

Form-based Code v. Social Segregation in Latin America: The Case of Bogotá

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From the 1950s to the 1970s, Bogotá, Colombia was one of the fastest growing cities in the world due to extensive migration from the countryside. Because of a lack of development control during this period, Bogotá became characterized by extreme social and geographic polarization between rural migrants and urban elites, which in turn exacerbated the traditional uneven development of the city. Elites primarily located in neighborhoods in the north of Bogotá, well served by municipal infrastructure and enjoying easy access to services and employment opportunities. Low-skilled rural migrants settled in neighborhoods in the south that had poor municipal services and were located in environmentally polluted areas far from the central business districts.

These patterns of social and geographic polarization and uneven development translated into differences in built form, including different sized lots, building footprints and heights, differences in facade elements and materials, and different street, sidewalk and park dimensions. The elite areas distinguished by suburban housing while low-income areas were

defined by dense neighborhoods of informal origin and self-help housing. These neighborhoods of informal origin are today home to more than half of Bogotá's population and occupy about a third of the urban area.

Faced with the prospect of continuing, ungovernable urban sprawl led by both the formal and informal sector, in 1979 the city implemented a form-based code and a growth boundary intended to control sprawl, alleviate residential segregation, and densify the central city. However, 35 years later, these policies have failed to halt or reverse the uneven development of the city. This uneven development is manifest in continuing 1) residential segregation, 2) uneven built form patterns and 3) uneven distribution of services and employment.

This research argues that the unintended outcomes of the form-based code are due to private sector interests and actions, which in turn are influenced by the traditional social divisions in the city, institutionalized by equity policies. I focus on the so-called Stratification policy, which is not a planning mechanism but rather a national social policy developed to

distribute cross-subsidies from high-income to low-income groups for utility payments. As a social equity tool, Stratification is based on the classification of urbanized land in six different levels, or "Strata," based on building characteristics at the block level. My investigation documents how private sector developers respond to the incentives and disincentives provided through the Stratification system, working also towards influencing planning regulations. For example, Stratification prompts developers to invest more in areas of higher strata, attempting to influence planning processes in order to increase height restrictions in these areas, or in neighboring zones of lower strata. Because of this complex articulation of planning and social policies with private sector interests and actions, Bogotá's low income residents close to the wealthy are in effect experiencing gentrification and dislocation; or opposite, disinvestment and overcrowd when they are away from the high-income areas.

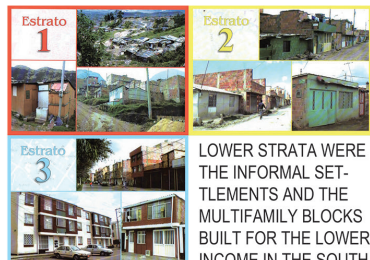
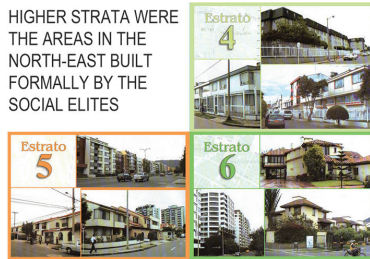
FORM-BASED CODE vs SOCIAL SEGREGATION

THE CASE OF BOGOTÁ 1979 - 2016

In the 1970s, Bogotá's urban planners and architects decided to fix the city problems of urban sprawl and social segregation using a "substantive" approach. They determined that the city should grow more dense and compact to foster a better integration of the social groups, while conserving the peripheral rural areas. Consequently, the city in 1979 enacted a revolutionary comprehensive plan that introduced an urban services boundary to limit growth; and a form-based code, to encourage the incremental densification of the central areas. However, they underestimated the rooted rationale of social segregation that led the private sector construction industry. As result, 30 years after, the city has densifying unevenly: more private investment have gone to the wealthier areas, while disinvestment in the poorer neighborhoods have facilitated their unruly development.

1940-1979: PLANNING BASED ON SOCIAL STRATA

HIGHER STRATA WERE THE AREAS IN THE NORTH-EAST BUILT FORMALLY BY THE SOCIAL ELITES



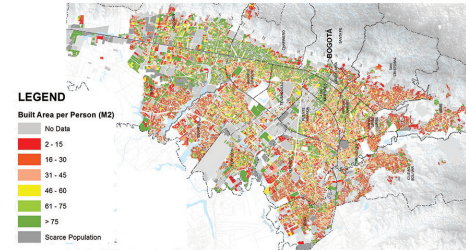
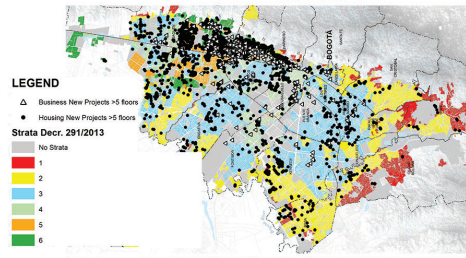
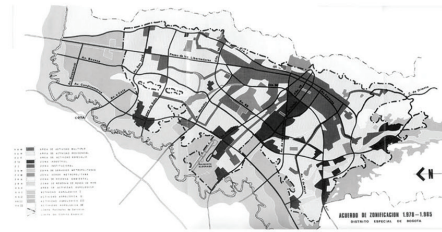
LOWER STRATA WERE THE INFORMAL SETTLEMENTS AND THE MULTIFAMILY BLOCKS BUILT FOR THE LOWER INCOME IN THE SOUTH AND WEST

1979-2016: FORM-BASED CODE + GROWTH BOUNDARY

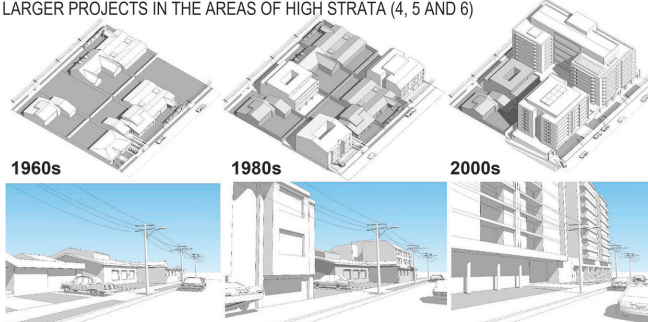
PLANS FROM 1979 TO 2000 PROPOSED A DENSE MEGA-CORE & SUBCENTERS TO OVERCOME SEGREGATION

HOWEVER NEW PRIVATE DEVELOPMENT FOLLOWS THE LOCATION OF THE HIGH STRATA IN THE NORTH

RESULT: PERPETUATION OF SPATIAL MISMATCH & UNEVEN DENSITY: LESS PEOPLE LIVE IN HIGH-RISES & MORE PEOPLE IN LOWER STRUCTURES



THE MECHANISMS OF UNEVEN DENSIFICATION: FORCES FROM THE PRIVATE SECTOR LOBBY TO CHANGE THE REGULATIONS AT THE LOCAL LEVEL TO BUILD MORE AND LARGER PROJECTS IN THE AREAS OF HIGH STRATA (4, 5 AND 6)



WHILE DISINVESTING IN THE AREAS OF LOWER STRATA (1, 2 AND 3), FACILITATING UNRULY AND INFORMAL DEVELOPMENT

