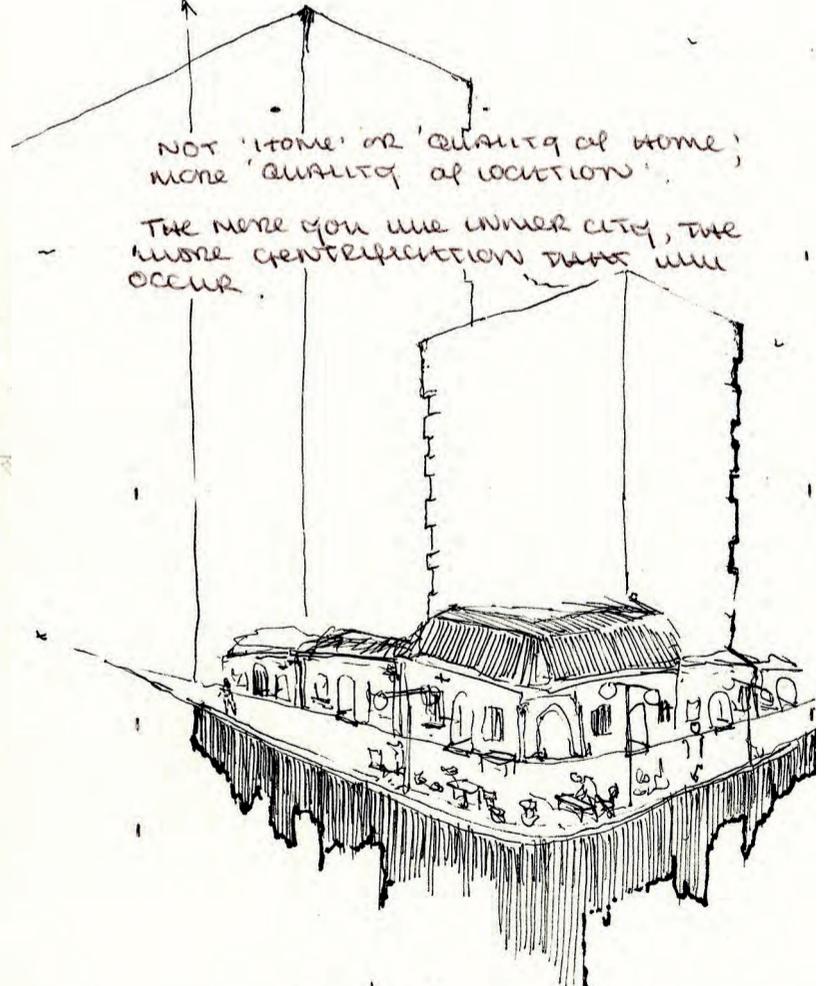
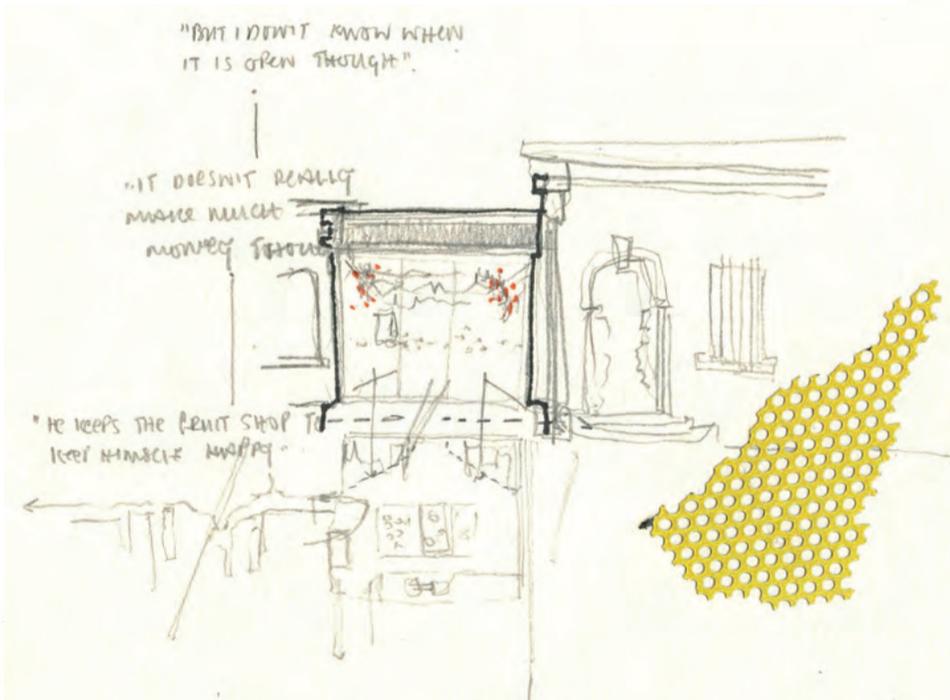
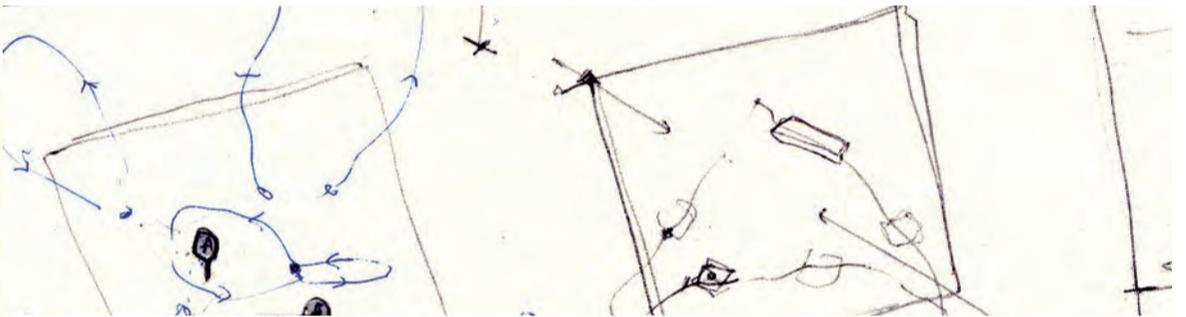
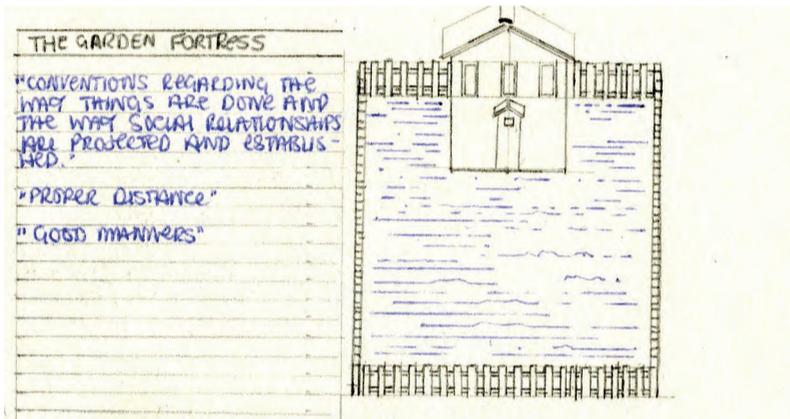
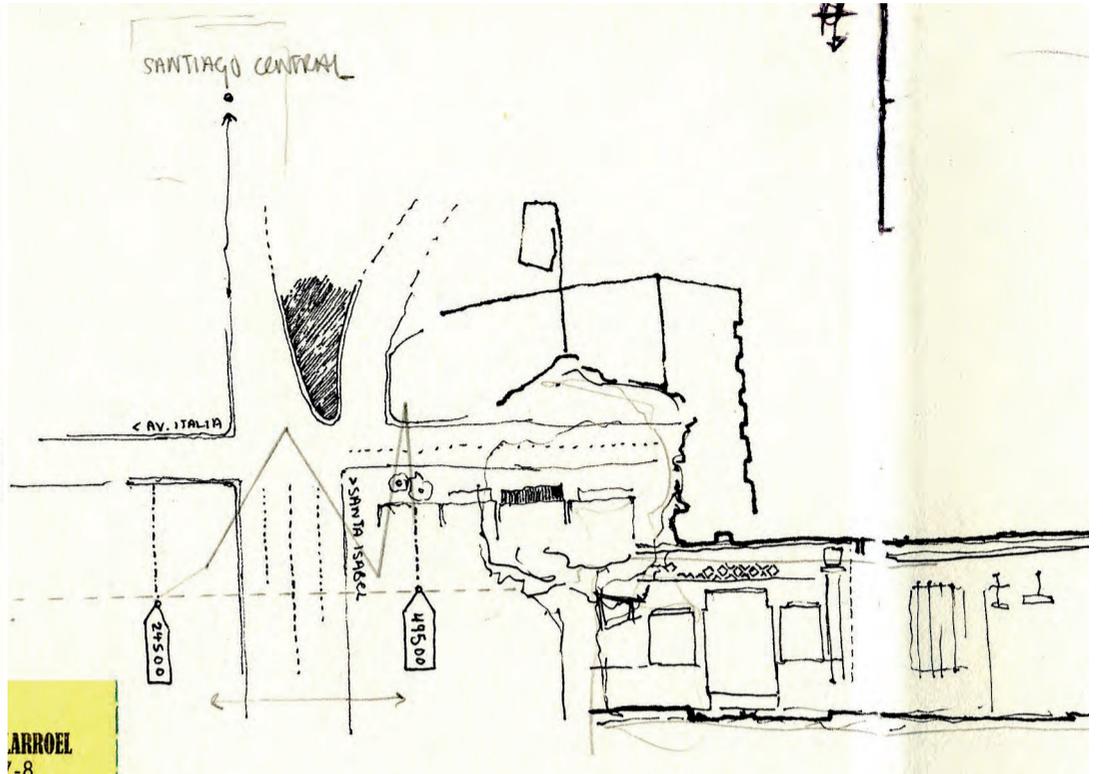
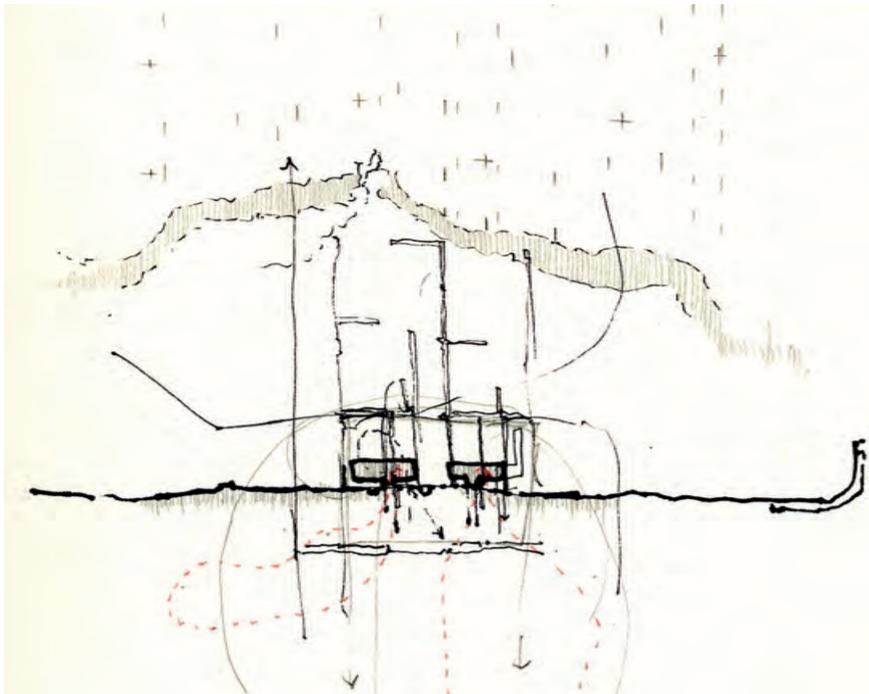
# SANTIAGO - Providencia in Transformation



"FROM HERE TO HERE IS MY PLACE,  
AND YOU ARE ALWAYS WELCOME!"



# SANTIAGO - Providencia in Transformation



## SANTIAGO - Providencia in Transformation

“The trip to Santiago, Chile confirmed the importance of two exercises Peter Cook recently drew my attention to. These being, ‘to look’ and ‘to do’ – simplistic maybe, but I think they are often overlooked in the school of architecture and planning. Meanwhile the summer labs are an opportunity to open our eyes to four very different cities. They allowed the chance to really ‘look’ at Santiago and actually respond thoughtfully to what we had seen.

Our first days were spent exploring Providencia, the main strip of Santiago city and Barrio Italia, our focus area. Here, the redevelopment of Fattoria Italia is causing a neighbourhood shift. New shops and residents are moving to this now, ‘fashionable’ area.

Being part of the lab meant that we not only able to experience the city itself, we were tutored by individuals and local students who truly knew the city. We were able to share their spirit and views, as well as their concerns for the future. We spoke with academics about Santiago’s history and current socioeconomic context, developers of Fattoria Italia, and artists and designers who were currently occupying Fattoria’s studios and working within the area. Collectively, these views constructed a near complete perspective on ‘The Barrio’. They established a datum for us to work from; we were now able to go into Barrio Italia, ‘looking’ for examples of change and elements in need of protection during Barrio Italia’s transition.

In response, my group put theories aside and engaged with Barrio Italia’s neighbourhood, both old and new. We compiled a short survey for the people who work, live and study around Barrio Italia, asking them what they felt was essential for their neighbourhood and what they felt would need nourishment through Barrio Italia’s transitions in order for the neighbourhood spirit to be preserved. Many of the interviewees grabbed the opportunity to tell us about their Barrio Italia. And by the end, we felt that the neighbourhood shared a spirit; a spirit fuelled by pride and heritage. We realised our interventions needed to protect this.

In coherence, we analysed the various approaches to territory. Newer retailers marked theirs in a physical manner; they kept their stock within their shops, whilst the older traders spread their stock out onto the street. Here, the boundary between shop and street was permeable. For them, territory was gestural and we felt that by eradicating physical boundaries, an invitation to interact was made and on a wider scale; something this approach could support a community network.

Our reactions and responses were a result of integration. By really looking at how space is inhabited and by doing the surveys; we were able to understand a neighbourhood on so many levels. A city cannot rely on its physical fabric alone.

I feel that city planning students can often be guilty of doing too much ‘looking’ without acting upon the solution. Meanwhile, studying architects can get too caught up in ‘doing’, without ever taking their work outside four walls and placing it into context. The Summer Lab seems to be an intrinsic embodiment of both, where students can immerse themselves, in a real situation and develop a sensitive response. A balance that is essential for the making of sustainable cities.”

**Emily Priest**

## SANTIAGO - Providencia in Transformation

“ Over the week at the workshop in Barrio Italia, my group uncovered an intriguing idea about the changes taking place in the built environment, the population, and the uses of the neighbourhood: that each type of building, group of people, or kind of use had a lifecycle it is living out in Barrio Italia. Some life cycles last over decades - a house is built, settled into, sees children grow up, and is passed on to grandchildren, is added to, redecorated, remodeled. Other life cycles are extremely short - a restaurant pops up in an vacant property, makes a visual splash and redefines attitudes about the area or what the restaurant represents, and closes within two years. Some business activities seem at the end of their days - second-hand books and furniture repairs that can't keep up with the rising rents - while other businesses are in their infancy, such as children's fashion boutiques. Some uses may be experiencing a mid-life crisis and are reinventing themselves by adopting new spatial qualities - visible by an aged mechanic shop, hidden behind an adobe wall and metal gate, adjacent to a Hyundai-branded repair shop with clear glass walls and an open parking space within.

Change in the urban fabric is inevitable, sometimes desirable, and always good for some people and bad for others. When viewing buildings, groups of people, and land uses within a lifecycle framework, it makes sense that certain typologies, groups, and uses will pass away and be replaced by new ones as time goes on. But is the change in Barrio Italia caused by natural life cycles or could there be manslaughter in our midst? Is there really no market left for second-hand furniture in a central area of Santiago and it's time for these businesses to die, or are the luxury flat and boutique mall real estate businesses using their financial clout to create an environment where the furniture stores go bottoms up and that space can be taken by the highest bidder? In an arena with many players, it is hard to distinguish between fair spatial practice and predatory behaviours when looking at the use change over time. Looking at the changes in population that accompany the spatial changes may be more helpful in determining whether some uses and groups of people are being forced out. If within a few years, Barrio Italia becomes an area where there are only high-end boutiques, flat apartments, cafés, and chic car repair shops, an area that offers goods and services only to people of a particular socio-economic class, it will be clear that some form of hostile takeover has occurred. Not all the traditional houses, local businesses, and residents and artisans could reach the end of their natural lives all at once.”

**Julia Hansen**

“ Summer lab workshop in Santiago, capital of Chile was really and truly about the story of two cities. Struggle between the new, the advanced, and the different with the old, the traditional and the static is apparent in Santiago and just as anywhere in today's world is inevitable. Barrio Italia neighbourhood served a completing example of a problematic relationship as such.

One of the general observations extracted from the talks and literature on Santiago's urban development was in regards to a glaring presence of monopoly in the landownership resulting in centralised decision-making. In case of Barrio Italia, despite recently allocated authority that is very much pro local community there is still lack of a dialog about the future of the area between the state, the investor and the local people. Insufficient long-term planning regulations add to the bias vision for development put forward by the big investors.

Nevertheless, as oppose to other barrios in Santiago, Barrio Italia has a uniquely strong communal will to preserve local living that is based on the long term values, traditional architecture, street morphology, local industries and communal activities. While, the everyday living of the local community is what makes the neighbourhood unique and attractive for the investors, it is not considered, promoted or incentivised as part of a holistic planning for area's development.

Along these lines, it can be argued that in order for Barrio Italia to develop more harmoniously avoiding negative effects of gentrification and diminishing sense of place there is a strong need to work towards creation of enabling environment, both physical and social, which would allow for the new development cycles to take place along with processes already in place, mutually reinforcing but not excluding each other.

Thus, in a group with the local students we have worked out a number of strategies aimed at first of all increasing awareness about various scenarios of development in the neighbourhood. Urban acupuncture interventions could help to generate curiosity and hopefully trigger a dialog amongst all-important urban stakeholders. Other suggested strategy addressed the importance of strengthening local industries and businesses to avoid the diminishing sense of place and its further gentrification. We have also developed strategies promoting alternative spatial practices in the barrio that would help saving existing street morphology and challenge developers' vision for Barrio Italia.

Incorporating the security of local everyday living as a principle for urban development in Barrio Italia and other neighbourhoods may bring more harmonious and meaningful results long term by addressing the struggle between the 'two cities' of Santiago.”

**Anna Koledova**





**in collaboration with  
Francesco Careri (Stalker,  
Roma Tre University, and  
Laboratorio Arti Civiche).**

# M E

# A Constellation of Liberated Spaces

by Azzurra Muzzonigro

Why is the phenomenon of occupation so important in Rome? What are the series of circumstances that led the illegal appropriation of empty buildings reach the scale of the city? What is their potential in rearticulating the relations that shape the cityscape? What alternative urban vision do occupations put in practice? How? These were some of the crucial questions that led the Rome SummerLab group in the exploration of some of the squatted spaces in Rome. An intense and very rich dialogue has emerged from the many encounters with these realities.

## Between formality and informality

Initially we dived into forms of informal housing, such as the fourth floor of Corviale, the one kilometer long visionary building often cited as symbol of the wrong housing strategies carried out by the government from the 70s onwards. The fourth floor, originally designed to accommodate urban services that were never realized, was left empty and soon spontaneously occupied by people who could not afford market housing. This occupation has a very loose, where not inexistent, political organization and represents a form of spontaneous appropriation of an empty space in a very rigid public housing structure. The visit to Corviale brought up questions regarding the tension between the building itself, as the materialization of the abstract view of the planner and architect, and its everyday use. How does life work its way around such a rigid and monolithic structure? What is the responsibility of architecture in facilitating versus discouraging social relations? To what extent is social marginalization an issue of form?

## Between occupying and dwelling

We then explored the complex galaxy of the housing squats, looking at those spaces, both public and private, that are occupied –or rather “liberated”, as the movements articulates it- as a mean to pursue the political goal of the right to dwell the urban space.

The group visited occupied residential and social buildings, which are often sites for the creation of new common spaces as the result of new relationships among different identities.

Thanks to the great hospitality of its inhabitants, we were able to take a closer look inside Porto Fluviale, one of the occupations of the Coordinamento Cittadino Lotta per la Casa (<http://www.coordinamento.info/home/>): it takes place in a building originally conceived as a warehouse for the armed forces and then a few years ago squatted by a very heterogeneous community of migrants, which have since transformed its internal space and retrofitted the whole building to accommodate the housing needs of about one hundred people. We also had the opportunity to have an insight into Action's occupied housing, particularly into CaSette, thanks to the introduction by arch. and inhabitant Sofia Sebastianelli. On a completely different scale than Porto Fluviale, CaSette represents an experiment of a smaller scale self-organised housing focusing on a sustainable and ecological approach.

The other dimension that this section explored more closely is the legalized outcomes of housing squats, that is to say former squatted buildings that have undertaken a renovation process which made them legal and recognized by the public administration. In this case the precious conversation with eng. arch. Marco Felici, construction manager in charge for the public administration of the Autorecuperato (Self-Recovery) of Pietralata project, has been key in providing a 360 degrees perspective on a complex case of urban transformation, born inside the Occupation City. Our encounter with the communities of Porto Fluviale, CaSette and of the Autorecuperato of Pietralata raised many reflections and questions, especially around the role of the public administration. What should be its responsibility in providing socially sustainable housing solutions? Looking at the incredibly long and dispersive process and the many controversies and contradictions raised in the realization of an Autorecuperato project, how

should roles and responsibilities be split in a more efficient way between the public administration and the cooperative of inhabitants? What changes should be put in place in the regional law of Autorecuperi to optimize a potentially sustainable and non-speculative approach to public housing?

## Unsettled cultural spaces

Following the survey of dwellings, we looked into the recent wave of occupation of cultural spaces, such as theatres and cinemas, which focuses on the re-articulation of cultural production. Thanks to the introduction and guidance of Architect Valentina Milan, we had the chance to get in touch with some of these spaces: Cinema Palazzo and Teatro Valle in the first place, two very young cultural squats, that, thanks to a sophisticated and very aware manipulation of media were able to re-articulate the production of an independent culture on one hand, and of (within) liberated autonomous spaces on the other.

This exploration led us also into another kind of spaces, a very new and experimental case: the former, and now occupied, factory of wagon-lits, called RSI\_Italia and now renamed Officine Zero, which production was interrupted as a consequence of a financial collapse and is currently in the process of re-articulating a self-managed production through the skills and competences of its workers/occupants. The experience of Officine Zero is particularly interesting as it sees the collaboration of the workers with other social groups, such as the university students, who have settled in the factory and transformed some of its spaces in rooms for co-working.

Among the other unsettled cultural spaces, we also had the chance to visit the very vibrant neighbourhood of Quadraro, particularly understanding, thanks to the precious guidance of Alessandro Luparelli, the long term work the C.S.O.A. Spartaco is carrying out within the neighborhood, through liberating and opening to the citizens' use abandoned spaces, where to organize an extremely diversified self-managed set of activities, from independent art exhibitions, to boxing classes, to murga dance practice, to tango lessons and so on. These kinds of squatted spaces raised many questions on the value and the meaning of culture itself, and of its intersections with liberated spaces and

autonomous mediatic representations. In what ways can self-managed cultural activities in self-managed liberated spaces re-think the production of culture, providing a common innovative response to different pressures ranging from a market driven culture to the struggle against neglect and social marginalization?

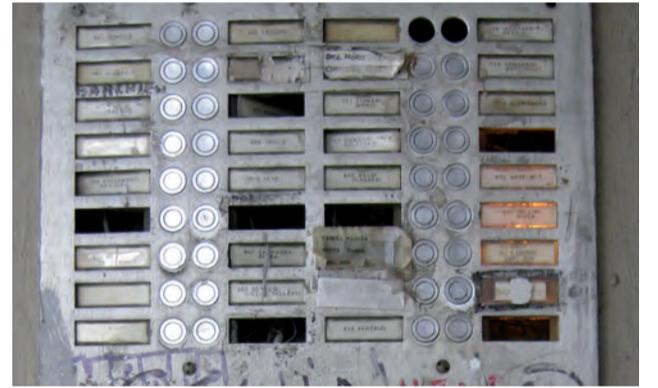
## Re-thinking production @ Officine Zero

After three days of full-immersion in the complex galaxy of liberated spaces in Rome, the group spent the afternoons of the fourth and the fifth day in Officine Zero, meeting the students/workers/occupants, looking at their daily activities, trying to understand and navigate the tensions between the individual and the collective aspirations and visions, trying to reinterpret its actual and potential interaction with the city, both at the scale of the neighborhood and at the wider scale of the whole network of occupations.

The experiences we had encountered in the previous days were crucial to design a sensible proposal for a possible future use of the factory, playing with their strengths to outline a project incorporating both the dimension of space and time, then making an effort in visualizing its transitory moments. What has resulted is on the one hand a leaflet showing the imagined spaces and activities. Among the most interesting, the food production chain: from vegetable gardens, to local market to restaurant, and the cultural spaces: the temporary, short term use of the main hangar of the factory as a space to host cultural activities such as: a pop-up cinema, the wagon-lits reused as artists' residences, the railways as a catwalk for fashion shows. The other outcome which appears in still form on the following pages was a stop-motion video, realized by the whole group as a collective piece that almost plays the role of a graphic instruction manual on how to realize the imagined spaces and activities. The video resulted as a sort of middle ground between the project and its possible future realization, incorporating the experiences of the other squats into a product that, through a deliberate and aware use of the media, aims at building strong connections at the local as well as the urban scale, while rethinking the processes of production, on the basis of the present material condition of the factory.

The 2013 edition of the Rome SummerLab explored the complexities that populate the constellation of liberated urban spaces from multiple perspectives and across different scales, reinterpreting the role of the designer as a committed figure articulating possible spatial alternatives at the threshold between the mainstream and the informal production of space.







# ROME - Occupation City

**Officine Zero** è uno spazio occupato e autogestito da lavoratori e studenti nell'ex impianto industriale RSI.

Le riflessioni scaturite dal contatto diretto e dallo studio di altre realtà di occupazione a Roma e nel mondo hanno dato vita ad una **proposta**, qui presentata, che integra il progetto precedentemente previsto dagli occupanti.

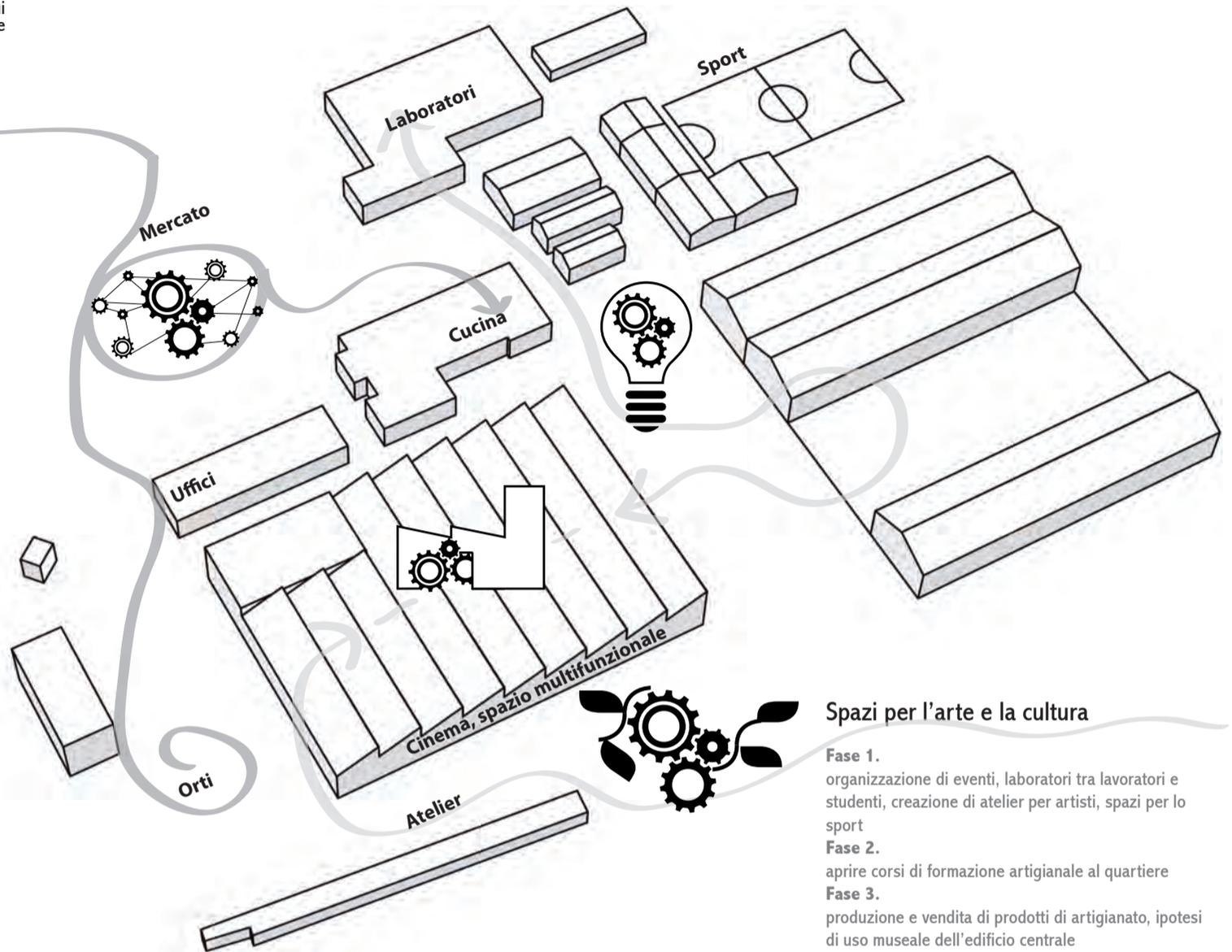
Proposta per **OFFICINEZERO**

## Mercato e agricoltura urbana

Dopo aver esplorato gli spazi delle Officine Zero e considerato diverse idee sperimentali e la forte intenzione di creare uno spazio produttivo, abbiamo visto una forte opportunità nell'inserimento del concetto di agricoltura urbana e di spazi per un mercato. Questa proposta si articola su due diversi livelli temporali, a breve e medio-lungo termine.

**Fase 1.**  
produzione locale di ortaggi,  
spazi per mercato,  
apertura luogo di ristorazione autogestito.

**Fase 2.**  
approvvigionamento a km zero di prodotti per il ristorante ("green food"),  
incontri ed eventi con il quartiere per la creazione di un network di artigiani e agricoltori locali.



 Riusare spazi abbandonati

 Ripensare la produzione

 Aprirsi verso la città e il quartiere

 Sperimentare

## Spazi per l'arte e la cultura

**Fase 1.**  
organizzazione di eventi, laboratori tra lavoratori e studenti, creazione di atelier per artisti, spazi per lo sport  
**Fase 2.**  
aprire corsi di formazione artigianale al quartiere  
**Fase 3.**  
produzione e vendita di prodotti di artigianato, ipotesi di uso museale dell'edificio centrale

## Ripensare la produzione

L'occupazione offre la possibilità di sfruttare le capacità, i luoghi e le attrezzature a disposizione attraverso la reinvenzione della propria produzione. Tale soluzione consente una progressiva trasformazione del profilo economico e sociale della città.



 **AUTORECUPERO**  
Pietralata  
Attraverso la reinvenzione di uno spazio esistente, il progetto dell'Autorecupero di Pietralata ha consentito la creazione di patrimonio pubblico.

## Nel mondo

**NIETZSCHE FABRIK** \*\*\*\*\*  
A partire dall'occupazione, avvenuta negli anni '70, la Nietzsche Fabrik a **Torino** ha riorganizzato gli impianti di una fabbrica di pneumatici riuscendo a creare un polo produttivo e commerciale che ad oggi include una falegnameria, una ferrocina, un atelier, uno studio di registrazione e uno studio di design di lampade.

La crisi del debito in **Argentina** ha portato all'occupazione di oltre 250 impianti industriali. Una di questi, la Zanon Ceramics, ha aiutato altre esperienze di occupazione fornendo materiali. Un altro caso simile si è verificato nel 2008, in **Grecia**, quando i lavoratori hanno utilizzato gli edifici della Vio Me per organizzare raccolte fondi allo scopo finanziare la riattivazione della fabbrica.



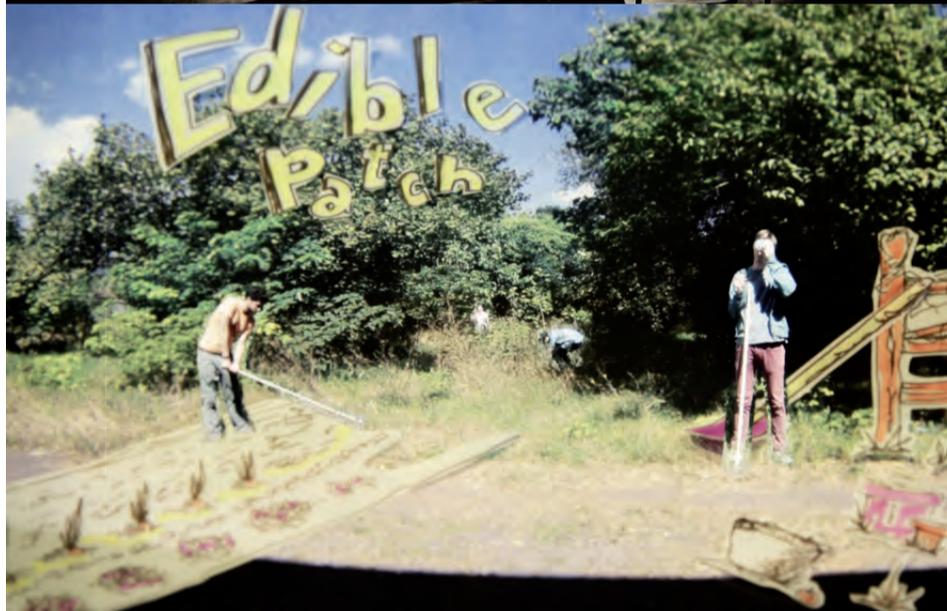
**TRANSITION HEATHROW**  
Transition Heathrow è uno dei migliori esempi di sostenibilità nell'ambito delle occupazioni. All'interno di un edificio che utilizza solo energie rinnovabili e che raccoglie le acque piovane, gli occupanti gestiscono la coltivazione di prodotti biologici.

 **Aprirsi verso la città e il quartiere**  
E' providenziale tenere presente che la sopravvivenza e il successo di un'occupazione dipendono in larga misura dal grado di coinvolgimento che si riesce ad ottenere con la città e con i suoi abitanti.

**Sperimentare**  
La flessibilità è una qualità che può essere sfruttata attraverso l'utilizzo di uno stesso ambiente in maniera diversa in momenti diversi, anche sperimentando soluzioni alternative.



# ROME - Occupation City



## ROME - Occupation City



The DPU Rome SummerLab 2013 dealt with the squatted realities of the Roman territory, with the objective of exploring and analysing different kinds of occupations through a series of field trips and further group work and reflections. The group was composed of an interesting mixture of backgrounds, nationalities and ways of approaching and understanding the work it was asked to do. Such diversity turned out to be highly beneficial, providing a stimulating environment and a rich set of different proposals and levels of discussion.

After the first three days of visiting some of the main occupied sites in Rome, the group was asked to focus its attention on a particular case, the Officine Zero (OZ) occupation. Born of the former RSI factory near the Tiburtina train station. After a first phase of brainstorming and reflection on the field trips and the different realities we encountered, the concluding work mainly aimed to use these previous experiences, as well as drawing on other international examples; to make a proposal for the OZ site based on the occupations' central concern focused on the 'Re-Use and Recycle' concept.

This proposal was built on the results of a former design and participation process, which defined a proposal for the redevelopment of the factory, focusing on the previously mentioned concept. One of the main goals for the community of workers and students who occupied the space was to be able to convert the factory to keep producing and taking advantage of both the facilities and the skills of the workers already present amongst the occupation. Not to interfere with this idea, our objective was to think of solutions for the short and medium term, which needed little investment and encouraged the creation of a network with the whole neighborhood and other similar occupations. The main ideas were the concepts of urban agriculture and product market, and the transformation of some existing spaces to host art installations, ateliers and cultural events, which would allow a creative use of the site of OZ and keep the concept of production, even if not strictly in an industrial sense.

Through the study of the Roman and international occupations, we came up with four main points that shaped the proposal significantly: rethinking production, reuse of abandoned spaces, openness towards the city and the neighborhood, experimentation and flexibility. All this process was then documented and presented in a leaflet that would be distributed to the occupants of OZ. In addition, a short video was edited encompassing our itinerary through the occupations in Rome and our contact with the people involved, as well as the representation of our main ideas for OZ in a performance that we made on the site.

Overall, the SummerLab was an enriching experience for those who participated. It was an opportunity to open doors to new ideas and concepts that as architects or people from other disciplines had perhaps not come across with in the past. The ability to come into contact with those living the realities of urban occupations and learn directly from them about the triggers, significance, management and distribution of their use of urban space is an entirely different approach to what one is used to in academic circles. Specifically, the Rome SummerLab's provision of a 'urban occupation' lens is central to today's urban scene, thus making the experience all the more essential for urban practitioners.



**All SummerLab Rome participants**



The Rome SummerLab promoted by DPU - UCL in Rome, as well as those occurring in other countries, dealt with a very current urban theme and of urgent approach. The case of the occupations of buildings is directly related to the discussion about the social function of property and the democratic management of the built environment.

Through the workshop, we had access to quite differently contextualised squat-occupations occurring simultaneously in Rome at this time. Being a city of worldwide cultural relevance, Rome presents cultural occupations happening in theatres and cinemas, closed due to the recession. It has also occupations in disabled factories, through which employees seek alternatives to obtain income, and yet occupations with housing purposes, which is the type most recurrent in the global context.

Knowing these occupations closely and listen to the people who are involved with these actions, gave us the opportunity to expand our understanding on the tensions surrounding the issue. The neglect by the council is one of the most significant tensions. Because they do not have an adequate policy concerning this status, the government has ignored the situation without promoting the removal of the occupants, but without regard to their constitutional rights.

The construction of social capital between the occupants and the interaction with the neighbourhood are also significant tensions because they correspond to complex processes, which are consolidated over time. Collective action of this movement, whether for housing, culture or work, involves rules for participation and behaviour and building trust among stakeholders, which requires individual dedication and a significant amount of hours per week dedicated to the movement.

However, we observed that after committing to the occupation movement, the occupiers have built a very democratic form of political organization, with regular meetings and decision made collectively. The existing identity in each visited community was quite evident and showed a positive attitude towards the action by them performed.

When we were asked to develop an action proposal to one of the occupations visited, the Officine Zero - OZ, we were forced to assume the role of the occupants of that place, considering all the tensions, the skills of the actors involved, the financial constraints they face and the background we have built over the week of the workshop and throughout our formations.

This activity within the workshop was crucial to the completion of our work, because we took the role of spectator and placed us as actors of that occupation. The process of building the best solution at the time was laborious, since for every new idea new challenges had to be faced, and we had in each context, consider the pros and cons of each idea, and collectively decide on the best option.

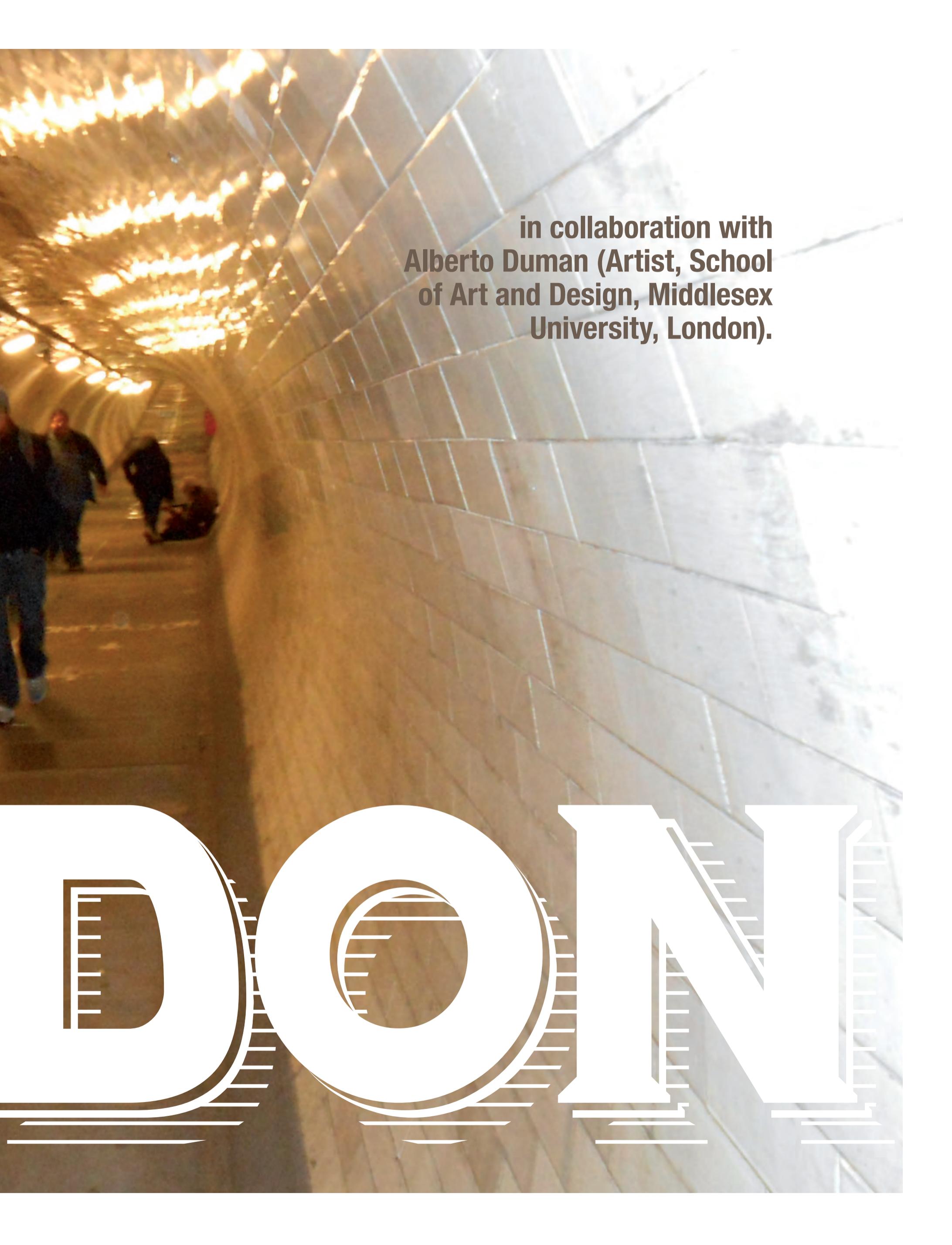
As my closest reference is the Brazilian reality (because this is the country where I came from), I could see, comparatively, that Brazil, despite being a developing country, advances with respect to social policies. The pressure exerted by organized movements on the current left wing government has achieved positive results, although at a slow pace. The scale of social problem in Brazil, especially in the case of irregular occupation is far more expressive than the one identified in Rome. Thus, numerically, the Brazilian scenario seems to be an almost unsolvable case. However, some conversations are being established, and social programs shaped to this reality, which cannot be found in a city of a developed country such as Rome, much older than the young Brazil.

As a result, the experience I had with the DPU SummerLab in Rome was enriching in both professional and personal aspects. Experiencing the social problem of occupations in the city of Rome, strengthened my questionings about the urban management methods prevailing in most cities around the globe and made me see possibilities for collective organization that, relying on governmental assistance, are sustained, protect each other and seek the collective good over the individual.



**Poliana Risso Silva Ueda**





**in collaboration with  
Alberto Duman (Artist, School  
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University, London).**

**DOONI**

# 'Gleaning the immaterial, or how to get wet in the CGI urban landscape'

by Alberto Duman

By the time we reach the street corner between Morning Lane and Chatham Place in Hackney Central, East London, the ground is wet from the rain fallen in the past hour, highlighting the chewing gum marks on the pavement and the crisp edges of buildings in construction reflected in the pools of rainwater. We are here today to experience the complex layering of temporal strata merging in the same physical space that distinguishes urban places; there is something to see here but most of what we are looking at is not here yet.

We are embedded witnesses of the multi-temporality of urban space and its significance in the manner described by Doreen Massey:

*'Space is the dimension of multiplicity, is the product of relations and is always unfinished and under construction'.<sup>1</sup>*

The feverish transition plans at work here towards the Legacy Convergence<sup>2</sup> targets surround us as an aspirational atmosphere that goes largely undetected in the soggy mid-morning everyday. We are engaged in an impossible, yet essential attempt: to hold momentarily the entangled diachronic lines that traverse places, and this place in particular, knowing all too well that *'space cannot be known fully in/as itself. There is no objective 'snapshot' possible of space, even of a space'*.<sup>3</sup>

Still, we are looking for evidences in the future of this place as a way to engage with its spatial politics as of now, stretching the anthropologically-derived notion of fieldwork between the material and the immaterial, the existing and the planned, or in ethnographic terms: the past as a myth and the future as a dream. But we are also getting wet in the midst of all this, our visual capacities partially are impaired by our being in the present, and our minds are equally busy thinking of a nearer,

more contingent future, that of shelter and food in the nearby pub.

We glance at what was until less than a year ago the Duke of Wellington pub, now converted into an outlet for Pringle, the Scottish heritage fashion and accessories brand, the brickwork of the wet building still fresh from the jet-washed transition from public house into shopping destination.

We scrutinise the composite images of people on the hoardings of the not yet completed development of the Textile Building, –a residential complex conversion of the ex-Burberry factory in Chatham Place– showing us local subjectivities yet to exist, the ghost future inhabitants cut and pasted from the libraries of immaterial citizens available to developers to pre-design the lifestyles of the future occupants of their buildings.

A bus with a sleeping driver awaits the return of the boutique day-trippers from the cavernous space of the Burberry fashion outlet heading to their next and only other destination in East London: Westfield in Stratford.

There are shops-fronted buildings completely painted in black, with large brand logos painted on their frontage, looking like charcoal-smouldered remains frozen in time, acting as

a visual cue of what is to come in their place once the job is done by 2016. This is the site of the planned Fashion Hub<sup>4</sup>, the Manhattan Loft Corporation's major investment in the area, breached by £1.5m GLA post-riot regeneration public funds that Hackney Council has allocated to springboard this retail-led regeneration scheme.

It's difficult to align our vision with our knowledge in such a fleeting, recombinant place, particularly for those who see it for the first time and yet a dialogue of sorts is taking place through our spontaneous analysis; the place is dialectically opening up in front of us.

It was exactly this focus on the 'fleeting' –both in the terms of occupancy of space and the relationships produced as a result– that guided our journeys into East London and evoked the crucial importance of such status, particularly since we were also 'fleeting' in our short-term engagement with such present urban condition.<sup>5</sup>

Moments of altered everyday perception like these, have been numerous in the London Summerlab 2013, propelled by constant movement and intended as a non-sequential accumulation of entry points into the social life of a place emerging in between the unrealised, the once but no more existing, the past that remains with transformed meaning and the yet to be built.

This has been our main tactic, a form of itinerant urban pedagogy crash course rooted in the experience of moving in the urban space understood as a critical urban practice. These crossings occupy the gap in between the local history tours concentrated on heritage that evoke history through the remains of past built environment and the vested interest visits by *'key decision makers, developers, architects, occupiers, and investors'* in the same areas,

staking their proposed developments as colonising trips into the future.

Indeed, only two weeks later, one of these trips has taken place in the exact same spot in Morning Lane, organised by the NLA and Hackney Council under the heading: 'Hackney... the coolest borough?'<sup>6</sup>, accessible to all those interested for the sum of £299+VAT.

In the promotional blurb accompanying the event we read:

*'Hackney today is a haven of hip and trendy places to live, work and play.'*<sup>7</sup>

Beyond the easy comparison that makes the week-long Summerlab fees sounding like the best possible value-for-money deal, and with the echo of the recent London Real Estate Forum<sup>8</sup> in Mayfair whose entrance fee was £999+VAT, there lies the chasm of inequality that defines the contemporary condition of East London we have attempted to frame and traverse on foot, public transport and conceptually in our proposition of 'Localising Legacies'.

We posited –and took with us on the road in our long journeys– that these multi-temporal urban dimensions in action located in the spaces of London as an epitome of the contemporary world-class city, exist both in material and immaterial terms, manifested and latent in equal measures.

Therefore, to 'glean the immaterial' meant for us to collect shards of these overlapping dimensions, to highlight and investigate some meaningful points of contact, friction and sometimes collision between collective futures at different scales caught in the present predicament of East London, and the way in which predominant images of the city as a product submerge social realities under market imperatives.

This aggressive, market-driven model of distributive social justice embedded in the Legacy Convergence framework currently driving much of the macro-level strategic delivery of planning in East London is echoed by Boris Johnson's chillingly humorous statement at the opening of the London Real Estate Forum last June: *'You are players in one of the most important, most exciting games of Monopoly ever played.'*<sup>9</sup>

The pernicious effects of such virtual renderings layered over the city at such scale cannot be overstated, particularly when the self-evident social inequalities in place are employed as de-facto licences to radically transform areas through a top-down/levelling-up agenda without serving the interest of those stuck on the ground, as Paul Watt reminded us during our visit to the Carpenters Estate in Stratford.<sup>10</sup>

But whilst the all-pervasive atmosphere of a city in the midst of such turbulent and significant physical and social transformation has inevitably permeated our rich and constant conversations, the voices we brought to bear and the places we worked and rested in across

our itinerant symposium have offered moments for identifying, evaluating and testing the unexpected folds in which other, possible urban collective imaginaries can materialise, mutate or migrate.

Starting from our presence in the Old Rectory house of St. John Church in Clapton<sup>11</sup>– slated to be demolished to make way for a mixed residential development– from which every morning we begun our journeys, to the Dalston Curve Garden<sup>12</sup>, a flourishing community space established in 2010 as a concession from the developer owning the land and now betrayed by the same developer as part of its expansion plans, through to the Chatham Arms pub, the first Asset of Community Value in Hackney finding out the pros and cons of empowerment through the Localism Act<sup>13</sup>, we have placed our participants at the heart of symptomatic instances of Hackney that revealed deep fractures in the highly cultivated self-image of 'cool borough'.

This last case in particular chimed with our chosen emphasis on the UK Localism Act 2011 and its unfolding application as an emerging planning framework worthy of attention<sup>14</sup>; equally we stretched the meaningful inheritance of previous community planning efforts in London through the People's Plan for the Royal Docks, funded back in those days by the Popular Planning Unit of the GLC.

Even at the swift pace forced upon by our weekly duration, the 'acupuncture' approach of these seemingly scattered instances has ultimately produced its own mapping; by connecting the various interstitial realities we have briefly inhabited and learned from, some precious insights have been gained in terms of framing the different temporalities encountered and sketching proposals for new grounds of negotiation between conflicting actors.

Most importantly, the necessities to which our constantly moving group was subjected in terms of free spaces available for public discussion have produced two interesting effects. The first was to highlight how alternative modes of occupancy of the existing urban space can test their apparent status in terms of access to public space – something that a static workshop could only learn in principle.

The other, crucially, was to reveal how in a climate of intensive real estate speculation and inflated value of an area, even spaces defined as social enterprises –or appearing to embody a socio-economic logic countering that of the market forces surrounding them– become attuned to the economic climate in which they operate, resulting in the shortage of free-access, community-led and affordable meeting places for nascent collective interests.

Also, through our nomadic, fleeting approach into Hackney and East London, a danger of longing was sensed; that of abandonment to a nostalgic derive into places where the speed

of transformation at work is so severe as to reducing resistance into preservation of the built environment and action into spectatorship of an unfolding spectacle.

Still, the attention placed to the multi-temporal essence of the places we traversed and the relationship they produce has actively resisted such reduction whilst dealing with the productive potential of this multi-dimensionality under attack. Perhaps, the most memorable legacy produced from such reflections has been the key sentence of one of the groups' proposals: *'The future is watching you'*.

### Notes

1. p.3, Featherstone D. and Painter J., ed., 'Spatial Politics: Essays for Doreen Massey', Wiley-Blackwell, London, 2013
2. The Convergence document (Strategic Regeneration Framework: An Olympic Legacy for the Host Boroughs) brings together physical and socio-economic regeneration goals for areas containing Olympic venues in East London: Newham, Hackney, Tower Hamlets, Greenwich and Waltham Forest. It can be seen and downloaded from <http://www.gamesmonitor.org.uk/files/Convergence%20Annual%20Report%202011-12%20FINAL.pdf>.
3. P.50, Saldanha A., 'Power-Geometry as Philosophy of Space', in Featherstone D. and Painter J., ed., 'Spatial Politics: Essays for Doreen Massey', Wiley-Blackwell, London, 2013.
4. <http://hackneyfashionhub.co.uk/>
5. We were often reminded of John Holloway's seminal text 'Change the world without taking power' and its emancipatory narrative outside of direct political struggle.
6. [http://www.newlondonarchitecture.org/event.php?id=543&name=nla\\_on\\_location\\_hackney](http://www.newlondonarchitecture.org/event.php?id=543&name=nla_on_location_hackney)
7. [http://www.newlondonarchitecture.org/event.php?id=543&name=nla\\_on\\_location\\_hackney](http://www.newlondonarchitecture.org/event.php?id=543&name=nla_on_location_hackney)
8. <http://lref.co.uk/>
9. <http://lref.co.uk/review/>
10. Paul Watt excellent account of that case, 'It's not for us', can be read at [http://www.gamesmonitor.org.uk/files/It's Not For Us.pdf](http://www.gamesmonitor.org.uk/files/It's%20Not%20For%20Us.pdf).
11. See the current planning application at <http://idox.hackney.gov.uk/WAM/showCaseFile.do?action=-show&appType=Planning&appNumber=2012/3345>
12. This is the garden website: <http://dalstongarden.org/>. And on <http://dalstongarden.org/?p=4735> you can see the proposed plans that would see it going.
13. There is a long and embittered story to learn from at <http://www.savethechesham.org>. Still, this single-issue campaign led by local residents has managed to make both local and national history: the first Asset of Community Value in Hackney and the first ever legal appeal by the owner of an ACV against its status as granted by a local authority.
14. This case is still active through an appeal the landlord of the pub has lodged against its designation as an Asset of Community Value (ACV). This is the first appeal case in UK brought in front of a judge. The proceedings will take place on the 17th October, at Hackney Town Hall Council Chambers and will constitute an important legal precedent to take into consideration.





# LONDON - Localising Legacies



THE ACTON ARMS WAS SITUATED AT 296 KINGSLAND ROAD. THE PUB HAD BEEN PRESENT ON 1839 AND WAS SUBSTANTIALLY REBUILT IN 1889. IT WAS A WATNEY'S BREWERY PUB. IN AROUND 1985 IT BECAME A FREE HOUSE AND TRADED FOR A WHILE AS NOLAN'S BAR, ADOPTING SOMETHING OF AN IRISH THEME. BY 2000 THE NAME HAD REVERTED TO THE ACTON ARMS, BUT THE PUB CLOSED IN 2001 AND WAS CONVERTED FOR US AS A HAIRDRESSERS' SALON. THE GROUND FLOOR IS NOW UNUSED.

YOU ARE HERE

PREVIOUS LOCATION DEMOLISHED



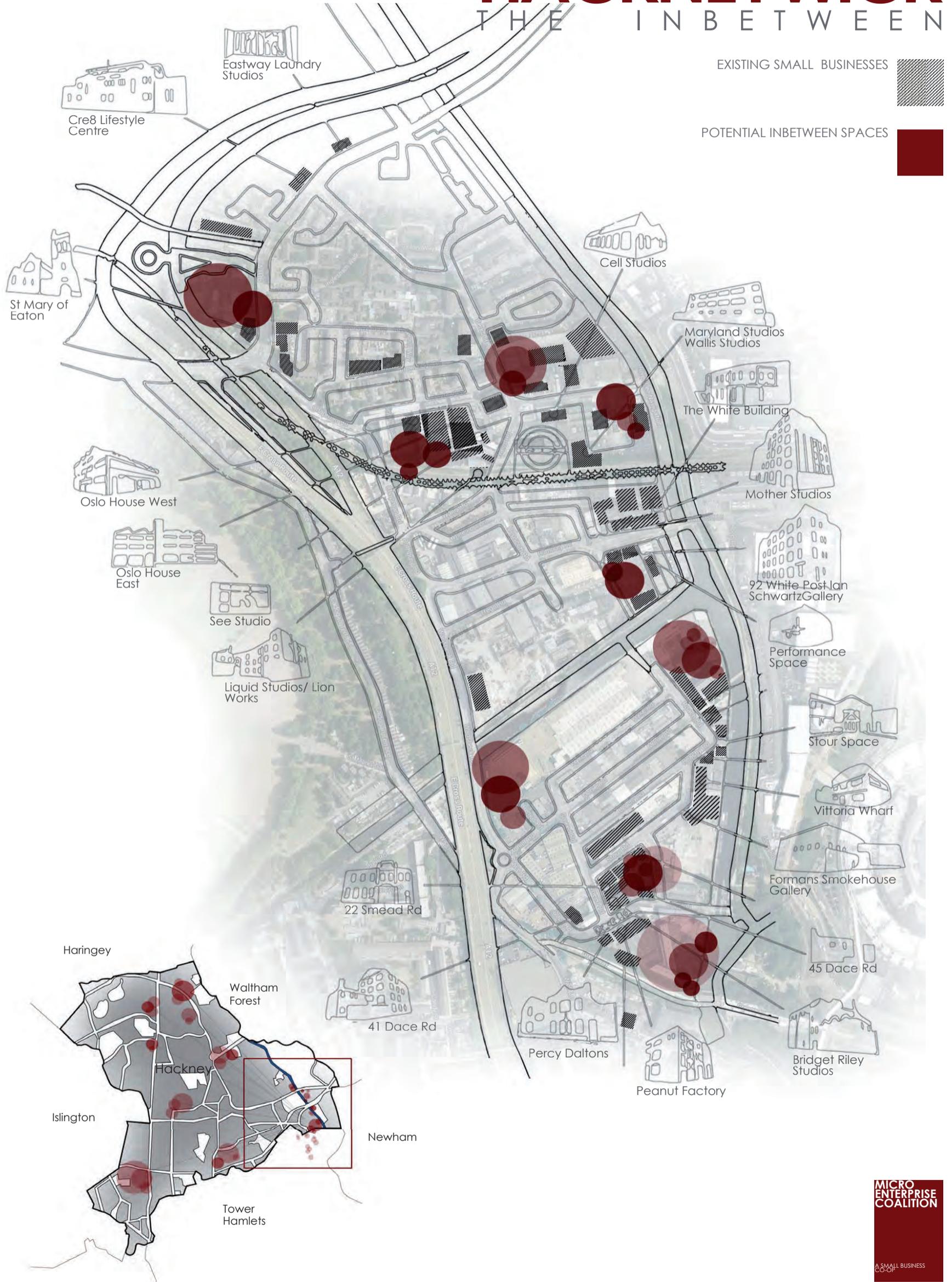
# LONDON - Localising Legacies



# LONDON - Localising Legacies

# HACKNEYWICK

THE IN BETWEEN



# THE IN BETWEEN SUSTAINING IDENTITY

Hackney Wick is an area of the London Borough of Hackney that has received a great deal of attention since a portion of it was selected as part of the 2012 Olympic Park. This 'honor of selection' is often sold to communities on the idea that it will benefit and grow the area, creating improved economy and quality of life for residents. However, due to the influx of activity from the Olympic park and now the proposed 'fashion district,' **development is moving too quickly for the identity of Hackney to remain intact.** This development is running the risk of squeezing out local residents and small businesses, as the untold effect of gentrification of an area often means an increased cost of living that cannot be sustained by the existing population.

Hackney Wick is an area worth protecting; its people and small businesses. Compromising their ability to remain will void Hackney Wick of the character it is known for. **Our proposal centers on the promoting of growth and awareness of local businesses and the artistic community, through involvement in the development process, to sustain and enhance the identity of Hackney.** The values behind this movement want to capitalize on the **cultural significance** of small enterprises, while enabling their capacity for **creativity, flexibility, and mobility**, to be supported by the **resilience** of other more established small businesses. The result will make Hackney Wick an incubator of small businesses based upon a **foundation of integrity** and fiduciary relationships.

Development is certainly here and will continue to come - that is a fact that cannot be ignored. However, it can be done in a way that creates a more **harmonious relationship** between small businesses and developers, which will then benefit the residents-at-large through maintaining and growing the character of the borough. To facilitate this relationship between small businesses and developers, the small businesses will band together to create a **Micro Enterprise Coalition**. This coalition will benefit from its strength in numbers, and will act as a much larger voice than an individual small business could on its own. This voice will be used to work with the Hackney Council and developers who are interested in building in Hackney Wick.

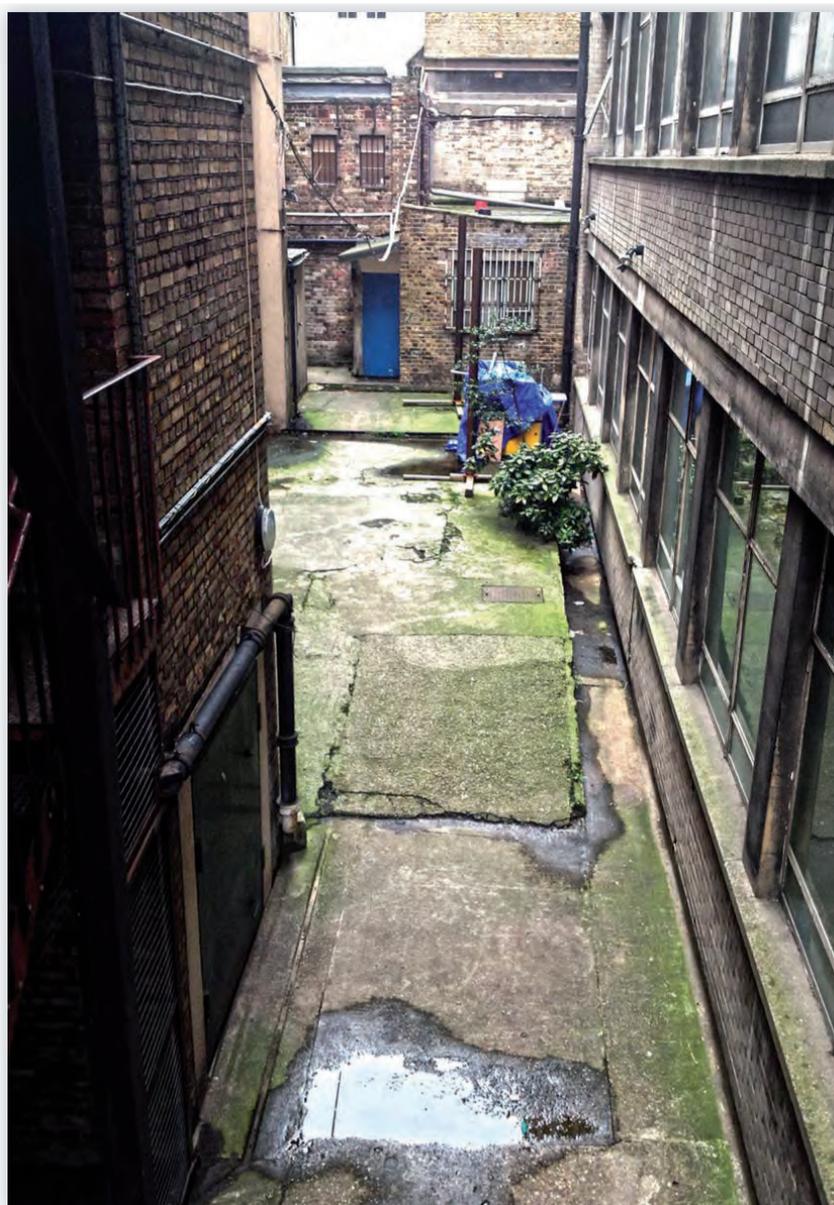
The main function of the Micro Enterprise Coalition is to provide support for small businesses - and this will be done in two specific ways. The first is to create a **'network' or 'map'** which is aware of the spaces that are being bought up by developers. These spaces often sit empty for a span of time after purchase, wherein the developer is either working on the design of the new building or is waiting for the market to change, etc. The coalition will work with developers on selling the idea of **preservation through occupation** - where a small business is allowed to occupy their newly purchased storefront, warehouse, alleyway, parking lot, etc during the time period while the developer moves through design plans. The small business benefits from access to a space to produce and build their business, whether it be bottling soda, opening a small cafe, or even artists creating their work, and the developer knows their property is being protected from vandalism and is already **promoting activity in the area** before their new development is built.

These short term 'leases' or 'pop up shops' lend themselves to the flexibility with which small businesses function as they are beginning to grow: as they need more space, they move to the next larger space available. This will help small businesses flourish where they may have struggled to find affordable access to rent space, and instead be able to grow. However, this system is not meant to act as a loop in which a business exists, but rather a **first stepping stone** towards being an independent business. It is even possible that the small business could outgrow space available in Hackney Wick - but they will always remember that Hackney Wick was the one who gave them the chance to start, and word will spread. Use of these spaces would need to go through the Hackney Council, in order to make the process legal, and discussions with the developer about the state in which the space will be returned to them will also be a discussion which is taken into account.

The Micro Enterprise Coalition will also promote these small businesses through events in which the public can tour these businesses and create awareness about their products (if they want that kind of exposure) - in a sense, it would be a **'venue crawl'** that gives residents more insight into the type of work these small businesses do. This could lead to further investment, a stronger sense of pride in the area, and generate economic activity through self-promotion that might otherwise be unattainable for individual small businesses.

MICRO  
ENTERPRISE  
COALITION

A SMALL BUSINESS



## LONDON - Localising Legacies

“ Coming to London from Tampa, Florida, one doesn't experience culture shock in the typical sense; many of the brands are familiar and the language is easy to understand. But a different kind of culture shock is definitely what awaited me in this short Summer Lab.

The sheer enthusiasm of each of the presenters was unique; of which there was not one or two, but six. Each were so knowledgeable and passionate about their particular field of interest that it quickly began to rub off on me. I can't remember the last time I took a class and encountered so many people who were obviously, thoroughly invested in and so focused on what they had to tell their students.

So what did I get out of my experience in the Summer Program?

For me London changed from a city-to-visit to a complex organism where politics, social needs and personal desires all interacted on a stage that constantly shifted. It became a breathing entity rather than a just a pretty tableau or façade. I got a new way to see.

But, in addition to the huge 'download' of information in a discussion format where intellectual questions sat next to philosophical questions and moral compasses were checked frequently, I got a reminder that blasé attitudes are not the norm and that passion is still alive and well. And it made me more excited about my field of study than when I arrived.

Before I knew it I - coming from a Design background as an Architecture student - had been dipped feet first into a view of the development of communities from the grass-roots end instead of the top-down 'Design by Fiat' so common in Architecture today. It was fascinating and I will carry this internalized knowledge with me from now on.

”

**Brett Freeman**

“ The structure of the Summer Lab about East London was based on individual preparation through reading, intense guided journeys within the areas of research, and a series of talks regarding historical and political topics, and personal experiences or studies by experts and local persons.

This approach offered a rather exhaustive picture of the situation in its complexity, also looking beyond what is merely tangible or commonly known, and considering the effects of the physical transformations onto the delicate balances of the social and economical networks of communities.

Most of the redevelopment areas visited show the aim of improving inhabitants' life quality, building houses and infrastructures, and creating new jobs. However, these large investments often cause a negative impact on existing local communities, who face the rise of prices, in particular of housing, a simultaneous reduction of the social housing capacity and a consequential change in the social composition of the community, with a new growing wealthier population and the existing population forced to relocate elsewhere. Three main elements seem to me rather recurrent in most of the analysed cases of redevelopments: their large spatial scale, far from a local dimension; their speed of construction, which does not correspond to a likewise fast ability to adapt by the community living in that area; and, most of all, the fact that they are mainly imposed, driven from above or by private interests, involving communities very little in shaping their future.

All these elements then raise quite strongly the importance of considering the interests and aspirations of local communities as the main purpose of the urban project, also by directly involving the communities themselves in the process.

Together with the ideas developed in this direction during the Lab, I found the overall experience very stimulating and also suitable for further investigation and study.

”

**Viola Maffessanti**

“

I watched with detached focus on the students as they came up against issues not previously encountered. The pace of the encounters that Alberto and William scheduled was rigorous and stretched them to their limits. But more critically, they came face to face with actual advocates and passionate stakeholders of Hackney, Hackney Wick and Dalston.

The notion of an international event imposing itself upon East London, more specifically the magnitude and breadth of impact of the 2012 Olympics clearly stretched their perspectives to the limit. And I'm not sure the full perspective of political and underlying social issues was fully grasped for now. But it was clear they understood that significant social, cultural and political forces were at work on a national and international level that are changing, and will manifest significant change, upon the Hackney Wick neighborhood and greater London for twenty odd years.

To watch them struggle with the notions of social value and social capital in determining a point from which to intervene into the community was extremely rewarding. The sensitivity, concern for moral decency and creativity exhibited with examining the 'creative act' of an appropriate intervention, as opposed to the typical Architecture School obsession with the end result, was extremely refreshing. It clearly expanded their boundaries and got them out of their comfort zone. And in this regard the Summer Lab workshop was a resounding excess.

I look forward to observing and engaging this group of students in subsequent semesters. It will be interesting, to say the least, to see how they draw from the perspective gained through the Summer Lab experience.

I am encouraged by the student work observed in the London Charrette. And hopeful that the expanded perspective on social value and social capital, in regard to what is of value to a community, will influence their future architectural work. For those that are able to articulate this influence in their future planning and design work, it holds great promise to expand the relevance of architectural practice through these thoughtful and socially responsible acts of design intervention.

”

**Andrew M. Hayes**

## Participants

### Medellin

**Luis Gabriel Alba**  
**Angela Hsieh**  
**Maria Ustinova**  
**Manuela Valencia**  
**Intiya Isaza-Figueroa**  
**Brian Garcia**  
**Jamie Abbott**  
**Kay Pallaris**  
**Maria Fernandez Redondo**  
**Sophie Dicker**  
**Natalia Silva Mora**

### Santiago

**Angela Hsieh**  
**Daniel Vargas**  
**Anna Koledova**  
**Julia Hansen**  
**Ayesha Javed**  
**Emily Priest**  
**Katherine Davies**  
**Lucía Valencia**  
**Nicole Pumarino**  
**Karin Villarroel**  
**Rocío Andrade**

### Rome

**Rada Zijlstra-Vreljanski**  
**Alberto Piccioli**  
**Angela Hsieh**  
**Cristina Catalanotti**  
**Enrico Perini**  
**Francesco Mellino**  
**Luisa Miranda**  
**Poliana Ueda**  
**Simon Ball**

### DPU SummerLab Staff

**William Hunter**  
**Camillo Boano**  
**Camila Cociña**  
**Azzurra Muzzonigro**  
**Caroline Newton**

### London

**Angela Hsieh**  
**Baiba Fogele**  
**Simon Ball**  
**Viola Maffessanti**  
**Court Vircavs**  
**Ann McCollum**  
**Brett Freeman**  
**Brian Watts**  
**Christopher Galbraith**  
**Daniel Houghton**  
**David Morrison**  
**Elaine Cummings**  
**Hannah Boehmer**  
**Juan Ferreira**  
**Kendall Ahlberg**  
**Matthew Baitz**  
**Nina Reali**  
**Sally Plunkett**  
**Susan Stimmel**  
**Marcela Arango**  
**Laidy Larue**  
**Edwin Bohorquez**



# An interview with Yun-Shiuan (Angela)

as told to William Hunter

Angela Hsieh is a current student in the MSc Building and Urban Design in Development from Taipei, Taiwan. She has been a participant in all the SummerLabs during the summer. She enthusiastically recalls her experiences in the different cities of Medellin, Santiago, Rome and London in a conversation with William Hunter.

**William Hunter:** You are the first participant that has run the marathon, so to speak, of the entire DPU summerLab series. Quite the spectacular effort and achievement and full of resilient grace, you actually rode your way across two continents and four cities in order to take part in the program. What was it like to experience these diverse spaces and topics in such critical fashion and rapid succession? And for someone in your unique situation, how did this factor into or change your perception of how the world views and accommodates diversity in society?

**Angela Hsieh:** For me, it is a whole new and extremely wonderful experience to do the entire summerLab series in four different cities before starting my postgraduate programme in the DPU. It is a great challenge, to accept such wide range of new information and knowledge in a short time, to organize them, and to use them doing different experimental projects. Since I am not an architect and have no urban studies background, most of time, I would more draw on field observations and past practical experiences to understand the city contexts.

In Medellin, its accessibility profoundly impressed me. Comparing with the other city centres I have been to, Medellin's has the most wheelchair users who could easily move around on the street or in the public space. However, when we went to the predetermined cable stations of Comuna 8 on hilltop, I experienced a

completely different situation. At there, the road is narrow and steep which even cars are difficult to move on. It seems like two different worlds in a city. All these experiences on the street, on the road, and from upper view to see the city on the cable would be kept in mind to remind myself: always paying more attention on details and never give up trying to observe and consider things from different angles.

In Santiago, after visiting the residents' houses and doing small interview on the street, I found it was interesting that people in Barrio Italia mostly could be understood from two perspectives – 'outside' and 'inside'. For instance, some neighborhoods persist to stay and to run their business in the old houses, such as grocery store, second-hand bookstall, or old furniture shops. From 'outside' point of view, such traditional business activities are their source of livelihood; however, the truth would not simply like that, their shops and works in their mind are the symbols of their faith, their memory, and their enthusiasm. Their stories enlighten me that if I only take a glance on the street instead of entering the houses, a house is merely meaning 'a house', and I would never know in fact it means 'a family'.

My third summerLab, 'Occupation City', in Rome indeed brought me a culture shock. This time, I truly experience the Roman legacy that citizens coexist with their occupied space in order to fight for the right of residence and

culture. What I feel surprised is that those occupants were not evicted in these cases. Because in my experience in Taiwan occupation is not common and normally it would be regarded as illegal, in the final the occupants would neither be allowed to stay nor have right to use the space. In Rome, however, on the contrary, I do see the political and culture dynamic change as the occupation happened in the city. Moreover, occupation would also wake and influence some citizens to start concerning on the certain urban or public issues.

Unexpectedly, I finally faced my greatest challenge in London. This was my first time to feel helpless during a month travel. One morning transport lesson taught me that tube would not be the best option to individually travel in London. But thanks to this, I could quickly understand how to move in London by bus and know how to use the tube service to avoid the barrier in some station. In the last summerLab, East London gave our team a fantastic idea that using daily life events recording to represent the abstract concept 'time' in the space. It let me re-think about the definition of 'active' and 'passive' behavior. For example, if a person is stimulated by the 'time recorded video' and starts to think and to open their imagination, is that means the intervention has transferred a person's thought from 'passive' to 'active'? I am still on the way to find the answer.

In the end, I would like to say I am extremely grateful to my friends for creating and sharing wonderful memories with me in each summerLab city. In addition, especially I want to thank William and Camillo for patiently giving me much advice and support, bracing me to accomplish the entire DPU summerLab series.



# A conversation with Ben Campkin about the DPU SummerLab

Ben Campkin, director of UCL's UrbanLab sits down with William Hunter and Camillo Boano to discuss the methods, pedagogy and strategies of the SummerLab and somehow plotted potential future collaborations.

**Ben Campkin:** I'm not sure how familiar I am with the DPU summerLab. Why don't you just start by telling me what it is.

**William Hunter:** Well summerLab is essentially a revolving workshop series where we invite participants to join us in various cities to investigate a particular urban problematic or phenomenon.

**Camillo Boano:** Yes. We started it back in 2011 with a workshop in Rome, looking at the housing struggle movements and squatting realities.

**BC:** So the first one was in Rome and this year you were in

**CB:** [interjects] Medellin, Santiago, Rome and London

**WH:** We've now done Rome three times. It's been our hallmark so to speak. Actually the first and the second year we also tried to run a Lab in Bucharest but it didn't materialize.

**CB:** But we were able to do Zurich in 2012. So each year it's expanded.

**BC:** And what's the process for selecting the cities and the topic or case?

**CB:** We select the city on the basis of existing partnerships already in place both at the individual as well as the institutional level. We then start a broader conversation with collaborators and among ourselves to discuss topics and issues we might find interesting to investigate and then we move to the preparation of the brief, which aims to define the scope of the exercise and the logistical preparation. Then we simply jump on a plane!

**WH:** Also at the beginning there were factors of proximity behind the choices. We tried to stick to European capitals or places that were easily accessible for ourselves and participants. But we honestly choose cities that we find intriguing and that are topical. Most cities are at least for a short span or especially if it's a first visit. And there was this sense of pinpointing those cities that have a certain appealing and grand reputation for being one thing, but that contain an opposing story, another side to the city.

**CB:** The fact that we work with local collaborators who in most cases are friends and colleagues who are already investigating certain urban issues – for example Francesco Careri from Stalker/Osservatorio Nomade – is central for us. It allows a longer perspective and incremental attitude that builds upon previous experience. It also works as an opportunity to develop new partnerships, for instance our experience in Santiago, which evolved thanks to our DPU Chilean alumni and current PhD students.

**BC:** So the local collaborator. What is their role versus yours?

**WH:** The local collaborator is instrumental. We may be familiar with or may have even spent time in the city, or in the case of London, actually live in the city where we conduct a Lab, but we usually are not as familiar with the everyday aspect of a place, the territory so to speak. I guess it varies in degree how much the collaborator will be involved. They are certainly forefront in the scheduling – scouting and setting up facilities, arranging the meetings with various individuals, and providing us important details to consider.

**CB:** When we first start out we usually layout out the pedagogical premise. We explain what we've done with past Labs, the general idea of

what the Lab series is and what the expected outcomes could be and then we give them room to scheme how to make it happen locally. They are often more knowledgeable about the particular context and topic than we might be at first. So we rely on this knowledge and experience.

**WH:** It's also been important for us to find those people in our network that are equally enthusiastic about running this type of workshop, as it is often surplus to our normal job spec and of course it's during the summer when we could all be doing various other things with our time, not least of which could be taking a needed break.

**CB:** They are precious resources. Local collaborators are people we walk with, to use another Stalker reference, or they are simply like Virgil for Dante, guiding us through the different corners of the city.

**BC:** But the workshops are quite short. Why is that? How difficult is it to plan?

**CB:** The workshops are 5-6 days – essentially a week long. Of course it takes a lot longer to plan them. It does require dedication and a lot of communication.

**WH:** I worked full time every day on coordinating this year's series. There were four workshops – which meant four collaborators to scheme with, four cities and situations to understand and four sets of applicant and participant pools to deal with and coordinate. Plus there was the insertion of the Scholarship scheme that added another level of decision making. Parts of it can be very easy, while some things are more challenging to plan or become uncertain until the very day before. It is all very time consuming. But it's what was required at this point to get the program's concept off the ground and to sustain its success.

**BC:** Back to the short time span of each workshop? What is the reasoning behind that and what do you accomplish?

CB: Each lab is a short window opened onto an urban reality. The rapidity of immersion in such new, alien and almost unknown realms works almost as a blind date - an exciting meeting full of unexpected contingencies. It requires little preparation from participants but does, to a certain extent, serve pedagogically to enter without many pre-judgments on a certain urban phenomenon. It is all about curiosity and contingency. As such it is not centred on actions based on assumptions, but more a continuous explorations, performed collectively and incremental. It is usually on the Friday, the time to present some outcome, when everything seems to get clearer. But then it's basically time to leave.

WH: I think it's the trans-disciplinary nature of the participants that ensures the level of achievement. I mean if we were running a workshop that had a very strict brief to develop some kind of formal architecture or project we may be able to produce more refinement, but the product would be far less holistic and smaller in conceptual depth. That said, participants that come from the built environment backgrounds tend to think with or be more familiar with this type of rapid creative action and can spring into production mode quicker. But between our own ethos and the various disciplines at play within our groups, we try to breakdown pre-conceptions about professional roles.

CB: Yes we try to assert a particular brand of thinking about the design process. This may make our lives or the nature of the workshop seem a bit undetermined to participants, but the idea usually becomes pretty clear very fast.

BC: The idea of trans-disciplinary. It's a very appealing point. How can you ensure that and where does it stem from in this case?

WH: Well it starts with the type of participants we welcome to the workshops. Of course there is a desire for these workshops to be design oriented. And by that we mean that they revolve around creating strategies for situations, rather than an object-oriented action. So the target audience is generally from an urban persuasion let's say. But they come from different places on the spectrum.

CB: We've had architects, urban planners, social workers, anthropologists and geographers. And all of them coming with a different sensibility and notion of design...Design-research is becoming central for us.

WH: But there is also diversity in age and experience. We have current students and young professionals and occasional seasoned veterans of their fields. There is a big difference between an architecture student and a seasoned architect. The relationship and knowledge exchange

is very interesting and helps to foster a very diverse and opportunistic learning platform.

CB: By and large this stems from how the DPU is run in general and how we run the MSc Building and Urban Design course. Our ethos is based on creating spaces for critical conversations across diversities - profession-wise, geographical and of course generational. It interrogates and confirms the significance of an urban practice. Acknowledging the complexity and the contradictions in each city we have to constantly negotiate meanings and positions including where we as "expert" are located. In refusing a conventional, safer, object-oriented, aesthetic design culture we affirm the power of design to hopefully make a contribution to the messy vitality of urban everyday life.

BC: And how do the participants respond to this in such a short time span? It can be difficult to accept an alternative way of thinking.

WH: Well I think we're lucky on one hand that there is a certain obviousness to this way of thinking these days. There is a buzz surrounding the idea of inter-disciplinary leanings and notions of community engagement. And definitely the experience of being out in the field, getting hands dirty and seeing things in the flesh is an appealing way to learn. Most of the participants are energetic to take this on. That's not to say it isn't a challenge. We've had cases where the workshop process was questioned because people weren't accustomed to uncertainty. They felt it prevented them from knowing what to produce.

BC: So do you get what you want out of it? Are you satisfied by the production?

CB: Absolutely. We've felt a great success. Even in those moments of question there is a sense of progress. What we are trying to do in general is create the platform to re-think urban situations and design processes. So it works regardless. Each Lab allows for experimentation.

WH: In Medellin the groups eventually produced speculative, yet detailed strategies and holistic plans to understand the re-insertion of communities into the grand infrastructure schemes.

CB: In Santiago an installation was developed, capturing the attention of the people in the street. It was conceived as an "urban tactic" and a temporal experience to discuss the findings of the exercises and the design strategies developed by participants aimed to contain gentrification in Providencia. In Rome video reportage and narratives were produced to question perceptions around uses and functions of squatting areas and the gesture of occupation itself.

WH: In London many diverse proposals shed light on how citizen groups in and Hackney could maintain and promote a sense of collective identity in the midst of more conventional and capital-driven post-Olympic planning schemes.

BC: So where do you go now with summerLab?

CB: Well we hope it continues. It's taken a lot of effort from a small group of people and we've also been lucky this year to have some support funding. That kind of support will become more and more important to give us the room to breathe and avoid wondering whether or not we can run a particular Lab or not. We have some ideas...

WH: I don't think it is a question of interest or proof in the formula. And we're not going to run out of cities and phenomena to investigate. The pedagogical model works. From a business or departmental perspective, there's some way to go. Support funding is essential. And the fact that we've had repeat workshops in Rome - that circumstance helps us a lot. The relationship we establish with our collaborators makes things a lot easier to roll out. We're already thinking and very excited about the next series in 2014.

CB: We don't necessarily expect to run more summerLabs per year, but we would like to tap into our alumni networks more and more through the series and open it more to the whole UCL community. We were very fortunate this year that an ex-student brought 17 students from the University of South Florida to the London workshop. It has been great for all of us.

WH: And of course there is the hope that a particular Lab's topic or output could be siphoned into further substantial research or projects or perhaps introduce new ways of conducting research by design action and tactics.

CB: The DPU has a long history of engaging with cities and communities and summerLab was always seen as another way for us to do so, sometimes in arenas that were of a less developing nature, but that still contained degrees of contestation and debate. Having the chance to investigate a problematic in such a rapid fashion really excited the thinking process and perhaps could pave the way in how we approach the field. As William says, it is a way for us staff, to also think on future research projects and debate with colleagues who share urban interests.

BC: Well it sounds like a really interesting program. I think I want to attend one now.

WH: Of course.

CB: Or we could try to run one together (?)

# dpu summerLab

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