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# STUDY SPACE SYMPOSIUM ARTICLES

## Learning from Bogotá: An Introduction to the Study Space Articles

Colin Crawford\*

First and foremost, this volume of essays is about learning from Bogotá. In less than a score years, the magnificent, complicated, maddening city of Sante Fé de Bogotá will celebrate its 500th anniversary.<sup>1</sup> In recent history, the city has gone from being one characterized by disorganization and public insecurity to one that was awarded the Golden Lion Award for cities and urban design at the 2007 Venice Biennale.<sup>2</sup> As the Biennale' organizers noted of Bogotá:

This city has in the last decades addressed the problems of social inclusion, education, housing and public space especially through innovations in transport. Bogotá has applied Mies van der Rohe's *dictum* 'less is more' to the automobile: less cars means more civic space and civic resources for people. The city provides a model for streets which are pleasing to the eye as well as economically viable and socially inclusive. Bogotá is, in short, a beacon of hope for other cities, whether rich or poor.<sup>3</sup>

Without question, the visitor is struck by these innovations, including the Transmillenio bus lanes, the extensive bike and walking trails, gracious parks and welcoming public spaces, and a plethora of new, monumental, public architecture, functional architecture for *all* Bogotanos at that—such as magnificent libraries and striking public sports facilities.

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1. *Una Ciudad de 468 Años*, in BOGOTÁ: EL RENACER DE UNA CIUDAD 334 (Gerard Martin et al. eds., Editorial Planeta Colombiana: Bogotá, 2007) [hereinafter BOGOTÁ: EL RENACER].

2. La Biennale de Venezia, Biennale Architecture - 10th International Architecture Exhibition: Official Awards, <http://www.labiennale.org/en/news/architecture/en/67078.1.html> (last visited May 20, 2009).

3. *Id.*

The numbers attest to the fact that something special occurred in Bogotá between the early 1990s to the mid to late portion of the current decade: in this period that began with Antonus Mockus's mayoral efforts to encourage more civilized urban interaction and considerate driving and progressed to Enrique Peñalosa's successful struggles to direct an urban redesign of the city,<sup>4</sup> traffic accidents dropped from a 1995 high of 1,380 by nearly two-thirds, to 546 in 2005. In 1993, homicides reached 4,352, while a decade later they dropped more than half, to 1,610.<sup>5</sup> Correlations are not causes, but these numbers do hint at a transformation of civic life and the visitor cannot help but speculate that some of those causes have to do, at least in part, with the transformation of the *urban* fabric. Certainly many of its citizens understand that these public security improvements have a distinct land use planning dimension. General Jorge Daniel Castro, a 32-year veteran of the National Police—not the sort of figure one expects to think deeply about land use and environmental management questions, at least not professionally—observes that “public security” is not only a police responsibility, but relates to our management of the physical and built environment. To assure safety, Castro goes on, one:

must provide that there is good illumination in the city, that the streets are found in good repair, that the pushcart vendors do not obstruct people's passage, because this is a sensation of insecurity. The theme is that security is not solely the charge of the police, but also of the government, of city hall.<sup>6</sup>

As he concludes, the end is to seek to provide “to the population those tranquil environments that will provide them with a space for sane living.”<sup>7</sup>

And because Bogotá demonstrably had succeeded in securing

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4. Both efforts are described in Nancy Rhinehart's introductory essay to these articles. Nancy Rhinehart, *Public Spaces in Bogotá: An Introduction*, 40 U. MIAMI INTER-AM. L. REV. 196 (2009).

5. BOGOTÁ: EL RENACER, *supra* note 1, at 105.

6. *Id.* at 123. (“Mucha gente cree que el tema de la seguridad ciudadana le compete solo a la Policía, pero este término es muy amplio, es integral, nos concierne a todos. Por ejemplo, se debe procurar que haya buena iluminación en la ciudad, que las calles se encuentren en buen estado, que los vendedores ambulantes no obstruyan el paso de la gente, pues eso es una sensación de la inseguridad. Es que el tema de seguridad no es únicamente de los policías, sino también de los gobernantes, del alcalde.”)

7. *Id.* at 124 (“... con el fin de proporcionarle a la población aquellos ambientes de tranquilidad que le generan un espacio de convivencia sana.”).

this end, unlike so many contemporary world cities, the Colombian capital shows a vibrant, exciting face to the world; it can be a pleasant and stimulating place to visit. Given that it is also the political, cultural and economic center of one of the world's most unequal societies, this fact is arguably of special consequence for other mega-cities in the less-developed global South.

Second, the essays collected here attest to some of the things Bogotá has to teach, both for good and for ill. No change comes without a cost, of course, and, equally, no change is permanent—modifications are enacted upon the modifications. The Study Space project of which this volume is the second iteration<sup>8</sup> strives to create a forum to focus on the positive and negative effects of human activity as it changes physical and built environments—in the broadest sense of the term “environment,” or what the Study Space subtitle characterizes as the “human habits and habitats in the 21st century.” This volume endeavors to provide some such explorations and reflections for Bogotá. It is our sincere hope that the attached volume of essays will add to an ever-deeper understanding of what is arguably the single greatest demographic change of our era: namely, the phenomenon of worldwide urbanization. We therefore invite your participation in this project as reader, as fellow student, as commentator and critic and, if these essays are as provocative and thoughtful as their talented authors intend (and as I for one believe them to be) to spur you to join us on similar such Study Space journeys.

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8. The first series of articles, about Panamá City, Panamá, was published in 4 TENN. J.L. & POL'Y (2007).