

Interweaving the Displaced Environment:
A Digital Storytelling Network for Ciudad Bolívar

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A thesis submitted
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Architecture

University of Washington

2012

Committee:

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Program Authorized to Offer Degree:

Architecture

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank the Department of Architecture and especially Professors Brian McLaren, Louisa Iarocci, and Brad Khouri for their guidance. Thank you to my family for your belief in me during my entire academic career. Thank you to my rock, Bethany, for your unwavering support during this program, I would not be here without you.

In loving memory of my sister,
Lina Maria Vergara

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ABSTRACT

Colombia's internal conflicts over the past fifty years have forced nearly four million Colombians to be displaced from their homes and relocated from rural areas to slum urban living situations. The displacement process has forced this population to abandon everything; to lose their sense of culture, place, and identity in the world. These people usually enter an unfamiliar environment, in self-built squatter settlements that are already marginalized zones within densely populated cities, having lost all sense of their former identity with no collective place to replace it, to reconnect to their community and cope with their traumatic past.

The displaced environment created by this problem needs a collective network in order to begin stitching its scattered spaces and give its dislocated fragments a sense of order. This thesis will provide a digital storytelling network for the displaced environment of Ciudad Bolivar, Colombia. The intent is to explore how architectural solutions can be quietly inserted into the urban fabric in a way that integrates with the existing surroundings and yet provides a visible marker for collective gathering. The project seeks to create spaces that provide for the individual exploration of film to facilitate a process of healing and restore peoples' link to their story, the collective condition of displacement, and their new neighborhood.

The project responds to the displaced environment by producing a space where all the social conventions within the neighborhood are stitched together. It uses the concepts of stage, instrument, and receptacle to form spaces that will allow the individual to cope with the condition of displacement as it relates to their own story, the group, and the urban fabric. Through the exploration of film and media, residents will begin healing and restoring their link to themselves and to their neighborhood. Going beyond the functions of a community center, the new media network will integrate technology, material innovation, local culture, and the framework for an economy to create a sense of place for a community without one.



1: THE DISPLACEMENT TRAGEDY

Colombia's internal conflicts over the past fifty years has led to the displacement of nearly four million people from their homes, and their relocation from rural areas to slum urban living situations. The displacement process has forced this population to abandon everything; to lose their sense of culture, place, and identity. These people usually enter an unfamiliar environment, having lost all sense of their former selves with no collective place to reconnect with their community and get in touch with their lost past. The majority of the displaced end up in self-built squatter settlements that are in already marginalized zones within densely populated cities.

This displaced people need a shared collective space in order to mend the trauma of their past to make sense of their present and move forward. Despite its common public perception as an intrusion into this displaced environment, architecture has the potential to serve

as a space for healing, sharing and resistance for these people as they transition and adapt to new urban areas. It can be a place that gives prominence to their voice, both individually and collectively. Architecture in the displaced environment can provide spaces for self-containment and expression, activism and change, and public interface and performance.

In seeking to adapt to their new environment, the displaced population in Potosi, one of the poorest barrios in the metropolitan area of Bogota, have begun a film and video education program called Centro de Medios. This local self-help organization gives people a chance to be heard by outside communities through the medium of film. This thesis will provide a media and communications network for this program to be housed in the Potosi barrio of the Ciudad Bolivar locality. The intent is to explore how architectural solutions can be quietly inserted into the urban fabric in a way that integrates with the existing surroundings and yet provides a visible marker for

collective gathering. The project seeks to create spaces that provide individual exploration of film and video to facilitate a process of healing and restore peoples' link to their neighborhood. Going beyond the function of a community center, the new media network will integrate technology, material innovation and local culture to create a sense of place for a community without one.

Fig. 1 | The Displaced Environment



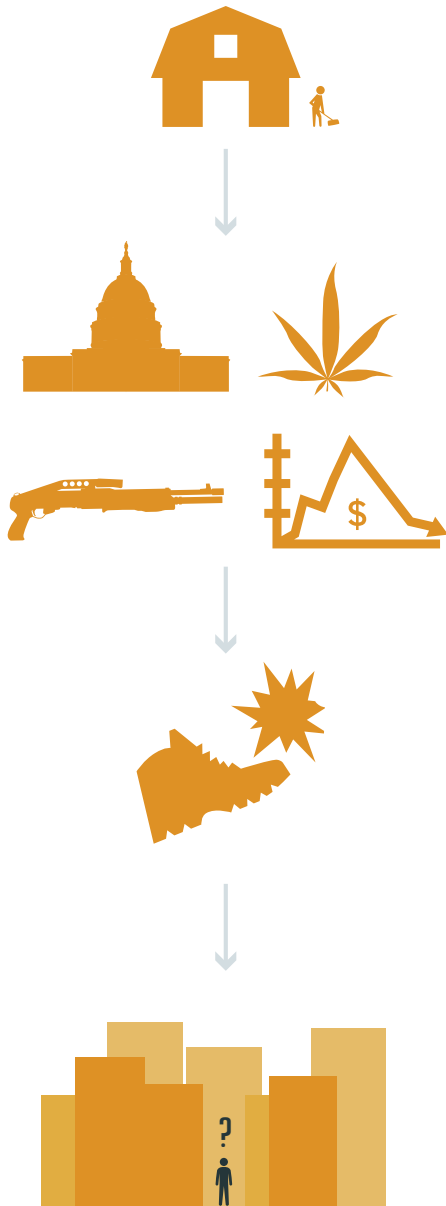
2: DISPLACEMENT PHENOMENON

In its broad definition, displacement refers to a change in position; it is a condition that results from the movement of an entity that changes its relative position in space. When related to people, displacement can occur at different scales of space and can be either forced or voluntary. While acting as a relatively fixed point in space, architecture is immersed in a world of constant displacement of people, information, and experiences. It is perceived to be stable and responsive to these exchanges, especially when people are subjected to forced displacement from one place to another. The making of place can provide a sense of continuity for the displaced while providing fixity in response to the instability of to movement and transfer.

The following chapter will discuss the social nature of the condition of displacement and its spatial implications within the built environment. It proposes

a reading of architecture that has a great potential to act within this displaced environment. The role of architecture will be discussed in terms of how it can be located within this unstable physical and cultural setting, looking at precedents that work within self-built cities. The city of Ciudad Bolivar will be examined in its dual role as a displaced locality in the city of Bogota and as an area that houses the displaced. The chapter concludes by looking at the formal and programmatic elements that challenge this process of forced movement at an urban scale.

Fig. 2 | Ciudad Bolivar



SOCIAL ASPECTS

Displacement as a social condition acts on different levels of consciousness within the displaced. The varying levels largely depend on the motives, including “migration, (post)colonialism, instant urbanization, and globalization of the world economy”¹. This thesis deals with forceful displacement of others, primarily caused by violent acts.

Unfortunately, people are forced to move from their homes for a variety of reasons at almost a daily rate worldwide. This type of displacement has been described as: “the forced and involuntary exit of place, neighborhood, parcel of land, the fields and the country; it is to abandon everything, to lose culture”². Forced displacement is an unfortunate reality for the majority of the population living in the rural areas of Colombia. This phenomenon has been taking place for over forty years, which has led to Colombia having the fourth largest population of internally displaced people in the world. Colombians have been

forcefully moved from their homes due to three main factors: intensified armed conflict in areas of land interest, territorial clashes between paramilitary groups and guerrilla forces, and illicit crop cultivation and drug trade³. The majority of this population moves to urban areas, particularly squatter and so-called slum developments. These areas typically have few resources to deal with the added social problems and individual psychological trauma that occurs due to the relocation of these masses of people.

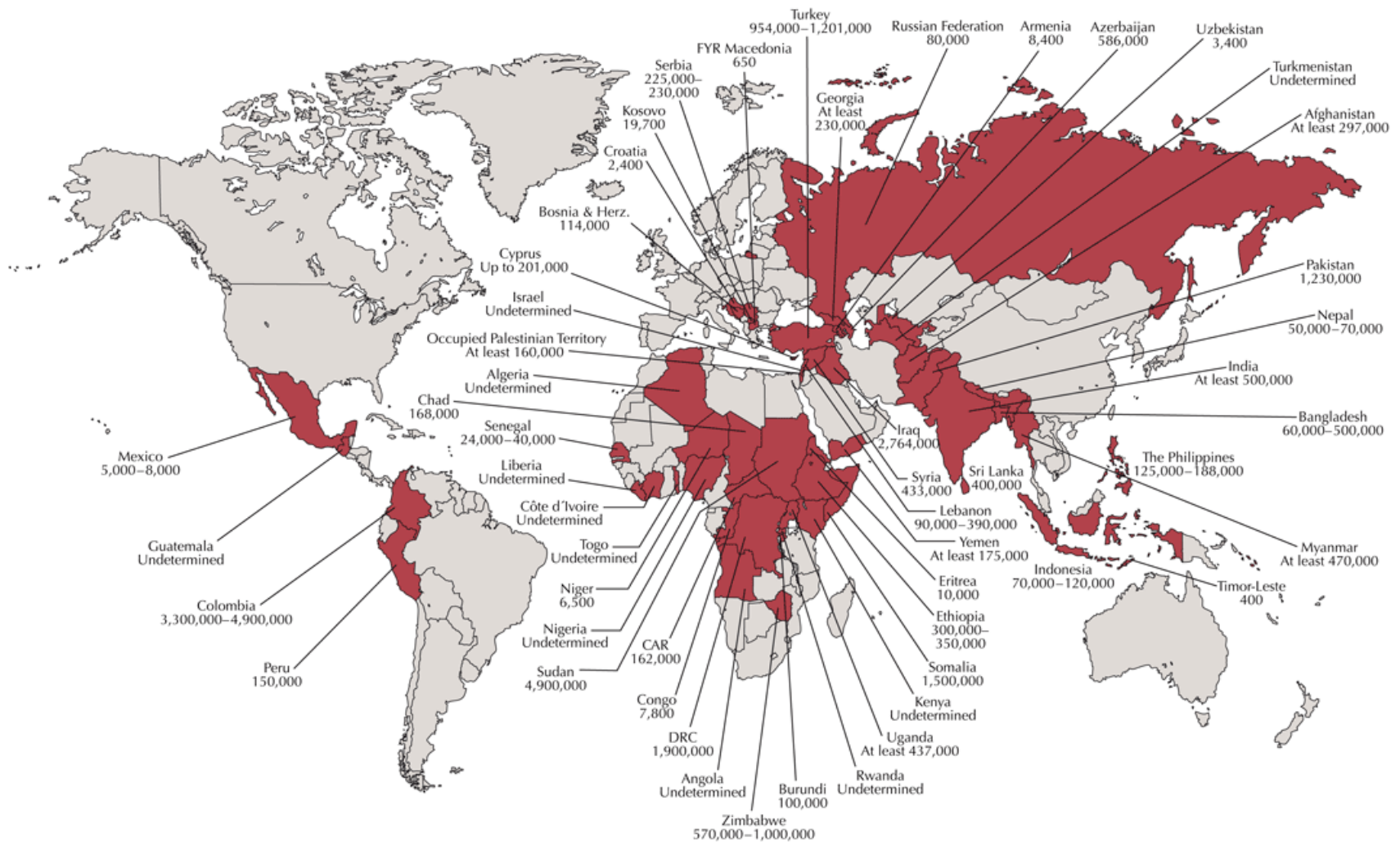
Fig. 3 | Internal Displacement Diagram

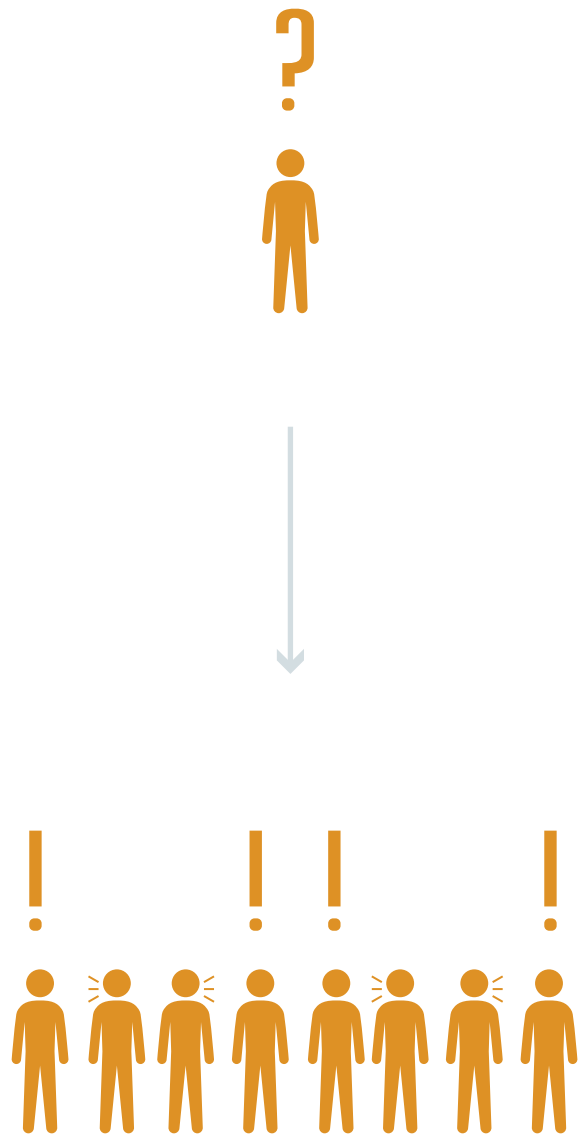
(Left) General flow of internal displacement, specially within Colombia.

Fig. 4 | World Wide Displacement

(Over) Map of internal displacement by country

Internally displaced people worldwide (December 2009)





The condition of displacement is a phenomenon that can be experienced at an individual level but also shared with others. For the individual, this trauma can cause one to call into question the idea of self. As Heynen⁴ argues, identity can no longer be considered fixed or stable as a result of these experiences. Forced to adapt and change to their new environments, the displaced can not depend on the stable spatial and cultural markers that helped establish their original identity. Yet the loss of those previous patterns of behavior and value systems often times can enable individual's capacity to self-reflect⁵. Riaño-Alcalá⁶ observes that as individuals become more self-aware, they may also become more isolated and anonymous. This condition is reinforced by the presence of fear that persists throughout the journey of displacement, particularly when violent events have occurred. This isolationism can hamper an individual's ability to access protection, navigate new surroundings, and establish new social support networks.

The condition of displacement can therefore create a heightened awareness and, at the same time, a feeling of seclusion within the individual. The displaced typically negotiate this phenomenon through their own creative means but sometimes lack the cultural outlets for such actions due to the scarcity of resources in the displaced environment. Any intervention happening with this environment should provide spaces that allow for self-reflection but also collective gathering. These spaces should allow for the displaced to share the present condition that binds them and creates the potential for a new future.

Fig. 5 | Challenging Displaced Condition

(Left) Individual coping with traumatic mental experience of displacement in collective situation.

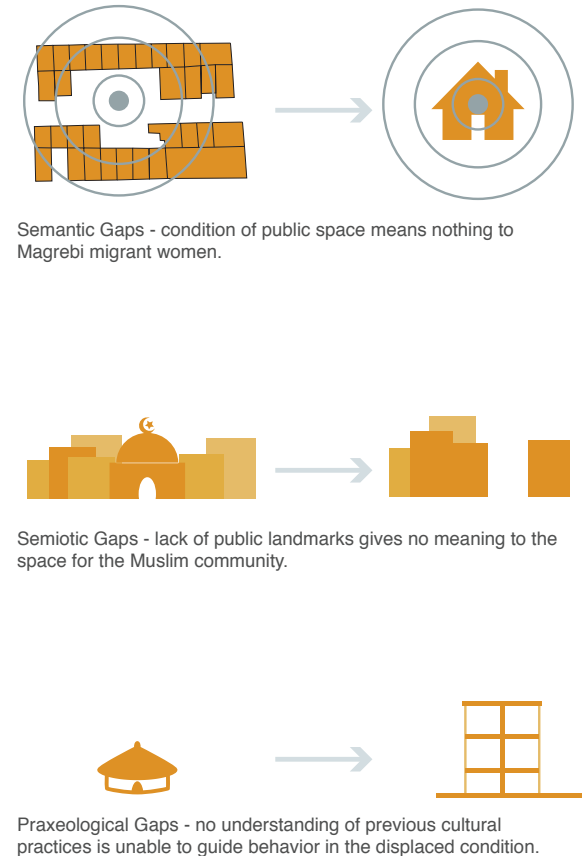
ARCHITECTURAL CONNOTATIONS

Forceful displacement greatly impacts an individual's social order and mental stability. It also has a tremendous effect on physical space, particularly in the city where the majority of the displaced move to in search of services⁷. Displacement, as the physical movement of people, changes the space of a city in both a material and social sense. As the displaced begin to adapt to their new environments, they begin to either physically re-organize or perceptually alter their surroundings.

Hilde Heynen argues that gaps occur in displaced environments that exist in the conflict between the condition of displacement and the physical space. She argues that when the usual understanding of existing cultural systems do not provide individuals with the means to react to given situations, certain disparities arise between these individuals and the built environment⁸. She terms these gaps as semantic, semiotic, and praxeological. Semantic

ones occur when the meaning of a particular condition is no longer decipherable, such as a public space in Brussels that means nothing to a Maghrebi migrant woman, which has caused their homes to become the center of their lives. When displacement results in an inability of a site to carry particular cultural meaning, semiotic gaps happen like the lack of built landmarks in Brussels for the Muslim community, such as mosques and public baths. Praxeological gaps are manifest through the lack of well-defined practices that can guide behavior in a displaced condition, as seen in new apartment layouts that do not relate to Kabylean dwelling habits in Tizi Ouzou. Finding these missing links in the relation between physical and perceptual space can help to show how architecture can properly play a role in environments like the Ciudad Bolivar locality.

Fig. 6 | Gaps within the Displaced Environment
(Right)





Heynen observes that architecture can also serve as a spark to inspire new practices to fill the gaps of displacement in the built environment and facilitate cultural transformations. She argues that architecture can take on three distinct roles, as a “receptacle, as an instrument, or as staging of displacement”⁹. Receptacle architecture can serve as a medium that embodies the social and cultural changes that happen in conditions of dislocation¹⁰. This type of architecture represents the social condition within the culture of displacement. These types of interventions can already be seen in the unstable cultural environment of Potosi, such as in the painted walls of buildings that have been appropriated by the residents of the neighborhood. The information portrayed by the murals help exchange ideas between the displaced so the story of their condition starts to be told.

Fig. 7 | Receptacle in the Displaced Environment
(Left)

Instrumental architecture acts as the catalyst for cultural change in the built environment¹¹. In this case, architecture functions as a spatial tool for setting parameters of behavior within the displaced landscape. The existing community centers and public facilities already act as instrumental architecture within Potosi. These markers are placed so that the built fabric of the neighborhood holds some their physical edges while others become exposed. This architectural language will help guide how the instrumental architecture of the storytelling network is sited and acts within the rest of Ciudad Bolivar.



Fig. 8 | Instruments in the Displaced Environment

(Above Left) Fundacion Hogar Infantil (Above Right) Centro Comunitario (Right) Colegio El Pacto



Fig. 9 | Stage in the Displaced Environment

(Above) Park Promenade built by the city government, viewed as a jewel within the neighborhood. Image: <http://mw2.google.com/mw-panoramio/photos/medium/21561456.jpg>

Architecture as a form of staging creates the “theatrical space of negotiation” where all the social conventions are played out in the built environment¹². It can either be passive by becoming background to the activity of the neighborhood or active by forming the physical and spatial conditions in which the conventions are reconsidered due to the condition of displacement. Currently, Ciudad Bolivar lacks any kind of staging architecture since the typical building convention is to infill as much and as quickly as possible. In order to reconsider this architectural approach, the staging architecture of the network will be free-standing and separated from the rest of the fabric. This will provide the visibility necessary to form public urban spaces within the neighborhoods so that residents can see their collective story being told. One space the project seeks to stitch together to the rest of the area within Ciudad Bolivar is a park promenade that is quite often used as a thoroughfare for commuters and begins to form the ideas of staging for the locality.

Most architectural interventions are not designed explicitly to act like any of these definitions, but can be read in this way after they have been occupied. In squatter settlements, the effort to read architectural interventions in this way can serve as a means for designers to intervene in a positive and responsive manner, rather than forcing an external design approach. This thesis will design a digital storytelling network for the displaced population, according to this kind of balancing with the existing landscape in order to respond appropriately to the condition of displacement.

The digital storytelling network will primarily use digital media such as film and photography to help residents cope with the mental stress brought on by displacement. This particular type of art form allows the displaced to learn how to use different tools that will empower them in an increasingly digitally dependent world and heal the trauma caused by forceful movement to unknown environments. As noted

by therapist Dan Aron, the arts provide ideal ways for people to heal the damage left by traumatic events since the pain is mainly remembered in images and in the body¹³. The displaced will use digital media as a way to project those images of pain beyond themselves in order to better understand and become aware of their past and their current situation. It will be a way for these individuals to form a “recorded collective memory based on individual experiences from past suffering”¹⁴ and look towards building a future within the displaced environment.

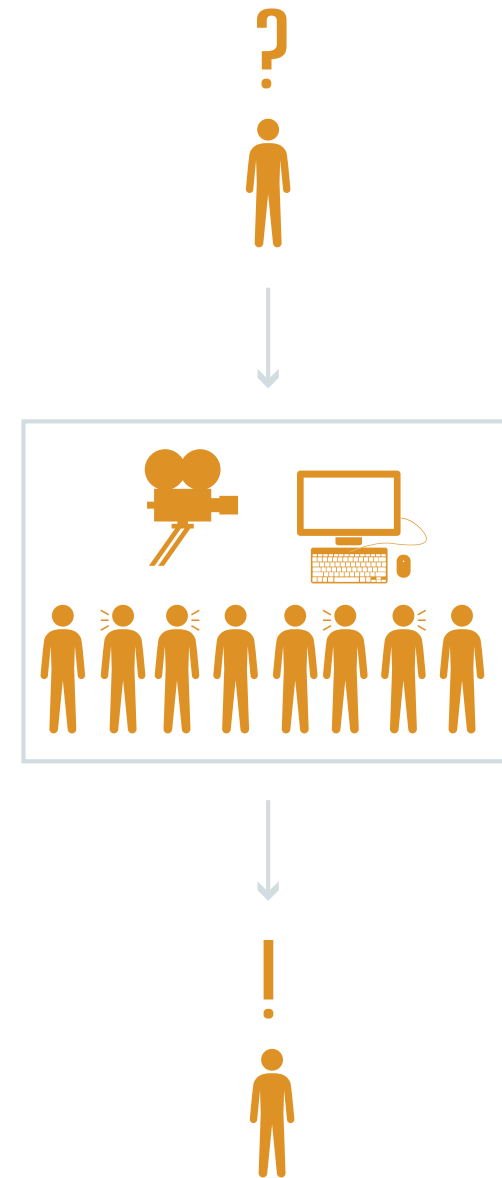


Fig. 10 | Displacement Coping Concept
(Right)



The collection of stories will enable the displaced to be rooted within the continuity of time that was broken by a forceful change of place. As Gotthard Booth notes “nothing gives man fuller satisfaction than participation in processes that supersede the span of individual life”¹⁵. Stories will be told and shared beyond the experience of one

individual allowing residents to participate in this continuation of the past, present and future. Juhani Pallasmaa argues that architecture should not only tame limitless space but also limitless time to allow the individual to inhabit both¹⁶. The architecture of the digital storytelling network within the displaced environment will reinforce this experience by primarily

using the notion of staging as a means to ground the individual in their space and time. The architecture will relate the individual to their own story, the individual to the group condition, and all of these actors to the urban fabric they inhabit.

Fig. 11 | Network Relationships
(Above)

PRECEDENTS

Built precedents in similar slum conditions provide examples that can guide the interventions within the Ciudad Bolivar locality. The Slums Information Development and Resource Centers (SIDAREC) in Mukuru Kwa Njenga slum in Nairobi (2008) demonstrates how different architectural responses to displacement can come together in one place. The program aims to give the community a powerful tool to end the cycle of poverty by providing technology training, health clinic services, early childhood development programs, and a community theater. The site was organized with the intention of creating a civic landmark in the Mukuru community by creating a “T” building in plan. This particular form of the building relates to the urban order immediately to the east of the building, and creates a strong street presence to the north, which demands the attention of passers-by.



Fig. 12 | SIDAREC

(Right) Media Lab | Mukuru Kwa Njenga, Nairobi, Kenya | 2008.
Image: <http://openarchitecturenetwork.org/projects/sidarec>



The building is sited behind a wall that surrounds the entire area to provide protection and privacy, a design strategy commonly found in Kenya’s traditional building patterns. Service amenities such as composting toilets, non-burn medical waste disposal, and a biological filtration swale are incorporated in the design to create the low-impact infrastructure needed for the building programs. Incorporating local technologies was also important as seen in the wattle wood screens along the main circulation spine.

Inside, the building is organized according to varying degrees of public and private functions. Public amenities like pay phones, Internet, and photocopying and printing areas act as the “receptacle” of the center by representing opportunities for connections to larger communication networks. These include the street front, which creates a sense of a commercial public front. Proceeding further into the center, one finds the library, the day care and the clinic; which are the instruments or spaces of the center that can incite change through education and advocacy.

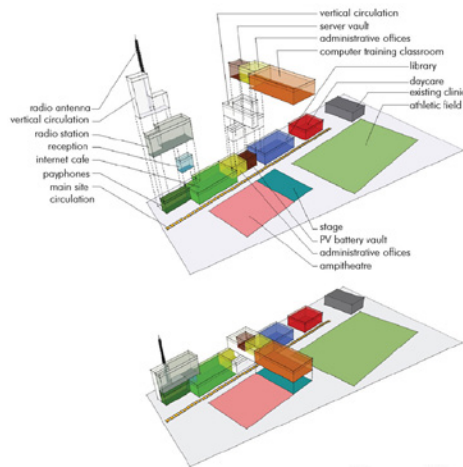


Fig. 13 | SIDAREC

(Above) Site Plan

(Left) Program Diagram

Images: <http://openarchitecturenetwork.org/projects/sidarec>

The remaining spaces of the center provide the opportunity for the residents to communicate their active voice and help others find theirs. Sitting above is an elevated radio station that stands as a beacon for Mukuru. This complex broadcasts educational programs, public service announcements and entertainment to the surrounding area. Along one of the exterior walls messages are displayed on a LCD projector, which makes the center a recognizable marker in the community. As the literal staging of displacement, the center provides a place for informal gatherings, video production viewings, and theater productions. The computer training room, which is beneath the stage, provides the preparation space for productions.



Fig. 14 | SIDAREC

(Above Right) Photo collage from street

(Right) View into classroom

Images: <http://openarchitecturenetwork.org/projects/sidarec>

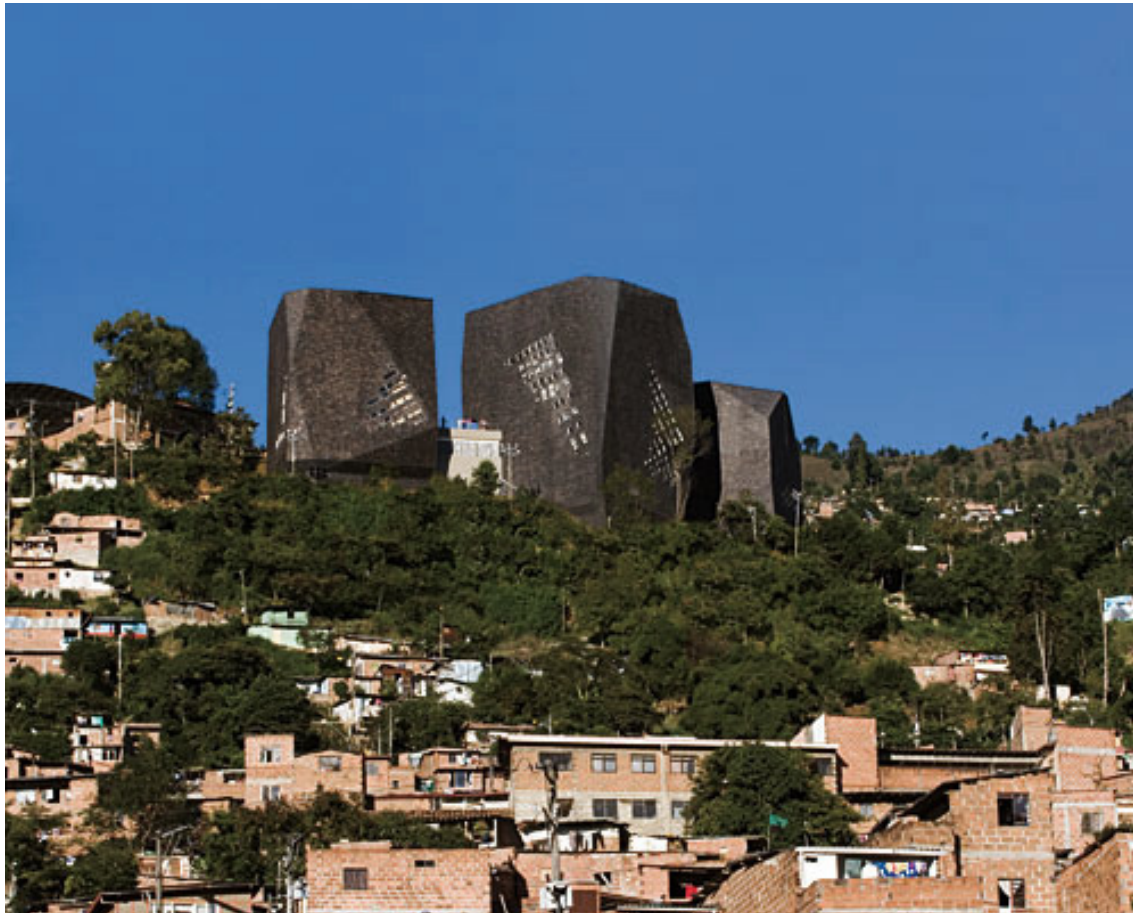


Fig. 15 | Parque Biblioteca España

(Left) Library | Medellín, Colombia | 2007
Image: <http://www.plataformaarquitectura.cl/2008/02/19/biblioteca-parque-espana-giancarlo-mazzanti/>

Parque Biblioteca España (Medellin, 2007) is another project that demonstrates the use of architecture as receptacle, instrument, and stage within a displaced environment. The library is located within the Santo Domingo Savio barrio, an impoverished area once considered one of the most violent in Medellín, Colombia. Part of the government's social master plan, the library seeks to improve the quality of life for residents, draw tourism to a marginalized area, and serve as a beacon of pride for the neighborhood¹⁷.

The library's three distinct, black boulder-like masses sit in stark contrast to the neighborhood's brick and stucco structures, giving the project a sense of monumentality. This is reflected not only in the global recognition the project has gained by winning the 2008 Iberoamerican Architecture Biennial award, but more importantly in the sense of pride the library has given the local residents; so much so that local boys greet visitors to the neighborhood by offering architectural tours of the library¹⁸.

The simple program offers a reading of the library as the instrument of displacement. A library, community spaces, classrooms/workshops, media space, a gallery, and the auditorium are primarily held within the three masses and their respective facades present few openings. In these spaces of communal gathering, light is brought in through skylights that run along the edge of the roof. The architect argues that this concept offers a temporary disconnection from the outside context, creates a new space, and “changes their reality”¹⁹. These spaces function as accessible and free areas, serving as sites of sharing and gathering for residents.

A covered square located between the masses provides the public staging of displacement in the project. The space allows for informal gathering on the wood deck to occur between the volumes. Voids between the programmatic masses allow for views down into the city and valley while the public deck can be seen from the streets in the front of the project. This flexible space acts as the



background to the iconic figure that is the programmatic masses, allowing for all activities in the library and beyond to unite in this displaced neighborhood.

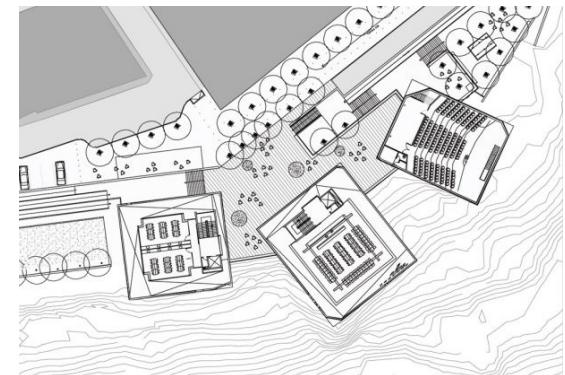


Fig. 16 | Parque Biblioteca España

(Above) View of Courtyard (Right) Ground Floor Plan
Images: <http://www.plataformaarquitectura.cl/2008/02/19/biblioteca-parque-espana-giancarlo-mazzanti/>



CIUDAD BOLIVAR

LOCALITY OF THE DISPLACED

Nowhere else are the impacts of displacement seen and felt as strongly than Ciudad Bolívar, located on the southwest portion of Bogotá, Colombia. This urban area is the 19th locality, or localidad, of Bogotá, whose neighborhoods were built on lands of old 'haciendas', established in the early 1950s and extended towards the hills to the west²⁰. The district grew partly in response to the Colombian government's investment in a satellite city for the working class in Bogotá that fell short of meeting the needs of the people. The communist party founded an association that promoted squatter settlements and illegal self-housing projects resulting in the founding of Ciudad Bolívar²¹. The Council of Bogotá finally acknowledged the district within Bogotá's urban development in 1983 during the rapid process of urbanization²².

Fig. 17 | Ciudad Bolivar Locality

(Above) Map of Colombia, Location of Bogotá and locality within the capital

Currently the district covers nearly 229 km² or 15% of the total city area. The majority of the area is made up of farmland and parks leaving only 10% that is developed with housing and other built works. The seventh biggest locality in the metropolitan region, the area unfortunately contains one of the highest populations of poor, who are primarily a product of internal and external displacement. This problem continues to plague Colombia as Ciudad Bolívar receives the largest amount of this population each year²³. Compared to the Bogota's mean growth, the area is one of the most densely populated and rapidly growing localities in the city²⁴.

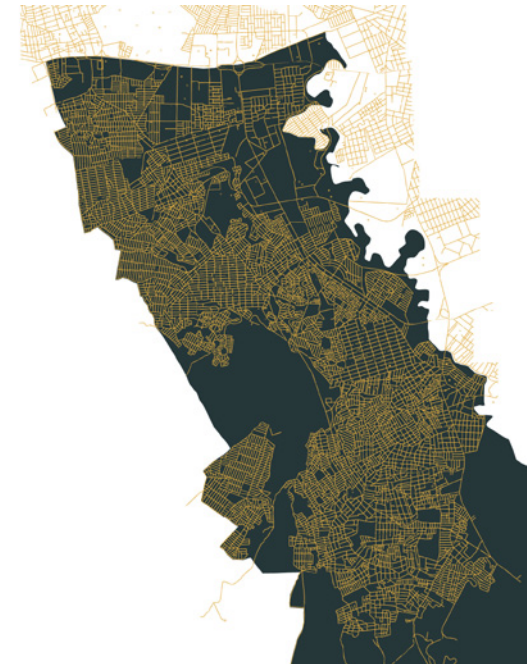
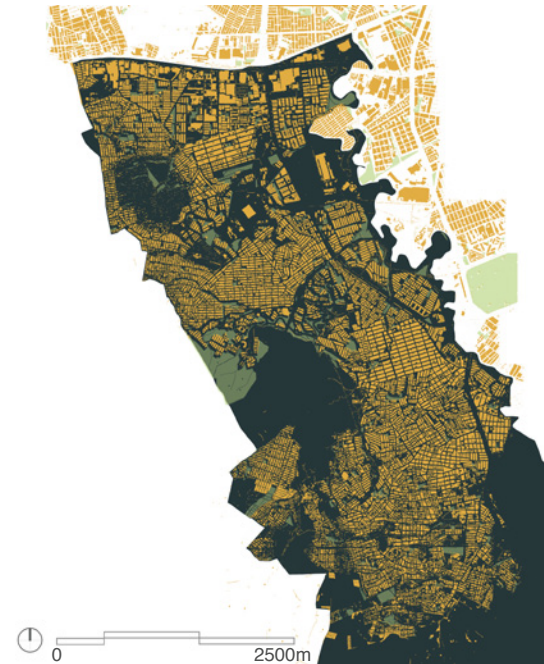


Fig. 18 | Ciudad Bolívar Growth

(Above) Views of buildings and infrastructure. Image: Google Earth. (Right) Maps of Ciudad Bolívar Built Form/Infrastructure



Since the neighborhood began as an illegal area of urban squatting, it is generally considered a slum on the periphery of the city. However, the physical and social conditions that once relegated it to the category of slum were present only during its initial years²⁵. Residents have actively continued to battle the stigmas and realities that slums are typically associated with: criminals, overcrowding, informal housing, and insecurity of land tenure²⁶. At the same time, internally displaced people continue to show their collective force in both accommodating to and resisting local structures that constrain them²⁷.

This resistance is evident in the social and physical conditions of Ciudad Bolívar. Displaced women for example tend to take up all kinds of survival jobs such as street vending or domestic services operating in the private and public space. Displaced Afro Colombians and indigenous groups usually squat in their own social networks after displacement, which allow them to invent strategies to generate income primarily through street vending of cultural products from their settlements in the new urban environments. At the same time, it gives them the opportunity to maintain commercial and cultural relationships with their past²⁸.

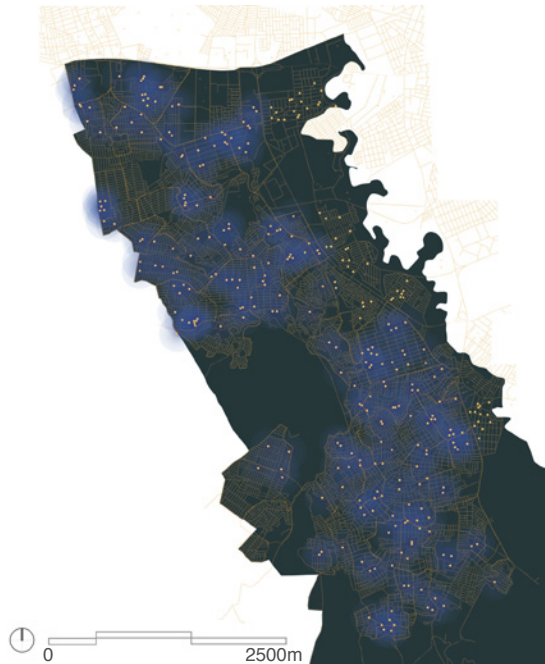


Fig. 19 | Ciudad Bolívar Organizing

(Above) Views ICES (Left) Maps of Ciudad Bolívar Barrios and Existing Community Resources

Numerous built examples within Ciudad Bolívar embody the strength of this collective resistance. The Hillside Institute of the South (ICES), a private school for primary and secondary education, in the barrio Potosí was founded in 1984 in part due to the efforts of the Social Institute for Adult Education and the residents of the area²⁹.

DISPLACED LOCALITY

The locality of Ciudad Bolívar itself presents a case study in the history of displacement. The area was created by the forceful actions of figures of power including paramilitaries, drug traffickers, and the government that forced people to migrate to this peripheral zone. Ciudad Bolívar in a way mirrors the struggles of Colombia over the last 60 to 70 years. All of these actors involved in shaping Colombia's history during this time are in some way still present in this district³⁰. The Central and Local Government, the armed forces wing, the Drug Lords, the pirate developers, and the population itself have helped shape the urban space, in terms of its social and physical interactions. These interactions, constrained by systems of power, have limited the population's ability to mediate social practices, in order to change or improve the spatial conditions within the Ciudad Bolívar³¹.

Since primary roads do not enter the area, the locality is physically marginalized from the rest of the city. The TransMilenio bus system, the primary mode of public transportation for the city of Bogotá, reaches only the east edge of Ciudad Bolívar. Along that same border, a strip of urban parks runs the entire length, which further divides it from the neighbors to the east. Not only does the district contain the highest population of displaced people, but it also is physically displaced from the rest of the capital.

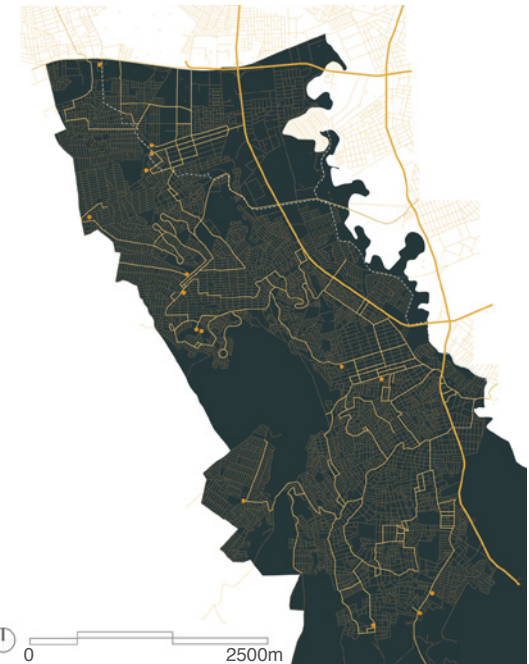


Fig. 20 | Ciudad Bolívar Access

(Above) Views of buildings and infrastructure. Image: Google Earth. (Right) Maps of Ciudad Bolívar Barrios



DISPLACEMENT CHALLENGED

The people within the district of Ciudad Bolivar lack the means to communally gather in their environment. One such means of addressing the condition of displacement has been by embracing social media and communications. This phenomenon is nothing new. The union of media with urban space has become an important reference point for a certain mode of social experience³². John Downing observes that when in the hands of the individuals, information and communication technologies can empower civilian communities to strengthen their processes of good governance, transparency, and accountability³³.

Fig. 21 | Sueños Film Colombia

(Left) Resident of Ciudad Bolivar using film to story tell.
Image: <http://centrodemedioscb.wordpress.com/>

These media practices are already well established in Colombia and other socially struggling communities. Kayapó video is an example of how embracing new technologies can help communities strengthen their identity and culture, as well as increase the impact of their voice on the governing bodies. The indigenous communities of Kayapo chose to exchange political speeches and to film their protests against the Brazilian state. These people understood the advantages of using film as a communication tool to change their social and political reality³⁴. By embracing these tools of representation, the Kayapó showed that people can control their own history by controlling their own image in the media.

Sueños Films Colombia within Ciudad Bolívar has begun to empower the residents of the district with such tools in order to start telling their own stories. This project began in 1999 as a series of audiovisual workshops on photography, film and human rights. The stories were broadcasts across local channels and quickly grew in popularity. With

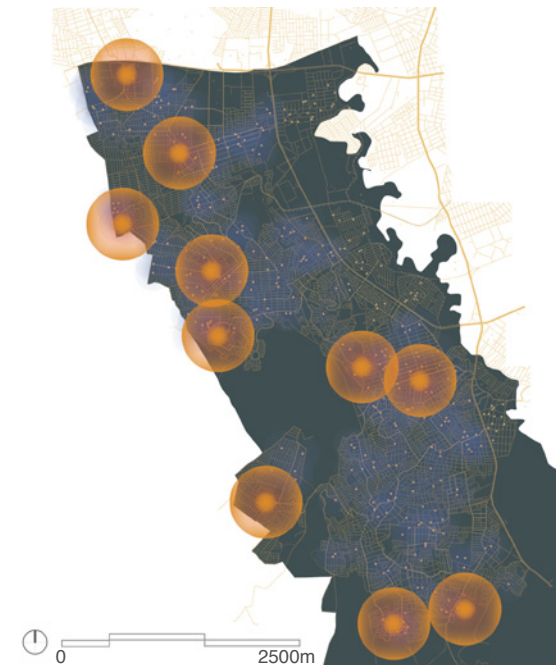
the growing demand to hear these stories, a program came about to obtain greater coverage called Sueños Films Colombia³⁵. In its current form, EKO Audiovisual School and Centro de Medios in Ciudad Bolívar teach the residents to understand the visual communication tools and showcase their stories at the Ojo al Sancocho festival each year. The program teaches technical skills but also creative approaches that “resulted from the process of reviewing the life of an individual”³⁶. The means of representation are grouped as experiences of word, image, and space.

The displaced population has already started to form their voice through video tools. A digital storytelling network within Ciudad Bolívar will aid to further enhance their individual experience while creating a central image to outside communities.

The barrio Potosí will be the site of this investigation into notions of intervening in a displaced environment by exploring the gaps created by its condition. The network draw upon the functions and energy of the of the ICES school to test ideas of varying interventions for the displaced population.

Fig. 22 | Mapping Overlaid

(Right) Potential stages can occur that take advantage of existing activity, access, and infrastructure





3: FRAGMENT

The barrio of Potosí represents a microcosm of the physical and social conditions that affect the rest of Ciudad Bolívar. It makes up one of the ten barrios or sections within the Jerusalem neighborhood, which itself makes up one of the three hundred and twenty neighborhoods of the locality. The barrio currently houses around 15,000 inhabitants, the majority of whom have been displaced from rural lands across the nation. The thesis will specifically look at stitching the barrios of Potosi and La Isla as a potential seed to jump-start the network within the Ciudad Bolivar locality.

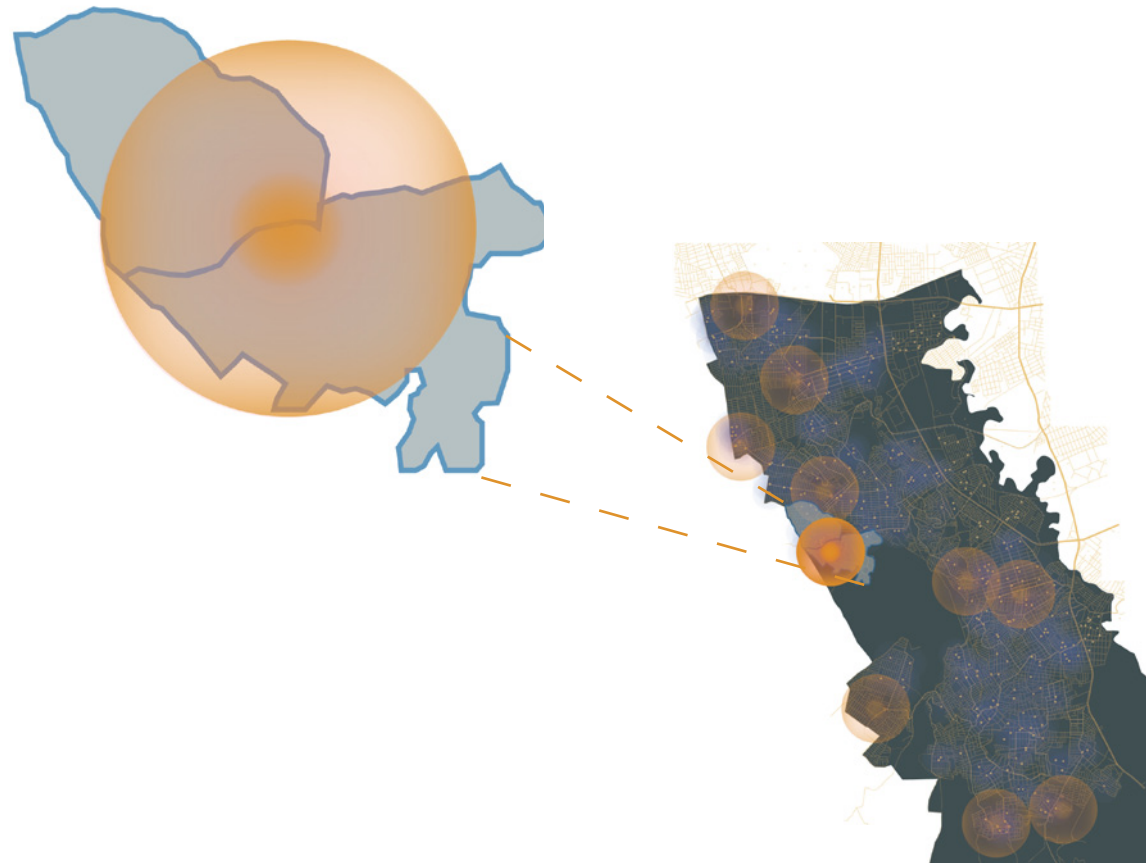


Fig. 23 | Seed for Network

(Right) Location of Potosí - La Isla
(Left) Aerial view of Potosí - La Isla
Image: <http://mapas.bogota.gov.co/geoportal/>



HISTORICAL LANDSCAPE

More than a hundred years ago, the area was called Tibanica Cuenta where water was traditionally worshipped. The *Palo del Ahorcado*, or the tree of the hangman, still stands just west of the barrio. Many legends surround its origin, however, it still serves as the last station of the procession during Holy Week for the local church of the neighborhood. In 1932, the region was taken over by successful farmers who owned large estates for a few decades. The land belonged to few people for many years until 1982 when a wealthy farm owner divided the area between members of the family³⁷. In the beginning, construction of housing was mainly through self-built efforts, which caused conflicts between some of the family. Despite the efforts of the authorities to intervene more dwellings were built.



In 1985, the barrio gained juridical status, which placed it in a stronger position to confront eviction attempts and campaign for recognition by the city. The area benefited from the assistance of international NGOs and aid organizations for much of the late 1980s until 1998. The previously mentioned Social Institute for Adult Education founded the Hillside Institute of the South (ICES), promoted primary and secondary education. A culture of violence and rebellion is shown by the murder of Evaristo Bernate, one of the founding leaders of the school in 1992. Subsequently, the Potosi was left behind in much of the city's regularization efforts and became one of the least developed barrios in the region.

Fig. 24 | Historical Landmarks

(Left Above) Palo del Ahorcado
(Left Below) View of ICES

SOCIAL LANDSCAPE

The school still plays a pivotal role in the community through its promotion of social and political actions for the barrio. Its leaders have helped organize much of the effort to provide critical infrastructure to the rest of the area³⁸. The school can be seen as an instrument of displacement within the barrio since it has served as the symbol for cultural and social change. This and similar educational institutions provide the foundation for the staging of displacement within the digital storytelling network for the displaced population.

The area is physically marginalized from the rest of the district on the western edge. The eastern edge of the barrio is marked by a park promenade that delimits the eastern edge to the neighboring barrio. Arterial bus routes stop just short at this edge much like the TransMilenio bus routes that stop at the edge of the Ciudad Bolívar locality.

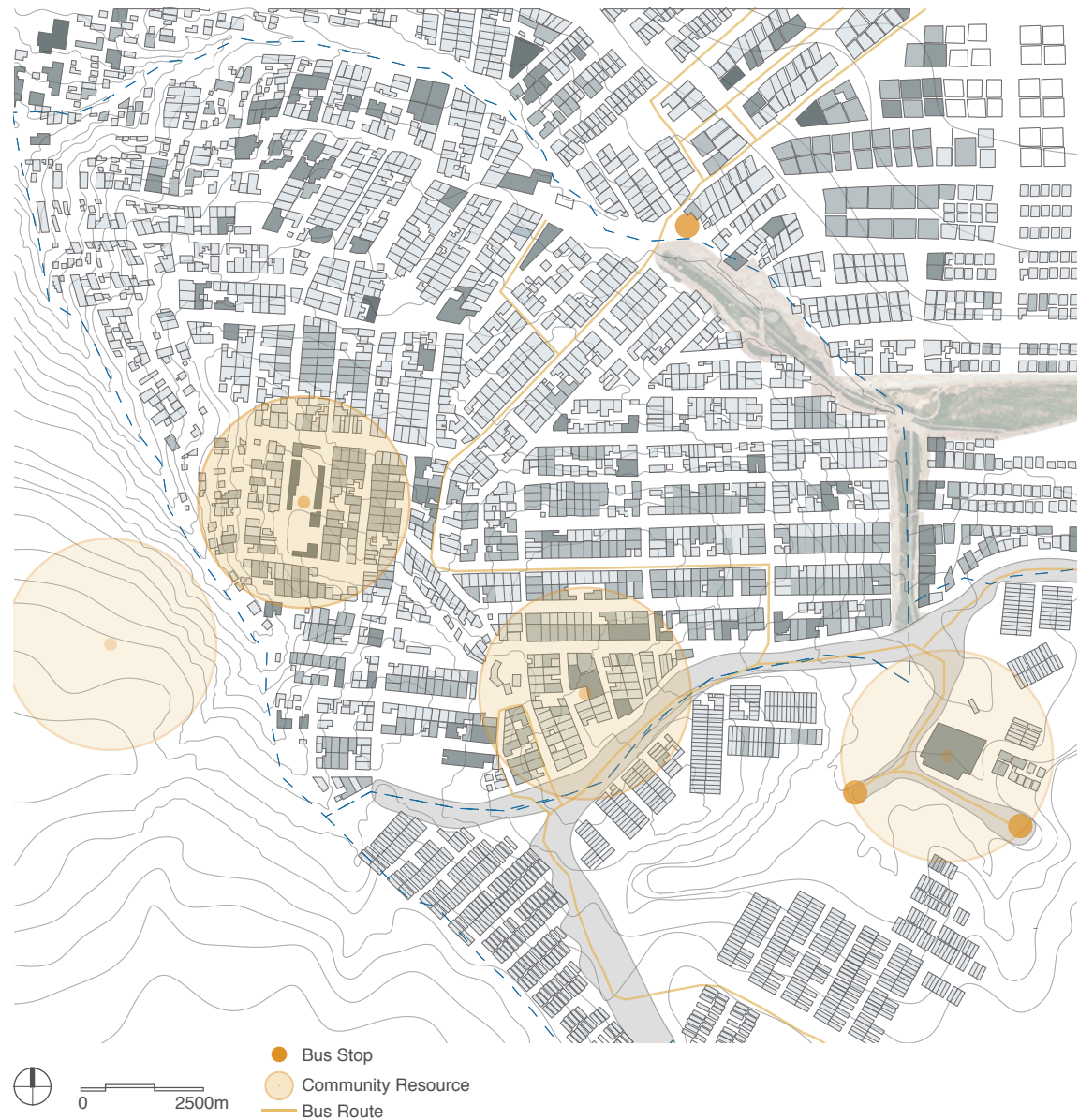
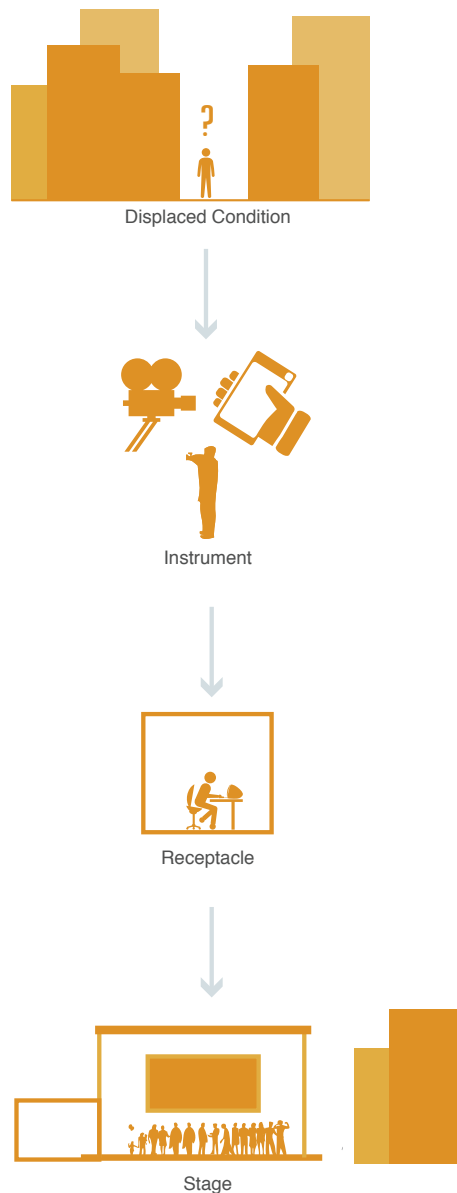


Fig. 25 | Potosi Barrio Existing Landscape
(Right)



DIGITAL STORYTELLING NETWORK

The thesis proposes a program that builds upon a social medium that is already well present within Ciudad Bolivar. It will use this established educational program as a way to create a formalized support network within the neighborhood. Through this programmatic and formal approach, the thesis will demonstrate the validity of an incremental strategy for to intervening within this particular urban fabric.

The thesis proposes that a network rather than a singular all-encompassing center can better express the ideas of receptacle, instrument, and stage as a design approach for the displaced environment. This urban intervention will also serve to test the idea of small but intensive interventions as a way of entering the existing order of the neighborhood. It is not only the hope that this network will serve as a teaching tool but also as a healing medium for the condition of displacement. The program

will be based upon the objectives of the Sueños Films Colombia but also will be guided by the idea of staging displacement as a way to challenge and combat its negative effects on the people. Specific elements will include narrative areas for experiences of word, image, and space and areas for teaching and support.

Instrument components will be range from small recording devices to film production equipment. The idea will be for residents to record their stories and experiences as they see necessary according to their condition.

The receptacles of the network will house producer and maker spaces for the different experiences that the educational program seeks to provide. These interventions will be flexible

Fig. 26 | Components of Digital Storytelling Network (Left)

spaces for the teaching of oral, film, tacit, and performance art. Spatially they will be held at the edge by the existing fabric of the community so that the building can start to disengage and encounter the residents of the neighborhood.

Staging architecture will provide the central point of the network. It will serve as the space for large performance and gathering. As the most public node of the network, it will stand free from the rest of the built environment within the locality. This intervention will act as the visible icon of the network, as the final stage where residents can begin the public outreach needed to create a unified story of their displaced condition.

The building interventions will serve as a teaching tool for the community. As seen in the SIDAREC center in Mukuru Kwa Njenga slum, the incorporation of technological advances made the facility a new tool rather than a burden on the community. As this network will be

tested within the barrio Potosi, material and technological innovations will be implemented as appropriately needed.

Through the Digital Storytelling Network, the thesis hopes to demonstrate an appropriate way to intervene within the displaced environment. By looking at a particular neighborhood within the larger context, it will provide ways of interpreting other displaced contexts in a similar fashion and provide design methods to enter the displaced environment. By providing communal, educational, and performance spaces, the network will provide a creative and social avenue for the displaced population to gain a social and political voice



4: COMING TOGETHER

The physical and cultural landscape of Potosi – La Isla directly informs the evolution of the design. The intent is for the project to create its own space and visibility while at the same time connect the different pieces of the barrio. Videos produced from the residents of the neighborhood as well as maps were carefully considered in order for the stage to embrace an incremental approach to intervening in the area. The chapter will walk through the analysis of barrio characteristics and demonstrate the impact of these on the project.



Fig. 27 | Potosi Analysis

(Left) Aerial View Background
(Right Above) View of Potential Site



PUBLIC SPACE

A park promenade on the eastern edge of Potosi creates an opportunity for the stage to stitch the barrio to the different areas along the periphery. The residents near this space speak very highly of it and use it often as a thoroughfare for residents around the area. It was built by the city government and employed small design interventions that go a long way to create a distinct public space for the people. These include landscaping along the middle of the path, pavers for areas of walking, and a small park near the north end of the promenade that terminates at a bus stop. The south end currently ends at one of the few paved roads in the neighborhood. Across this street, there is an empty lot that could embrace the traffic from the promenade by creating a marker along a potential future route extending further south between the housing.

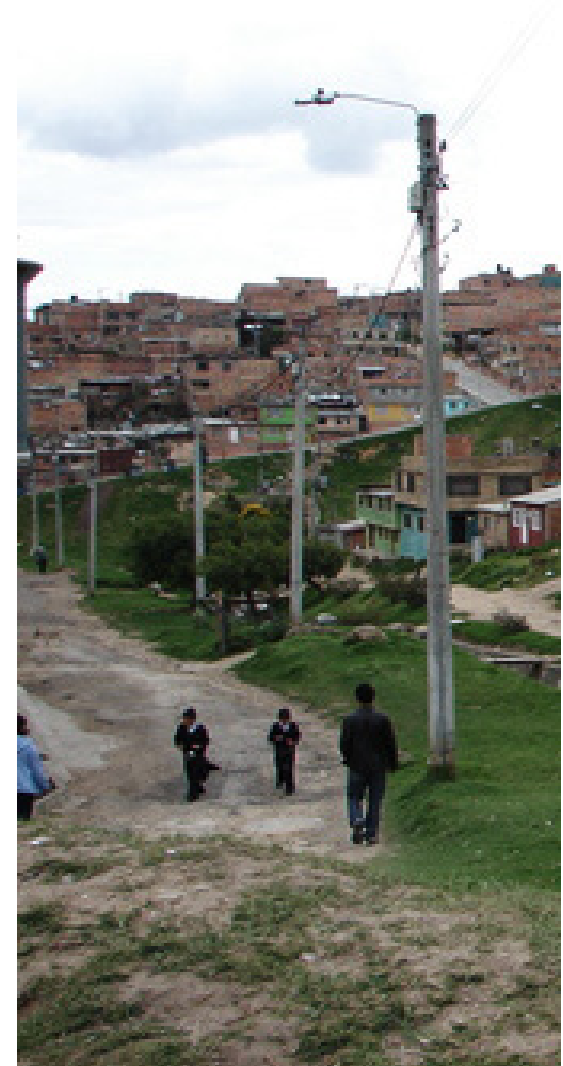


Fig. 28 | Site Analysis Park Influence

(Left) Flow through site from park promenade

(Right Above) View of park promenade to south

Image: YouTube

(Right) View of park promenade to north

Image: <http://mw2.google.com/mw-panoramio/photos>



ACCESS

There are two bus stops near the site that will impact the project design. The intention is to draw foot traffic from commuters into the site and link it with the movement coming from the park promenade and the future route from the south. Therefore, the edge along this east end of the site will need to be inviting and it suggests an entry into the project. Currently these stops lack any sort of sitting area for the residents, which provides an opportunity for the project to create an interesting and safe place for residents to wait for their bus. The stage will need to protect from the vehicular traffic running along the north edge of the site while at the same time create permeability for residents walking along the same route.



Fig. 29 | Site Analysis Access Influence

(Left) Flow through site from bus stops and road
(Right) View of bus stops to the south from the site



TOPOGRAPHY

The barrio is characterized by significant grade change rising 55 m from the park promenade on the east to the Palo del Ahorcado on the west. The steep slope makes at times leaves the land vulnerable to landslides during heavy rains. This topography has played a big role in how the neighborhood grew, as residents do not benefit from the ability to level areas for normal development. The informal character of the grid in the barrio is a direct outcome of the ability to build with the slope. The project will embrace this attitude by using the existing topographical character of the site in order to create space. Since the site sits along a valley on the east end of a steep grade, the west edge of the project will block it from degradation and use it as an opportunity for an educational part of the stage.

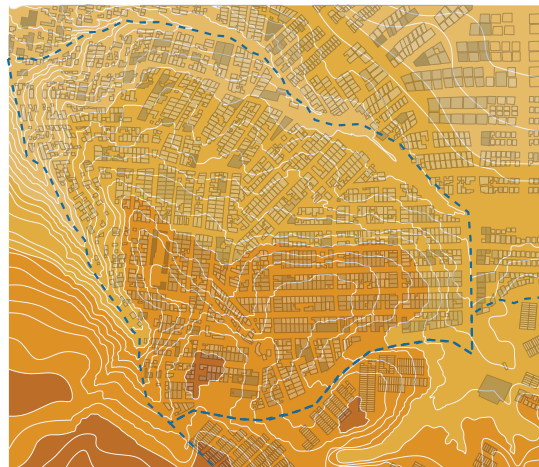


Fig. 30 | Site Analysis Topography Influence

(Left) Flow of topography through site
(Right Above) View of typical slope condition in barrio
(Right) Map showing grid to slope relationship



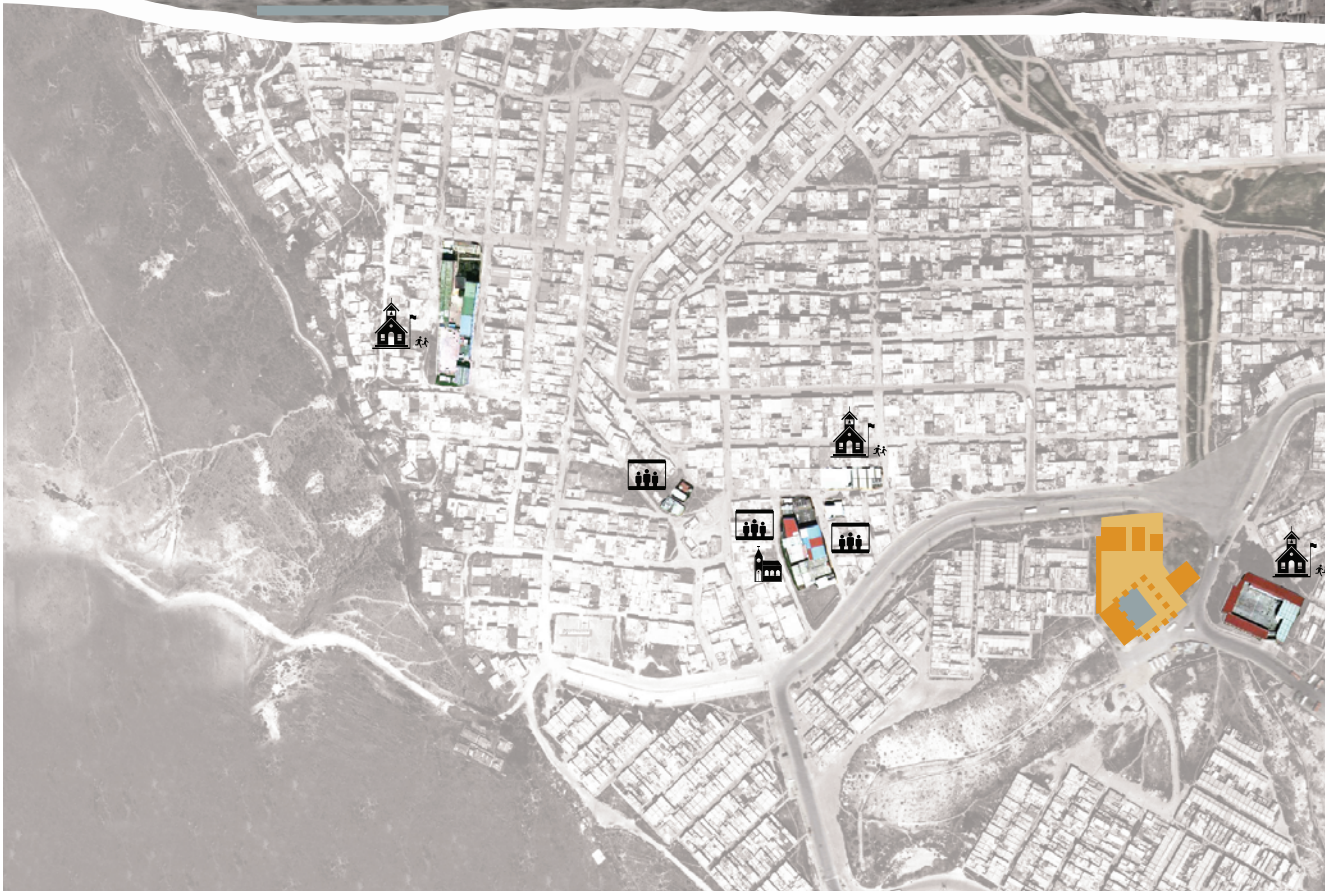
BUILDING SCALE

Almost all of the buildings in the area are one-story houses. These were primarily self-built by residents as the neighborhood grew in population. There are few exceptions where the residents were able to invest in more than modest construction methods, but these tend to be saved for community resources. The majority of the project will need to respond to the scale of the area in a respectful manner in order to make it blend into the fabric rather than stand out.



Fig. 31 | Site Analysis Scale Influence

(Left) Scale of the project on site relative to surroundings
(Right Above) View of typical building condition in area
(Right) Map showing building scale



COMMUNITY RESOURCES

There are already some existing resources such as schools, community centers, and churches within the area that are used by the residents. The buildings lack the space for collective gathering at the scale of the neighborhood for the potential yearly festival of the storytelling network. The project creates a space where these resources and other residents can gather and use in a flexible manner throughout the year, while creating a space of production of stories above it at the same time.



Fig. 32 | Site Analysis Resources Influence

(Left) Project proximity to community resources and potential space for gathering on site

(Right) Influential school, church, and community center



COURTYARD

The idea of a courtyard is very prominent within public buildings of the area. Much like the rest of other neighborhoods in Ciudad Bolivar, Potosi had for many years been troubled by paramilitary gangs so creating spaces of protection for residents was crucial. The project creates a space that is found within the barrio but starts to introduce permeability to address the changing social environment of the locality.

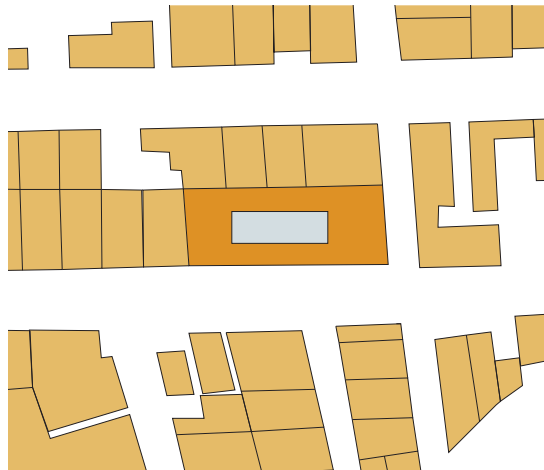


Fig. 33 | Site Analysis Protection Influence

(Left) Inner courtyard found within area and location on site
(Right) Typical inner courtyard condition in area



CONSTRUCTION

Buildings in the area employ a simple frame construction method. Concrete frame with CMU fill-in panels provide an easy way for residents to build their own settlements. The project will embody this simple technique for the majority of the buildings of the stage so that they begin to read as part of the neighborhood. However, when appropriate the project will allow for new materials to form the infill panels so that as public infrastructure the stage contrasts with the housing. One gestural move is made in order to give prominence to the production and telling of stories. On the ground floor the palette of pavers and green landscape is carried from the park promenade through the site and beyond to the future walkway to the south. The pavers on the inner courtyard will blend into the different spaces of the stage so there is little definition between private and public space.

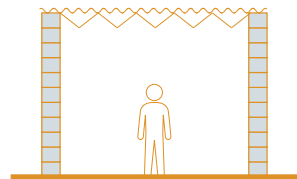


Fig. 34 | Site Analysis Construction Influence

(Left) Section diagram through project and roof plan

(Right Above) Typical construction method on site

(Right) Diagram concept for construction method of project



PROGRAM

The displaced population has already started to form their voice through video tools in the pilot program Sueños Films Colombia. The digital storytelling network within these barrios will further enhance this individual experience while creating a central image to outside communities. This will happen by providing a prominent element that houses the production part of the program. It will also add new elements such as a market space to jumpstart an economy within the area and draw visitors from different areas of the city to the site. Lastly an archive is added that creates a collective and recorded historical voice for the residents.

Market

Small Stall x 6	45 m ²
Large Stall	90 m ²
Storage and Mechanical	95 m ²

Meet

Gallery	75 m ²
Community Room	30 m ²
Offices x 4	15 m ²
Storage and Mechanical	15 m ²

Perform

Theater	460 m ²
Storage and Prep Stage	100 m ²
Mechanical	50 m ²

Produce

Classroom x 2	70 m ²
Individual Spaces x 5	15 m ²
Shop	100 m ²
Animation Lab	50 m ²
Media Lab	50 m ²
Group Space	200 m ²
Offices x 2	15 m ²
Equipment Storage	50 m ²
Mechanical	50 m ²



Fig. 35 | Site Analysis Program Influence

(Left) Location of program elements on site

(Right) Program breakdown

(Right Over) Residents using video tools to record stories



5: STAGE

The design of the stage is the direct result of the site and program analysis. The conceptual image on the left was an idea superimposed from outside of the neighborhood as a way to envision the potential impact of the different components of the stage on the area. The concept is to blur the line between image, building, and urban fabric so as to create a seamless relationship between the architecture of the stage, the individual, the group, and the neighborhood. It is also important to create spaces of refuge for individuals that might be dealing with very traumatic experiences and do not want to be completely exposed while in the process of producing, telling, and archiving their story.

The intent is for the residents to experience the site in a non-linear fashion, much like storytelling evolves and takes different turns as different people tell it. This means that an individual will see at the same time multitude of stories being told, produced, and placed in a collective history. The design documentation will walk through the site much like a particular resident new to the area will experience the project's different components. It will go through the process of an individual understanding the site, being drawn through it, producing their story, telling it, and finally archiving it to become part of the collective voice of the neighborhood.

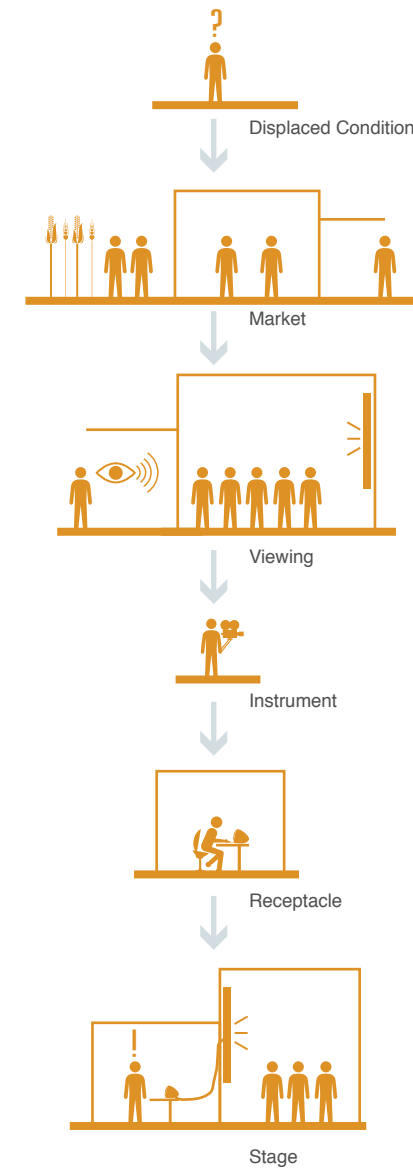


Fig. 36 | Design Concept

(Left) Conceptual image of stage
(Right) Walk through of design



SITE

The resident encounters the site from the park promenade. The market stalls on the north end of the site provide permeability and protection from the road. The meeting space on the east edge creates a forecourt and entry from the north as well as from the commuter traffic from the east edge. The individual gets a small preview of the stage found within the heart of the project below the production space that glows with activity. The pavers on the promenade continue up towards the sloping ramp that leads into the inner courtyard of the project.

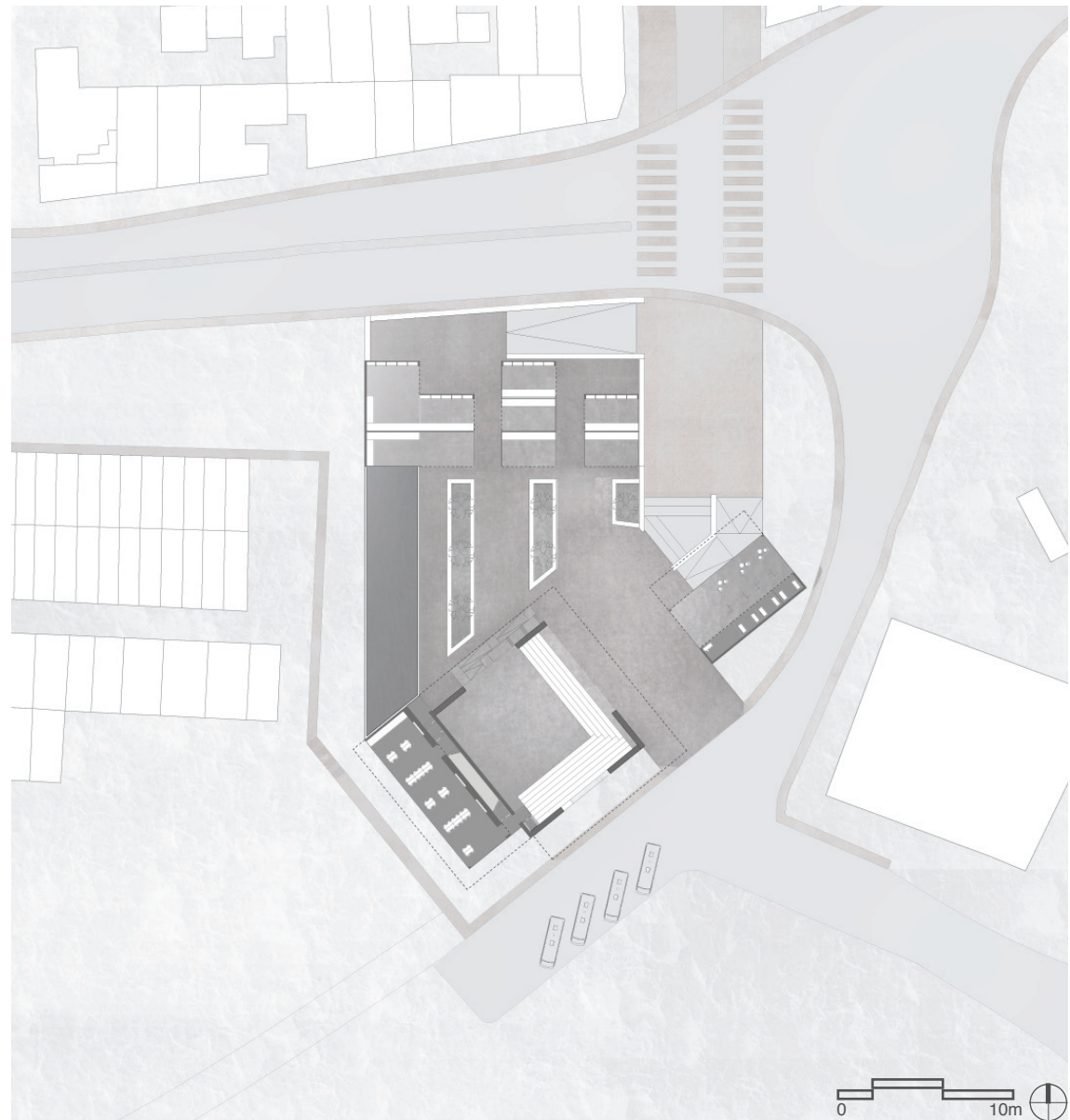
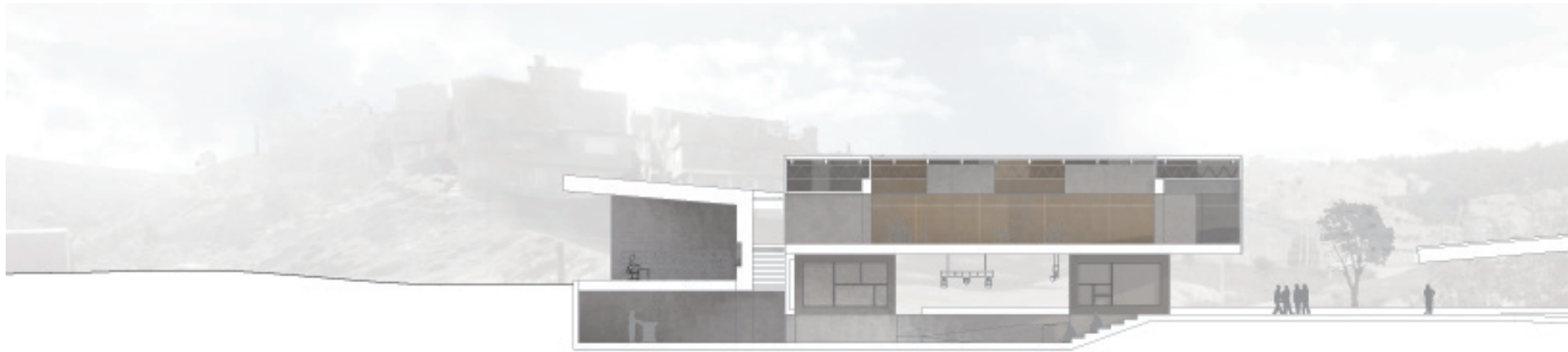


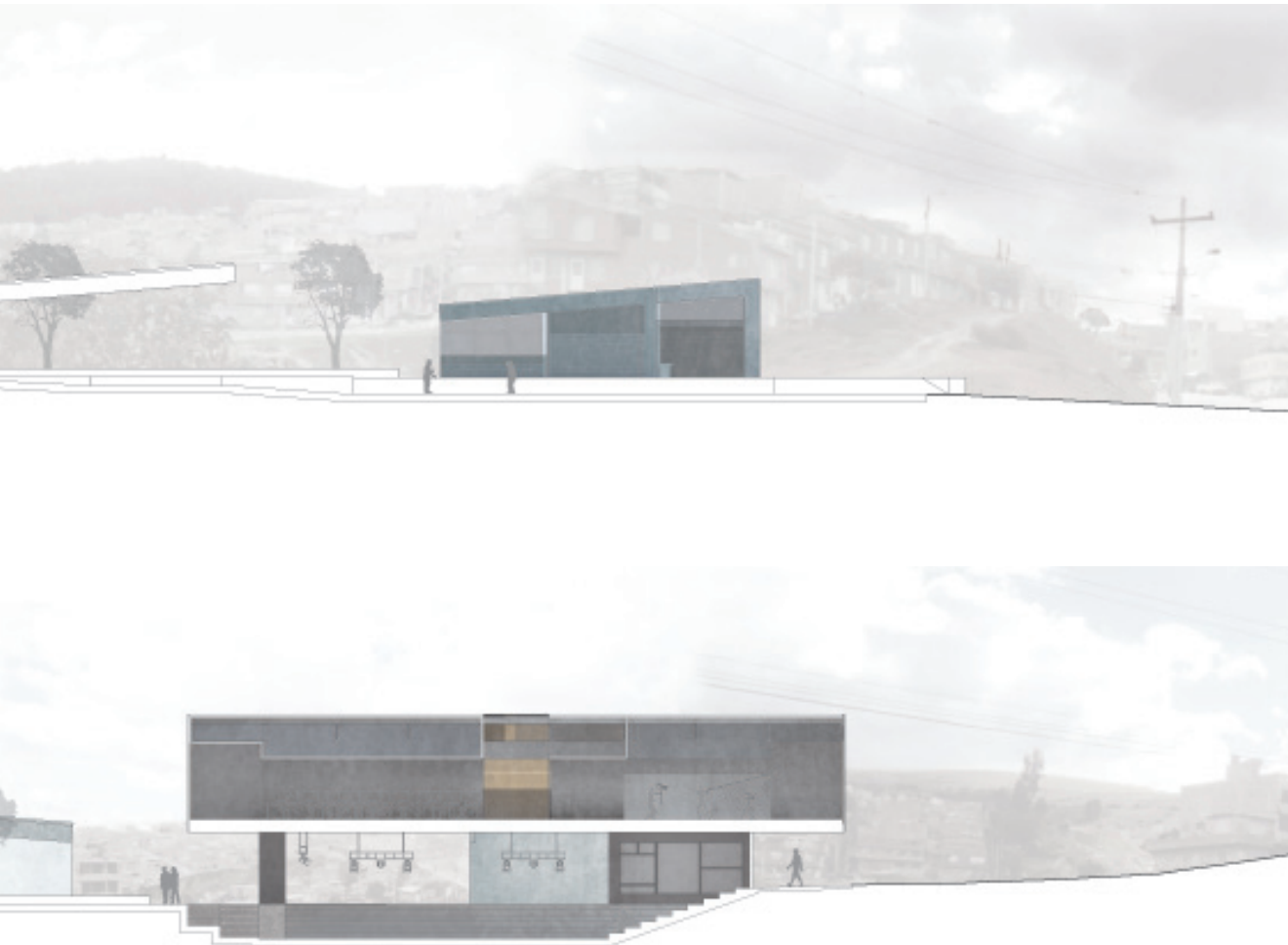
Fig. 37 | View from Park Promenade

(Left)

Fig. 38 | Ground Floor Plan

(Right)





SITE SECTIONS

Walking up the ramp into the inner courtyard, the resident would pass along the market stalls into the forecourt created by the overhanging roof the meeting space. Beyond they would see the stage that slopes down and into a support area for different kinds of performances. The production space above provides protection as well as the infrastructure necessary for a variety of productions in the stage. The archive holds the production space symbolically at the south end and faces the future continuation of the promenade.

The section below shows the protection that the different components of the project provide the inner courtyard. This place provides spaces for informal gathering and a water retention area on the west edge of the site.

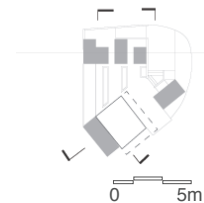


Fig. 39 | Site Sections
(Left)



MARKET

The individual has entered the inner courtyard. The market is busy with vendors from the area selling products to residents and visitors from other areas alike. The stalls employ a frame structure that allows for use as shelving on one end. The structure wraps up and over to provide the enclosure above. The east and west facades of the stalls are intentionally left open in order for residents to infill with their own enclosure and embrace the ad hoc construction method of the area.

The individual stops before the stage to look at information produced by the residents on panels that hold up the structure of the production space above. The concrete frame would be filled with digital screens and boards for residents to tell different stories beyond the perception of just a single viewing screen.

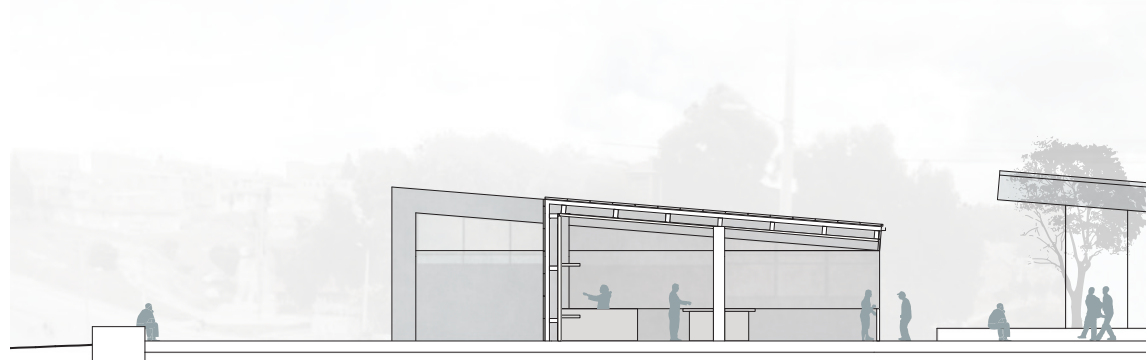


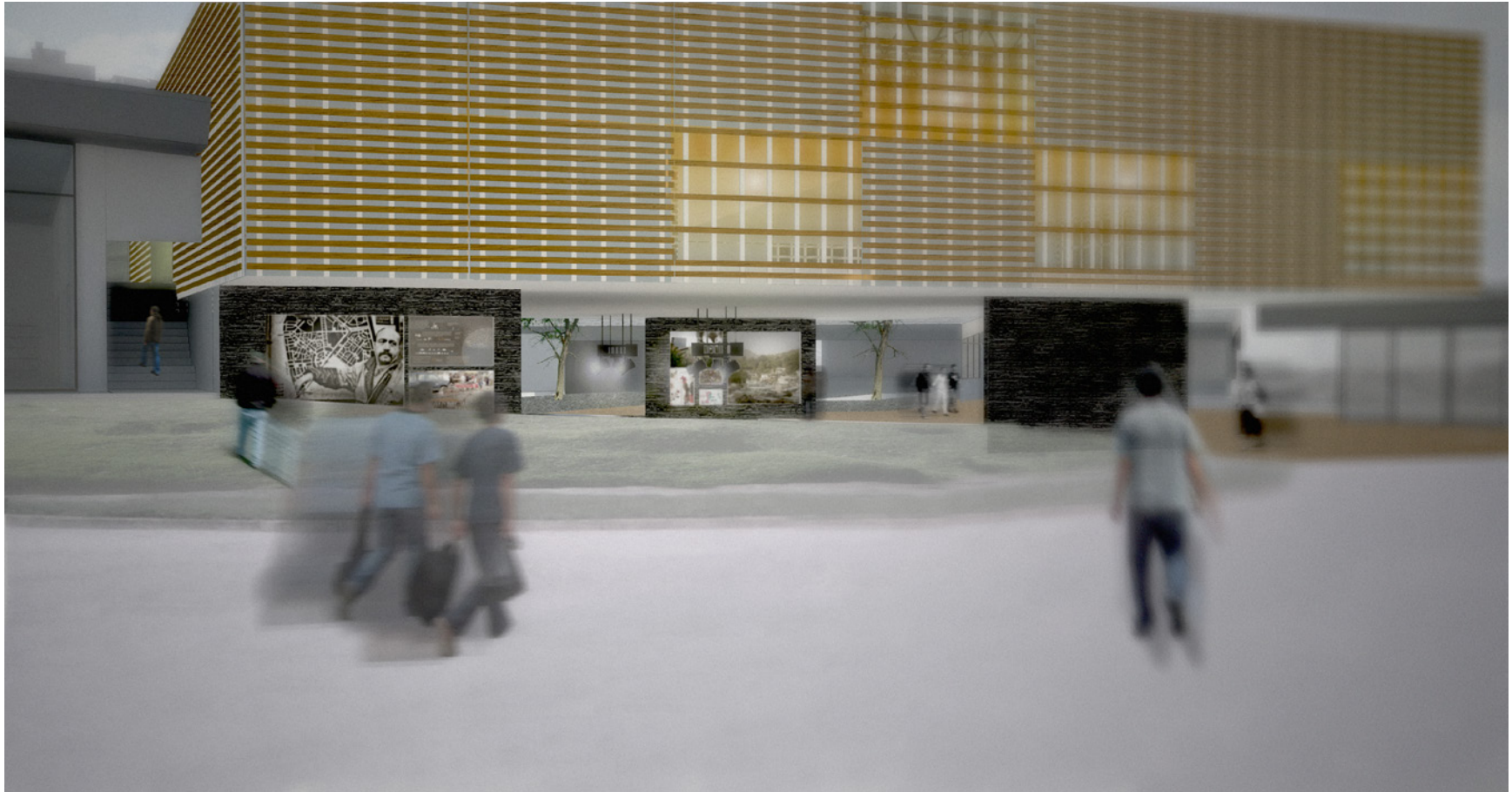
Fig. 40 | View from Market

(Left)

Fig. 41 | Section at Market looking East

(Right)





BUS STOP

Passing along the edge of the stage, the individual has gone along the images and information found on the panels to the activity from the bus stop. Here the project provides an entry into the production space on stairs that are held between the active portions of the program and the more calm of the archive. The cantilever portion of the production space provides protection from the elements and a space for residents waiting for their bus.

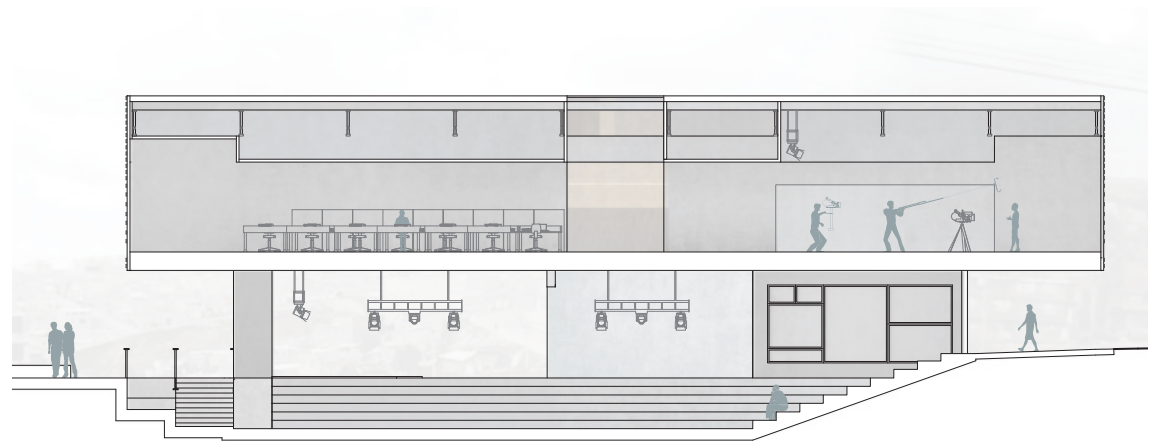


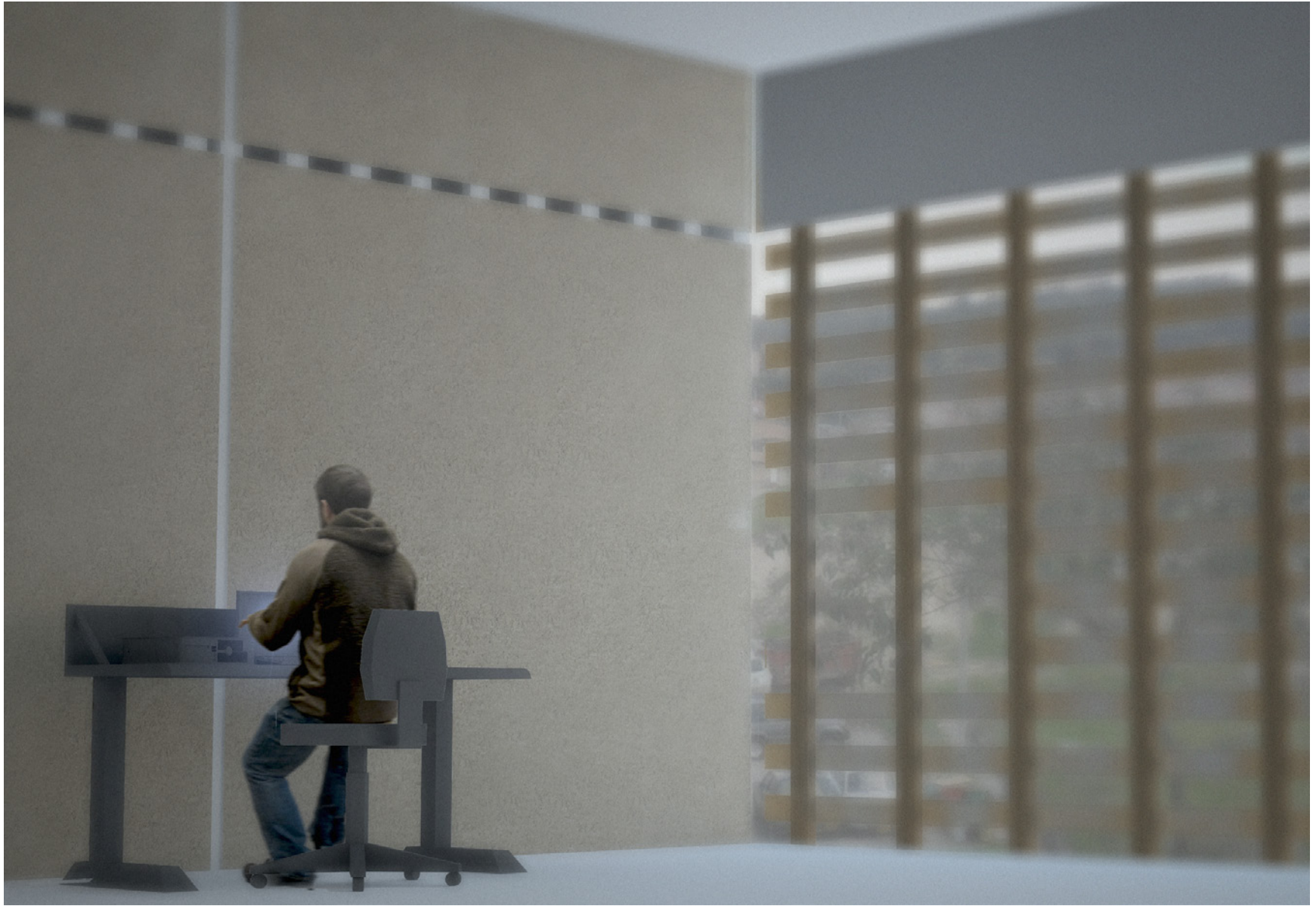
Fig. 42 | View from Bus Stop

(Left)

Fig. 43 | Section at Stage looking North

(Right)





PRODUCTION SPACE

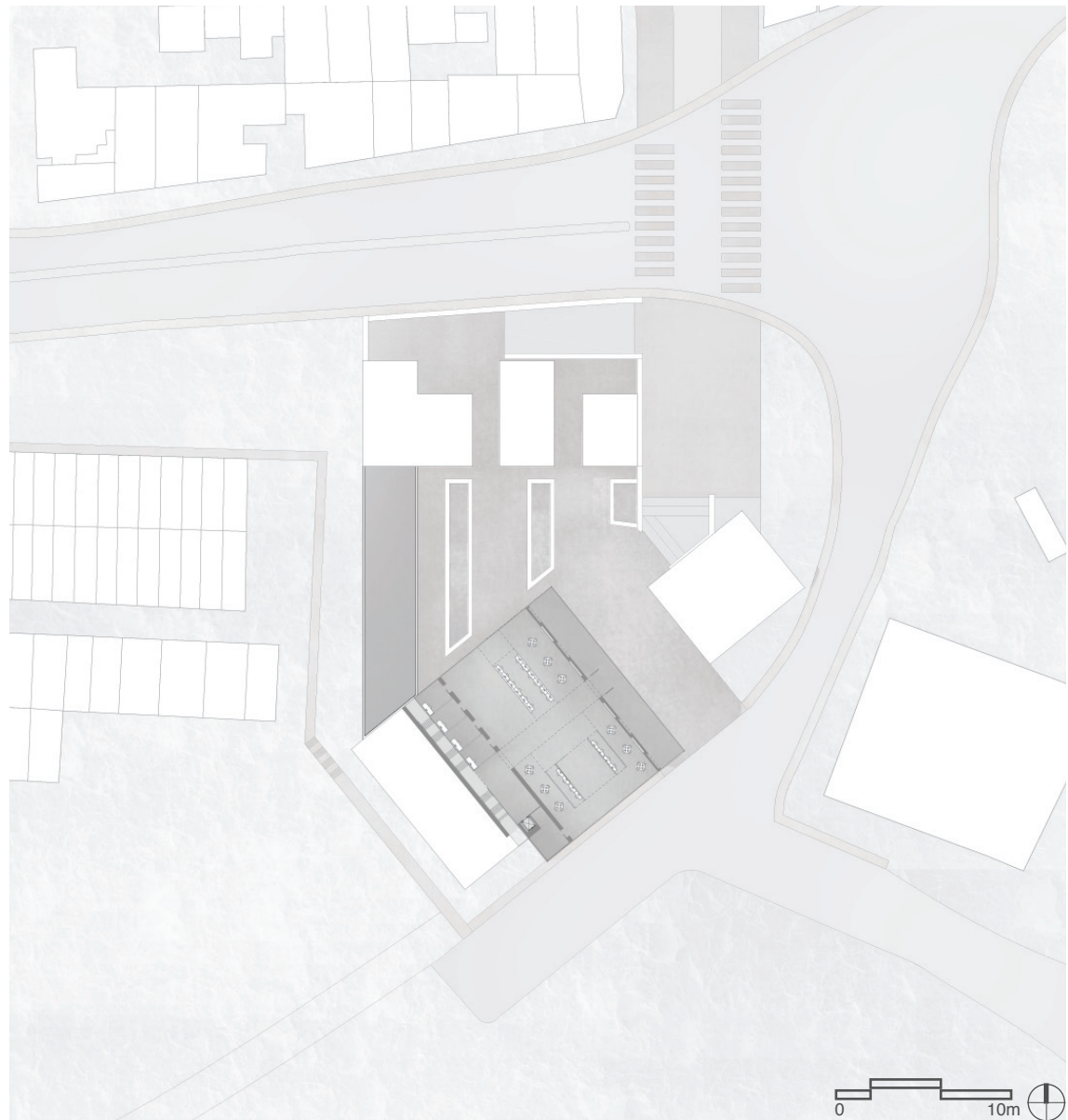
As the individual enters the production space, they pass into the communal areas of the production space. These areas are held between the main structure of the space that creates the smaller and more intimate areas of the program along the north and south ends. The classrooms, individual spaces, and labs are located within the bars at either end. The communal areas in the middle are left intentionally open in order to provide flexibility as the needs of the area change. Once the resident has passed the communal areas, they enter into the space for individual production and reflection. Inside this space, the resident is provided protection by the wood screen while still seeing the activity in the courtyard below and the urban fabric beyond.

Fig. 44 | View into Individual Space

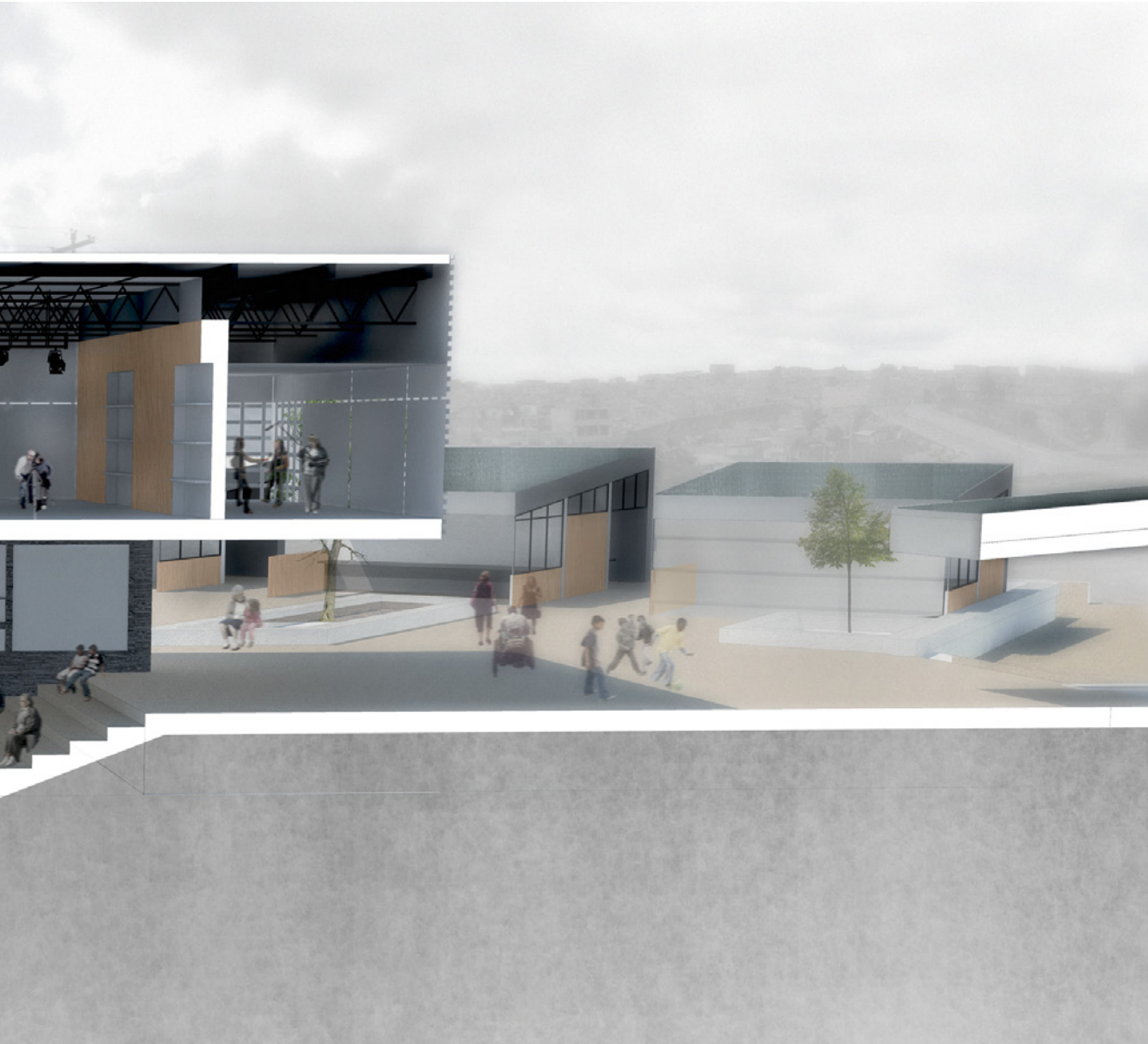
(Left)

Fig. 45 | Production Floor Plan

(Right)







PERFORMANCE

With production completed, the individual is able to tell their story in the performance space. This area provides the flexibility and support space for a variety of different productions that residents could use all the time. It is open to the elements but covered by the production space above so it provides a public amenity for this and other nearby barrios.

Fig. 46 | Section Perspective through Stage looking West

(Left)



ARCHIVE

Finally, the story comes to a close as the individual places their story in the archive. Access to the archive is provided by openings near the inner courtyard and the bus stop. It is provided the same type of architectural language as the market and meeting space to signify it as a support space to the production and telling of stories. These spaces for reflect the attitude that the programs are a particularly individual act. In contrast, the architecture of the archive just like the stories that it holds, is part of the collective story of this neighborhood and others within the locality. It faces south as the potential weaving of the network continues physically with the future promenade beyond.

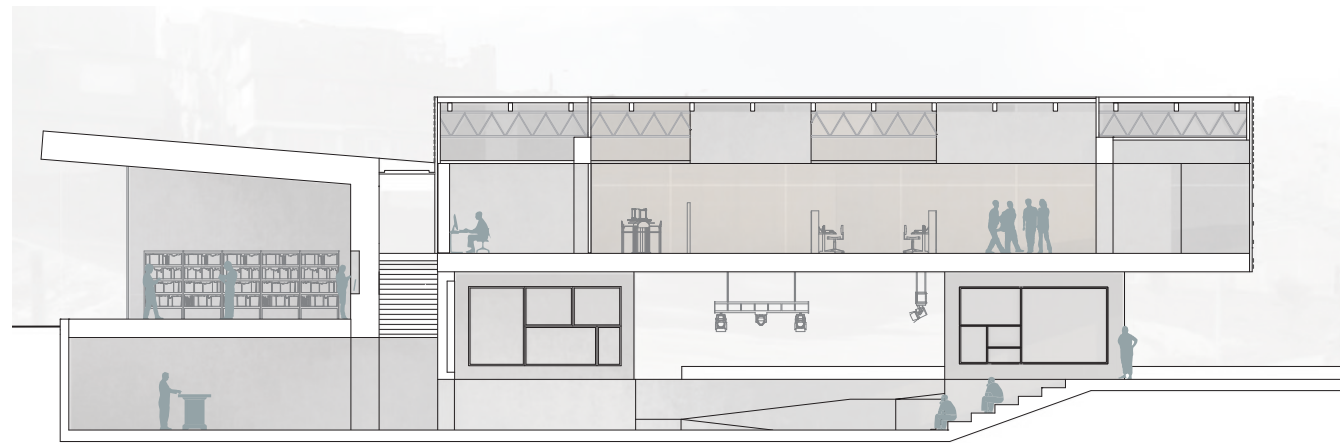


Fig. 47 | View from Archive

(Left)

Fig. 48 | Section at Archive looking West

(Right)



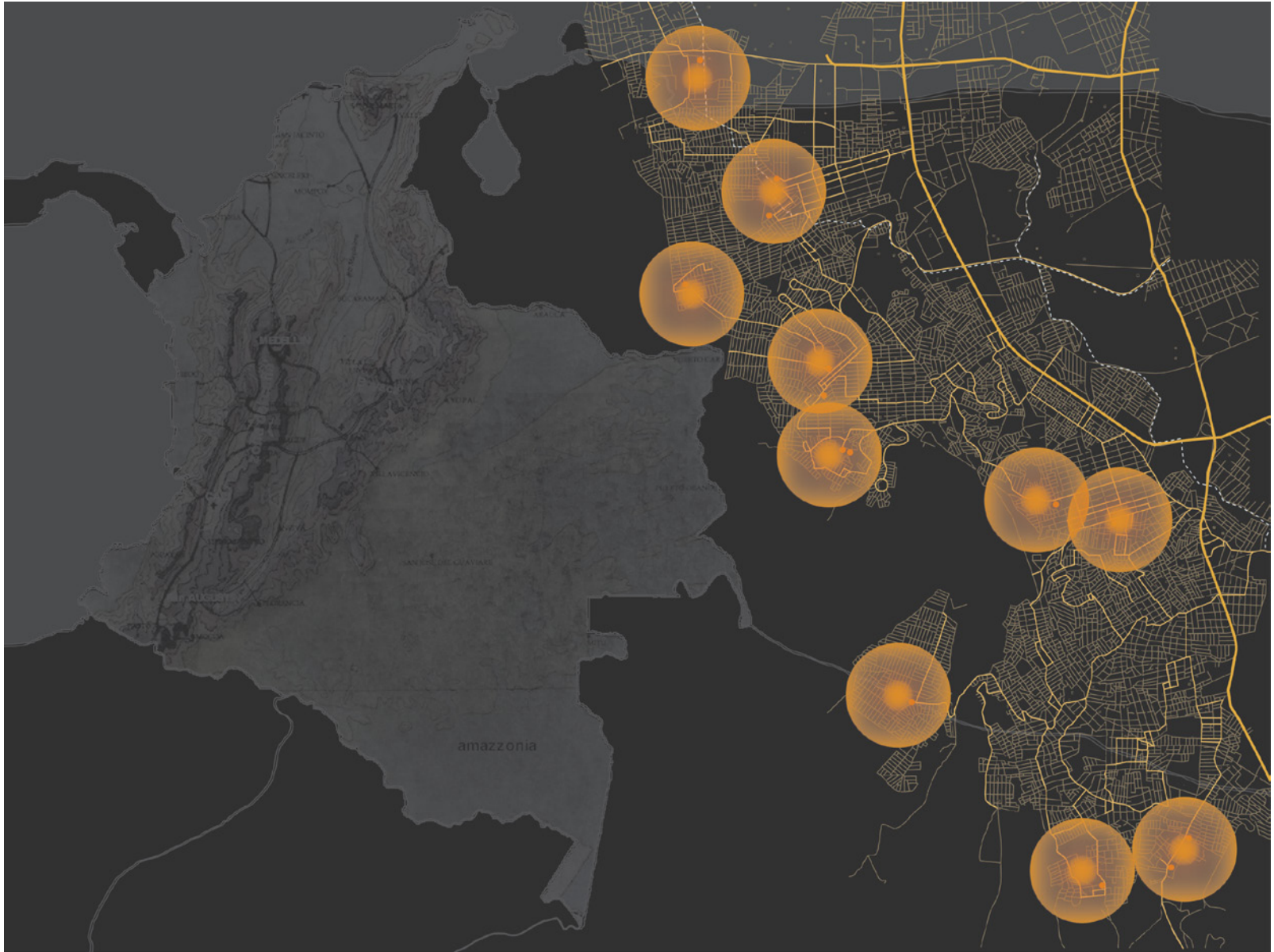
6: CONCLUSION

This thesis began with an interest in the marginal zones of cities, where the hand of the architect or designer did not make its mark through its evolution. As seen in the case studies, informal settlements are beginning to draw the attention of designers for their seemingly unlimited potential for inhabitation. Within Colombia, the majority of these areas began as self-built informal settlements by people forcefully displaced from their homes, making them a part of the displaced environment in the city. From this departure point, the thesis sought to answer several questions: what is the role of the designer within this environment? What is the role of architecture in relation to the individual, group and urban experience? What is the appropriate architectural response to a people whose life history has forced them to lose their sense of culture, place, and identity?

The project hopes to fill the gaps, as Heynen argues, that occur in the displaced environment between the condition of displacement and the physical space. When the usual understanding of the existing cultural systems lack the means to instruct one on how to react to new situations, architecture can serve as a spark to inspire new practices that attempt to cope with displacement in the built environment and related cultural transformations. The project serves as a model for future development within this and similar areas of Ciudad Bolivar. It argues that careful consideration of the site brings about a project that becomes part of the existing fabric and can therefore be embraced by the residents.

The network not only hopes to interweave the physical fabric of the displaced environment, but also of the collective story of the locality so that when one story is told in one stage, it can be shared by others in another. These stories will be shared beyond the experience of one individual allowing residents to participate in this continuation of the past, present and future.

Fig. 49 | Mapping Overlaid
(Right)



Endnotes

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