



Making the City in Cartagena de Indias

Field Course 2016/17 under the guidance of Silke Oldenburg

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Intro: Making the City

Silke Oldenburg

Latin America is today the world's most urbanised region where urban transformation has brought not only technological innovation but also the heightening of social differentiation, socioeconomic segregation and environmental degradation.

These processes of urban change are also clearly palpable in Cartagena de Indias on Colombia's Caribbean coast. Cartagena still preserves much of its impressive colonial heritage, which marked its architecture and is reflected in urban social structure. Historically, Cartagena was the most important port for the Spanish conquest on the continent, shipping slaves in and treasures out. In 1811, Cartagena became the first of Colombia's cities to declare independence from the Spanish Empire. However, successive civil wars devastated parts of the built environment and affected many lives, leading to its nickname "La Heroica". By the 20th century, the city had lost its economic importance, not least due to the conflicts of the preceding decades. Addressing this economic crisis, tourism was developed during the 1920s as a new resource in the national economy (Cunin and Rinaudo 2005, 2). This policy evidently bore fruit, as Cartagena was declared the first tourist destination of Colombia in 1943 (Deavila 2015, 127). Several decades later, a tremendous change in the socio-spatial dynamics was caused by Cartagena's recognition as UNESCO World Heritage site in 1984. This recognition generated a regulation process and urban policy makers assigned a new symbolic and economic value to the city centre. This was followed by a massive construction and renovation boom that coincided with the emptying out of the historic core from its residents, today subsumed under the umbrella term "gentrification" (Scarpaci 2005; Valle 2017).

Recent studies in urban anthropology focus on built forms and social relations, urban imageries and shifting power relations in the city, providing a window on complex processes of urbanisation as well as changing modes of urbanity. Urbanity, following Förster (2013) is understood as dynamic process and captures the social interactions of urbanites as intentional practices of encounter and distanciation. Hence, urbanity is continuously produced by urban dwellers (Förster 2013). This actor-oriented approach was also the point of departure for our MA-guided field course in 2016/2017 with the overarching theme MAKING THE CITY IN CARTAGENA, COLOMBIA. After an introductory semester in Basel, during six weeks eight students approached the general topic of making the city as a social practice, exploring different social spaces across cityscapes and the transformation of a city through such practices.

Cartagena de Indias is an ideal context for exploring relations between built environment and the human body as legacies of the slave trade continue to shape today's social realities in the form of racial and social exclusion. At the same time, the colonial architecture generated a booming tourist industry, which to this day is changing the social, economic and political landscape and has led to inner urban displacement, gentrification and social contestation of exclusionary urban practices.

This working paper is one of the principal outcomes of the field course. It provides a vibrant testimony of our trajectories beyond Cartagena as "tourist paradise" – trajectories we followed on our own, within our research group as peers or together with our interlocutors in order to gain an understanding of urban life in the Colombian Caribbean.

How is the city made? Who makes the city? Who is excluded from contributing to making the city? These were the questions that provided us with a starting point to

describe urban scenes and biographies and that forced us to grapple with methodological challenges and first interpretations of our findings. Therefore, this working paper is intended to be read as an “assemblage”¹ of urban ethnographic methodology and urban theories. Including many visual elements, it captures co-existing, overlapping or fragmented urban social spaces without intending to depict a holistic picture. Images and imaginations, institutional and everyday practices, spatial accounts and built environment, the urban assemblage coalesces to an urban sociality. Within this assemblage, we examine particular topics, urban biographies and social configurations of space in order to illustrate urban living conditions, challenges and opportunities in Cartagena. Particularly, Lefebvre’s theory of space (1974) inspired our approaches towards the city. As space is never a neutral container, Lefebvre proposes a “unitary theory of space” concerned with the physical, the mental and the social dimensions of space starting from the awareness that space is fundamentally a political construction which reflects the social relations of production (Lefebvre 1996).

Analogously to the metaphor of the urban assemblage, the complex living conditions and contested meanings of Cartagena’s cityscapes are brought together in the photo on the title page of this issue, which takes up the bits and pieces which assemble different perceptions of Cartagena and hints at the ways urban space is produced. How do these different descriptions contribute to “making the city”? The simultaneity of material and imaginary facets of a city defy any fixed definition, even if Latin American cities owe their existence, more than any other region, to colonial writings as those documented plans for architecture and street design while mirroring the power of monarchy and church (Biron 2009, 16). The ordering of cities and the intent to create and define a “brand” of a city can be found in the realm of popular culture as well, for instance when internationally acclaimed Colombian singer Carlos Vives praises Cartagena as “La Fantástica”. The fantastic, exotic and “magical” touch of this metaphor (and accordingly the images of its videoclip) is intended to represent an ode to “African roots” and “Caribbean joy”. Here, speaking with Lefebvre, the city officials commercialize popular culture to enhance touristic attraction. So, obviously, Cartagena eludes a synthesis. The city is dynamic and fleeting. However, the attractive image of “La Fantástica”, successfully merging glossy representations of the city with popular cultural appeal, obscures the many other faces of Cartagena. These are the poor faces, the ones that are rarely written about but which are the majority of the population’s social reality. It is the city where sociopolitical problems, infrastructural neglect, intraurban displacements, gang violence and mounting insecurity take place.

Urban anthropology aims at addressing the challenges of the urban age and the changes these transformations imply. It helps us to engage explicitly with the complex social lives that people develop in cities while it reflects on past and present experiences, challenges and ambitions of making and living the city in Cartagena.

Life on the Caribbean coast takes place on the streets and the squares, and that is also where our research took place. The different sites are outlined and linked up in the introductory city map, around which our working paper is organised. Individual research designs cover topics from a broad range of urban interest, while pictures from our field sites show where we worked and what we were researching. Different ethnographic genres convey our astonishment and amazement unleashed by the city, while also providing a condensed background of some classical concepts of urban anthropology as,

1 Without having the space to develop the conceptual underpinnings of the term “assemblage,” this metaphor is an intriguing way of thinking about the (urban) social world which is marked by indefiniteness and indeterminacy, but also by emergence and heterogeneity (see Marcus and Saka 2006). It is closely related to concepts such as collage, and captures volatile yet interconnected contexts. It is introduced by Brenner as “methodological tool, empirical description or an ontological perspective” (Brenner et al. 2011, 232). The term “urban assemblage” (compare Fariás and Bender 2009) reflects the notion of the city as a whole and goes further by conceptualising the “city as multiplicity” (Fariás 2011, 369), thus taking urban social space into account.

for example, “public space/gentrification” (Wabersich/Bosbach) or the “right to the city” (Peduzzi) as well as tentatively exploring less researched phenomena as “urban indigeneity” (Hobi). It is particularly this mixture of relying on classics but also methodological genres as interviews or mapping (Bettschen/Miglioretto), challenges in the field and questions of positionality (Wermuth) that add to our overall approach to and representation of Cartagena as a urban assemblage (all in this double issue).

Reflecting on urban phenomena as diverse as mobility, production and consumption, gentrification, insecurity and inequality, popular art, sex work, sports and space for children, the students elaborated on these topics in their respective research reports². Furthermore, we organised a photo exhibition at the Institute of Social Anthropology, University of Basel, and designed a showcase as an outcome of our dealing with Cartagena.

Christine Wabersich sheds light in her contribution on processes of gentrification and how municipal policies have shaped local places, particularly on how street food vendors deal with these policies and how they assign meaning to the transformed places. While gentrification might lead towards alienation, Wabersich highlights the twisted feelings of belonging and attachment such places generate.

Following two interlocutors’ portraits, Anna-Sophie Hobi explores “urban indigeneity” by following coffee sellers during their urban work trajectories through the city and back to their rural homelands. As many of these coffee sellers have been displaced to the city by Colombia’s violent history, Hobi highlights the importance of rural lifestyles for this urban indigenous community.

Following this rural-urban excursion, Livia Wermuth describes how urban design and the built environment foster social exclusion in La Boquilla, a former fishing village. Situated next to a gated community, Wermuth raises questions on perceptions of security and the ambiguities that urban transformations produce.

Nicolas Miglioretto provides a methodological contribution on mapping practices in the Northern neighbourhood Santa Maria, where he offers insights into how temporal and spatial aspects of the city shape children’s ways of enjoying leisure time.

The next piece by Christina Bosbach explores downtown Cartagena, which shows how historic power relations are still embedded in space. While working on the memory of the slave trade, Bosbach was intrigued by the seeming lack of remembrance, fleshing out the repercussions of century-long racial and social marginalisation of social groups and their impact on today’s realities.

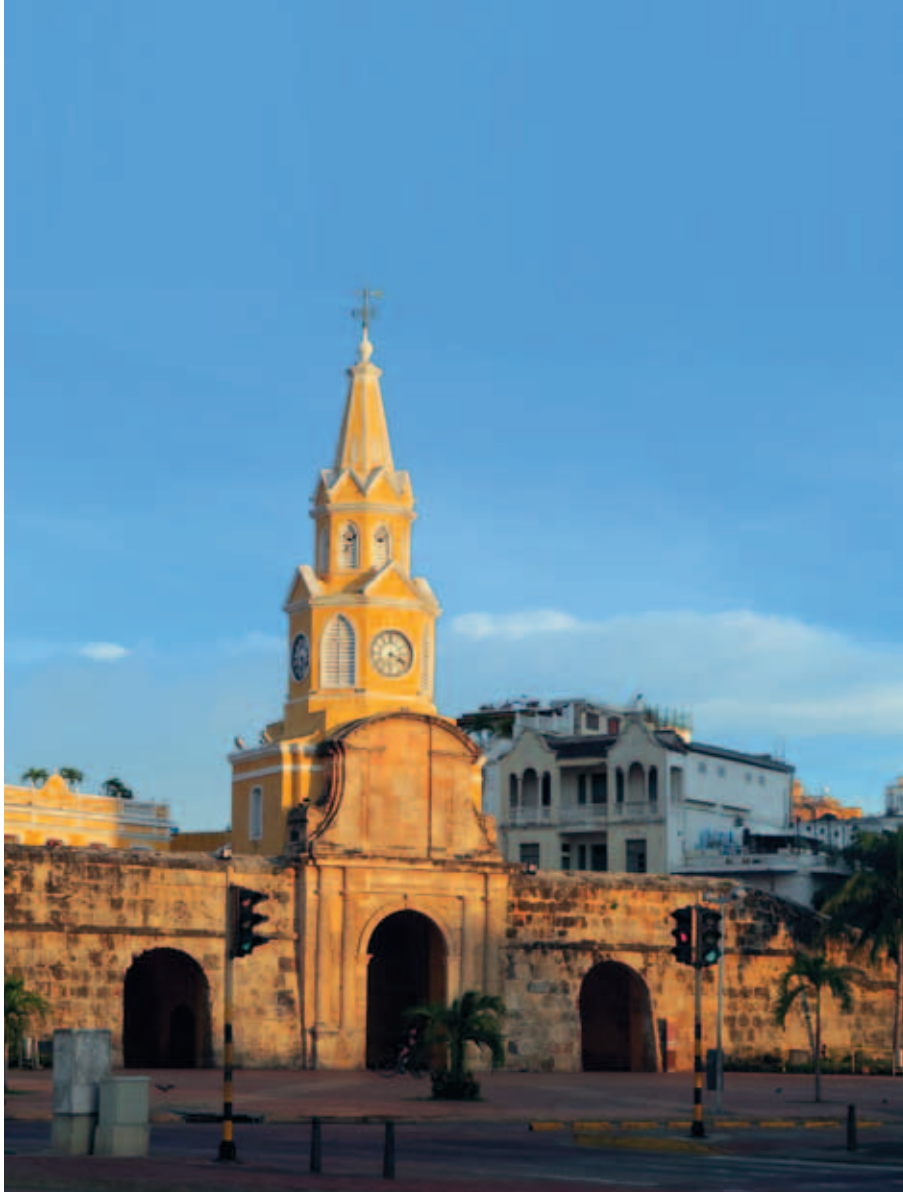
Silke Oldenburg concentrates on Cartagena’s emblematic neighbourhood Getsemaní and its street corners which are spaces of conviviality but also contestation. Shedding light on the street corners serves as a lens of urban sociality in a heavily contested neighbourhood which juggles between images of city branding and local identities.

Another way to reclaim a “right to the city” is brought forward by Nora Peduzzi’s contribution that shows how the built infrastructure is appropriated as a kind of canvas, by being painted and sprayed upon. Following *grafiteros* in Cartagena, she exemplifies the double-edged character of street art for processes of gentrification.

Laura Bettschen explains the challenges of doing fieldwork in the realm of sex work in Cartagena. She is interviewed by her fellow researchers Christina Bosbach and Christine Wabersich about her experiences and raises the importance of gaining trust.

This double issue brings our personal experiences in “the urban field” together. At the same time, it presents thorough examinations of Cartagena’s cityscapes and the way how urbanites live and make their city – while we tried to make sense of this living and making the city.

2 Selected papers are downloadable under: <https://ethnologie.philhist.unibas.ch/de/forschung/publikationen/>.



Torre del Reloj.
S. Oldenburg, January 2017

Fieldnotes

Leaving the airplane, the warmth immediately hits me, and it feels like I'm diving into a pool of hot air. I get a slight hunch that I probably won't be able to leave this pool again during my whole stay in Cartagena. After passing the immigration and getting my luggage, I take the very first taxi I see. The driver is a young man with friendly eyes. Driving along the coast towards the city, I realise that I'm very unprepared – I haven't even taken the time to find out how much I am supposed to pay for the ride, much less have I agreed on a price before hopping in. Too late. I agree with myself to be okay with probably getting ripped off this time. For a quick second, I wonder if the hot weather is already affecting my attitude... [...] Leaving the highway and entering the *centro histórico* – the old town which is surrounded by a huge city wall – the streets get very narrow, lined with colourful, colonial-style houses with little wooden balconies and beautiful doors. There is a lot of traffic, mostly taxis, and we only advance very slowly. It is getting very hot inside the car without the airstream that accompanied us while driving faster. I have time to look outside the window, observe the scenery and let the first impressions sink in. [...] Even though I had seen pictures of the *centro histórico* before and it therefore looked somehow familiar, something feels odd. I don't know if it is just me, after an almost 30-hour trip arriving to a place I've never been before, or if it is something else. Then it suddenly strikes me: the cobblestone streets and the houses are suspiciously clean and it all looks like a small, peaceful village – not like the one-million inhabitant Latin-American city I expected (Fieldnotes, Nora Peduzzi, 03.01.2017).

Defending Public Space against Gentrification: Coming Back to Plaza San Diego

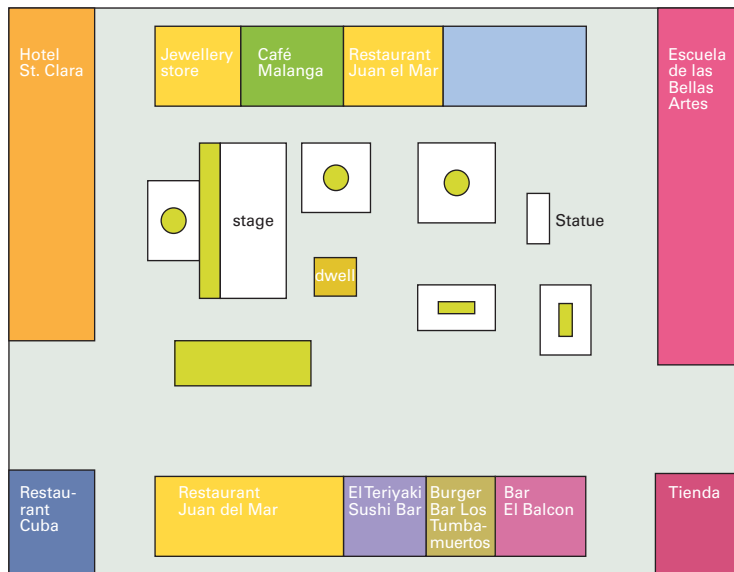
Christine Wabersich

The woman in front of the restaurant *Tumbamuertos* sweeps the street before she sets her tables up. Many cars are driving through the road alongside the place, causing loud background noise with their horns. It is hot, about noon, but surprisingly busy at the square. The people under the trees talk to each other, also seeking the dialogue with two light-skinned, blonde tourists. Nothing is going on in the restaurants that I'm facing. No, nothing isn't exactly right: There are just no tourists occupying the seats. The operators and employees are engaged in arranging tables and chairs, cleaning and preparing. At the house wall of the bar *El Balcón*, the menu is being set up and controlled if it's straight. Parov Stelar jingles in the background; not the first time that I hear the music of this particular band at the *plaza*.¹

Colourful Plaza San Diego, photographed from the West.
C. Wabersich, January 2017



1 Fieldnotes, 10.02.2017.



Mapping Plaza San Diego. The colours reflect the ones that the houses around the plaza are painted in.
C. Wabersich, February 2017

When approaching Plaza San Diego, it depends very much on the time of day if one will be overwhelmed by the impressions. The first thing one notices is that the *plaza* is colourful: all of the houses surrounding the square are painted in different colours, some shining in green, others in red, orange, purple, blue or yellow. Plaza San Diego is best described as a cosy public space, with big trees framed by planted terraces. Rectangular stone benches around them provide – depending on the seat – an excellent view of the restaurants or the *plaza* while being sheltered from the sun by the shade of the trees. In the middle of the square is a little stage made of concrete, which most people use for sitting on. An old stone well stands out although it is no longer in use. Just months ago, the statue of a famous singer was erected and now attracts mostly tourists who sit beside it for a photo opportunity.

For locals – who for the most part live in other parts of the city – the way to Plaza San Diego, the centre of the likewise named neighbourhood San Diego, can be quite long. Located in the historic centre of Cartagena, which is guarded by massive fortified walls, it is situated in the upper Northern end of town and thus, the route somehow becomes one-way-street. Townsmen also have to consider that costs for food and clothing are higher than in other neighbourhoods, as the prices are set with tourists in mind as the main customers.

Travellers may find the “old heart” of the city attractive because of the many boutiques, shops and restaurants that provide a quality service within a short distance from hotels and BnB’s. Tourists following their guidebooks will see charmingly renovated colonial houses that encompass Plaza San Diego. The most ostentatious ones are

beyond doubt the hotel *St. Clara*, painted in orange, and the red building of the institute *Bellas Artes*, both noted as important and representative buildings. Typical descriptions in books and traveller's blogs describe the square as a cosy place within the historic centre of town and refer to the colorful houses, now hosting restaurants, a jeweller's and a souvenir shop respectively. What the depictions have in common is that they describe the *plaza* as a place not only for visitors but also for locals to meet, hang out and relax. Most of the guides do not mention that Plaza San Diego is – in my reading – a “gentrified space”.

The term “gentrification” was first put forward by Ruth Glass in 1964. The British sociologist used it as an analogy to the term “gentry” – describing a class of lower nobility in the 18th century – that had moved from the periphery back to the city centres. Glass used “gentrification” to describe a similar phenomenon happening in the 1960s in the UK. She subsequently showed how the increasing relocations of middle-class people to urban neighbourhoods in London caused the displacement of lower-class residents. Although there is no consistent definition of the term, it can be conceptualised as “the process by which higher income households displace lower income residents of a neighbourhood, changing the essential character and flavor of that neighborhood” (Kennedy and Leonard 2001, 6). Even though there are various elaborations on gentrification, some characteristics appear in almost every description: The process consists of an economic and material upgrading of houses and infrastructure and a change of residents as well as public perception. A gentrified neighbourhood is characterised by a high percentage of renovated or new buildings, affluent residents that have replaced former inhabitants and improved infrastructure, just as it is publicly imaged as “in” or “trendy”. In the public use of the term, gentrification is mostly associated with the revaluation of fabrics, increasing rents and displacement of autochthonous residents. In my judgement, a “gentrified space” is, therefore, a space characterised by these changes having occurred.

Vacant house to buy.
C. Wabersich, January 2017



In the case of Plaza San Diego, many of the local families moved away when their houses were fixed up and sold to foreigners or Colombian elites or turned into a restaurant. A real estate agency lists the blue building at the corner online (see image, above), offering the apartment with a jacuzzi on the rooftop and fully furnished for about 1 090 000 USD (c.f. Paul Juan Realty 2017). One of the main buildings, the former monastery *St. Clara*, was turned into a five-star luxury hotel in 1995 and access is to which is now mainly limited to hotel guests. Those able to pay for an elaborate breakfast can also enter the atrium and enjoy the exquisite atmosphere. As a concierge guards the entrance, not just anyone can step from the streets onto the premises. This privatization of space also extends to the *plaza* itself: as the restaurants occupy parts of the streets with seats and tables, the public space formerly accessible to all pedestrians is turned into a “private” area, where one must consume at least a drink to enjoy the square. Plaza San Diego, which until about five years ago had been a place mainly for students and locals to hang out in the evenings, was renovated around 2014. New, uncomfortable benches were installed, the wall people used to sit on was raised so high that they can no longer get up, and the plants got more space with little fences installed around them. All in all, there was less and less space left for residents and students which made them look for and find another place – namely the Plaza de la Trinidad in the neighbourhood of Getsemaní. The descriptions in the tourist guidebooks do not show that the students of the *Bellas Artes* who stay at the *plaza* after classes have ended are neither to be mistaken for students from the *Universidad de Cartagena* who would rather spend their evenings in Getsemaní, nor that they live nearby in San Diego. Also, the locals that spend a day in the old city, meeting acquaintances and relaxing at the plaza before they move along, dwell mostly in other parts of the city.

For all that, gentrified Plaza San Diego is a space that offers economic possibilities for different actors: used by street vendors to sell their products and make a living, it retrieves dwellers from other parts of the city and even formerly displaced residents, bringing them (back) into the neighbourhood. This happens throughout the day and starts quietly in the morning: just one of the *tinteros* offers coffee to go. Sometimes a man with a little food cart serves *arepas* at the corner. Around noon, only one cart provides fresh lemonade, resisting the ascending heat – only to get superseded by all the other vendors who fill the *plaza* past 4pm. As night falls, Plaza San Diego comes alive. Street food like Corona beer, *arepas*, *obleas*, *paletas* and *ceviche* put up for sale draw hungry tourists, as well as a few students and locals from other neighbourhoods, to that everchanging place bathed in warm streetlights. Before moving along, people meeting acquaintances and relaxing at the square are entertained by various street performers – mostly dancers and some singers – and by mobile vendors trying to sell jewellery or souvenirs.

Most of the vendors in the inner city and some of them at Plaza San Diego do not have permission to sell street food and are aware of the fact that their cart is illegal. The majority cannot afford a licence because of the high costs associated with getting one. As there is no other way to support a family, they still do sell street food – one such vendor being Albeiro, who does not see himself as having much of a choice:

I started selling Ceviche more than twenty years ago. First I sold, I sold it for another owner. I did not have my own business. About five years ago I assigned my own business, which is street vending. Informal sale as they call it here. Because here in Colombia the sales that are not written in the government are street sales, informal businesses. And I come here doing this business since five years. The informal sale. [...] No, I do not have a permission. [...] They do not want to give them. They do not want to give them. On the contrary, they want to get us out of here, from the zone, from the centre. They do not guarantee us, no guaranties, if we do not pay the IC [Identity Card] for that, because we are informal sellers. And like me, there are many sellers. There are more than two thousand vendors. They earn their livelihood by selling. Because there is no other way. [...]

Sign for *Espacio Público y Movilidad* stored away.
C. Wabersich, January 2017



It is said that Colombia is a very rich country. There are many tourist entries. But there is a lot of poverty, a lot of need. Then, one is forced to work on the street to support a family.²

The mayoralty of Cartagena launched the department *Espacio Público y Movilidad* in 2003. It oversees policies, plans and programs concerning public space, such as parks and squares, and therefore also engages in controlling actors that use such public spaces like street food vendors do (*Espacio Público y Movilidad* 2014). The department attempts to provide more public space in the old city centre so that pedestrians can move freely on streets and squares without caring about traffic, through a campaign called “*mas espacio público – mejor movilidad*”³. For this, the department’s officers put signs up after 5 pm, thereby shutting down the streets for cars. Yet, some of the restaurants within the walled sector use this situation to their interest; by buying licenses from *Espacio Público*, they are then permitted to use the blocked roads to put up tables and chairs in order to provide a larger sales area. Thus, the office’s objective – to gain more public space for a better mobility – resulted in quite the reverse as the gained public space turned into private areas that can be used effectively only when eating at the restaurant. As street vendors are bothered that public space is “sold” to restaurants, this may explain why they remain within their “group”, although there is no offensive competition between diners or bars and mobile salesmen: Karine and Albeiro do not turn to the restaurants when they need to change money for a customer’s drawback. Instead, they ask other long-established owners of food carts and the employees of a little *tienda* [shop] at the corner that sells drinks to locals respectively.

The office of *Espacio Público* affect mobile merchants not only by allocating licenses but also by enforcing these regulations. Officials – not the police – appointed by the department are sent out to patrol the streets. They are authorised to confiscate food carts, store them away and impose fines. A female foreign vendor experienced:

- 2 “Vendo Ceviche hace más de veinte años. Primeramente, vendía, lo vendía a otro dueño. No tenía negocio propio. Alrededor de cinco años adscribí mi propio negocio que es la venta ambulante. Venta informal como le llaman aquí. Porque aquí en Colombia las ventas que no están escritas en el gobierno son ventas ambulantes, negocios informales. Y yo vengo [de haciendo?] este, este negocio de cinco años para acá. La venta informal. [...] No, no tengo permiso. [...] no los quieren dar. No los quieren dar. Antes, por el contrario, nos quieren sacar de aquí, de la zona, zona al centro. No nos garantizan, ninguna garantía, si no pagamos la CI [Carnet de Identidad] por así, porque somos vendedores informales. Y como yo, hay muchos vendedores. Hay como más de dos mil vendedores. Se ganan el sustento por la venta. Porque no hay otro medio. [...] Se dice que Colombia es un país muy rico. Hay muchas entradas de turistas. Pero hay mucha pobreza, mucha necesidad. Entonces, uno se ve obligado a trabajar en la calle para mantener a una familia.” (Interview with Albeiro, 12.02.2017).
- 3 Literally: More public space – better mobility.

And also, once, my food cart was confiscated by the *Espacio Público*. [...] And it happens to all street vendors. Like I was so mad, this terrible. This huge truck, with people in black, they park next to you and like twenty guys in black clothes go and they take everything and they put it on the top of their car and they take it away. Like everything you have, like money, food, everything. And they break things, sometimes on purpose, sometimes not. They take it to some storage that is out of Cartagena and you have to pay a fine. And then it takes minimum one month so you can get it back [...]. So, I was on this island, and this happened when I left my employee working. And they came, and they took everything [...]. He [her Colombian boyfriend] got the whole back but it was so much paperwork. [...] And I had to pay the fine, the minimum fine was 90'000 pesos. But they charge you more, like this is the minimum. [...] Before I started I was asking a guy and he was like “now, they confiscate, you go back to the place and in one month they’ll confiscate, you’ll go back to the place” and this is how people do this for ten years.⁴

As Tatiana⁵ indicates in the last sentence, the vendors will be left alone eventually if they endure this procedure long enough. This requires not only patience, but also the means to retrieve their carts. Coming back to the same place over and over again also induces that a vendor gradually gains knowledge about the different actors of the area he or she usually sells street food. By being informed who or which officials control the area, and subsequently getting acquainted with the others, expanding their “knowledge of acquaintances” contributes to vendors’ ability to stay at the *plaza*. For instance, Karine’s table on which she displays her *obleas* is not perceived as illegal at Plaza San Diego because she grew up in the neighbourhood. Karine is both well-known by and acquainted with residents, shop owners, and vendors, as well as the controlling officials and policemen in San Diego. She, too, was badgered when selling *obleas* without permission at other places.

The interesting point is that all the literature about gentrification concentrate on the process itself to describe and analyse how “traditional” inhabitants resist and react to these changes. According to their conclusions, blocks are almost cleared of local residents as they have to move eventually. This is undoubtedly the case for the private houses at Plaza San Diego. However, it is not mentioned that former residents like Karine or other actors such as street vendors in general still use and shape public spaces in gentrified neighbourhoods. So, what are the pull factors, the motives behind why someone like Karine comes back to the square when she lives on the other side of town? The phenomenon can most likely be explained by two important factors. First, as Karine grew up in the neighbourhood, she is emotionally attached to the *plaza*. The vendor uses emotive expressions to describe what meaning this particular public space holds for her: Plaza San Diego is “like my family”, “like the patio of my house” or “like my own blood”⁶, Karine claimed. Another point is that the vendor is well aware of the fact that the upgrading of houses and the *plaza* itself has attracted tourists and subsequently created jobs, though not all residents in San Diego could profit from the process:

But from the other point of view I recognize it as very good because that generates a lot of employment. As much to the employees of the restaurants, as to the others the sellers of the street, it generates income to us, it generates

4 The interview was conducted in English (Interview with Tatiana, 23.01.2017).

5 The name of the vendor has been anonymised.

6 “Es como mi familia”, “Es como el patio de mi casa”, “Es como mi propio sangre”, “Es mi lugar preferido”, “El lugar es magico. Como algo que te atrapa.” (Interview with Karine, 12.02.2017).

Graffiti in Getsemaní referring to the first line of the neighbourhood's unofficial anthem.
S. Oldenburg, January 2017



employment. [...] it's cool because it's a tourist city. Therefore it generates change and I think restaurants are very cool. It is an opportunity for everyone. For many people, for the owners of restaurants and for street vendors. Between them am I. Because if the restaurants were not there, I did not sell the *obleas*.⁷

By adapting to a gentrified neighbourhood, street food vendors can even profit from travellers that are attracted and visit these rehashed spaces. So did Albeiro, who was affected by his international clientele: He switched the sign on his food cart from *Coctelería* to *Cevichería*: The former refers to *Cóctel del mar* [cocktail from the sea], which is a Colombian term for little cups filled with mixed seafood. As foreign tourists thought that Albeiro was selling cocktails, he changed the name to *Cevichería* to avoid misunderstandings, even though he does not sell the original *ceviche*.

The vendors do not only catch up on others, e.g. by polishing up food carts, but also use *Espacio Público*'s influence to defend public space against unwelcome newcomers. Though mobile salesmen often have to defy officials themselves, they make sure that new competitors are expelled from hot spots by reporting newcomers to these authorities. Vendors also profit from the gentrification processes as the neighbourhood San Diego is now perceived as a secure space in public⁸, which subsequently allows tourists as well as locals to stay at the *plaza* long after nightfall. Indeed, Karine pointed out that compared to the

7 "Pero del otro punto de vista la reconoce muy bueno porque eso genera mucho empleo. Tanto a los empleados de los restaurantes, como a los otros los vendedores de la calle, nos genera ingreso, genera empleo. [...] es chévere porque es una ciudad turística. Por ende, genera cambio y me parece muy chévere los restaurantes. Es una oportunidad para todos. Para muchas personas, para los dueños de las restaurantes y para los vendedores ambulantes. Entre les soy yo. Porque si los restaurantes no estuvieran, yo no vendía las obleas." (Interview with Karine, 12.02.2017).

8 Interview with Albeiro, 12.02.2017.

time when she grew up in the San Diego, traffic increased making it tough for kids playing in the streets. Also, residents now would not necessarily know each other because many houses were fixed up and sold to strangers. These changes are probably counterbalanced by the patrolling officers and officials of *Espacio Público*, as their presence contributes to the impression that public spaces in the colonial city are always monitored by the authorities.

Gentrification is a process that affects locals, tourists and the street vendors. The last-mentioned group adapts to customers that would not be there if the neighbourhood had not altered, and some know how to profit from the gentrification process as they see it as an opportunity to make a living. Working as mobile merchants, even former inhabitants can take part in this development, spurring it with their actions. They may, for example, attract more tourists and affluent buyers. In particular, street food vendors develop different strategies to defend space against newcomers or authorities. Hence, locals can remain influential actors at Plaza San Diego and shape gentrified spaces through their presence (even if they cannot afford to live there), and can also be influenced by them.

This opens up questions to literature regarding the gentrification models. First of all, the process does not only affect residents' buildings alongside streets, but also public spaces like squares that are by definition accessible to all. Secondly, following the model, former residents do not have a say in occurring changes as they move away and can't afford to return due to the increased rents. So, why does Karine, who grew up in the neighbourhood, come back to Plaza San Diego – why does she not “just let go”, one might ask. This points to the conclusion that, even if she had to move, Karine does not want to give up on her neighbourhood and remains there at least in a public space, with private places in San Diego no longer being accessible to her. She as a street food vendor defends this public space against expulsion caused by gentrification solely by her physical presence when coming back to the *plaza*. Thus, the neighbourhood is not experiencing a “loss of culture” – at least not when Karine as a former resident uses the public space to still feel at home at Plaza San Diego.

Karine on the Plaza
San Diego.
C. Wabersich, January 2017



Introducing *Karine*

Christine Wabersich

Karine is a 36-year-old street food vendor. She grew up in the neighbourhood San Diego, then moved a few times within the city, because her father let the house he owned and in which she had grown up. At the time I met her, she lived in the neighbourhood El Rodeo, which is located at the opposite end of Cartagena, because she could not afford living in San Diego anymore. Despite the journey and the costs, Karine came almost every day to Plaza San Diego to sell *obleas*. Two of her sons, Natan and Nilo, would come from school directly to the *plaza* only to spend the rest of the day there, having lunch and dinner, doing their homework, playing football and eventually going home when Karine finished her sales. This was normally at about 10 p.m. or 10.30 p.m., but it took them at least another 30 minutes by the local bus system El Caribe until they were in El Rodeo.

The vendor is a single mother and cares not only for Nilo and Natan: she also looks after her youngest son all day, a baby boy who was at that time about a year old. All in all, she has six children with five different men; the oldest ones live with their fathers. Karine comes up with all the costs for education, clothing, transport etc. for her boys who live with her in El Rodeo.

To make a living, Karine sells *obleas con arequipe* or *dulce de leche* [sweet condensed milk], which is a thin waffle with caramel cream sauce. Traditionally, one eats it with the caramel sauce, but the vendor offers various toppings, such as jam, sugar sprinkles, and chocolate. Also very common is grated cheese on top of the caramel sauce. One *oblea con arequipe* costs 2000 pesos, which is about 0,65 CHF. Every additional topping costs 1000 pesos (ca. 0,30 CHF) more.

Selling *obleas* is one of the various ways for Karine to earn money. She also spent some time selling “minutes”, meaning she lend her phone to people who cannot afford their own so that they can make a call. They pay Karine for the number of minutes the call takes. She sold pieces of cake that she bought at the local supermarket, too.

For Karine, the neighbourhood is linked to her childhood memories as she grew up there and used to attend classes at the institute *Bellas Artes*. The vendor still knows most of the people here and is emotionally attached to Plaza San Diego:

Well, here I grew up. And it's very familiar to me. It means many things. Tranquility. Where I go in general, where we also lived ... A good space to be with my children. Where they can stay, play. I have conflicting feelings too. As I told you, many things have changed. But for one thing, for one person, it is good, for another it is bad. [...] But it [the square] is beautiful. The place is magical. Like something that traps you.¹

The vendor did not sell many *obleas* at times, since local people wouldn't pay such a price for a dessert that was clearly addressed to tourists, when for the same price, they could buy half a chicken breast for take-away. Nevertheless, Karine came to the *plaza* almost every day, costing her the bus fare of her and her sons, among other fees. Despite this, Karine mentioned several times, that she still felt so connected to the *barrio* San Diego she grew up in, that she would do anything to go back there.

1 “Bueno, aquí me, me a donde crecí. Y es muy familiar para mí. Significa muchas cosas. Tranquilidad. Donde voy en general, vivieron también... Un buen espacio para estar con mis hijos. Donde pueden estar, jugar. Tengo sentimientos encontrados también. Como te dije, muchas cosas que han cambiado. Pero para una cosa, para una persona es bueno, para otra es mal. [...] El lugar es mágico. Como algo que te atrapa.” (Interview with Karine, 12.02.2017).



Santiago in his home village Tuchín.
A. Hobi, January 2017

Introducing *Santiago*

Anna-Sophie Hobi

I met Santiago one late night at the Plaza de los Coches, where he was selling cigarettes, biscuits, and chewing gum. Our conversation began with his asking whether I wanted a cigarette, and eventually turned to his hometown and being Zenú. He focused on the famous *sombrero vueltiao*, the typical black and white braided hat, which originates from his town. We chatted for a few minutes before he continued his route within the old walled city.

Santiago is 28 years old and originally from Cerrito El Tamarindo, a village and *cabildo* located within the municipality of Tuchín. He has been working in Cartagena for several years, but he usually only stays there for a few months at a time before going back home to Tuchín for one to two months. In his hometown, he owns a newly built house, where he lives with his wife and his lively four-year-old daughter. At home, the family's income is generated through braiding and subsequently selling *caña flecha*. Just next to their house, there are several fields where *ñame* and *yuca* are grown, which his family cultivates – along with aunts, cousins, nephews, and nieces. His grandfather used to be the *Capitán* of the *cabildo* Cerrito el Tamarindo and most of the people living within this territory – *cerrito*, stretching from the foot up to the top of the hill, – belong to Santiago's extended family. His parents, however, live a few kilometres away, in Esmeralda Sur, which is a bit more rural, and their house is only accessible by foot or dirt bike.

Santiago came to Cartagena due to a lack of job opportunities back home, and now he rents a small room in Media Luna, Getsemaní. When working, Santiago carries his vendor's tray on one shoulder and a wooden crate of jugs in the other hand. Not only does he sell cigarettes, but also *tinto* in the early hours of the day. The vendor typically works during the evening until late at night; or often even until dawn. Whenever a customer approaches him when he is on the move, Santiago puts down his load on the ground or a bench to serve him. Though mostly mobile, he also sells at selected spots, such as the Plaza de los Coches or the Plaza San Diego in the historic city centre, as well as on the surrounding wall, where he might chat with his fellow street vendors.

Santiago's wife, Yerlis, told me that she only moderately enjoyed Cartagena when visiting her husband. Complaining about the noise in the big city, she said she preferred smaller towns and expressed her desire – she probably directed her concerns towards Santiago, who was sitting in a chair close to us during our conversation – to go back to work in a town closer to Tuchín, such as Montería or Sincelejo, like she had done before they had their baby girl. Santiago would not, however, allow his wife to do so – despite not being formally married – for fear of the house being abandoned, their child not properly being taken care of, and her leading a stressful life. This was the reason he gave for working in the big city: he earns enough for his wife not to be “forced” to seek employment elsewhere. At the same time, life in Tuchín is cheap and offers certain advantages for members of the Zenú ethnic group, such as lower costs of health, education, and food. Santiago considers this mobile way of life ideal for financial reasons and enjoys going back home, where life is “simple” and “self-sustained”. Yerlis disagrees, complaining about being too bored of rural life, that nothing ever happens, that the power is not always on to watch TV, and that one cannot go anywhere to enjoy life, as she puts it.

When I left Tuchín, preparations for Santiago's 28th birthday were on their way, and he celebrated the very next day. I did not meet him again. He came back to Cartagena to sell *tinto* around two months later and continues his working arrangement as it is.

Urban Indigeneity? The Meanings and Dynamics of Rurality for Indigenous Coffee Sellers in Cartagena de Indias

Anna-Sophie Hobi

“I didn’t think you’d really come” is the first thing Santiago said to me when he spotted me waiting for him at Cartagena’s central bus terminal. Santiago had invited me to come to Tuchín on the first day we met. Without hesitation, I had replied I would gladly join him.

Tuchín is a rural municipality in the north of the Córdoba department, around 200 km south of Cartagena. The whole territory has 33’653 inhabitants (Alcaldía de Tuchín 2008). Tuchín is the best-known and name-giving municipality from where many but not all *tinteros* – indigenous coffee sellers in Cartagena – originate.

The “informal” business of coffee vending is highly mobile, as the vendors carry their coffee in crates or wagons and sell it while moving through the streets of Cartagena’s walled city. Mobility not only characterises their daily work but also their lives as a whole. The majority of the indigenous coffee sellers belonging to the Zenú ethnic group solely come to Cartagena for temporary work. Many have a family, children, a house with some land or a *finca* back home¹ in Tuchín. They stay in the city for a few months and then return to Tuchín or their home villages respectively, where they remain for several weeks. Santiago was one of them. A smaller number of *tinteros* have been in Cartagena for several decades. This short article gives an account of the meaning of the rural home of Tuchín to temporary and permanent coffee sellers and their indigenous identities in an urban context.

When telling the other *tinteros* in Cartagena about my plan to visit Tuchín, one of them, a man named Luis, offered for me to stay at his family’s house; he was concerned about Santiago’s since he did not know his wife. While I agreed to that, I intended to visit Santiago’s. Three of Luis’ brothers – one with his wife and baby boy – a sister and his parents live together in his childhood home, located close to Tuchín’s main square and market. Interestingly, both of Luis’ brothers had worked in Cartagena as *tinteros* before. The family owns a few pigs, chickens, and a dog. I visited Santiago three times at his home by the foot of the *cerrito*. While his rather new concrete house, where he lives with his wife and daughter, is within walking distance of Luis’ family’s, it is already noticeably more rural. Much like Luis’ family, Santiago owns a few hens that walk around freely in and outside the house. Furthermore, he has fields of *yuca*, *maize*, and *ñame* just next to his house.

It was my first morning at Luis’ mother Maria’s and I was sitting in the backyard when I heard a noise and noticed someone’s presence on the back patio. Through the wooden palisade, I caught sight of an orange shadow moving. When I asked Maria about it, she said, “That’s just Elías working, don’t hesitate, go take a look”. I slowly opened the gate. Elías, Luis’ younger brother, was sitting in front of an old Singer treadle sewing machine, comparable to the one my grandmother used to have. He invited me to come closer, so I could see what he is working on. While seaming round handbags,

1 Many of my informants referred to their village saying “at home” or “at the village” (“*en casa*,” “*en el pueblo*”).

made of black and white *caña flecha*², Elías explained that he had to finish them by the end of that week; an agent would pick them up the following Friday.

Like him, most *Tuchineros/-as* earn their daily income with handicrafts. While few households actually own a sewing machine, working in handicraft production still qualifies being considered an *artesano/-a*. A clear majority – like Santiago and his wife when I visited them – spend a few hours a day braiding *caña flecha* into around two-centimetre-wide strips. They work on the same strip, interweaving new *caña flecha* fibres, and rolling it up until the time has come to sell it. Fibres can be either harvested or bought at the local market, where finished strips will be sold by the meter. During my stay, 800 Colombian Pesos (COP) would buy a meter of uncoloured white band. As Luis' older brother explained, the price had fallen significantly from 1000 to 800 COP³, considering that for a fast *artesano/-a* it takes 30 minutes, for others up to an hour, to produce a meter. This makes a considerable difference in income. The more finely a strip is braided, i.e. the more and thinner fibres are used, or the more elaborate the patterns woven, the higher the price per meter.

One reason for young men working in Cartagena might be the dropping meter prices and the cheaper Chinese competition for the handicraft production, as the *Tuchineros/-as* explain to me. Santiago's working style, this back and forth way of life, entails a strong and constant connection between the rural and the urban; and the continuous flexibility and mobility within the region.

A smaller number of *tinteros* have lived in Cartagena for decades. Most of these permanent residents came to the city some 20 or 30 years ago, having been displaced as a result of Colombia's protracted armed conflict. This group of *tinteros* does not regularly visit and stay in their home municipality of Tuchín. Nevertheless, or even more so, their rural home has significance for their indigenous identity as Zenú. Most of the displaced *tinteros* are affiliated to so-called Zenú *cabildos* within the district of Cartagena.

Indigenous communities in Colombia usually organise themselves in *Cabildos Indígenas*, public entities legally representing the community, acting as an authority, and coordinating activities bound to their customs and rules (Ministerio del Interior 2013). In Tuchín, there are 65 such *cabildos menores* each with a *capitán* as head authority. All *cabildos menores* of the Zenú ethnic group belong to the *Cabildo Mayor Regional del Pueblo Zenú*, the highest administrative and political entity of the Zenúes with the *Casique mayor* as the top ranking authority – existing side by side with the organisational and political structures by the Colombian government. Within the territory of the *Resguardo Indígena de San Andrés de Sotavento*, the protected geographical area governed by the *cabildos*, the Zenú people are guaranteed access to land and political participation. As Indigenous Zenú groups settled in other regions of the country such as Cartagena de Indias, they formed their own *cabildos* outside the Zenú territory. In the district of Cartagena, there are four *Cabildos Indígenas Zenú*: two in Bayunca, one in Pasacaballos, and one on the outskirts of the city in Membrillal. Only the one in Membrillal is officially recognised as a *cabildo* by the *Cabildo Mayor*, and political participation is thus guaranteed. However, access to land is not ensured, since the area where the Zenú community, as well as the *cabildo* leadership, stay is not within the territory of the *Resguardo Indígena*. *Cabildo* members announced that *en Colombia no hay tierra* – there is no land in Colombia. In Membrillal, the land is leased and not their own, and acquiring it has been their prime concern since the *cabildo*'s establishment in 2002. The struggle for land became most evident in August 2017, when some houses were demolished, and the community threatened to be resettled.

2 *Caña flecha* (bot. *Gynerium sagittatum*), in English called wild cane, is used for different kinds of (handicraft) products, notably the *sombrero vueltiao*, a famous hat from the Colombian coastal region but is not cultivated in Cartagena.

3 1 CHF = 2'934.5 COP (April 2017). 1000/800 COP would then be around –.30/–.25 CHF.

These “urban” *cabildos* not only maintain their traditional political and legal organisation, but more importantly actively try to support and promote essential aspects of Zenú identity, most prominently agriculture, animal husbandry, and fish farming. In other words, they are promoting the pursuit of a rural lifestyle. Furthermore, the production of Zenú handicraft is encouraged. If we look at rurality and its meaning to the coffee vendors, most of the indigenous urbanites have a longing for such a mode of life. This includes three main elements, namely: access to land and agriculture, handicraft, and indigenous political organisation. It becomes clear that, to them, indigeneity goes hand in hand with these elements of a rural lifestyle, which are inaccessible or coupled with long and complicated processes in an urban context. For permanent indigenous urban dwellers, Zenú organisations, especially the ‘urban’ *cabildos*, are in a sense the only ‘spaces’ where, apart from private households, indigeneity becomes visible and is talked about. Additionally, they create space for interaction, solidarity, and community, and through a *cabildo*, collective actions within or towards political or public-sector entities can be realised. The ‘urban’ *cabildos* and other Zenú organisations (mostly) exclude non-indigenous persons and thus become the area where indigeneity, and consequently the rural home, plays an essential role in daily life.

Temporary vendors such as Santiago, however, do not seek affiliation with such official indigenous organisations or *cabildos* since they are based within the borders of the *Resguardo Indígena de San Andrés de Sotavento*. For coffee sellers like him, Tuchín remains the centre of life, where their families are, where their children go to school, where weddings or burials take place, where they are involved in politics, and so on. There seems to be no urge to repeat, express, or internalise their indigenous identity through communal or official entities within the urban context.

I found it noteworthy to mention that most of the permanent Zenú coffee sellers like Luis actively maintain the link between the ‘rural homeland’ and the ‘urban residence’ in what Andersen (2013, 59) calls “attachment to non-urban communities”. Luis, as well as most permanent *tinteros*, visit their “homeland” once or twice a year, usually on New Year’s Eve or in *Semana Santa*. Clifford (2007, 206) similarly makes mention of these connections:

For all who identify as “native”, “tribal”, or “indigenous”, a feeling of connectedness to a homeland and to kin, a feeling of grounded peoplehood, is basic. How this feeling is practiced, in discursive, embodied, emplaced ways, can be quite varied. Urban populations may or may not return to rural places for family gatherings, ceremonial events, dance festivals, subsistence activities, pow wows, etc. For some it is a matter of frequent visits; others go once a year, for summer or mid-winter social activities; some return rarely or never [...] In diaspora, the authentic home is found in another imagined place (simultaneously past and future, lost and desired).

In the case of the Zenues in Cartagena, I would claim that most of the permanent *tinteros*, and especially members of the ‘urban’ *cabildos*, wish for a rural style of living. This yearning for a ‘homeland’ was discussed by Clifford (2007, 206) as part of “Indigenous experience today”. The longing for a rural life could consequently be categorised as being part of urban indigeneity. The rural, whether visited frequently or not at all, remains a source and essential part of their indigenous identity. Urban indigenous communities’ aspiration for this lifestyle could further be interpreted as opposite or even a reaction to the processes of urbanisation, not in the sense of a migratory movement back to the countryside (Mitchell 2004), but in that indigenous communities find an in-between alternative within or at the outskirts of the city.

Questions on Security and Power in the Context of Gated Communities¹

Livia Wermuth



Man eating out of a garbage can.
L. Wermuth, January 2017

My first night in La Boquilla was horrible. I felt so sick that I had to throw up several times. Perhaps it was because of the street food I had eaten for supper, perhaps because of the oppressive bedroom and the stuffiness of its air. In the late afternoon of the following day, I felt better and I left the house to go for a walk on the beach to get some first impressions of the research field. As I arrived to the southern part of La Boquilla, which is called Los Morros, I took a random picture to document its huge beachfront condos, hotels, and resorts. Looking at the taken photograph, I realized what I had just captured: in the background, modern and posh buildings, and in the foreground, a man, who is eating directly out of a garbage can.²

1 Translated from German by Christina Bosbach.

2 Fieldnotes, 09.01.2017.

The observed scene reflects my research interest in questions of security and power. The global phenomenon of gated communities was my point of entry to have a look into mechanisms of social inclusion and exclusion in La Boquilla. Right from the start, I realized that the place where I chose to live during five weeks, is different from the touristic inner city of Cartagena, where I stayed the first few days with my colleagues. Indeed, the first cab driver I asked actually refused to take me afield to La Boquilla, which is situated about seven kilometres north-east of the historic centre of Cartagena. The sector of La Boquilla is located on a peninsula that connects the Caribbean Sea with the mangrove swamps. Founded 200 years ago mainly by slave descendants who made a living as fishermen, it has since transformed into a more complex urban community. Today it is considered “one of the most stigmatised marginal communities of the region, with high levels of unemployment, violent crime and micro-trafficking” (Plato and Villa 2017).

Upon arrival, I am met by my host, Laura³. We walk along the sandy road to a big, white house with barred windows. It has lost any connection to the neighbouring buildings. It is not the only one, however, to catch my eye amongst the many simple dwellings. On our way to Laura’s house, the people in the street enthusiastically greet me and I feel welcome. Laura is celebrating her birthday. Entering the house, I can hear music and voices coming from the rooftop. No daylight falls into the house, and my small room smells of dust and cooked food. Later I join the guests on the rooftop, where they are eating and drinking; dancing Salsa and Zumba. When the sun starts setting, a friend of the family looks out over the rooftops onto the beach and warns: “When the police leave the beach, you have got to go home”.⁴ Before and after sunrise and sunset – meaning before and after 6 am and pm respectively – the streets of La Boquilla are totally empty. Thus, apart from the heat, the time of day also limits my research opportunities. Staying with Laura, I am able to live in the community, share the everyday life of a German-Colombian family, and get to know their working environment in the tourism industry. It is the first concrete option of housing I am offered in La Boquilla and I accept it gladly.

From the very beginning, security, criminality, and fear are frequent and important topics of conversation. The first instructions I get from my hosts are to close the doors and windows at all times with the additional locks they have attached to them. The curtains also need to be drawn during the day, so that no one can look into the house. I am told not to – or only with great caution – open the door to strangers. The family of three are guarded by a dog, which is trained to bark upon detecting sounds and to bite strangers that enter the house. Apart from these directly communicated measures to ensure security, I will at a later point observe additional security measures taken to protect the body. One night, Eloise – an intern in the tourist agency, also living with Laura – comes back from the town centre late; Laura’s husband Nicolas, worried by the sound of someone entering the house, suddenly appears in the corridor, looking agitated and holding a gun in his hand.

The next day, I stroll along the beach to get some impressions of my research field. Facing my temporary home, there is a construction site, where another big, white house is being built. The windows are barred as well. The way to the beach leads me past a sheltered square. At its margins, men and women sit on plastic chairs. They are watching the kids playing in the shade without saying a word – or at least so it seems. Perhaps their gazes are lost somewhere on the horizon, in the sizzling, flickering heat of the day. In any case, I am greeted briefly but in a friendly manner. Barefoot, I skip past the shards of glass: a lot of beer and other bottles of alcohol are pervasive on the beach. The sand burns the soles of my feet. To the South, there is a cluster of restaurants,

3 All names in this text have been anonymised due to security reasons.

4 “Cuando la policia se va de la playa, tienes que ir a casa.” (Fieldnotes, 08.01.2017).

hostels, kitesurfing schools, and in the North are restaurants, bars, and clubs. I look out over the glittering blue sea with a dog's carcass on the ground in front of me.

Every day I become more accustomed to my surroundings. Soon I hear the phrase "*no dar papaya*", which is comparable to "opportunity makes the thief". In addition, "*no dar papaya*" emphasizes one should not expose oneself to danger and heed the advice of the locals to move around safely in La Boquilla. When I mention that I would like to go jogging along the beach, Laura tells me to head south. Furthermore, I am told I should only walk around during daytime, and if possible, I should not be on my own, carry money or make visible other valuables, especially when walking north, so as not to fall prey to robbery, which is frequent in this neighbourhood. These advices are directly linked to questions of the relationship between security and power. Some of them confuse me, as they are a stark contrast to the experiences my colleagues and I have made in the city centre.

The gap between the poor and the rich in La Boquilla is visible on the main road *Vía del Mar*, which links Cartagena to Barranquilla. Coming from the city centre of Cartagena, after passing the bridge *Bocana*, one is granted with an architectural landscape dominated by high-rise buildings with swimming pools, wellness facilities, fitness centres, shopping centres, and 24/7 surveillance. This western side of the main street and the southern part of La Boquilla are called "Los Morros", named after one of the hotel chains. Further to the North, the modern hotels and buildings disappear abruptly and completely. After the last hotel, *Hotel Sonestro*, there is a stretch of wasteland and a sign marking the entrance to La Boquilla.

At this fork in the road, the direct juxtaposition of the urban rich and the urban poor is considerably well visualized: on the eastern side of the main road, in the direction of *Ciénaga de Tesca*, there are the illegal settlements of La Boquilla. In a ditch on the side of the road, right in front of the wooden fences, small groups of people sit in the shade of the trees chatting. Next to them, there usually is some sort of (un-)motorized vehicle filled with an array of fruit. The fences mark groups of houses, patios, squares or gardens. The dense mangrove forest, which is directly behind the ditch, makes it hard to get an overview on them. Though it seems so dense, there are pathways from the main road leading down to the mangrove bog. They are just wide enough so that one can see further dwellings stretching out towards the bay, where the fishers' canoes are tied up. Most houses are built from wood, though some have brick walls. The residential housing is dominated by cabins mainly built out of wood, an assembly of metal structures, or other materials probably found on the streets.

The first group of houses located directly at the eastern side of the main road catches my eye, because along them lies a freshly white painted wooden fence. Although the posts are not produced in an exact manner, the regular gaps in between them makes the construction recognizable as a fence. Through the gaps, I can see the houses built from stone and metal sheets. In other places, the fence resembles a wall, blocking the view to the inside. Here, the posts are joined together, barely leaving any gaps. Looking at the fence, I notice a security camera that is fastened on a high wooden post facing the street. When I pass by later on, just before sunset and in the bus homewards, I notice that there is a small light on the camera – and that the camera is not real. Neither does it function as a streetlight: the small light is not sufficient to light up the street and thus makes little sense. Observing the white fence and the fake camera, I am however reminded of the architectural characteristics of Los Morros – the collection of hotels and modern high-rise buildings: the metal bars and fences, the concrete walls, and the cameras in front of the modern buildings, are all dominated by the colour white. At least in their external architectural form, the illegal settlements seem to adapt to Los Morros. Architectural forms and measures to establish and guarantee security are imitated here in the use of the white fence and the camera. However, the inhabitants do not seem to take this architecturally invoked illusion of security for a fact, which is why the advice concerning appropriate behaviour I mentioned above is still relevant. Having arrived



House with fence
and camera.
L. Wermuth, January 2017

with a suitcase, a laptop, a DSLR camera and a little – but for this place too much – money, I was not prepared to live in a dwelling like this during my research. The architectural differences upset me. For the first time in La Boquilla, I am faced with the overwhelming contrast between how and where people – by sheer randomness – are born, grow up, and live. The situation saddens me and makes me angry. As a Swiss student, I am not residing in Los Morros but still in the South of La Boquilla, in a big and well-guarded house. At the same time, I am glad I am able to live with Laura and her family and am not staying in the North.

After the fork on the west side of the main road, in the direction of the Caribbean Sea, the main village square of La Boquilla seems to be kept under surveillance by a new security camera. This time it is a real camera, but, as the former president of the Council of the village mentions, it is out of order. Furthermore, the architectural motif of the white fence can be found in this northern part of La Boquilla. This example of a fence is more simplistic than the one in Los Morros but follows the same principle of an exact, ordered unit. Entrance to the house behind the fence is granted through an iron gate, which is fastened with a latch. Bars, fences, walls, locks, signs that warn of dogs, security cameras, other security technology, and security guards are characteristic for guarded living quarters (Grant 2004). They make up an important part of the architecture in the South and the North of La Boquilla. Only the materials used, the type of security technology, and thus the degree of security, surveillance, and control are different. In Los Morros, one encounters – apart from bars, fences and walls – mostly security cameras and guards; further to the North, mostly locks and signs warning of dogs. It is not just the differences in the architectural landscape that separate La Boquilla into southern and northern parts. In the process of negotiating the identification of La Boquilla, the name “Los Morros” is used by several different informants as a contrast and a boundary, among other defining factors.

One of the people I interviewed was Danny. The 47 years old father of four went to primary school in the neighbourhood and later studied tourism, languages, and economics



at the *Universidad de Cartagena*. His father was a fisherman. Danny looks younger than his age, has a radiant smile, mostly wears branded functional clothing, and carries around technological gadgets visibly. I speak to him of my contrasting bodily experiences, depending on where I move within La Boquilla – South or North. Pensive, he explains:

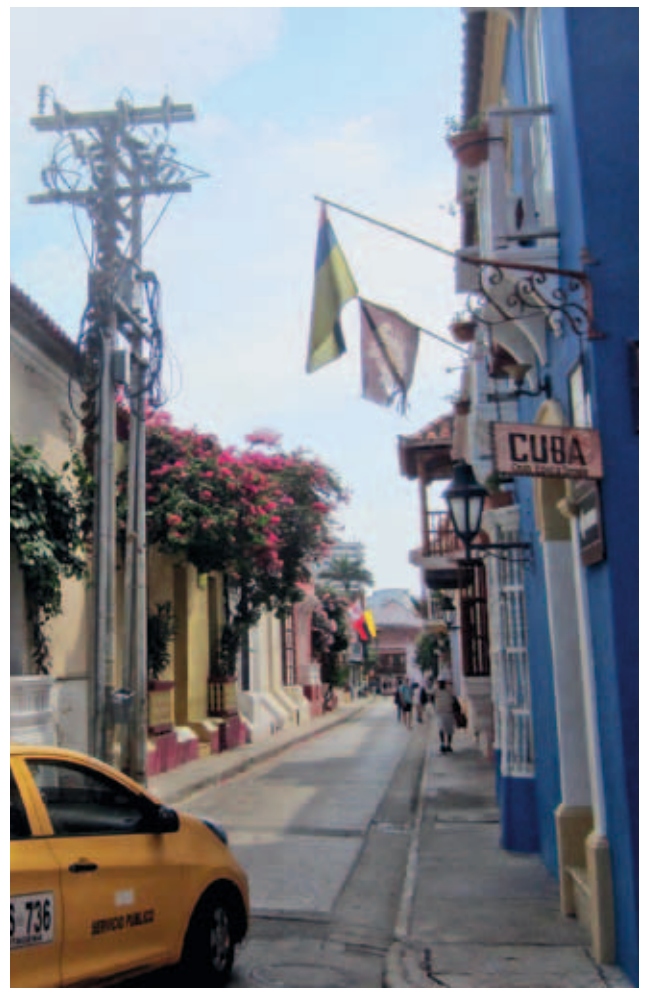
La Boquilla is not what it was before... Many years ago, everybody knew everybody within the community, we knew who is in and out. These days, there are new people, strangers. People are buying and building apartments and hotels... and criminals come. La Boquilla is safe, La Boquilla is safe! We have some problems of insecurity. But you can walk around here and nobody dies.⁵

My understanding and experiences of security, however, are borne of spontaneous movement. That a decision on which street to walk, made in a spur of the moment, can have existential consequences – to the point of stopping me in my tracks – has never been a concern to me. In La Boquilla, the possibility of getting hurt or even dying through external influence is avoided in everyday action through concrete advice and strategies. Danny's response to these constraints of movement was a mere shrug.

Local forms and expressions of restrictions of movement, fear and suspicions, and spatial change were the focus of my short research trip to Cartagena. Gates, walls, fences, locks, signs warning of dogs, security cameras and other security devices all characterize gated communities in La Boquilla and can be considered techniques of exclusion (Caldeira 2000). The phenomenon has, as I myself experienced during my field research, enormous influence on social actors and their interaction with (public) space. Discourses of fear and gated communities as constructed environments, therefore, illustrate “a trend towards fragmentation of the urban fabric, social segregation and privatisation” (Roitman and Phelps 2010, 3488–89).

5 Interview with Danny, 01.02.2017.

























Mapping Rhythm and Children's Space for Play and Sports

Nicolas Miglioretto

Studies in European cities have shown that public spaces where children and adolescents can play have disappeared successively in the last quarter of the twentieth century. As urban density grew, other actors raised claims to these spaces, built upon them or privatised them. The increasing car traffic has further narrowed down children's play areas (Pühse 2014). These factors, amongst others, have led to a decline in opportunities for sports and exercise in public areas, which has been identified as one of the factors leading to a decrease in children's coordinative abilities and increase in their body weight (Pühse 2014, 46).

While there are some studies on these aspects in the European and Northern American context, few scholars have focused on Latin America, despite the fact that an increase in obesity, in general, has been found there as well. It is this absence of studies that made me focus on the question of how children use public space for play and sports in Cartagena. I was particularly interested in mapping the areas where children play and the rhythms they follow.

Children are generally eager to explore, play in, and arrange their surrounding environment. Although flexible and spontaneous in the use of their surroundings, they are at the same time dependent on the options offered in their immediate vicinity. This limitation in space for them to explore is due to their dependence on and supervision by adults and their restricted mobility. The younger the children are, the more this applies (Labrosse 2016, 22). Just like the radius of children's movements, the rhythm they follow is not entirely of their choice. Rather, it is determined to various extents by the environment, people (parents, supervisors etc.) and institutions – especially school – they depend on. All of these factors shape the way children use public space for various forms of physical activity.

One of the primary methods I employed to explore my research question was mapping. As a base, I used maps and information provided by residents of the neighbourhood I was working in. I then indicated on these maps, where and how the children and adolescents used spaces for physical activities. Furthermore, I did a simple mapping of the neighbourhoods' public space available to the residents in general and to the children in particular. The mapping of the environment was complemented with an observation of the environment and circumstances of children's play as well as sketches and photographs. Observing the children's games, I paid particular attention to their daily rhythms.¹

I focused on the neighbourhood of Santa Maria. Here, the government and the municipality do not provide official maps displaying the borders of the *barrio*. There is a map available on *Google Maps* (see image "Map of Santa Maria"), however, the residents indicated slightly different borders of the neighbourhood, locating the Western frontier in calle 70 instead of calle 69a, and the Eastern border in calle 70c, rather than 70d (marked with the red dotted lines on the image). The part closest to the pedestrian bridge (marked in green) is what locals referred to as "*Crespito*", a definition unavailable on the municipal level and Google Maps, which indicates the gap between everyday usage of space and its technocratic administration.

Once the outline of the neighbourhood was mapped, I started on the surrounding elements that I could connect to play and sports in public spaces. This included aspects such as stores, play- or sports-grounds, and small open areas. At the same time, I tried

1 I was inspired by Lefebvre's (1992) rhythm analysis.

to get a feeling for the daily rhythms in the city, especially in this neighbourhood. This also entailed noting down eye-catching differences in traffic volume and/or speed.

From the very start, right to the end of my visits to the neighbourhood, I took notes on where and when I observed children or adolescents play in the streets, taking care to include different times of the day. I categorised the observed activities by the children's age, gender and whether they played at daytime or at night.

As illustrated by the two maps of children's play, there were more activities that took place during the day. Most of them occurred in the side streets, and only a few on



Map of Santa Maria.
N. Miglioretto © Google
Maps 2017

calle 70 and carrera 14 – the main roads in the neighbourhood, where there is the most traffic. At night, activities were concentrated on carrera 14a and 14b and the football/basketball square between carrera 13 and the canal, where there is the most light from the street lamps.

The maps also show a gender difference: in general, boys seemed to play outside more often than girls. Furthermore, there was a gendered spatial division: carrera 14a was used more by the girls, while the football/basketball square, carrera 13a and 14 were used almost exclusively by the boys, and only in carrera 14b were the two more equally represented.



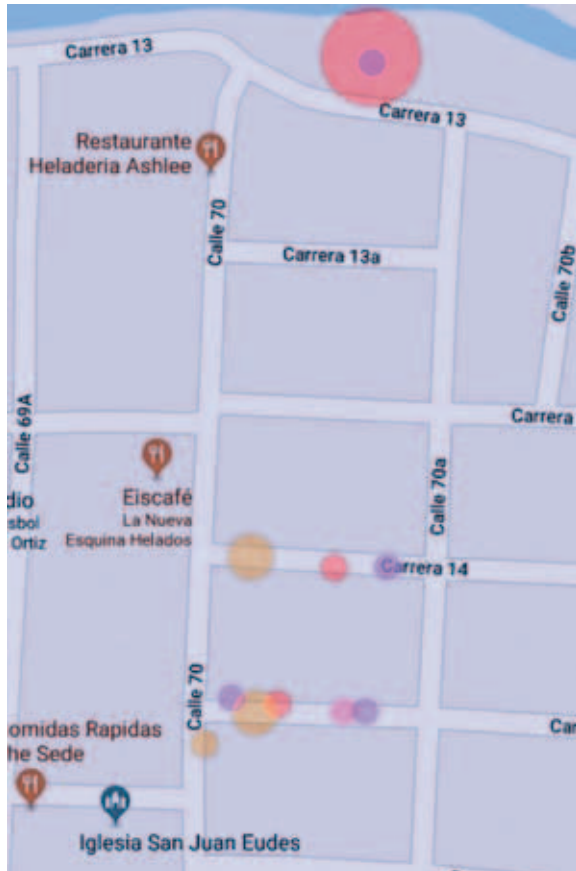
Play and sports
during the day.
N. Miglioretto, © Google
Maps 2017

The way children played was influenced by the physical features of the surrounding environment. One important aspect was the structure of the buildings lining the streets. For children playing in the streets, things such as walls without windows, which can be used as part of the playing field, were relevant. The similarity of the roads' construction was also significant. Massive concrete elements connected to form the streets, sidewalks, and gullies. According to residents, calle 70 was paved about four years prior; the carreras a little later. Paving the roads has strongly impacted the life on calle 70, which residents also referred to as "*la Avenida*":

The games on the street here have changed. Hardly anybody plays marbles anymore, a common thing to do five years ago. Generally, there are few children playing in this street. It has become too dangerous. Motorbike-taxis rush through the *Avenida* in irresponsible speed. Two years ago a boy was knocked over by a motorbike in the *Avenida* and died. There were some other accidents too, though less severe.²

A final important aspect of the physical environment that influenced children's choice of space in which to play was the street lighting. Night falls quickly and early at this latitude, so playing outside after 6 pm requires artificial lighting. According to residents, area-wide street lighting had come hand-in-hand with the paving process a few years previously. At the time of my research, the streets throughout Santa Maria had street lighting, but the quality varied. Some parts were well illuminated, while others were still almost dark. Play was restricted to the well-lit areas. As soon as it was dark, children clustered in the light of these street lamps. They played football, rode bicycles or rollerblades, or played other games.

2 Interview with Ludovico, 05.02.2017.



Play and sports at night.
 N. Miglioretto, © Google
 Maps 2017

Concerning the rhythms of children's and adolescents' play, I found that they never went out to do sports much earlier than 4:30pm. Occasionally, I observed some of them playing baseball or football at around 4pm, but most activities took place when it got close to twilight and then stopped shortly after nightfall. I found the first possible explanation for the starting time of the games when talking to residents: I was told that children were usually at school until 4pm. When coming home, they had to get changed in order not to soil their school uniforms as they mostly possess only one. Only after that would they show up in the streets to play together. I also found that even on weekends, when there was no school, there were hardly any games going on in the streets before 4pm. School was obviously not the only factor at play here, however: it was just too hot before 4pm to do any sports. Even in January and February, temperatures in Cartagena rarely drop below 24° C at night. On most days, it is only after 4 pm that they go below 30° C, doing sports and physical activity a little more bearable.

Though, as I mentioned, the children used the streetlights to play, they were mostly home by 7.30pm, by which time the streets had lost most of their liveliness. Even though residents argued the lights had made the neighbourhood safer, they still seemed to tread cautiously at night.

Apart from the light, the heat, and school times influencing children's rhythms and choice of places to play in public spaces, the traffic patterns in the neighbourhood also played an important role. I spent one Friday sitting at the intersection of *calle 70* and *carrera 14b*, where I counted and observed the motorised traffic between 4.30 and 7pm. I found that all vehicles, especially motorcycles, moved at higher speeds on *calle 70* than on the cross streets. It was noticeable that the volume of traffic increased towards 5pm and decreased again after 6pm. Residents confirmed these assumptions when I asked them about their perception of the traffic volume. As visible on the maps, children hardly played in *calle 70*, which was mainly due to this high traffic volume.

In conversations and interviews with residents about children's play, it was the traffic, as well as the issue of safety, that residents mentioned most frequently.

Residents around children, also the ones not affiliated with them, seem to have some sort of a "watchdog" function. At every given moment, there are several adults present on the street or in their houses' forecourt. Even though it looks like they are not paying close attention to what is going on, it seems nothing happens unseen. Eyebrows are being raised when a motorbike passes a little faster than safe. I always have the feeling that there is at least one eye on me as a 'stranger'.³

The perception of adults' "watchdog-function" was later affirmed in conversations I had with residents. The presence of adults was a safety aspect provided by parents, relatives, and simply fellow residents. Thus, children usually play in the line of sight of either the parents, other relatives, or acquainted residents.

This had implications for my research as well. As suggested by Christensen and James (2008), I had decided on getting parents' consent before talking to the children. Entering the neighbourhood, I did not find it hard to get in touch with the adults, but I had difficulties explaining why I was there and what I was interested in, mostly due to language barriers. I also felt awkward hanging out or even just walking by and "observing" the children. Thus, I decided to spend time in the places children used to play in and tried to connect with the neighbours so they would know who I was. Drawing turned out to be a great way to do that. As soon as I knew some people, I sat down to draw. It instantly got me attention; it was not only an opportunity to get into conversations but also enabled the residents to get used to me.

Most children I talked to described playing outside as one of their main activities in their leisure time. Privately owned spaces for play and sports are very limited in Santa Maria. In the families I got to know, three generations shared a small apartment of not much more than 60 square meters. There are no backyards, and the forecourts are usually too small to play in or open towards the street. Thus, it is public spaces that children have to make use of in order to play. However, the security aspect of staying in sight of their parents, the competition from the traffic, as well as the limited streetlight at night, narrow down children's radius of movement considerably. Unfortunately, this eliminates the "official" opportunities for children's play provided by the municipality.

Summing up, children's play is limited by temporal and spatial concerns. As demonstrated, there is a relatively limited time frame, in which children have to share the public space they use for play with other residents, street vendors, and most importantly with vehicles. While children seemed to enjoy a certain priority when compared with adults, they still had to give way to motorbikes and cars: adults tossed back the ball when it landed in their forecourt and often moved to the sidewalk to avoid stepping into the improvised football field. At the same time, the goals had to be set up with rocks or other small objects, which could quickly be removed when cars needed to pass. Children claimed this limited public space whenever they were allowed outside and felt like playing. These claims, however, were made within the rules imposed by other actors, such as parents, residents and drivers.

A majority of residents I talked to, especially the ones with children, were aware of the necessity of safe spaces for children. This was partly due to my choice of area (where many children lived and played in the streets). Nevertheless, I was surprised by the residents' awareness of the problem that such small amounts of space impaired children's developmental potentialities. This suggests that further research on the factors determining children's opportunities of using public and/or safe spaces would most likely be welcome and might even contribute to improve the situation.

3 Fieldnotes, 20.01.2017.

Plaza de los Coches – About the Everyday and Beyond

Christina Bosbach

The first time I set foot on the Plaza de los Coches, I hardly recognized it as the same place I had read about and seen images of before arriving in Cartagena. I had imagined the *plaza* differently: a large and open, square-shaped area bustling with activity, a meeting place for all kinds of people. However, stepping onto the *plaza* in the early morning of my first day in Cartagena, I found few people dwelling there and little going on. Moreover, the *plaza* is not a square in the literal sense of the word. It has a triangular shape and struck me as rather small upon crossing it. Granted, sitting down on one of the benches overlooking the *plaza*, it does seem bigger. But even when walking at a leisurely pace, one needs no more than a minute to walk across its entire length.

The triangular *plaza* can be entered and exited at each corner of the triangle. One of those corners leads to the next public square – the Plaza de la Aduana, where the city council is located. Another one leads to two of the narrow alleys that wind through Cartagena's historical city centre, here located on either side of a clothes shop of a popular Spanish fashion brand. Taking the third, one will end up on a broad and busy road outside of the historical centre, where buses and taxis connect the centre to the rest of the city and beyond.

The most impressive entrance to the *plaza*, however, is located in the midst of the fortification walls that run along one of its sides. These walls surround the entire historical city centre, and tourist guides are fond of invoking past fights against pirates when pointing them out. At the Plaza de los Coches, they are painted a dark yellow and do not seem as monumental or threatening as these stories suggest. On top of them, overlooking the *plaza*, sits the *Torre del Reloj*, a clock tower that is a popular location for tourists to take photographs by. Beneath the tower, one enters and exits the *plaza* passing through one of three high arches leading to another square, this one framed by busy roads. Because the fortification walls are so massive, it is underneath these three arches that one can find some of the scarce shaded spots around the *plaza*. Several vendors make use of this and set up shop there everyday, selling fruit, stamps, t-shirts and other merchandise from the comfort of the shade. Entering the *plaza* this way in the morning or around midday, one is also likely to get chatted up by one of the men advertising excursions for tourists. Most of them are middle-aged, wear T-shirts with the logo of the company they are advertising for, and carry clipboards, maps and brochures. Like the vendors underneath the arches, they are regulars, working on the *plaza* almost daily.

Apart from the clock tower, the most striking feature of the *plaza* is the tall statue of Pedro de Heredia, a Spanish *conquistador* from the early 16th century. It towers on a stone pedestal that is roughly three meters high and bears three coat of arms, one belonging to Heredia, one to the Spanish King of the time, and one to the colonial city of Cartagena. A fourth coat of arms depicts a nude woman with feathers in her hair and a dove. This is the *India Catalina*, a local indigenous woman that – by force – served Heredia as a translator and informant. Below her image, one finds the inscription: CARTAGENA DE INDIAS A SU FUNDADOR – Cartagena de Indias to its founder. Heredia himself is depicted as a stately man with short hair and a long beard, wearing plate armour on his upper body, a floor-length coat across his shoulders, and short trousers that reveal toned legs. In one hand, he holds a roll of parchment, the other hand rests on top of the long sword he carries in his belt. The statue looks down onto the *plaza* with a hard,



severe and proud expression carved on its face. It is the most popular motif for tourist photographs on the *plaza*, and some people like to point at the inscription when taking them. To tourist guides, the statue often serves as an anchoring point for their explanations about the city's origin and history.

Other features that allude to the *plaza's* history are less conspicuous. Beneath the clock tower on the fortification walls, there are several signs referring to various aspects. The newest and largest sign is part of the project I took a closer look at during my research. This sign, along with several others put up throughout the historical city centre of Cartagena in spring 2016, bears the title “La Herencia Africana. Cartagena de Indias, Sitio de Memoria y Conciencia Afro”.¹ It is part of a wider project, the *Ruta del Esclavo*, established by UNESCO to remind people of the history of slavery.² However, when talking to locals who were involved in this movement, I was unable to clarify whether the original initiative in Cartagena had also come from UNESCO. In any case, the sign at Plaza de los Coches explains the aim of the project as wanting to make visible the memories of the city's black population, highlight their continuing contribution to the

1 In English: “The African Heritage. Cartagena de Indias, Place of Afro Memory and Consciousness”

2 Cartagena, a port city with strategic value, was once the major port in the trade of enslaved human beings from the West Coast of Africa on to the Americas, especially in the 16th century.



Plaza de los Coches
in the morning.
C. Bosbach, January 2017

region's identity, and develop a commitment to fight racism and intolerance. It serves as an introduction to the project, also including a map of all the other signs, and it is located on the Plaza de los Coches probably due to the *plaza* being a central square in the historical city centre and a starting point for walking tours as well as due to its past as Plaza de los Esclavos, the city's slave market. However and in spite of its size, I only rarely observed people reading or even looking at the sign and saw not a single tourist guide pointing it out. This lack of attention and knowledge contrasted with the image of the widely known and appreciated project I had read about online beforehand. It was this contrast that got me interested in finding out who was behind the project, what their aims were, and how they perceived the situation. I also ethnographically explored some of the spaces the project aimed at re-constructing by making visible a marginalized memory. The Plaza de los Coches was one of them. Here, my main aim will be to provide as encompassing an impression of the Plaza de los Coches as the short research allowed me to gain, closing with a brief word on the hidden dimensions and the role of memory.

There is a nice breeze at the *plaza*, which is fortunate, because the few seats in the shade are taken. I push the worries about getting a headache to the back of my mind, close my eyes and enjoy the breeze. With my eyes closed, I notice that there is actually quite a lot of noise. Frequently, the angry honking of

taxi driving by makes its way across the bulky fortification walls. On the roof of one of the houses at the *plaza*, construction work is going on. I cannot see the workers from where I am sitting, but I hear their constant hammering, punctuated by shouts and laughter. A mixture of indistinguishable voices drums in the background, the occasional calling of a drink vendor (“*agua, agua, agua, agua...*”) coming through. Weaving through this blanket of noises is the faint music playing in one of the adjacent restaurants.³

Spending a day at the *plaza*, moving from one shaded spot to the next, one will hear a variety of sounds. The most persistent perhaps is the sound of traffic – especially the honking of the taxis – from the other side of the fortification walls. While prominent in the morning, it is much less noticeable once the noise level at the *plaza* increases towards the evening. From midday onwards, the faint music coming from the various restaurants in the buildings surrounding the *plaza* mingles with the sounds of traffic as well as the hum of voices and occasional shouting, both of which increase in volume once the sun has set. During my time in Cartagena, there were also sounds of hammers and drills from the early morning until dusk, advertising the presence of construction workers one could only spot from certain angles. These sounds and their mixture varied with the time of day as well as with the course of one’s personal movements across or locations on the *plaza*. Though describing it this way, the *plaza* may seem like a noisy place – it really is not. In fact, compared to other spots in the city, it is relatively quiet.

The wooden benches along the fortification walls are completely empty. They are fully exposed to the sun and the heat is oppressive without a breeze to take the edge off. The *plaza* is not exactly comfortable at this time of the day. In fact, at the moment, there is one single living creature staying still in the sun: A street dog is sleeping right under the sign of the *Ruta del Esclavo* with its tongue lolling out of his mouth. The few tourists and vendors are all moving across the square, adapting their paths – if possible – to the little shade available.⁴

Spending an entire day at the *plaza* can be tricky – especially if one is prone to getting headaches when staying in the sun for too long. Although there are a few trees planted between the benches along the fortification walls, they are so spindly that their leaves hardly provide shade during the day – a fact that many of my interlocutors bemoaned. Thus, it is only in the early evening hours, when the walls throw their shade over the benches, that people settle there for more than just a few minutes.

There are, of course, other options to sit down apart from these benches. In one of the corners of the *plaza* is a pub that offers “typically British” food and has a couple of tables with chairs around them set up, some even in the shade. Having a drink there will give one access to these – but that comes at a (rather high) price and is limited in time. Next to the pub, one has the option of sitting down on a couple of steps leading up to the buildings behind them, though not many people do so, even though there is shade in the evening. There are arcades in front of these buildings but unlike under the other arcades at the *plaza*, no vendors set up shop there.

The most permanently shaded spot apart from the arches in the fortification walls can be found underneath the arcades running along the opposite side of the *plaza*. This is the *Portal de los Dulces* – the portal of the sweets. Walking through these arcades, one has the option of entering various buildings housing restaurants, small shops, and bars. One will also pass a variety of stands offering an array of colourful, mostly coconut-based sweets set out on plastic tables. The sweet vendors – most of

3 Fieldnotes, 12.01.2017.

4 Fieldnotes, 14.01.2017.

them women – arrive every morning between 9 to 10 a.m., clean the tables they had stored underneath the arcades the night before, and arrange their produce on them. They then settle down on plastic chairs next to their display, where they lounge during the day in quite a relaxed fashion, looking out across the *plaza*, sometimes chatting and only getting up when somebody shows interest in their produce. Unlike some of the mobile vendors, they do not pursue customers aggressively. Sometimes they even have “visitors” – people they seem to know – who sit with them for a while to chat, adding to the relaxed atmosphere. The sweet vendors make most of their business in the evenings and at night, when the *plaza* is bustling with tourists and locals alike. Eventually, at around 11pm, they pack their produce, pile the chairs and tables against the pillars of the arcades, and leave.

As it has probably become clear from reading about places to sit down, one of the major influences on dwelling and movement on the *plaza* is shade. During my stay, I met a couple of mostly elderly people that regularly spent part of their days on another square in the city – this was a park-like place with tall trees, benches and plenty of shade. When I asked them why they chose this place over, say, the Plaza de los Coches, it was the shade they mentioned first. Shade makes a very noticeable difference to the activities at the *plaza*. In the early morning and in the evening, there is plenty of it and people move across the square slower, frequently sitting down, taking time to look at their surroundings. For the rest of the day, the sun burns down directly onto the open *plaza* and people rarely sit or stand still for more than a few minutes before moving on to another spot or stepping into the arcades. Unsurprisingly, the most permanent occupants of the *plaza* are the vendors underneath the arcades and arches that have a shaded spot – and it is always the same vendors in a particular spot.

One of the few spots where there is shade is next to the statue of Heredia, the “founder” of the city of Cartagena. Two hat vendors are sharing it, having carefully arranged their postures in order to expose as little of their skin to the sun as possible. On the floor next to them, they have put down their high stacks of sombreros. It seems they are taking a break, watching the occasional group of tourists walk by, and talking. Other vendors are pushing metal trollies in front of them as they cross the *plaza*. Most of them sell drinks, advertising them with calls that nearly sound like a meditative chant: “*Aguaaaa, aguaaaa, aguaaaa, aguaaaa*”. They call again and again as they move on, usually not even pausing in the shade.⁵

The mobile vendors that walk around the historical city centre regularly pass the Plaza de los Coches. They sell an array of produce – drinks, ice cream, coffee, hammocks, hats, sunglasses, rattles, selfie-sticks – which they push around in carts or carry in their arms. Some products change in the course of the day: drink vendors will call out to advertise water in the mornings, and beer and soft drinks in the evenings. While all the vendors walk across the *plaza* rather slowly, occasionally pausing, they rarely stay put for a longer period of time, even when there is plenty of shade. Unlike the seated vendors, they also pursue customers more actively, especially the ones that are selling tours. The tourists’ reactions to them vary: Some ignore them, some turn them down, others are drawn into price-negotiations. Most of the mobile vendors are men between the ages of 20 and 50 with one exception: In all the time I spent at the *plaza*, one or two *Palenqueras*⁶ would arrive in the late afternoon and stay for a few hours to sell fruit. These were women in their 30s, and selling fruit was not their only business:

5 Fieldnotes, 14.01.2017.

6 *Palenqueras* is the name given to the colourfully dressed women selling fruit in the city. They often carried their fruit in bowls on their heads. The village *Palenque*, from which many of them come, gives them their name.

Two young women stroll across the *plaza*, chatting animatedly. They are wearing jeans, tight fitting t-shirts and colourful sneakers. It takes me a while to recognize them as the two *Palenqueras* that usually spend time in the *plaza*. They both carry plastic bags and metal bowls with fruit in them. Once across the *plaza*, they put down their bowls next to a sweet vendor they seem to know and vanish. About five minutes later, they are suddenly back, now wearing the colourful dresses and headscarves that are “traditional” for *Palenqueras*, though I can see their jeans occasionally peaking out from beneath their dresses.⁷

In this case, the vendors that come to the *plaza* know each other well enough to deposit their produce with the other. They have all found a way to make an income from the tourists, which in this case is not only selling fruit. The *Palenqueras*' main income seemed to come from posing in “traditional” attire and letting tourists take photos of and with them for a small fee.

Apart from the vendors' produce that can change in the course of the day, their numbers and attitude changes as well. While there are relatively few of them in the mornings, the much larger number of people dwelling at the *plaza* in the evening draws more vendors as well. Likewise, the vendors seem most relaxed in the morning hours, when the *plaza* is not very busy. They can often be found standing or walking in small groups. This was the case for the two hat vendors from the field diary. It is only when the tourists start arriving in flocks – especially on days when cruising ships dock in Cartagena – that their business picks up. At the Plaza de los Coches, this is usually from about ten in the morning, going rather quiet during the hottest hours of the day and picking up again towards the evening. With the vendors offering sweets and drinks, the tourists (and some locals) seem to have all they need to hang out at the *plaza* at night. But while they can encourage people to spend time at the *plaza*, the vendors can also make them move: I repeatedly observed that small groups of tourists reluctantly gave up sitting on the benches, because they were approached by rather persistent vendors every five minutes. This was one of the reasons some of the locals gave me when explaining why they did not like the *plaza* that much, though I had the impression they still turned the vendors down much friendlier than the tourists did.

There are other changes concerning business at the *plaza* during the day. The most striking aspect is perhaps that one can observe a growing number of sex workers there from the late evening onwards. They are usually young women that stand together in groups or sit on the benches looking at their phones. Sometimes, the “meetings” seem to be previously arranged, sometimes the women are chatted up or chat up groups of tourists. Another business that grows stronger from the afternoon onwards is the horse-drawn carriages. They are drawn by a single horse, which often looks quite worn out. The coachmen steer them along the narrow streets in front of the arcades and pick up tourists to give them tours of the historical city centre, navigating the narrow alleys and shouting out the names of famous features the tourists then take photographs of.

The stationary and mobile vendors, the coachmen and the sex workers aim their business first and foremost at the tourists, as do the bars and restaurants around the *plaza*. Another group of locals regularly present, the police, pays attention to both parties, mostly watching what is going on and sometimes stepping in to regulate horse-traffic conflicts or caution a group of tourists. In general, it is easy to recognize tourists as such, because they usually move in groups, carry maps and/or cameras, walk slowly with a relaxed posture, and look around a lot. Some are accompanied by a guide carrying an umbrella or a sign of some sort, or wearing a t-shirt to distinguish themselves. Like everyone else, the tourists spend more time at the *plaza* as soon as there is shade in the evening. Their composition also changes during the day. In the earlier evening hours,

7 Fieldnotes, 23.01.2017.

there are a lot of families, but they later give way to a younger party crowd. The tourists I talked to told me they mostly enjoyed the *plaza* because of its “historic charm”, horse-drawn carriages, and sweet vendors. They were especially focused on the colonial architecture and on Heredia’s statue, all of which was pointed out to them by their guides. If they were interested in other features linked to the *plaza*’s history, it was usually the fortification walls, which are praised in booklets and by tourist guides as a symbol of the city’s resistance against pirates. Except for the few that had read rather extensively on the city’s history beforehand, none of them knew about the city’s and the *plaza*’s history of slave trade.

Though at first sight, it may seem like tourism is what life on the *plaza* is all about, there are other groups of locals and other activities that are not – or not directly – associated with tourism. One of these activities is related to religion. On a number of days, there were two women in their 40s, dressed rather conservatively with ankle-length skirts and long sleeves, who stood next to a stand displaying bibles, and occasionally chatted up passers-by, mostly locals. There was also a middle-aged man dressed in a suit that came to the *plaza* a couple of afternoons a week. He had a large speaker, a microphone and a bible with him. He lectured with a lot of vigour, sometimes screaming and threatening into the microphone, though it seemed to me that his potential audience largely ignored him.

The local passers-by do not look around much. They are dressed rather formally – long trousers, button-down shirts, elegant dresses, polished shoes – for work I suppose, and usually carry a bag or a briefcase. Looking at it closer, I notice they take the most direct way across the *plaza*. Most of these ways conveniently happen to be in the shade. They walk faster than the tourists and seem to know where they are going. For them, the plaza seems to be a place of transit rather than a place to stay.⁸

The composition of people at the *plaza* changes in the course of the day. In the early morning, a lot of local people cross the *plaza*. They usually do not look around much, carry bags, and take the direct way across the square – I assume they are on their way to work. For them, the *plaza* is a place of transit. They return the same way in the evening, walking slower, but still not showing a lot of interest in their surroundings. A much smaller group of locals use the *plaza* as a place to meet, talk and hang out. Occasionally somebody sits and reads a newspaper in the early morning and – as mentioned before – the sweet vendors get visitors during the day. Most of the locals, however, arrive in the early evening when there is plenty of shade. I met one particular group of elderly men, who sat most days in a circle of plastic chairs they borrowed from sweet vendors in the centre of the *plaza* to talk and have a coffee or two.

It was mainly this group of men I had the chance to talk to for longer. When I asked one of them what he thought about the *plaza*, he told me – insisting on speaking English – that they always met there in the evening, because “this place nice, beautiful, good... safe”. Safety seemed to be the most important issue, which was confirmed by the others in the group but also by other people justifying their choice of place to spend time in. Since I also wanted to know what role memory played in the construction of the *plaza*, I eventually guided the conversation to features like Heredia’s statue. As soon as I pointed to the statue, the whole group started shouting: “¡Ladron! ¡Bandido! ¡Negrero!”⁹ and a lot of other – presumably not very nice – things I did not understand. The men explained that Heredia had stolen the indigenous people’s money and brought slaves from Africa, but – as one of them explained shrugging – he had also founded the city, and thus his statue had to be there. To him and to the others, the statue and the power relations it

8 Fieldnotes, 17.01.2017.

9 In English: “Thief! Criminal! Slave trader!”

suggested did not seem to matter a great deal in their daily lives. It was just a feature of the environment, even if what it embodied was something they disagreed with. Switching again to English, my vis-à-vis explained that there were a lot of statues of so-called heroes in Cartagena, which was just the way it was in other countries and therefore nothing to worry about.

Conversations like these hint that the *plaza* – which may seem like a large, at times too sunny square attractive especially to tourists and those catering to them – has more subtle dimensions to it. These include the (historical) power relations embedded in features like the statue of the colonizer looking down upon the former slave market. They are, however, not the only power relations impacting the *plaza*. Gender is another dimension producing power relations and shaping the use of the *plaza*. I am not only referring to the sex workers here, but also to the way men treat women in public space (cat-calling etc.), often making them change their paths and affecting their confidence in their own movements. While gender relations impact how the space is used, people's economic means go even further in influencing whether people can access it at all. Though spending time at the *plaza* is free, food, drinks and the transport to get there are expensive. It is thus not a space that is accessible to everyone. Not many locals spend their free time there, the group of elderly men being an exception. Finally, state power is present in the form of the police officers and in the fact that the city administration is housed on the adjacent Plaza de la Aduana. While in the case of police officers, I observed a couple of instances when they tried to get tourists to pay a fine – unjustly from what I could tell – I never witnessed them (or the organization in charge of administering and controlling public space, *Espacio Público*) confiscate the carts and produce of mobile vendors. I was told this happened relatively frequently because the vendors usually do not have a license.

Concerning historical aspects, I found that references to the plaza's and the city's history matter the most in contesting exclusion and criticizing political practices. For example, one day I came across a protest of mobile vendors in front of the city administration's buildings at the Plaza de la Aduana – the *plaza* next to the Plaza de los Coches. Several vendors spoke, demanding that licenses be granted to them and criticizing the local and national government. They did so by comparing the current administration to the colonial one and comparing themselves to the colonized, who had eventually mounted a resistance and overthrown the government. This historical reference both delegitimized the current political powers and emphasized the legitimacy and strength of the protesters. With regard to the Plaza de los Coches, people with intellectual/academic background expressed a strikingly similar view that invoked historical references: they all saw a certain continuity between the *plaza* being a market where human beings were sold and the sex workers selling their bodies there nowadays. By comparing it to the one in colonial times, they criticized the economic and political situation, saying that it is driving women into doing sex work.

It should be kept in mind that conversations like the ones I had with the group of elderly men about Heredia's statue show that locals – in general – are very aware of the historical power relations embedded in space. They also object to them. However, my impressions from all the places I explored in more detail were those of everyday life, where these power relations matter little. In the case of the statue, it provides a means for tourist guides to physically ground their history of Cartagena, a location for tourists to show they have been to the “core” of the city. For others, it is simply a feature of the environment that provides a shaded spot to rest for a few minutes. Thus, at least from the impression I got, the memories that the *Ruta del Esclavo* project strives to visibilize in order to change people's perception and use of public spaces like the Plaza de los Coches have not – or perhaps not yet – had an impact on everyday spatial practices.

Street Corner Society – Conviviality and Contestation in Getsemaní

Silke Oldenburg

“Ayyyy, yo soy Getsemanicense, barrio de bravos leones, sincero de corazones¹...” once again, this unofficial anthem of the neighbourhood Getsemaní roars from the bawling sound system of Bar El Carpintero through the narrow colourful alleys, and the mood heats up when the cooling dusk settles on Cartagena. Life on the Caribbean coast takes place on the street, and urban life in Getsemaní is no exception. The small alleys are the stage for a variety of spatial practices, such as residents settling on the pavement in their rocking chairs to enjoy the upcoming evening breeze; elderly people playing a game of bingo in front of their houses; concentrated men with their foreheads wrinkled energetically smashing pieces of domino onto a small white plastic table, aiming at the coins lying on it; some youths hanging out at the street corner in front of the little kiosk, chatting and catching up on the news of the day. The street corner as classic metaphor of everyday solidarity (Whyte 1943) is the place for heated debates, where aficionados of *ludo* (a board game) and *dominó* assemble; where beer is shared from big bottles into little plastic cups; where drug dealing activities take place; where neighbours watch over the nightly activities of children, of gossiping, flirting, yelling and joking; where even little birds in their cages are brought outside to catch fresh air. Walking the *barrio* therefore seduces the senses. Locals and tourists alike cavort in the Plaza de la Trinidad in front of the large yellow church. Children play football in its centre, two elderly men sit on a bench on the edge and play chess. Fruit and juice vendors push their wooden carts through the streets during the day and sell booze and drugs hidden under the fruits in the evening. Passers-by watch and drink iced beer from the bottle, while Papa Ucha is still swinging his hips to the Salsa rhythm of “El Getsemanicense”, a song whose lines every child knows and which recounts the *barrio*’s identity.

Residents take pride in the fact that their neighbourhood equals and represents Cartagena in many commercials, films or music videos. However, whenever the municipality closes Getsemaní’s streets due to filming, the urban dwellers are transformed from protagonists of their *barrio* to mere extras.

“Bravos leones” – alluding to brave lions, pride and a strong sense of community, the song highlights the Caribbean way of life, emphasizing friendship and social cohesion. It points to vivid ambience and the history of the neighbourhood, which is referred to as the cradle of Independence, as freedom fighter Pedro Romero supposedly took up the revolution in the Plaza del Pozo². Today, new battles need to be fought: Locals fear that the process of urban renovation and the steadily growing tourism industry might force them out of their homes due to government renovation requirements and skyrocketing prices in the area. The so-called process of patrimonialization (Deavila 2015, 125), the

1 The song can be listened to here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XeQc_trq1tw. Song by Lucho Pérez: El Getsemanicense (last accessed: 20.10.2018).

2 Little is known about Pedro Romero, who was supposedly born in Cuba and worked as a blacksmith in the *barrio* of Getsemaní. He played a crucial role in Cartagena’s movement for independence, in which many people of African descent were involved. Pedro Romero organized the men of Getsemaní, broke into the city arsenal, and armed the crowd with guns, lances, and daggers, forcing the Royal Junta to declare independence on 11 November 1811. Until today, these events are commemorated in a huge carnival, which is the most celebrated annual event in Cartagena.



Waiting for the video shoot.
S. Oldenburg, April 2016

conversion of cultural heritage into an economic resource, was initiated by UNESCO's declaration of Cartagena as "patrimonio cultural" in 1984. Getsemaní's residents emphasize that the label not only refers to the built environment but also to the immaterial culture, the ways of its people. At stake is not only the privatization of the city, of its public spaces, its own image and its conversion into a merchandise, but also the loss of its urban identity. Here, a look at the street corners serves as a lens into urban sociality in a heavily contested neighbourhood.

Historical background: From pirates to policies

Getsemaní is about 400 years old and was originally constituted of lower-class inhabitants, mostly artisans and seamen, but also enslaved blacks. It has long been considered "arrabal", a somewhat derogatory term that refers to its peripheral status in relation to the historic city centre (Magallanes and Valdelamar 2011, 13; Ferrer and Morillo 2013, 48). The neighbourhood became known as site of revolution against the Spanish crown in 1811 and still prides itself as "cradle of independence". However, economically, the 19th century was a time of decay for Cartagena in general. There was no comprehensive industrialisation of the city – and the formerly most important port in Colombia lost its status to Barranquilla. Even in the 1950s, Cartagena was still one of the least prosperous cities of Colombia (Deavila 2015, 127); Getsemaní, where the city's biggest market was held, was described to be full of dirt, criminality and alcohol. Even when tourism efforts of the national government for Cartagena were on a rise, Getsemaní deteriorated further. An important marker of this urban transformation was the displacement of Getsemaní's public market in 1978. The bustling market had been identified as obstacle to the advancement of the

tourist industry and had to give way to a modern convention centre (Posso 2015, 94). This left many people in Getsemaní's already marginal neighbourhood without a job. Furthermore, criminality, prostitution and heavy drug trade exploded in the 1980s. While tourist policies were put into practice, policies of social integration were not applied. This generated a rise of local versions of Robin Hood-like figures, like the Beetar-brothers³, that attacked the rich and the tourists but gave to their neighbours (Chica 2010). At the end of the 1980s, following a massive period of so-called "social cleansing", the brothers were killed by the police and criminality went down; however, the always existing drug trade prevailed, even if on a lesser scale.

Getsemaní's social composition has massively altered since the 1980s as slowly, tourism entered the neighbourhood when backpacker tourism surged due to the improved security situation in Colombia. The increased interest in Getsemaní led to a massive displacement of the local community. For families that have lived here for several generations, staying in their homes has become an unaffordable luxury as many local residents earn the minimum wage or are unemployed. Therefore, many residents feel that the increase in urban land prices has become a weapon to displace the poor population.

In the meantime, the drug traffic has boomed again due to supply and demand in relation to the tourist industry. Many elders lament the change of the neighbourhood's identity as some of their youth sell drugs to backpackers and opt for the easy money. These concerns by many residents can be read as articulation of urban uncertainty. On the one hand, residents cannot anticipate if they will be able to remain in the neighbourhood while at the same time their own children might be implicated in practices they do not approve of and therefore contribute to a perceived moral decay. In comparison to former times, today, Getsemaní's inhabitants no longer look for protection against pirates but try to confront different policies, which they feel are working against their continued life and presence in the *barrio*. Many homeowners and landlords cannot afford to restore their ageing properties to standards required by the government in order to preserve the colonial architecture. They have little choice but to sell to Colombian and foreign entrepreneurs looking to cash in on the growing tourism with another hotel or restaurant (Scarpaci 2005, 153). They complain about a lack of policies – policies that are often promised but rarely executed. As one resident remarks:

"We are used to this. In former times, when the pirates came, they took everything. Now, it's the politicians and tourists. They just sack and sack and sack."⁴

Turning Getsemaní into Jetset-manie?

Due to the effects of patrimonialization and gentrification on the one side and the opportunities generated by the weakly-governed spaces in the city centre, social cohesion has been massively altered. The first phenomenon attracted a huge amount of tourists while the second can be related to context-specific policies that have steadily displaced inhabitants from the centre to the outskirts. As rumours and conspiracy have it, the municipality tries to beautify the neighbourhood to clear out the poor in order to repurpose the space for wealthier inhabitants and open it up for tourism. Valorisation has become the weapon to remove the poor, neighbours denounce, to transform Getsemaní into a place

3 In the late 1970s and 1980s, Samir Beetar from Getsemaní was a prominent gangster in Cartagena. He was ascribed extraordinary powers, e.g. becoming invisible in the face of his enemies, as he often escaped his persecutors by jumping from one courtyard to the next under the protection of the neighbourhood.

4 "Saqueo tras saqueo tras saqueo." (Interview, neighbourhood resident, 20.04.2016).

for the “Jetset”: Jetset-Manie. The involvement of a well-known entrepreneur of bad reputation animates many concerns in the *barrio*. People assume that he will use his money to influence the city council to act in his favour, as he has already bought ten plots and built a big bar at the neighbourhood’s main square. Many inhabitants are fatalistic, referring to this entrepreneur’s influence in local and regional politics and his supposed connections to parapolitics⁵, drug networks and his sentence for murder. With his political influence, he has started to privatize the main public square Plaza de la Trinidad, causing heated debates among the residents.

Bola de trapo played
on El Pedregal.
S. Oldenburg, January 2017



5 The notion “parapolítica” or parapolitics refers to the revelation of very close relations between politicians and Colombia’s paramilitary groups in 2006 and is still a well-known term for referring to the close entanglements of politics and illegal activities as drug trafficking.

Nevertheless, as in many contexts of tourism-induced processes of urban transformation, the neighbourhood tries to unite and reinvent itself in order to confront the advancement of the tourist industry. The buzzword of gentrification is familiar to everyone. Yet, the concept was only introduced in Getsemaní in 2012 by a national NGO from Bogotá as a way to articulate the structural and subjective situation of a marginalized population in the city's heart. Picking up on such an academic slogan makes them feel connected to other locales, and Getsemaní's activists are looking for better ways to fight for their rights.

In an effort to regain the power of interpretation over the *barrio*, the social leaders are looking for inclusive strategies. The *Cabildo de Getsemaní* is the most popular group to present itself in the carnivals during the well-known annual celebration of Cartagena's Independence in November. As festive tradition, it pays tribute to the independence struggles and restages the passage from the colonial to the republican era, integrating different layers of the neighbourhood. Furthermore, the social leadership of the *barrio* tries to revive local traditions such as *bola de trapo* which is similar to baseball played on the streets. While many discussions of Getsemaní's younger generation take place in Whatsapp-groups, the traditional way of going from door to door for announcements is still common. Hanging posters on the doors of the church or at lanterns, the local community is informed about public events such as funerals, local elections, or special events in the neighbourhood, such as a flea market or a bingo competition. These forms of communication are still cherished in order to reinforce a sense of belonging. What is more, a sense of nostalgia is used as creative resource towards the future in order to strengthen the social cohesion and celebrate conviviality.

However, where funds become available, social envy and competition materialize as well. As neighbours meet mostly daily on the streets and at the street corner, they discuss, plan and cooperate, but also accuse and conspire on what the future has to bring for Getsemaní. A strong discussion that splits the population is one of belonging and turns around the question who has the right to decide about the future of the neighbourhood. Fierce debates about who is a "native" or a "*raizal*" – that is he or she who can prove their "roots" going back several generations in the *barrio* are fought out in the neighbourhood shedding light on supposed claims of certain residents. These heated debates bring up alliances or strong rivalries.

Here, the street corner as local spot becomes the point of reference and of stability in a neighbourhood that is undergoing rapid physical change as a consequence of municipal attempts to radically reconstruct and regenerate urban space. Obviously, this does not automatically instil a "sense of a *barrio*" or trigger social cohesion as there are manifold and often antagonistic interests at play. Förster's definition of urbanity (2013, 241ff.) helps, to understand the ways in which urbanites live their cities while producing urbanity, understood as social practices of encounter and distancing. Central to this conceptualisation is the way how urban actors continuously produce urbanity. Therefore, urbanity is not a quality or characteristic of cities as such but created by the interaction of actors and their ways to engage with each other and to situate themselves in the urban context. As already mentioned, there are many different interests involved in the debate about the historical heritage, current policies in relation to tourism and the future of the neighbourhood in general. As everyday urban life in Getsemaní is lived out in public with its shifting appropriations of public space and a struggle for day to day preservation of local habits, the reference to street corner society is a lens to illustrate and analyse urban sociality. Social practices of urban sociality take all shapes and forms; dozing in the shadows of the plaza, selling food (or drugs) to the tourists or having an argument in front of the neighbours all play into the production of urbanity – and become particularly tangible when the sound system animates the urban dwellers to dance and sing along to "their song."

Graffiti and Street Art in Cartagena – between Unruliness, Conformity and Commercialization

Nora Peduzzi

When Justin Bieber visited Bogotá in 2013 to give a concert, he also wanted to spray graffiti (Washington Post, 18.11.2013). To make sure the famous singer would return safe and sound from this adventure, the police decided to convoy him – which led to a major uprising within the graffiti scene. Even though there are no heavy penalties for

Maria Mulata,
Yurikauno
(Getsemani).
N. Peduzzi, January 2017



spraying illegally in Colombia, the graffiti artists live a dangerous life because they are exposed to the arbitrariness and corruption of the police – beatings, bribery, confiscation of material and nights in prison are possible outcomes if one gets caught. Bieber's police escort was an affront, especially because only two years back Diego Felipe, a young *grafitero*, was shot by the police in the very same city of Bogotá. Both incidences – Diego Felipe's death and Bieber's graffiti escapade gave rise on one hand to a vitalization of the graffiti scene in the whole country and beyond, and on the other hand also to a new tolerance towards street art from the public and even the authorities (Evans 2016, 172).

It does not seem to be a coincidence that the street art festival *Ciudad Mural* was held in the neighbourhood of Getsemaní in Cartagena in 2013, two years after the first wave of solidarity following Diego Felipe's death and the increased popularity of street art in general. But this form of institutionalized street art changes the way this culture is practiced and lived. Those who want to participate in an official street art festival have to conform to the imagination of the organizers (and accordingly with the city administration who gives the organizer the approval for the event) or adapt:

[...] and in the case of *Ciudad Mural*, we were prompted by the theme, and no, we did not have the possibilities to put our, our pseudonyms as a piece, that is the main part of the piece. If not as if you want to put it, you can integrate it, but the main thing is the theme. What we did was not graffiti!¹

The quote above is from Equiz, a local *grafitero* in Cartagena who talks about his experience of participating at *Ciudad Mural*. Not only did the festival *Ciudad Mural* have an effect on individual actors, but on the city itself as well.

The right to the city and contested public spaces in Getsemaní

The right to the city is a concept introduced by Henri Lefebvre in 1968. Besides the right to centrality included in the right to the city (see Lefebvre 1996), which will also play an important role in the specific case of the neighbourhood of Getsemaní, it also includes the right to create, to express oneself and even the right of appropriation:

The right to the city manifests itself as a superior form of rights: right to freedom, to individualization in socialization, to habitat and to inhabit. The right to the *oeuvre*, to participation and *appropriation* (clearly distinct from the right to property), are implied in the right to the city. (Lefebvre 1996, 173–74)

The aspect of the “right to the *oeuvre*” (ibid.) seemed obviously very important to my research interest, since the *grafiteros* and the other street artists are constantly creating new pieces and therefore also constantly creating, shaping and re-shaping the city itself. The second aspect that is of interest in this quote is the appropriation: the practitioners of street art and graffiti do not only appropriate the walls – legally or illegally – they also appropriate the public space by changing the place where their *oeuvres* are located and by influencing how other actors perceive this place. It becomes evident that the practice of street art and graffiti is one possible form of executing the right to the city in Lefebvre's sense. When analysing my material, I realized that not only the “producers” of street art and graffiti can be seen applying the right to appropriation (i.e. the right to the city), but also the ones using their *oeuvres* afterwards. In this particular case, there were two rivalling street art tour providers present in Getsemaní: Christoph, a Belgian man who set up a donation-based *Street Art Tour*, and Merly, the director of a local association named *TuCultura* with their *Ruta Ciudad Mural*. They are both using the existing environment and creating something according to their beliefs and interests –

1 “[...] y en el caso de Ciudad Mural, bueno nos impusieron la temática, y no, no teníamos las posibilidades de poner nuestro, nuestros seudónimos como una pieza, ósea lo principal de la pieza. Si no como si quieres ponerlo, puedes integrarlo, pero lo principal es la temática. ¡Lo que nosotros hicimos no fue graffiti!” (Interview with Equiz, 05.02.2017).

and earning some money from it. One argument in the conflict was that Christoph would appropriate the street art in Getsemaní and use it for his own purposes, and that he apparently had less of a right to do so than the people around *TuCultura*, who considered themselves to be at home in Getsemaní.

But before entering further into the contested public space of Getsemaní, a little excursus is necessary: To fully understand the dynamics observed, it is indispensable to have a look at how the presence of graffiti, or a mural, changes a specific place and the perception of it, and how a place also needs to be considered as a social space. The example of the street art festival *Ciudad Mural* that was held by *Vertigo Graffiti* in 2013, shows how the sheer existence of the over 30 newly created murals evoked a lasting change in the different streets and places and their perception, by people using the public space in Getsemaní. Merly from *TuCultura* describes it as following:

That place [Plaza del Pozo, Getsemaní] improved 100 per cent because it was a dirty place, literally dirty, always full of garbage, always dirty walls, no light. From the festival there is a super nice graffiti [...] right now it is clean, with lights, and people respect it, they respect the graffiti, they respect the place. And we really de-stigmatize all that spaces. In the same way it has happened with other graffiti. And it was achieved that the routes are cleaner, the streets are cleaner, lights were placed that help people not to feel afraid to go there. They became safer, cleaner around this whole process of the urban art.²

The places where murals³ were created changed from being dark, dirty places where most people would not feel safe (at least during the night), to cleaner and safer places. The places, as social spaces, even seem to influence the behaviour of the people using it: they respect the painting and therefore also the place.⁴ It seems the work and passion put into the mural and onto the wall by the artist was acting upon the people through the image, the image being a promising sign of the existence of the right to the city, a visible reminder of the possibility to appropriate public space, to create and to shape – to make the city.

The concept of “place-valorisation” (cf. Mubi Brighenti 2016) set off by the practice of street art is visible here. Because especially street art, in differentiation to graffiti, is “associated with thrilling lifestyles, urban creativity, fashionable outfits and hip neighbourhoods” (Mubi Brighenti 2016, 158), its presence can increase the value and popularity of a place previously associated with unpopularity or even danger. The lights in Getsemaní must have been placed there by the city administration. So, the murals probably also draw other groups of people (i.e. tourists) to the places that are considered to need more safety measurements (e.g. lights), than the people who were present in those places before the existence of the murals. Merly’s observation of people

- 2 “Ese lugar [Plaza del Pozo, Getsemaní] mejoró 100% porque era un lugar sucio, o sea literalmente sucio, lleno siempre de basuras, siempre las paredes sucias, sin luz. A partir del festival quedó un graffiti súper bonito [...] ahora mismo está limpio, con luz, ya la gente lo respeta, respeta al graffiti, respeta al lugar. Y realmente de-estigmatizamos con todo ese espacio. De igual manera ha pasado con otros graffiti. Y ha logrado que los caminos están más limpios, las calles están más limpias, que haya colocado luces que ayuda que la gente no sienta miedo pasar por allí. Se convirtieron más seguras, más limpias alrededor de todo este gran proceso del festival de arte urbano.” (Interview with Merly, 17.01.2017).
- 3 Merly does not distinguish between murals and graffiti. The piece (see image “Mural by Ceroker”; created by a street artist from Bogotá I also talked to online) at the Plaza del Pozo that she talks about, and also most of the other pieces that have been created during the festival qualify as murals, do not qualify as graffiti in the classical sense.
- 4 Their behaviour was also influenced before the presence of the mural, but in a different way. The mural provoked a change in behaviour.

respecting the graffiti and the place, and the understanding of a place as a social space come together in Abarca's notion of how the visual (and aesthetic) experience takes place and how in this process a new reality is created:

The propagation of an artistic identity opens up the work to spatial and temporal dimensions wholly entrenched in the viewer's everyday existence. And it is in these dimensions that the aesthetic experience of street art actually takes place, for it does not come from the contemplation of a particular work. It appears when the encounters with works recur in space and time, and the viewer begins to look forward to the next encounter, to speak the artist's language, to feel engaged with the artist, as well as with the rest of the pedestrians who have allowed themselves to stop and watch, and have entered into the game. This entering opens the consciousness to a new stratum of reality and, by extension, to many others, an opening that facilitates the construction of a subjective environment different to the one imposed by the spectacle of capital. (Abarca 2015, 225)

Generalizing Abarca's explanations, the theoretical interpretation presented by Siegenthaler of "art as social space" (2013) can be applied. Here, art is perceived as producing a social space rather than just existing in an established social space:

Such social spaces [...] derive from the unfolding relationships between actors and places. They are constituted by social actions [...]. This shift to agency and relationality, as the producer of space, emphasises action and process as opposed to the physical expanse of place and site. (Siegenthaler 2013, 742)



"Noli me tangere, el barrio libre resiste" (Getsemani).
N. Peduzzi, January 2017

The presence of the murals in Getsemaní definitely created new social spaces and opened up possibilities for new interactions and encounters on one hand, but also led to – or exacerbated – already existing challenges the neighbourhood has to cope with, as we will see below.

The dispute in Getsemaní between the different street art tour providers, as briefly explained here above, is not the only conflict taking place in Getsemaní. Another omnipresent theme that is directly linked to the questions of (public) space and the right to the city, is the ongoing process of gentrification that takes place in the *barrio*. With its increasing popularity among tourists, especially among backpackers, the neighbourhood became more and more interesting for investments, resulting in rising rents and living costs for the residents of Getsemaní, forcing them to move to a different *barrio*, usually further away from the centre. Restaurants, bars and hostels are being opened where people used to live, changing the appearance and atmosphere of the neighbourhood and provoking a shift in people present. The topic of gentrification was also covered in the Street Art tours, because some of the artists at the festival *Ciudad Mural* decided to make it the motif of their mural – more or less explicitly (cf. image “Mural Getsemaní”). Ironically, the presence of the murals actually seemed to fuel into the process of gentrification: since the people coming to the Street Art tours are mostly young folks who fall into the category of individual backpacking tourists, it dawned on me that the street art – to use the general term – itself was functioning as a catalyser for the gentrification problem of Getsemaní.

Mural (Getsemaní).
N. Peduzzi, January 2017



Reading more about street art and gentrification, my assumption gets confirmed: Getsemaní is not an exception, the two phenomena are closely intertwined in many cities all over the world. Javier Abarca even proclaims that street art always plays a crucial role in the process of gentrification (Abarca 2015, 231). Abarca is very accurate in the

utilization of the terms “graffiti” and “street art” and it is important to emphasize that it is not a coincidence that it is street art (i.e. figurative murals) that is present in the areas undergoing a process of gentrification, and not graffiti. The above mentioned “place-valorisation” (cf. Mubi Brighenti 2016) usually happens through street art, because graffiti is still stigmatized by a majority of the public and is associated with violence and crime (cf. Cohen 1973; Halsey 2002; Halsey and Young 2006; Snyder 2006).

Street art is able to facilitate gentrification whereas graffiti has a more difficult stand, because as with any other phenomena, it is unsettling not being able to understand something fully because one does not belong to the initiated group of people. Graffiti is a scene that is not very open and heterogenous, and pieces are hardly legible for people outside the scene and are therefore often perceived as threatening, as Serok, a local *grafitero*, explains in one of the interviews:

There are times when styles and concepts are strong enough, that some fellow *grafiteros* paint, and people feel assaulted. But that’s the characteristics that graffiti has, it’s not for everybody ... it’s not to aggravate, but only to say something⁵.

But for the sake of honesty, graffiti sometimes is used as a form of protest, that is intended to be visually aggressive. Equiz told me about one night, a couple of month before I met him, where he and some other *grafiteros* went out to “bomb” the streets, with the only goal to cover as many walls as possible. He told me it was for revenge, because in the preceding weeks a lot of their carefully done pieces had been covered almost immediately. He even acknowledged, slightly guiltily, that it was pure vandalism and was brutal, and that they just wanted to make a point⁶.

Besides the fact that graffiti is hardly understandable for people outside the scene and is quickly misinterpreted as the statement above illustrates, Abarca points out the difference between *grafiteros* and the practitioners of street art:

If graffiti is full of working-class teenagers, most street artists are university students or graduates, often in art or design. Many work in the visual design industry or even professionally produce artworks for art galleries. And, if graffiti was born in the neglected parts of the city, street art thrives in – and rarely ventures beyond – areas undergoing gentrification, the natural environment of its creators. (Abarca 2015: 226)

This also resonates with my data: I contacted some of the Colombian street artists who had created murals in Getsemaní in 2013 and without exception, all of them have a professional formation in design or art and are able to make a living off of it. Also, Jorge as a student of the university *Bellas Artes* reaffirms this pattern: he was creating a figurative mural in Getsemaní when I first met him, and he identifies himself as an artist, not a *grafitero*⁷. Abarca calls street art an “ersatz version of graffiti” (Abarca 2015, 228) that plays into the desired aesthetics of authenticity, but is still very accessible and open to everyone to be understood.

The problem of gentrification – because it can also be positive for a neighbourhood to experience place-valorisation and might even bring economic growth and new

5 “Hay veces que los estilos y conceptos son bastantes fuertes, que de pronto pintan compañeros, y la gente se siente agredida. Pero eso son las características que el grafiti tiene, no es para todo el mundo... no es para agravar, pero solamente para decir algo.” (Interview with Serok, 06.02.2017).

6 Interview with Equiz, 05.02.2017.

7 Interview with Jorge, 25.01.2017.



employment possibilities to a city as a whole – is that it happens at the expense of the local community, the *Getsemanicenses*, who are suddenly unable to sustain themselves in their accustomed environment anymore. Obviously for Cartagena as a city, it is absolutely desirable that Getsemaní is attractive to individual backpacking tourists, because they represent a different group of tourists compared to the ones arriving with the big cruise ships. The public sector also co-financed the festival, together with private donors and organisations. Abarca even sees the possibility of this type of festival being used by administrations to induce a place-valorisation that might give room to further investments and income:

[...] the most prominent form of institutionalization [of street art], however, is the now ubiquitous mural festival. In these often municipally-funded events, a relatively small elite of muralists is flown around the world to produce large-scale works, which frequently bring valuable positive attention to cities and areas. A number of these festivals seem to be conceived in order to instigate gentrification or similar processes. (Abarca 2015, 230)

Also, the fact that governments are more tolerant towards street art – as long as it remains within certain limits, aesthetically and location-wise – than towards graffiti, relates to the dynamic of ‘place-valorisation’ and the broken window theory (Gretzki 2015, 247). But it also becomes clear that the right to the city, the right to the oeuvre is not granted to everyone and holds only under certain conditions.



"Getsemaní no se vende" (Getsemaní).
N. Peduzzi, January 2017

It is obvious that the inhabitants of Getsemaní (and also the foundation *TuCultura* as a local actor) try to defend their space, because their right to the city is jeopardized: they might be forced to move to a different neighbourhood, losing their right to centrality and also their right to individuality in terms of choosing their place of residence and way of living. It is not surprising that they take action and organize themselves. One visual effect of their resistance is the presence of signs on houses saying "*no se vende!*". Coming back to Lefebvre, these actions also qualify as an application of the right to the city:

The right to the city legitimates the refusal to allow oneself to be removed from urban reality by a discriminatory and segregative organization. This right of the citizen (if one wants, of 'man') proclaims the inevitable crisis of city centres based upon segregation and establishing it: centres of decision-making, wealth, power, of information and knowledge, which reject towards peripheral spaces all those who do not participate in political privileges. [...] The right to the city therefore signifies the constitution or reconstitution of a spatial-temporal unit, of a gathering together instead of a fragmentation. It does not abolish confrontations and struggles. On the contrary! (Lefebvre 1996, 195)

In conclusion, what becomes clear in the case of Getsemaní is that the supposed application of the right to the city in one form (i.e. the right to the oeuvre, the right to create and shape one's environment) can actually threaten the very same right to the city for others. 'Supposed', because the majority of the street art present in Getsemaní had to fulfil certain criteria in order to be tolerated by the authorities. Today, the public space is still contested in Getsemaní – *el barrio resiste!*

Entering the Field – An Insight into the Research Process

Interview with Laura Bettschen¹

Christine Wabersich & Christina Bosbach: **Could you tell us about the first time you visited the Plaza de los Coches?**

Laura Bettschen: I think that was right at the beginning of our stay, when we had just arrived. The first time was during the day and the next one or two days later in the evening. I still remember that I had such difficulties seeing who is who. In spite of Silke having always told us this was the main spot where prostitution happened. I just kept wondering “Who is a tourist, who is going out, who is really prostituting themselves?” I could not see that at all (laughing).

And how did you figure it out in the end?

It happened in a very natural way because I was there a lot. Suddenly, I was observing more and seeing more as well. However, I also knew better what to pay attention to because an academic, Winfred, who also has this facebookgroup and who has written a lot about prostitution, accompanied me once. He then told me that there are different types [of sex workers] and that I should pay more attention to their behaviour than their clothes. Because of him I started directing my attention to those aspects and with a bit of time, it [who was a sex worker] became relatively clear to me. Due to their behaviour, how they moved, how they looked about, how they waited...

So, what did you pay attention to before Winfred explained about the sex workers' behaviour?

I was more focused on their attire. So, I had imagined that it would have to be a certain type of short dress or that they would be wearing a lot of make-up and shoes with very high heels. Thus, I had the stereotypical image in mind. And he told me that they usually carry a bag but do not have food or drinks in their hands, because they are working. If they do that, it is usually when they are taking a break. But then they also withdraw behind the foodstalls. And it was usually true, what he said, although there were always exceptions.

How did you get into contact with the sex workers?

Well, in case of the woman I accompanied to a nightclub one night, it was when I was out with a good friend of mine, we were drinking beer. And he actually struck up a conversation with her because we were in a club and she was there on her own. He then started talking to her. She was also Colombian [like the friend] and said she was

¹ Interview conducted in Basel on 07.05.2018. Translated from Swiss German by Christina Bosbach.

working in the streets – “Trabajo en la calle”, she said. And then he asked more questions, because he knew I was interested in that. And he also told her I was writing this piece of research... And there, he helped me a lot. He actually did the entire preparation work. And I could just talk to her then and accompany her. We all went out together and did a deal – I would pay her ticket to the club and get to ask her some questions during the night (laughs) and observe her and so on. However, I then had the feeling that it was very obvious... meaning, others noticed I was there too; because in that club, there were nearly only women working as prepagos. [...]

And the women I spoke to at the plaza, I met those when a friend of Silke’s accompanied me. I had written to her and we met up and she went with me to talk to the women. And she then had the idea that we should first speak to the coffee vendors because they were often friends with the women or knew them quite well, and they [the tinteros] then suggested us someone. So, they said “I know her quite well and I think she would agree to...”. However, they advised us not to directly walk up to other women and start talking to them. Because of this, we approached the women via this rather complicated detour.

Why did they advise you not to do that? Did they give you a reason for that?

One of them said that many of the sex workers are relatively insecure and withdrawn, or they are afraid that someone could find out [they are doing sex work]. They do not want to expose themselves too much. There were also some from Venezuela or from other parts of Colombia, and they just did not want their families to know. He also said they were suspicious and that it would be better to ask someone we already knew. [...]

Yes, well, but that was only after about a month. I waited for a rather long time [before approaching the sex workers], because I did not know exactly and I was quite anxious...

So, did you feel it made a difference that you were from elsewhere? Did they talk more openly with you?

So, I had the impression that they talked very openly with me. Thus, they actually told me right away that they had children and that their families did not know about it [the sex work] and where they came from. And I mean, sure, one can always argue they just told me anything. But I felt they were very open and honest. The one friend was there as well, the one from Cartagena, and they also answered her questions quite honestly and told her that the minimal salary just was not enough and we just wanted to do something to enable our kids to buy school material. It seemed to me that they explained their ideas very transparently. So, in that respect, I did not feel it made a big difference. Maybe language-wise... but even there they did not adjust to me (laughing). They were talking at quite a speed.

Did you record those conversations?

No, they did not want me to. [...]

Maybe they were scared anyhow, because they knew it [the recording] would be processed somehow. And I think they were not so familiar with research processes and possibly could not really picture what it would entail. I guess they were scared that someone could find out after all. But when they were just able to tell me, they dropped their reservations. So, I wrote all of it down in my fieldnotes, just now quoting anything in the report later on, since I had no transcripts. [...]

I did tell them I was not going to write a publication, just a reflexive piece about a short fieldwork, and everything would be anonymized. And that it would be really cool if I could record it. But they were not convinced by that. Probably they were scared of the fixity, of when something is put down black on white on a piece of paper. That is different from just telling someone.

Did you think they understood what you wanted to do with your research?

I told them I was interested in their work, which is part of the dynamics of the plaza, and in general about the subject of public space. But I have to be honest: I did not explain in detail what my research was about. At this point, I did not really know myself how to connect any of this to theory. Rather, I wanted them to tell me about their work, because that is part of the plaza. But I think, they did not always understand what I was getting at. Or why I wanted to know that. They probably assumed I was simply interested, which is why it was rather informal. And it was very late into the research – I just talked to them after a month. [...]

When I finally got to talk to them, I was just relieved I had an entry point. It is a very sensitive subject, even if it is very present at the plaza. I felt I had to be careful how I approach it so as to not offend anyone. [...]

I think the beginning is always the hardest part, creating a certain basic feeling of trust. Later, I dared to sit down next to the women, when I saw them. And I did that, just like this. And it was okay. But then they knew: This is the woman who is interested in what we do. But it did need time.

Did you feel you were influencing them with your presence and your observation?

Yes, that one time in the club, I felt that very strongly. At the plaza itself, it was less the case, though it certainly did have some effects. [...] It did not stop them doing from what they were doing. But they did have an eye on me. Maybe they were paying me more attention than they would have someone else [...] I think my presence had an influence somehow, but a marginal one due to the way I was doing my research. Had I talked to them more, had I been very present, the influence would have been bigger. But it is hard to say how this would have shown.

Did you also try to hide your influence, for example by presenting yourself as a tourist in the beginning? Or did you always try to clearly be a researcher?

No, I never did, because it also depends on the others, what roles they ascribe to you. One cannot much or always influence which role one assumes. At the beginning, I surely was more of a tourist, at the end possibly more researcher – because they knew then... that I was not just on holiday and that I was interested... and that I wanted to do something with the information. At the beginning, I was more of a tourist. In between, I may have been a medium. A certain mediatory function may have been there. But it changed. It really depends on how they others see you.

A medium – do you have an example for that?

Yes, I think that I was once in a club. There were a few tourists and they knew I was doing something related to prostitution. Those were three US-American men, and there were a lot of prepagos in the club, who were nudging them with their elbows

and wanted to dance with them. I was the one who had to talk to them [the prepagos] and ask what they want, whether they should leave and how much it would cost. This happened two or three times. The prepagos also told me “You are working on this subject, so go and ask them...” Both sides accepted that in a way. [...]
It was a bit strange but it was okay, because I felt no one was bothered. (laughing)
This was what I meant when saying I was a medium.

Did you ever feel you were bothering someone with your presence or when you were observing?

Yes, quite a lot. When I was observing, I felt I bothered them a bit. When they were suspicious, not knowing what I was doing or who I was... I think, the entire construct of prostitution in Cartagena is so complicated that many people do not know who is involved. There are also more taxis coming to the plaza at certain times. The police does not say anything. A lot of parties are involved and others as well that oppose it and some that want to know more about it... When people don't know you, they are sometimes suspicious. I did notice this. And this is why I was a bit uncomfortable about just walking up to the sex workers and talking to them.

Do you want to add anything concerning your position as researcher?

The most important thing is that one can try to influence one's position, but in the end, I felt one often forgets that the field is also determining one's role. How they see you. Whether in the end, they see a researcher or a tourist. I think you can try to guide impressions by the way you behave, how you treat people or your clothing – but I feel it depends on them a lot. And it is also something that can change, very quickly as well. So, it certainly is not something fixed, it often blurs. That is the most important thing I noticed in the fieldwork. [...]

And I think gender is always a factor that one can say makes a big difference. But also, where one comes from, or what one does with that, how good one can speak the language. There are a thousand things that can influence and change one's position.

Excerpt of a Research Report: Tourism, Sex Work and Public Space in Cartagena, Colombia – The Challenges

Laura Bettschen

Together with a friend, the three of us entered a nightclub in Getsemaní, a neighbourhood in Cartagena, and because so many women in the club were sex workers, I was sure to seem out of place. Many times, I felt other women looking at me. It was a strange feeling. Anja, the sex worker I was accompanying, was talking to potential clients several times during the night. She came from Cali and worked as a *prepagado*. Even though I had tried not to watch her too obviously and tried to keep my distance, she lost several customers for various reasons, and I could not help but wonder whether my presence had something to do with it. Circulating spaces in which prostitution was practiced as someone “coming from the outside” was very difficult at times, because I knew how delicate the topic was to some, and I did not like to arouse suspicion among sex workers and their clients. Even though it was my aim to remain discreet and inconspicuous, I knew I was attracting the attention of some of the women. During the whole research stage, participation and observation were worthwhile and important in the process of data gathering. As the “unity of nearness and remoteness” (Simmel 1950, 402) that characterizes the stranger according to Georg Simmel, I could either participate subjectively or observe and afterwards mirror what was going on from a certain distance. However, the situation in the nightclub showed that I could never be near and remote at the same time without interfering – and possibly interfering too much – with a space. Through my wanting to observe what was going on, I had created a distance between myself and potential informants.

Another issue was that throughout the whole stay in Cartagena de Indias, the working hours had remained a big challenge for me, as did the language. Many times, I was up during the night, making my way to the centre between 8pm and 9pm, trying to be at the plaza before night fell and it started to get dark. After arriving, I mostly stayed at the plaza itself and at its nightclubs the whole night, observing the dynamics of the square talking to security and staff of the one nightclub I knew well, and to sex workers and coffee sellers. In order to have a clear mind and be attentive to what was happening around me, I mostly stuck to drinking water all night long and did not visit the nightclubs unaccompanied. It was difficult to detect whether the working situation was the same for the women working as sex workers. Did they, too, stick to drinking water during the night? Were they leaning against the monument of Pedro de Heredia because they began to get tired of walking or standing? Working hours were tough, because after midnight had flown by my body began to get tired, and when this happened I sometimes had to force myself to stay awake, and even more importantly, to stay observant. Although I did not perceive the language barrier as a huge problem, I could not articulate myself the way I wanted to. I took Spanish classes for four weeks. This was very helpful, but communication remained a problem, as some people talked very rapidly and with a heavy Caribbean accent which I had trouble understanding.

Outro: From Making the City to Making Sense of the City

Silke Oldenburg

Cities are alive. Obviously. Orienting oneself in a sprawling, honking, hot and difficult to understand context demands patience, commitment and passion. Doing ethnographic research for the first time is therefore a likewise complicated yet fascinating endeavour which requires an instantaneous sensibility to process a broad array of images and feelings at once. For instance, while we have a physical experience of the city – we feel its heat, its noise, the bumpiness of its tarmac – our experience of it is also informed by imaginary elements, by the indefinable and the uncanny (Canclini 2009, 41). Phenomena that are familiar and unfamiliar at the same time dominated the first weeks for most of the students when I could observe traces of homesickness or even culture shock without them realizing it: “It doesn’t feel strange here,” they stated in an astonished voice and I was wondering from where this feeling of “being used to” comes from. Is Cartagena in their experience really similar to Basel? What did they expect? Would they be able to delve into this complex urban space in such a short time span and how would it be to accompany a group in a city that is perceived by its own inhabitants as the second most dangerous one in Colombia?

Obviously, all of these ambiguous feelings and impressions contribute to the serendipity of field research. Engaging with everyday realities of ordinary people’s lives in research terms is not easy but triggers curiosity, engagement and energy with or within the urban environment. Relying mostly on empirical data, as ethnographers we are dependent on our interlocutors, their generosity, and their willingness to let us share their everyday life or their perspectives as experts in different realms. This became obvious for the students struggling with questions of positionality and social status in the field. Analogous to de Certeau’s *flâneur* who moves through urban crowds anonymously and observes without being object of surveillance (Jaffe and de Koning 2017, 44), the awareness of social privilege was raised during the field trip and during our final semester back in Basel. To share people’s experiences of everyday life enhances a confrontation with one’s own social status, cultural identity and positionality as individual but also as researcher. Sometimes we have to deal with people whose perspectives we would avoid ‘at home’ and leaving the comfort zone is a picture that sometimes comes up when heat, nostalgia and illness strike or racist or elitist comments make conversations burdensome. Accessing formal institutions and taking bureaucratic hurdles in a foreign context for the first time, confronting climatic challenges as the constant heat and not to mention the lilting *golpeao*, the typical vernacular of the Colombian Caribbean, led in the first place to feelings of fatigue but in the following weeks became a rewarding experience in coming to terms with everyday challenges.

The ethnographer of the urban needs time in order to gain knowledge. Six weeks are only a short timespan in order to get involved, to start observing attentively and listening closely while also paying attention to one’s own bodily reactions towards the urban environment. Nevertheless, while doing research for the first time was mostly based on “trial and error”, the students’ accounts in this working paper document the rich insights they gained on different levels. For me, it was particularly rewarding to observe how they slowly gained certitude with their research topics and how they started approaching their interlocutors with more ease, steadily getting used to the heavy Colombian accent. Obviously, six weeks are not sufficient to delve deeply into the making of a city, however, I hope that this issue conveys many of the pleasures, concerns and achievements a project course can bring forward.

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Notes from Contributors

Laura Bettschen

I have been fascinated with the dynamics of public space, and how fast they can change within a specific time frame. In my research in Cartagena, I wanted to explore that complexity and describe the relevant factors in the process of changing dynamics.

Christina Bosbach

Since I had my fair share of doubts about whether ethnographic research would be for me, it came as a bit of a surprise how much I enjoyed it, even and especially the seemingly endless writing of fieldnotes after a tiring day. Though and perhaps because challenging in many respects – be that the heat or the clash between my personal values and practices and some of my interlocutor's – the six weeks in Cartagena also got me to reflect intensely about the ethics of research and the way I want to research in the future.

Anna-Sophie Hobi

I was eager to tackle my initial research in anthropology and delve into ethnographic field work to test my own abilities. The topic of Indigeneity and urban-rural relations caught my interest but – honestly speaking – the prospect of enjoying constant flows of coffee was not negligible either.

Nicolas Miglioretto

The many ways in which people organize their lives and tackle challenges in their daily life around the world in widely varying circumstances fascinate me. In my research, I wanted to combine my two subjects of study: anthropology and sports sciences. The question of how children organize themselves to play and do sports in public space proved to be a suitable choice to bring together those topics.

Excursion to San Basilio de Palenque.
S. Oldenburg, January 2017



Silke Oldenburg

As city enthusiast, I am always excited to experience the diversity, creativity and unexpected encounter cities offer. I also feel committed to analyzing the various social challenges found in cities, such as poverty, insecurity and gentrification. I am particularly interested in the ways people experience and communicate about urban exclusion and solidarity and how differences are constructed, reproduced and transformed through time and space. My work focuses on comparative long-term urban research in Colombia (since 2004) and DR Congo (since 2008).

Nora Peduzzi

People who follow their passion, even against any possible obstacle, fascinate me. And there is something mesmerizing in witnessing someone expressing and creating his or her identity through visual art in a public space. Graffiti have an impact on a place, they create social spaces, and their temporality — some only last for a night, others for years — make them an even more interesting aspect in the process of “making the city”.

Christine Wabersich

Focusing on street food vendors not only allowed me to immerse myself in the fantastic Colombian dietary, but also to broaden my perspective on social actors and interactions in public space — thus, I constantly detect striking similarities regarding gentrification processes in Basel when strolling through my own *barrio*.

Livia Wermuth

When entering a space, I start interacting with its subjects as well as its objects. I wondered how individuals or communities in Cartagena appropriate their lived space. Therefore, I focused on the relationship between body and space, the changing bodily experience and power relations interfering a specific space.



Excursion to La Boquilla's mangrove swamps.
S. Oldenburg, January 2017

Glossary

agua	Water.
arepa	A typical Colombian dish: bread made from a ground maize dough with different fillings.
arrabal	Derogatory term for a marginal neighbourhood.
artesano/-a	An artisan.
barrio	Urban neighbourhood.
bola de trapo	Similar to baseball played on the streets.
cabildo	Historically, a cabildo represented "African religiosity"; in Getsemaní it has been revived as festive tradition. Beyond this meaning, it is a public entity legally representing the community and acting as a local authority.
calle/carrera	Street/big street.
centro histórico	Historic centre.
cerrito	Small hill.
ceviche	A Peruvian fish and/or seafood dish.
conquistador	(Spanish) conqueror
domino	Dominoes.
finca	Small farm.
Getsemanicense	Inhabitant of the neighbourhood Getsemaní.
golpeao	Local accent/pronunciation.
grafitero	Sprayer, graffiti artist.
ludo	Boardgame.
ñame	Yams.
"¡No dar papaya!"	"Opportunity makes the thief!"
No se vende.	Not for sale.
obleas	Colombian dessert dish: a biscuit sandwich filled with caramel, condensed milk, chocolate or similar.
Palenquera	Woman from the village Palenque. In Cartagena this term mostly denotes women selling fruit in colourful gowns.
plaza	Place, public square.
prepagó	Here: women working as escort girls (not necessarily involving sex work), being paid beforehand.
Semana Santa	Catholic holiday (the week before Easter).
sombrero vuelatio	Black and white braided hat, a typical product from Tuchín.
tinto	Coffee.
tintero	Coffee vendor.
yuca	Cassava, manioc.



Street decoration with plastic bags (Getsemani).
N. Peduzzi, January 2017

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As a group we all appreciate the support of everybody involved, research interlocutors and hosts alike, who made our stay enjoyable, productive and in sum a great experience.

Christmas decoration
in January. View
of Bocagrande from
Puente Román.
S. Oldenburg, January 2017



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