PERFORMING, VENDING, AND WALKING IN THE CITY: 
THE INTERNALLY DISPLACED POPULATION’S 
OCCUPATION OF SPACES IN MEDELLIN, COLOMBIA

by

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ABSTRACT

Internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Medellin, Colombia experience stigmatization and social, economic, and spatial exclusion. Furthermore, despite the fact that they generally remain in the city on a permanent basis, IDPs are treated as temporary or ambiguous residents. This thesis examines how IDPs respond to these experiences by permanently occupying and appropriating spaces in Medellin using social, cultural, and economic activities. Drawing primarily on evidence from two cases - the Centro de Desarrollo Cultural de Moravia and Parque Berrío - and exploring the concepts of the right to the city, spatial practice, and the transformation of space, this thesis demonstrates how performing, vending, and walking are among the activities that IDPs undertake to occupy spaces and establish their permanence in Medellin.

Keywords: Displacement; stigmatization; exclusion; right to the city; public space; transformation of space
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I sincerely hope that this project draws attention to the social and spatial challenges that IDPs face in the city and leads to the acknowledgement of the actions taken by these affected individuals.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE OF CONTENTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Approval ................................................................. ii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abstract ................................................................. iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgements ....................................................... iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table of Contents ............................................................ v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of Figures .............................................................. vi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of Acronyms and Abbreviations ................................ vii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Introduction</strong> ........................................................... 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Justification of Area of Study ........................................... 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literature Review ........................................................... 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodology ................................................................. 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chapter 1 – IDP Identity and Spaces in the City</strong> .................. 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IDPs and Migrants in Medellin ......................................... 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IDP Identity in the City .................................................. 23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IDPs and Spaces in the City ............................................ 28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IDP Activities in the City .............................................. 34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Occupation and Transformation of ‘Public’ Spaces ............ 37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusions ................................................................. 47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chapter 2 – El Centro de Desarrollo Cultural de Moravia and Parque Berrío</strong> ........ 49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moravia and the CDCM ................................................... 53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spatiality ................................................................. 56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activities and Diversity ............................................... 62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parque Berrío .............................................................. 68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activities, Meeting, and Walking ..................................... 73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusions ................................................................. 84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Conclusions</strong> ............................................................. 85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommendations ......................................................... 88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bibliography</strong> ........................................................... 90</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Medellin Urban Sprawl. Photo taken on September 25, 2010......................... 18

Figure 2: An asentamiento to the northeast of the city centre. Photo taken on July 25, 2010.................................................................................................................. 29

Figure 3: Ranchos on the site of the former garbage dump in Moravia. Photo taken on November 4, 2010......................................................................................... 31

Figure 4: Parque Berrio. Photo taken on November 11, 2010................................. 40

Figure 5: Public Space enforcement officials in Parque San Antonio. Photo taken on November 2, 2010......................................................................................... 42

Figure 6: Centro de Desarrollo Cultural de Moravia. Photo taken on November 4, 2010.................................................................................................................. 51

Figure 7: Space alongside Centro de Desarrollo Cultural de Moravia. Photo taken on November 4, 2010......................................................................................... 52

Figure 8: Parque Berrio. Photo taken on November 11, 2010................................. 72
# LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ASENCULTURA</td>
<td>Asociación de Entidades Culturales (Association of Cultural Entities)</td>
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<tr>
<td>ASOADEAN</td>
<td>Asociación de ancianos desplazados de Antioquia (Association of displaced senior citizens from Antioquia)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CDCM</td>
<td>Centro de Desarrollo Cultural de Moravia (Moravia Centre for Cultural Development)</td>
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<tr>
<td>CODHES</td>
<td>Consultoría para los Derechos Humanos y el Desplazamiento (Consultancy for Human Rights and Displacement)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IDP</td>
<td>Internally Displaced Person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INDER</td>
<td>Instituto de Deportes y Recreación (Institute of Sports and Recreation)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-governmental organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PUI</td>
<td>Proyecto Urbano Integral (Integral Urban Project)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RUPD</td>
<td>Registro Único para la Población Desplazada (Unique Register of the Displaced Population)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
INTRODUCTION

Colombia, despite boasting one of Latin America’s oldest and most stable democracies (Drake 2009; Smith 2005), has been engaged in a civil conflict that has generated one of the most severe and protracted humanitarian crises in the Western hemisphere. Nearly five decades of military, paramilitary, and guerrilla violence, narcotics trafficking, coca eradication programs, and economic growth mega-projects (i.e., dams, mines, enclave-style farming for food or biofuel export, expansion of cattle ranches, etc) have forcibly displaced an estimated 3.6 – 5.2 million individuals (between 8% and 11.6% of the national population) from their homes, land, and belongings (Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre 2010)\(^1\). IDPs are most often displaced to Colombia’s urban centres where they merge into the margins of the city with migrants and other poor inhabitants.

Internal displacement implies desarraigo (uprooting) or destierro (exile), which have numerous consequences for the affected population. The effects include the disbanding of a community, the shattering of social networks, the destruction of life projects, and entering into a state of spaceless-ness. The term IDP can be understood as a temporary status, like refugee, whereby the individual, family, or community moves to a place of asylum for the duration of

\(^1\) While the government’s official figure as of December 2010 was 3.6 million IDPs, CODHES, a Colombian NGO widely considered the authority on facts and figures related to internal displacement in Colombia, places the figure at 5.2 million IDPs (Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre 2010).
the conflict. After the conflict, however, IDPs have the following options: they may exercise their right to return to their place of origin, their right to remain in their place of asylum, or their right to resettle in another part of the country, or in another country altogether. In Colombia, the majority of IDPs choose to remain in their place of asylum, which in most cases is an urban centre.

For IDPs who remain in their place of asylum, a number of local integration programs exist. These programs aim to fully incorporate IDPs in public affairs at the local, regional, and national levels, and provide them with equal access to public services (The Brookings Institution 1999). In theory, these programs largely fulfil the state’s responsibility to integrate the IDP population; in practice, however, on their own, they rarely succeed in transforming IDPs into equal, permanent residents in their new environment. This points to the need to draw attention to initiatives that IDPs are taking in their attempt to incorporate into the public affairs in their place of asylum.

Because so many IDPs choose to remain in their place of asylum permanently, the distinction between poor economic migrants and IDPs in the city begins to blur. Key differences exist, however, between migrants and IDPs: IDPs are typically poorer than migrants (Garay 2009; Molano 2005; Uribe 2000a); when tagged with the label IDP, they are often associated with illegality and bringing the conflict into the city (Molano 2005; Uribe 2000a); and, while migrants’ status tends to be permanent as a result of their integration into popular neighbourhoods and the local labour force (Naranjo 2008; Naranjo & Hurtado 2002), IDPs, despite residing in the city permanently, have a temporary or
ambiguous status in the city resulting from their lack of a permanent home, neighbourhood, and job, as well as their legal status. Consequently, public authorities and Medellin inhabitants frequently exclude IDPs socially, economically, and spatially from most spaces in the city, and often stigmatize them as either criminals or victims of violence. Although exclusion and stigmatization do not define the whole experience of IDPs in the city, much of the literature on IDPs focuses on these concepts (e.g. Garay 2009; Grabska & Mehta 2008; Molano 2005; Naranjo 2004, 2008; Sánchez 2008; Uribe 2000a, 2000b) as does a lot of the programming for IDPs at the institutional level (e.g. Fundación Batuta, CDCM, INDER). Additionally, as I describe in Chapter 1, the extent that IDPs are spatially excluded in Medellin also illuminates the importance of these issues. For these reasons, and others that will become clear as I present my evidence throughout this thesis, I use the concepts of stigmatization and exclusion as a basis to understand the experiences of IDPs in the city.

Medellin is a city that has a long history of both receiving and displacing IDPs. The latter phenomenon is known as “intra-urban displacement” (Personería de Medellín 2010a; Sánchez 2008), which unlike rural-urban or inter-urban displacement, is not as widely recognized by local, national, and international organizations and institutions. Nevertheless, intra-urban IDPs face similar challenges to other IDPs, particularly in experiencing spacelessness in the city. In Medellin, like in many other developing-world cities, spaces are typically assigned to, or appropriated by specific social groups: malls are for the wealthy, parks and museums are for tourists and locals with the time and
resources to engage in leisure activities, and popular neighbourhoods and the restaurants and businesses therein are for the working classes. One of the most imminent problems for IDPs, however, is that unlike tourists, upper, middle, or working class inhabitants of the city, and even migrants who fill necessary voids in the labour market and assimilate into the margins of the city, IDPs do not have designated spaces in the city which they can occupy on a permanent basis. Instead, Medellin locals, authorities, and institutions, only expect IDPs to occupy spaces on a temporary basis. Because the majority of IDPs remain in the city permanently, however, they become spaceless requiring them to find ways to include themselves in spaces on a permanent basis.

In this thesis, I analyze how IDPs appropriate and occupy spaces in Medellin. I argue that through the acts of vending, performing, and walking in the city, IDPs occupy and appropriate spaces in a non-violent and non-insurgent way. Through this occupation and appropriation of space, IDPs establish their permanence in the city while transforming key central spaces and spatial signifiers. Additionally, however, through vending, performing, and walking, IDPs develop a response to their experiences of stigmatization and exclusion in the city. Local authorities and residents accuse IDPs of being criminals (Uribe 2000a), of “illegally” occupying public spaces (Interview 10: September 15, 2010; Interview 11: September 20, 2010; Interview 12: September 20, 2010; Interview 13: September 20, 2010), or of bringing what they perceive to be a rural conflict into an urban zone (Molano 2005; Uribe 2000a). They also characterize IDPs as recipients of welfare and humanitarian aid who drain scarce public resources
(Uribe 2000a). These public responses to IDPs, coupled with racism and ethnic-based discrimination (many IDPs in Medellin are indigenous or Afro descendants), produce a set of stigmas that are pegged to IDPs in the city. These stigmas lead to IDPs’ exclusion from public spaces, established neighbourhoods, and the formal labour market. I argue throughout this thesis that many of these experiences stem from the perceived, or real temporary status that IDPs hold in the city. Thus, I argue that by undertaking activities to permanently occupy and appropriate spaces in the city, IDPs can establish themselves in the city and respond to these experiences.

Throughout this thesis, I use the term “appropriation” to refer to IDPs who lay claim to key central spaces in Medellin. Rather than IDP appropriation resulting in exclusive spaces for IDPs, however, the spaces that I analyze indicate the opposite: IDP appropriation serves as a means to transform spaces into dynamic sites of social, cultural, and economic activity that are, in fact, inclusive to IDPs, migrants, local Medellin inhabitants, and tourists. Additionally, IDPs appropriate these spaces as a means to integrate socially, culturally, and economically into the city, which further challenges the exclusiveness of IDP appropriation. While the term “incorporation” could be used to indicate the assimilation of IDPs into the existing activities in a particular space, I believe that “appropriation” is more suitable since it points to IDPs laying claim to a particular space so as to initiate their own activities and transform key central spaces and spatial signifiers.
**Justification of Area of Study**

Although a great deal of valuable research has been conducted in Colombian academia on the situation of IDPs (e.g. Bello, Ibáñez, Jaramillo, Meertens, Molano, Naranjo, Osorio, Riaño, Sánchez, Uribe, Villa), in North American academia, the topic does not receive the attention it deserves. Furthermore, in the research that has been carried out on the subject, several key questions remain unanswered regarding the activities IDPs carry out in the city and their significance. Most of the literature on development, empowerment, human rights, refugee studies, and forced displacement make sweeping normative statements emphasizing what the role of the state, non-governmental organizations, and the international community should be in responding to humanitarian crises such as internal displacement. Much of this literature proposes a ‘top-down’ approach to addressing the situation, and does not take into account the nuances of individual cases, communities, and spaces (Barakat 2005a, 2005b; Brennan & Martone 2007; Cohen 2007; Frelick 2007; Global IDP Project 2002; Grabska & Mehta 2008; Jones 2005; Kent 2007; McDowell & Van Hear 2006; Molyneux & Lazar 2003; Weiss Fagen et al 2006). In this paper, I do not attempt to make any general assumptions or proposals about how the situation of IDPs in the city should be responded to; instead, I present the specific issue of spaceless-ness that individual IDPs face in Medellin and examine the activities and actions they carry out to respond to their situation vis-à-vis space and experiences of stigmatization and exclusion.
The spatial issues IDPs face in the city are evident and ubiquitous, yet they are not generally associated with the major challenges of stigmatization and exclusion. I argue that space, stigmatization, and exclusion are inextricably linked. One action that IDPs take to respond to these experiences in the city is the occupation and appropriation of public social spaces. IDPs are typically presented as a destitute, embattled people with no control over their destiny and no capacity to alter their life situation. I believe that this portrait further victimizes IDPs and degrades them to a people incapable of integrating into the city. Therefore, I feel that it is instead more valuable to present them as spaceless individuals undertaking activities to enact and claim their right to the city and to occupy and appropriate spaces in the city on a permanent basis. Although IDPs do not explicitly state a desire to appropriate key central spaces in the city, the personal and collective accomplishments they cite as a result of having appropriated these spaces certainly point to the significance of this act. Vending, walking, and performing are activities IDPs carry out to accomplish this task and thus merit more attention. IDPs use these activities as tools to establish their permanence in the city, and overcome stigmatizations and exclusion caused by the ‘condition’ or ‘state’ that categorize them.

This thesis presents IDPs and their activities vis-à-vis space, exclusion, and stigmatizations in the city. My hope is that this particular presentation will shed light on some of the real and lived experiences and challenges of IDPs trying to become permanent residents of the city, as well as the activities they carry out to respond to these challenges.
Literature Review

Throughout this thesis, I have integrated the literature review with evidence as a means to support my main arguments. I do this because the main body of literature I employ does not focus on IDPs explicitly, but instead on the right to the city, spatial practice, and the transformation of space. Based on extensive field research in Medellin, I generated my main research question *how do IDPs occupy and appropriate spaces in Medellin?* Upon analyzing my data, I concluded that this literature best serves to explain the concepts of occupying and appropriating spaces and highlights well the experiences of IDPs in the city. I use substantial evidence throughout this thesis to demonstrate how this is the case. In this section, I briefly introduce the key theoretical concepts I apply throughout this thesis.

In considering the IDP population’s occupation and appropriation of spaces in the city, it is necessary to analyze the concept of the right to the city. While institutional discourses on the right to the city tend to emphasize the importance of being able to *visit* or *access* spaces in the city (Interview 4: August 25, 2010; Interview 7: September 9, 2010), scholars such as Lefebvre (1996) and Naranjo (2008) focus on the importance of being able to *live* and *participate* in the city. The institutional discourse leaves much to be desired for many inhabitants of the city: for those without the time, resources, or status to visit or conduct leisure activities in ‘public spaces,’ or for those deemed ‘indecent’ or ‘unworthy’ by police or public space enforcement officials to be present in public spaces in the city, the right to the city simply does not exist under these terms.
According to Lefebvre and Naranjo, however, IDPs, homeless people, and other marginalized segments of the population can enact or claim their right to the city by simply living in the city and participating in social, cultural, and economic activities. Through this process, marginalized individuals and communities engage in a struggle against stigmatization and exclusion.

To analyze the concept of the right to the city in depth, I engage Henri Lefebvre’s seminal essay “Right to the City” and look at Gloria Naranjo’s interpretation and application of the concept to the IDP community in Medellin. By presenting this theory of, and particular application to, the right to the city, I demonstrate how IDPs occupy, appropriate, and in some cases transform spaces in the city through participating in ludic activities (Lefebvre 1996) or by engaging in the construction of homes and neighbourhoods in the city (Naranjo 2004). Furthermore, I introduce the cases of the Centro de Desarrollo Cultural de Moravia and Parque Berrío to exemplify certain activities IDPs carry out to occupy and appropriate space, and enact their right to the city. This examination illustrates how IDPs engage in activities to facilitate their inclusion into the city, enact their right to the city, and directly respond to experiences of stigmatization and exclusion.

In addition to discussing the concept of the right to the city, I examine the process of occupying, appropriating, and transforming spaces. To illustrate how this process works, I analyze Lefebvre’s book The Production of Space (1991). By producing what Lefebvre calls a “social space” (1991) and Edward Soja calls “thridspace” (1996) – or a conceptual combination of a conceived, perceived, and
lived space – I argue that IDPs can imagine and enact a state of permanence in the city. Drawing on Lefebvre’s theory that congregation, assembly, social relations, and social activities all contribute to the production of a social space, I describe how in certain spaces in Medellin, IDPs congregate and undertake economic activities such as vending and performing in an attempt to transform the imagined and physical sense of the social space. All of these activities involve IDPs’ occupation, appropriation, and in some cases transformation of spaces, which serve to respond to their experiences of stigmatization and exclusion in the city.

To further develop Lefebvre’s concept, I draw on Doreen Massey to illustrate how it is essential to look at the economy in order to understand how spaces are produced, occupied, and transformed (1994). I analyze this concept with respect to the informal economic activities of IDPs in Medellin. Through their involvement in the informal economy (particularly, but not exclusively vending and performing), IDPs occupy, or lay claim to certain moments and locations in the time-space dialectic by re-identifying the space and changing the dynamics of the social relations therein. These actions help to facilitate IDPs’ incorporation into the formal and informal life of the city.

While Lefebvre, Massey, and Soja all provide the theoretical background to understand how social, cultural, and economic activities generally facilitate IDPs’ occupation, appropriation, and transformation of spaces in the city, Michel de Certeau demonstrates how walking can also have a similar effect (1984). De Certeau argues that walking vitalizes certain elements within a space,
transforming the spatial signifiers therein. He discusses the effects that the act of walking has on a space by creating either possibilities or prohibitions, and I examine some of the ways that IDPs, as temporary residents, walk the city. Specifically, I look at the examples of vending, performing, and begging: instead of realizing these activities from a fixed location such as a stall, a street corner, or a stage, many IDPs wander through parks and other public spaces, and ride buses, selling coffee or candies, singing or playing songs, or simply asking for money. These acts of walking create possibilities for IDPs and other inhabitants and tourists of Medellin. For IDPs, the act of walking enables the creation of economic opportunities and facilitates their inclusion into public spaces in the city; for other inhabitants and tourists, walking allows for the consumption of goods and activities provided and facilitated by the movement of IDPs around the city.

Finally, I create an image of a dynamic and constantly transforming city as a result of walking, social, economic, and cultural activities, which I contrast with Angel Rama’s static and non-transformational “lettered city”: a “planned and repetitive urban landscape” that attempted to uphold social hierarchies by using the written word (1996: 1). I discuss how the lettered city could not sustain itself facing an increasingly literate society: as a result of vending, walking, performing and other such activities, the lettered city cannot resist transformation. I illustrate how Medellin, like other Latin American cities, has undergone this process of transformation and I introduce IDPs as subjects who can carry out this transformation through the occupation and appropriation of spaces.
Methodology

The research methods I used to generate my main research question for this project were entirely qualitative and consisted of informal meetings, presentations, group discussions, participant observation, and formal, semi-structured interviews. Through an affiliation with the Instituto de Estudios Políticos at the Universidad de Antioquia in Medellin, I set up preliminary meetings with professors and researchers studying the internally displaced population in the city. We had in-depth discussions about the situation of IDPs in the city, and they directed me to a wealth of locally published literature on the matter (e.g. Bello 2006, 2008; Jaramillo et al 2004; Naranjo 2004, 2008; Naranjo & Hurtado 2002; Osorio 2009; Riaño & Villa 2008; Uribe 2000a, 2000b). I proceeded to use this literature to develop a site-specific understanding of the situation of internal displacement that I had been researching more generally before arriving in Colombia. Through these readings and discussions, I began to develop an understanding of specific forms of exclusion and stigmatization that IDPs experience in Medellin. Most significantly, it became clear that Medellin’s urban sprawl, the asentamientos (squatter settlements), and the general layout and distribution of space in Medellin are directly correlated to the allocation, occupation, and appropriation of space vis-à-vis IDPs in Medellin.

With this theoretical understanding of the distribution of space in the city, I decided to gain a visual perspective of the city by taking the Metrocable routes on a number of occasions (funiculars that climb up the mountainsides of the Valle de Aburrá and form part of Medellin’s public transit system), and by positioning
myself in high points around the city. Downtown and the city’s few planned
neighbourhoods are marked with relatively straight, streetlamp-lined roads with
houses and buildings made of permanent construction materials (i.e., cement,
bricks, tiles, etc.), while the rest of the city appears sporadic and unplanned, with
steep, narrow roads (many of which are unpaved), some homes and buildings
made completely with permanent construction materials, others partly, and
others made completely with temporary, or makeshift recycled materials. Taking
visual tours over the city was an important preliminary research method for
several key reasons: I became familiar with the unequal distribution of space and
the precarious living conditions of those existing on the margins of the city; I
observed the different grades of permanence of the dwellings and communities
throughout the city and came to understand them as a manifestation of constant
rural-urban migration and forced displacement to Medellin over the past several
decades; and, I became aware of the forms of IDP settlement in different spaces
throughout the city. Friends and acquaintances often accompanied me on these
visual tours of Medellin, explaining the process of urban expansion and drawing
comparisons with their visual memories of the city from times passed.
Additionally, bystanders in the cable car would often chime in with their own
explanation or account of a particular asentamiento, often proudly extolling the
aesthetic virtues of the community. These explanations I would then compare
with published anthropological accounts and histories of the city.

With this understanding of the physical allocation, occupation, and
appropriation of space in the city, I began searching for different social, cultural,
and economic activities that would demonstrate the process of IDPs’ occupation and appropriation spaces. After formally presenting my objectives for this project to professors and researchers at the university, we began to brainstorm different organizations and individuals I could contact to gain insight into IDPs’ activities in the city. I began with a semi-structured group interview at the Secretaría de Cultura Ciudadana at the Alcaldía de Medellín (the municipal government Ministry of Citizen Culture) to determine what cultural programs and activities exist for IDPs at the municipal government level (Interview 2: August 3, 2010). Through this interview, I began to chart the different initiatives proposed by the government ministry for the IDP community, as well as the initiatives proposed by the community and supported by the government. Of the initiatives cited in this interview, and in speaking briefly with those administering the different initiatives, the Centro de Desarrollo Cultural de Moravia (CDCM) emerged as the most viable option for conducting in depth research. My main contact at the Ministry took me to the Centre, introduced me to the administration, and I proceeded to spend time meeting and conversing with many of the staff members. I established a rapport with the staff, informed them of my research, and they offered to support me in any way they could. A series of informal meetings, tours of the Centre and the community, and sitting in on dance classes and performance rehearsals all allowed me to observe the activities taking place and how they represent the occupation, appropriation, and transformation of space in the community. My continued presence at the CDCM demonstrated my genuine interest in the Centre, its participants, and their activities, which led to a series of
one-on-one semi-structured interviews that proved to be invaluable in determining the importance of the CDCM to community members, as well as the significance of the activities they carry out.

To add more breadth to my project, I decided to incorporate a grassroots initiative into my research design. Returning to my initial set of contacts established in collaboration with the university, I began contacting IDP community leaders. Through informal encounters and telephone conversations I determined that many of the activities these community leaders carry out are political in nature and geared towards realizing change for IDPs at the institutional level. In particular, I found that much of the focus tends to be on helping IDPs with *tutelas* (making legal demands of the government based on the constitutional rights of IDPs). While these activities are crucial in supporting IDPs in the city, fighting for their rights, and helping them access much needed government resources, I determined that they would not help me understand how IDPs’ social, cultural, and economic activities serve to occupy and transform social, economic, physical, and cultural spaces in the city.

On visits to downtown Medellín, however, I discovered a group of musicians playing daily in Parque Berrío, who I learned were mostly displaced. I discovered that they were organized and went to my contacts at the university to see if they could connect me with their leader. They did, and we engaged in a long semi-structured interview about the process, objectives, and significance of the musicians in the park. This group leader helped me to broaden my scope to the vendors occupying the park, and not just the musicians, seeing in that many
of them are also IDPs. He invited me to accompany him to the park where he
introduced me to many of the musicians, with whom I held a series of semi-
structured, one-on-one and small group interviews on site. Arriving as a ‘friend’
of this group leader granted me uninhibited access to the musicians and vendors
in the park. To demonstrate my continued interest in their process, I visited the
park frequently to meet with the musicians and vendors, and attended their
meetings. Many of Parque Berrío’s occupants came to know me and trust me,
addressing me as compañero (companion, comrade, friend), and appreciated the
fact that I expressed such an interest in their activities.

Through site, activity, and participant observation, informal meetings,
presentations, and semi-structured interviews of varying lengths (depending of
the level of interest and amount of information the informant could, or was willing
to provide), I gained entrée to my research sites and subjects, and collected the
data necessary for this project.
CHAPTER 1 – IDP IDENTITY AND SPACES IN THE CITY

IDPs and Migrants in Medellin

Nearly a century of rural-urban migration, and a half-century of forced displacement to the city have fuelled Medellin’s urban sprawl through the scenic Valle de Aburrá (Naranjo 2008; Naranjo & Hurtado 2002; Uribe 2000b). From the core of Medellin, mostly unplanned neighbourhoods extend in all directions, absorbing migrants and IDPs from all parts of the country who have moved to the city to seek economic opportunities or refuge from violence in their places of origin (see Figure 1). Although similar in many ways, key differences exist between migrants and IDPs. Most significantly, migrants typically come to the city with the intention to stay, establish themselves permanently, and become part of the city’s economy and demos. Conversely, IDPs, like refugees, initially come to the city temporarily to receive emergency humanitarian aid and social assistance. While some IDPs opt to exercise their right to return if conditions in their places of origin permit, the vast majority of Colombian IDPs decide to establish themselves in the city permanently, like migrants, blending into the cityscape and assuming similar activities to those of poor migrants. As a result, many of the visible, social, and cultural distinctions between IDPs and migrants become blurry, which calls for a clearer examination of the two groups.
Migrants move to the city with a high degree of choice, little, or none (Riaño 2008; Van Hear 2000). As Riaño notes, however, the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) blurs the distinction between economic migrants, who typically move with some degree of choice, and forced migrants, who move with little or no choice whatsoever (Riaño 2008: 15). Although economic migrants and forced migrants are similar in that both groups experience vulnerability and exclusion upon their arrival in the city (Riaño 2008: 15), and both groups use networks of family, friends, and neighbours to adapt, integrate, and survive in the city (Osorio 2009: 194), overriding factors differentiate them. Namely, forced migrants leave their places of origin spontaneously, abruptly, and generally through some form of coercion, while
economic migrants do so on their own terms and schedules, albeit under certain (economic) constraints (Osorio 2009: 194; Van Hear 2000). Additionally, it is often impossible for forced migrants to return to their place of origin, whereas economic migrants can generally do so at will (Osorio 2009; Riaño 2008). Van Hear attempts to place IDPs in the broader arena of forced migration (2000), while Osorio differentiates between them: She argues that forced migrants have a small amount of autonomy and choice with regard to their date of departure and their destination, whereas IDPs have none whatsoever (Lassailly-Jacob 1999 in Osorio 2009: 158). Nevertheless, the conditions under which IDPs and other types of forced migrants leave their place of origin, and subsequently their inability to return, make these two groups overwhelmingly similar.

Throughout this paper, I use the term “migrant” to refer specifically to economic migrants who can plan to move to the city, have some degree of choice in the matter (despite economic hardships in their place of origin), and generally have the option to return home. Conversely, I use the term “IDP” to refer to those who have come to the city by obligation, force, or coercion. IDPs do not plan to move to the city and although they have the right to return to their place of origin, conditions there frequently prevent them from doing so (Osorio 2009: 195). Since the term “IDP” is a legal status that implies an obligation and recognition by the state – a controversial, yet important distinction that I will elaborate upon below – throughout this thesis, I will further clarify the differences and similarities between migrants and IDPs as they pertain to the context and framework of this project.
IDPs and economic migrants have been coming to Medellin as “strangers” over the past five or six decades (Naranjo 2008). Economic migrants particularly began to arrive in Medellin in the 1960s en masse amidst the industrial boom in the city, while IDPs started to become ubiquitous with the dramatic increase in violence in the countryside in the 1990s. Naranjo calls the economic migrations of the 1960s “migratory processes,” and the forced displacements of the 1990s “mass exoduses” (Naranjo 2008: 3). While the migratory processes reflected modernization and made economic migrants the face of a modern, dynamic city, mass exoduses represented human rights violations by military, paramilitary, and guerrilla forces, and the beginning of a new sociological paradigm in the city (Naranjo 2008: 3). Although migrants and IDPs both experience inequality, exclusion, marginalization, and intolerance by institutions and residents in the receiving centre, and both groups are largely employed in the informal labour market, some argue that IDPs occupy a “sociological category” different from migrants (Jaramillo et al 2004; Riaño 2008; Van Hear 2000). Sociological categories are based on a set of social behaviours, experiences, and specific circumstances. In particular, fear, as Riaño emphasizes, is an experience specific to IDPs that is constructed by their “historical memory” and “social suffering” (Riaño 2008: 27).

In many developing countries around the world where extreme poverty in the countryside forces rural inhabitants to migrate to the city for survival, the distinction between choosing to move to the city and being obligated to do so may not be significant. As is evident in Colombia, however, and as almost any
Colombian in the city or the countryside will attest to, the countryside is rich in natural resources and rural inhabitants are generally well nourished, live in better housing conditions, and have a reasonable quality of life, as compared to the city. A CODHES report cites that between 67.6% and 69.9% of IDPs suffer from some form of food insecurity due to the unavailability or high costs of nutrient-rich food and potable water in their asentamientos in the city (Garay 2009: 147-8). Furthermore, an astonishing 98.6% of IDP household incomes in the city fall below the poverty line, while 82.6% fall below the indigence line (Garay 2009: 206). By comparison, according to IDP testimonies cited in a report by the World Food Programme, food insecurity and their economic status in the countryside was never as major a concern, seeing in that IDPs had chickens, eggs, yucca, plantain, and other nutritious staples on their land that they did not need to purchase (World Food Programme 2003: 2). Additionally, merely 5.5% of IDPs live in a domicile that meets ‘adequate’ housing standards, as defined by the availability of, and proximity to, basic goods, services, facilities, and infrastructure, as well as the affordability and liveability (i.e., construction and space) of the dwelling (Garay 2009: 167, 177). In the countryside, IDPs do not cite housing as a major concern, seeing in that it does not typically pose a direct threat to their survival, as it does in asentamientos in the city (see “IDPs and Spaces” section below). Thus, seeing in that life in the city poses such a serious threat to the well-being of IDPs, it is necessary to draw a clear distinction between migrants who have the opportunity to return home if they realize they
cannot surmount these difficulties, and IDPs who, for fear, continued occupation of their lands, or direct threats to their well-being, simply do not have this option.

Despite the difficulties that IDPs face, there are two key areas in which life can be better for IDPs in the city than in the countryside: employment opportunities for women and educational opportunities for children. Since typical male occupations in the countryside (mostly in agricultural work) are not largely transferable to the city, and typical female occupations (cleaning, laundry, looking after children, etc) are, forced displacement often results in women assuming a lot of financial responsibility. Additionally, in many cases the matriarch becomes the *cabeza de la familia* (head of the household), effectively reconstituting traditional gender roles (Meertens 2001). With regard to children’s education, more opportunities exist in the city than in the countryside. As a registered IDP, a child may be admitted into school at any time throughout the year and receives free lunches and uniforms (Interview 1: June 17, 2010). Moreover, a nationwide music program called *Fundación Nacional Batuta*, in partnership with *Acción Social*, the national welfare system, provides free musical education for IDP children in city centres throughout Colombia (Fundación Batuta 2011; Interview 4: August 25, 2010). Although schools do exist in the countryside, they tend to be more difficult to access than in the city, and children often need to help out with work on the farm or in the house, thus limiting their opportunity to further their education.

All of the factors mentioned present an interesting paradox: although it is difficult to clearly distinguish visibly, socially, and culturally between an IDP and a
migrant, significant differences exist between the two groups’ experiences in the city. Many authors discuss how IDPs develop a joint identity with the poor (both locals and migrants) in the city based on stigmatization, exclusion, and anonymity (Garay 2009; Grabska & Mehta 2008; Molano 2005; Naranjo 2008), how their psychosocial trauma results in an IDP ‘condition’ different to that of others in the city (Bello 2006, 2008; IOM 2003; Riaño 2008), or how they are often accused of being guerrillas or paramilitaries and for bringing the conflict into urban areas (Molano 2005; Uribe 2000a, 2000b). I believe that other factors exist, however, that distinguish between IDPs’ and migrants’ experiences in the city. Namely, spatial factors play a key role in determining the experience of an IDP in the city vis-à-vis the experience of a migrant, or any other poor inhabitant of the city.

According to Naranjo, both IDPs and migrants become part of the city as soon as they decide to stay, despite the fact that society and institutions may not recognize them as such (2008: 5). Therefore, in the following section I attempt to explain how IDPs are not occupying the city temporarily, as their status may imply, but rather permanently, much like migrants. Nevertheless, IDPs self-identify differently from migrants, have a different legal status, and fall under a different social category than migrants, all of which affect the ways IDPs occupy spaces in the city.

**IDP Identity in the City**

IDPs have a complex identity in the city. Upon enlisting in the Registro Único de la Población Desplazada (RUPD, or the Unique Register of the
Displaced Population), IDPs become eligible for the numerous rights and benefits guaranteed to them by Law 387 of 1997. The fundamental principles of Law 387 are the following: IDPs have the right to solicit and receive international humanitarian aid; they have the right to enjoy internationally recognized civil rights and freedom of movement; they have the right not to be discriminated against based on their “social condition” as an IDP, their race, their religion, their place of origin, public opinion, or physical incapacity; they have the right to be reunited with their family; they have the right to access definitive solutions to their condition; they have the right to return; and they have the right not to be forcibly displaced. Additionally, the law explicitly outlines the responsibility of the State in responding to the diverse problems faced by IDPs (Republic of Colombia 1997).

Registration in the RUPD gives IDPs a tag that clearly distinguishes them from migrants and even unregistered IDPs. Many individuals in the city self-identify as IDPs, but if they are not registered in the RUPD, the state and society do not officially recognize them as IDPs. In order to register in the RUPD and declare IDP status, IDPs need to be informed about the system, they need to trust the system, they need to be able to provide all the required personal information, and they need to provide a detailed explanation of their displacement. Although these demands may sound straightforward, IDPs frequently live in marginal areas where this type of information is not widely disseminated, they mistrust the authorities with whom they need to register, and they fear that by providing the necessary details, if they are able to provide these details, they lose their anonymity and can once again become victims of violence.
or displacement (Ibáñez & Velásquez 2009). Additionally, authorities frequently reject the possibility that a particular group perpetrated the displacement, thus denying many IDPs the ability to register in the system (Interview 1: June 17, 2010; Interview 10: September 15, 2010). This scenario is especially common in Medellín, where intra-urban IDPs are frequently unable to register in the RUPD, and are thus excluded from the rights and benefits provided by the system (Sánchez 2008). As a result of these difficulties, only an estimated 65.7% of IDPs are registered in the RUPD (Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre 2010) and of those who are registered, few receive timely delivery of support, and many do not receive it at all (Ibáñez & Velásquez 2009: 431; Interview 13: September 20, 2010). This demonstrates that although a system is theoretically in place to serve IDPs, since it excludes many self-identified IDPs, it is ineffective in upholding the rights and benefits of all IDPs.

According to Colombian and international law, IDPs, like refugees, have a particular status as temporary residents in the city until the state can fulfil its obligation to facilitate their “right of return.” Because many displaced individuals are not officially recognized as IDPs, however, and because IDPs in Colombia seldom return home, an IDP/non-IDP dichotomy exists in the city. Although IDPs share many of the same characteristics as poor migrants, they are not migrants; and although individuals experience displacement and self-identify as IDPs, they may not have the recognition, legal distinction, and the accompanying social, economic, and cultural rights and benefits of IDPs.
This last point brings into question whether institutions and locals consider IDPs to be legitimate inhabitants of the city. Medellin, like many other modern metropolises around the world, is a city that has grown tremendously – economically and in terms of population – as a result of migration (Naranjo 2008; Naranjo & Hurtado 2002). Migrants, both in Medellin and more generally, come to the city to work. They occupy specific spaces within the city by establishing themselves in barrios populares (popular neighbourhoods) and engaging in activities such as factory work², construction, recycling, domestic work, and vending or peddling. They assimilate into the margins of the city with other recent and former migrants, fill necessary voids in the labour market, and are recognized by locals as trabajadores (labourers). On the other hand, IDPs are perceived in a much different light. Uribe categorizes IDPs as either desplazado damnificado (displaced victim) or desplazado bandido (displaced criminal) (Uribe 2000a), labels under which most accounts and perceptions of IDPs fall. The desplazado damnificado is not recognized by the receiving community as a fellow citizen and is therefore excluded from the demos and denied equal rights (Uribe 2000a: 27). On the other hand, the desplazado bandido is highly stigmatized as “politically subversive” (Global IDP Project 2002: 10), or as having “done some harm” (Molano 2005: 233), and is often considered to be a guerrilla (Uribe 2000a). More generally, “IDPs are seen to exacerbate local problems and demand services the state cannot provide” (Weiss et al 2006: 79), whereas migrants do not. They are perceived as a burden to the social system, “as

² Medellin’s manufacturing sector used to attract numerous migrants to the city. In recent years, however, many factories have closed further limiting employment opportunities for migrants and IDPs alike. For more information see Garcia 1995.
criminals, as a collective threat to societal stability, and as a population that has carried the conflict with them from rural areas into the heart of Colombia’s major cities” (McDowell & Van Hear 2006: 7-8). The term “IDP” generates positive and negative, and ambiguous and contradictory connotations: an IDP can be a victim who provokes compassion, solidarity, and indignation, or a danger to society who has brought the war to the city; an IDP is either an object of rights, or a usurper of resources (Osorio 2009: 178).

In addition to these stigmas associated with IDPs, due to the high percentages of displaced indigenous peoples and Afro-Colombians in the city, racial and ethnic-based discrimination constitute another major concern: “black, Indians and other non-Spanish speaking groups are considered undesirable neighbours by the authorities and resident populations alike” (Global IDP Project 2002: 86). Although these experiences of racism and xenophobia also apply to certain migrants in the city, when compounded with the stigmas associated with being an IDP, the psychosocial trauma related to being uprooted and breaking ties to their lands and their communities, and not immediately having a space they can occupy in the city (see below), this additional barrier to enter the city often proves to be a significant challenge that IDPs face.

The stigmatizations and temporary status of IDPs severely limit the activities in which they can participate in the city. Although IDPs and migrants have many of the same skills and the same degree of ethnic and racial diversity, and although they undertake many of the same economic activities in the city such as domestic work, recycling, street performing, and vending, IDPs are
overwhelmingly relegated to the informal economy. According to a CODHES study, 96.6% of employed IDPs work in the informal sector, or as wage labourers with little or no job security (Garay 2009: 206). As a result, IDPs are resorting to resbusque (odd jobs) and frequently need to create opportunities for themselves throughout the city in order to make ends meet. As I learned through walking, taking buses, and engaging in formal and informal conversations with vendors, performers, and walkers throughout the city, many IDPs are finding ways to “salir adelante” (get ahead) by selling candies, coffee, snacks, or guarapo (sugar cane juice), performing music on buses and in parks, juggling at stoplights, producing and selling artisan crafts from their home region, begging, or simply walking. I argue that these activities not only help IDPs get ahead, but also lead to their occupation, appropriation, and transformation of spaces in Medellin, symbolizing their permanent establishment in the city. This concept will now be explored in further detail.

**IDPs and Spaces in the City**

For IDPs, moving to the city often signifies a decline in housing standards, food insecurity, and extreme conditions of poverty and indigence, as explained above (Garay 2009; Ibañéz & Vélez 2008; Molano 2005). IDPs frequently live in ranchos (shacks, makeshift homes) in a number of asentamientos that cover the hillsides to the west, east, and north of the core of Medellin (see Figure 2). Ranchos and asentamientos are an allegory of the temporary-come-permanent status of IDPs in the city. Occupying land as squatters, IDPs scrape together materials to construct a dwelling for themselves and their families. Although it is
difficult to say with certainty whether individual IDPs intend for their rancho to become their permanent dwelling when they first arrive in the city, this frequently becomes the case: Over time, IDPs convert the makeshift structure into a permanent home through the use of bricks, concrete, and other durable construction materials.

Figure 2: An asentamiento to the northeast of the city centre. Photo taken on July 25, 2010.

In order to settle permanently in the city, IDPs go through three principal stages. As Jaramillo et al explain, first they arrive at the bus terminal, then they move in with family, friends, or acquaintances, and finally they acquire a lot in an asentamiento to set up their rancho (2004: 93). The authors argue that the third stage is the most important for IDPs to establish themselves in the city and attain
socioeconomic stability. For IDPs, acquiring a lot and building a rancho is significant for a number of reasons: it means not paying rent, it helps to overcome the condition of being arrimados (scroungers, unwelcome guests), it gives them a sense of security, it reduces the state of liminality (i.e., temporary/ambiguous status in the city), and it demonstrates a struggle for social inclusion (Jaramillo et al. 2004: 94-97). The ability to buy a lot (through savings, help from family and friends, government assistance, etc) also makes IDPs feel like they are part of a community (Osorio 2009: 345). On the other hand however, living in a rancho often poses difficulties for IDPs since most are built on “high risk” land. High risk (alto riesgo) land tends to be characterized by hillsides with the potential for landslides (as could be noted with the heavy rains in November and December 2010 in Bello, a suburb of Medellín) (Romero 2010), contaminated soil (as is the case with Moravia, which will be examined in detail in Chapter 2), and the presence of armed groups (prevalent in Moravia, but also ubiquitous in many asentamientos in Medellín) (Riaño 2002, 2004). Despite these challenges, IDPs take great pains to turn their ranchos into permanent dwellings with all the amenities of home.
Figure 3: Ranchos on the site of the former garbage dump in Moravia. Photo taken on November 4, 2010.

In *asentamientos*, IDPs are subjected to substandard living conditions, as characterized by precarious land conditions (as mentioned above), a deficiency in basic social services (e.g. sanitation, housing, education, health, and recreation), and higher rates of malnutrition, unemployment, and violence (Garay 2009; Naranjo 2008; Uribe 2000b). These “*espacios residuales*” (residual spaces) host increased rates of drug addiction, poor health, and armed actors, which present an imminent danger to the well-being of IDPs (Uribe 2000b). Because of a lack of planning, *asentamientos* are often difficult to transit by car.
or even by foot, and public spaces are scarce as new IDPs occupy them to set up their ranchos.

Two main types of asentamientos exist in Medellin: the asentamiento nucleado and the asentamiento disperso. Asentamientos nucleados are almost entirely populated by IDPs who take root in the community, build solidarity networks, and have some form of organized leadership (Uribe 2000b). These asentamientos are frequently identified as IDP communities where newly arriving IDPs can go to well-established IDPs for help and support, local and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) operate, and better information is available about IDP rights and benefits. In asentamientos dispersos, IDPs seek anonymity, live wherever they have contacts, look for daily sustenance, and aim to dissolve into the community. These IDPs frequently do not wish to contact other IDPs in the community, refuse to affiliate with community organizations, and are ill-informed about the services and benefits available to them (Uribe 2000b). If in asentamientos nucleados IDPs make an attempt to be visible to institutions and organizations, in asentamientos dispersos IDPs make every attempt possible to be invisible (Uribe 2000b).

Jaramillo et al argue that IDPs are in search of a place where they can be safe and secure, and remain unbothered (2004: 87). In moving from neighbourhood to neighbourhood in search of safe, affordable, and permanent housing, IDPs become what Osorio calls “urban nomads” (2009: 427), or a spaceless people, existing on the margins of Medellin and struggling for their inclusion in the city. Naranjo posits that by constructing ranchos and
asentamientos, many of which have become popular neighbourhoods in Medellin, IDPs occupy and appropriate spaces to include themselves in the city (2004; 2008). She argues: “In spite of exclusion, intolerance and inequity, IDPs fight for their inclusion in the city, and contribute to its construction with whatever means available and under the most adverse conditions” (2004: 152). In an earlier article, Naranjo and Hurtado explain that IDPs include themselves in the city through a process of “urban colonization” involving the appropriation of spaces and constructing homes and neighbourhoods (2002).

The IDP struggle for inclusion in the city can be examined within the framework of enacting or claiming the right to the city. Although Naranjo proposes that IDPs can enact or claim the right to the city through the appropriation of marginal residential spaces (e.g. asentamientos) and the construction of ranchos, these efforts take place, precisely, on the margins of the city where locals and tourists do not go and the majority of the city’s formal and informal activities do not take place. Therefore, the fact that IDPs simply exist on the margins of the city does not translate into their integration into the existing formal and informal life of the city. Instead, to integrate, IDPs need to establish their presence within the city by mobilizing public services and occupying spaces within the formal boundaries of the city, where locals and tourists frequent.

Lefebvre proposes that the right to the city can be enacted or claimed through participation in social and ludic activities (1996). In the following section, I will examine how IDPs enact their right to the city through engaging in formal and informal participation within the boundaries of the city.
IDP Activities in the City

“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: 173-4).

Henri Lefebvre, in his seminal paper "Right to the City", describes the right to the city as the highest form of rights and freedoms that ensures that inhabitants are not excluded from the central activities and spaces of the city (Lefebvre 1996). Unlike discourses, institutional or otherwise, which refer to the right to the city as simply the right to visit or access different activities and spaces within the city, Lefebvre’s definition illuminates the importance of living and participating in the city, of *habitat* (the environment) and *habiter* (way of living). *Habitat* and *habiter* are vital components of the right to the city in that they account for the inclusion of marginal segments of the population into the city’s spaces and social life.

IDPs face an uphill battle in their attempts to include themselves in the activities of the city. Unlike migrants, tourists, or locals who have *legitimate* spaces (i.e., planned or semi-planned neighbourhoods, permanent, well-constructed homes, hotels, etc) and conduct recognized and socially acceptable activities (i.e., formal employment, visiting, paying taxes), IDPs, because of their spaceless condition and temporary/ambiguous status, do not have a recognized role in society. As a result, IDPs are unable to participate in the city as migrants, locals, or tourists do, which force many of them to *wander* in their spaceless state. In their wanderings, IDPs sometimes assume their own activities (such as vending, performing, and walking), or participate in activities that institutions,
organizations, or associations facilitate for them (e.g. musical activities with Fundación Batuta and at the CDCM – see Chapter 2 – and sports and recreation activities with the Instituto de Deportes y Recreación), in an attempt to incorporate themselves in the city.

The Alcaldía de Medellín (municipal government), the Instituto de Deportes y Recreación (INDER – the national Institute for Sports and Recreation), Fundación Batuta, and other institutions have all been promoting ways to facilitate the right to the city for all of Medellin’s inhabitants. With respect to the IDP population in the city, INDER operates in many asentamientos and Batuta operates in communities with a high concentration of IDPs (Interview 4: August 25, 2010; Interview 7: September 9, 2010). One of the basic principles of these institutions is to open up facilities, classes, and programs to IDP children and youth in these communities, free of charge, and on a long-term or permanent basis. As will be examined in detail in the following chapter, the CDCM also facilitates classes and programs for inhabitants of the (largely displaced) community of Moravia. These institutions and their facilities provide a meeting place where participation and interaction take place through musical education, recreation, or sport, not just with other IDPs, but with other inhabitants of the city as well. By enabling children and youth to participate in these activities based on principles of rights, IDPs access spaces in the city typically out of their reach (for economic, social, or geographical reasons), allowing them to challenge their experiences of exclusion. Participation in INDER’s, Batuta’s, and the CDCM’s programs helps IDPs attain recognition as equals within a designated space.
Apart from institutional activities, IDPs carry out a number of their own activities in the city. In Parque Bolivar, Parque San Antonio, and Parque Berrío (which will be examined in depth in the following chapter), IDPs shine shoes and sell minutos (cellular phone minutes) and tinto (coffee) to locals and tourists passing through the park. On street corners in the city centre, and on busy avenues outside the centre such as Calle 50 (Colombia), Carrera 70 (La 70), and Carrera 80 (La 80), locals purchase guarapo from IDPs (sugar cane juice) made using a trapiche (a mill traditional in Colombia’s Pacific Coast communities). On city buses, IDPs ask the driver for permission to climb over the turnstile or enter through the rear door (so as not to pay the fare), where they proceed to introduce themselves to passengers as IDPs trying to support their family or to pay for a libra de panela y arroz (a pound of brown sugar – produced directly from sugar cane and prepared as a typical beverage – and rice, two of the main, and most affordable, staples in Colombia). Very few simply ask for money: the majority of IDPs sell chicles (chewing gum), chocolate bars, or hard candies, often with a suggested price, but generally asking for any amount of money passengers are willing to pay. Others sing a capella, play a traditional corrido on guitar, or engage passengers in trova, an improvisational style of folk music where the musician comments on, and often mocks, the subject of the song (in this case, the passenger). These activities, among others, illustrate how many IDPs take the initiative to create opportunities and spaces for themselves in the city.

An important aspect of Lefebvre’s discourse on the right to the city is that similar to human rights, the right to the city is not seized through domination, but
rather, enacted through participation. Institutions and Medellin inhabitants do not recognize IDPs as permanent residents because of their temporary/ambiguous status in the city, and consequently, they do not recognize their right to the city. Participation in institutional ludic activities (e.g. INDER and Batuta) and in their own social and economic activities (e.g. vending, performing, and walking) helps IDPs to attain this recognition by attributing “use value” to the city rather than “exchange value.” Lefebvre argues that the “city and urban reality are related to use value” (Lefebvre 1996: 68), which demonstrates that if IDPs participate in activities in public spaces, what Lefebvre argues is “the eminent use of the city” (Lefebvre 1996: 66), they enact their right to the city.

To become permanent residents of Medellin and the urban reality, IDPs can participate in activities in key, transited spaces to establish a connection to those spaces, and include themselves physically, socially, economically and culturally in the city. In effect, through these activities, IDPs enact their right to the city by occupying, appropriating, and transforming spaces in the city. This concept will now be explored in detail.

The Occupation and Transformation of ‘Public’ Spaces

“The transformation of society presupposes a collective ownership and management of space founded on the permanent participation of the ‘interested parties’, with their multiple, varied and even contradictory interests. It thus also presupposes confrontation – and indeed this has already emerged in the problems of the ‘environment’ (along with the attendant dangers of co-optation and diversion)” (Lefebvre 1991: 422).

The term ‘public space’ has been defined and interpreted in many different ways depending on the context and the discipline. For the purposes of this
thesis, public space should be interpreted in its broadest and most general sense: an open, “social” space in the city that can be accessed freely and uninhibitedly by all occupants of the city, regardless of status or denomination. Lefebvre’s canonical work *The Production of Space* focuses on the notion that (social) space is a (social) product (1991). As such, social space is a product of social relations and continued participation in a particular space. Lefebvre goes to great lengths to discuss how social space, or “the space of social practice”, is a “logico-epistemological space” that consists of a conglomeration of physical, or perceived space, mental, or conceived space, and lived space (1991: 26). These three spaces comprise his conceptual triad: spatial practice, representations of space, and representational spaces/spaces of representation, respectively. The outcome of combining these three spatialities, social space, or what Soja (1996) calls “thirdspace,” thus serves the purposes of both thought and action: “Itself the outcome of past actions, social space is what permits fresh actions to occur, while suggesting others and prohibiting yet others” (Lefebvre 1991: 73). “[T]he form of social space is encounter, assembly, simultaneity,” wherein everything comes together, whether produced by nature or society, through cooperation or conflicts: “social space implies actual or potential assembly at a single point, or around that point” (Lefebvre 1991: 101). Examples of a public or social space are sidewalks, roads, city parks, or as is specifically the case in Medellin, sporting facilities and cultural centres (see CDCM in Chapter 2).

Ironically though, public, or social spaces are frequently exclusive. As Sarlo laments, one of the biggest failures of the modern city is the elimination of
inclusive, common spaces: “[F]rom a cultural point of view, the most spectacular change could be defined as the fall of the idea of the city as a common space where people of different social classes use the same facilities” (2008: 48). As Lefebvre argues, urban cores “do not only contain monuments and institutional headquarters, but also spaces appropriated for entertainments, parades, promenades, festivities. In this way the urban core becomes a high quality [my emphasis] consumption product for foreigners, tourists, people from the outskirts and suburbanites” (1996: 73). I argue that IDPs carry out activities that facilitate inclusiveness and the interaction of different social classes in the city. This can be noted in Parque Berrío where traditional music from the Colombian countryside attracts crowds of locals and tourists who, in addition to giving money to musicians, stimulate the surrounding economy by having their shoes shined or purchasing tinto, minutos, or fruit from vendors in the park (see Figure 4). Additionally, according to occupants of the park, music creates an element of safety in Parque Berrío, citing that few fights break out and few pickpockets take place as compared to the area immediately surrounding the park (Interview 13: September 20, 2010; Interview 14: September 23, 2010). Lefebvre explains this phenomenon by arguing that “certain ludic spaces, devoted for their part to religious dances, music, and so on, were always felt to be beneficent rather than baleful” (1991: 35). In this case, “beneficent” activities are in no way subversive or antagonistic to the ruling classes; yet they still serve as a means to challenge the existing notion of space. The broader effects created by the activities of IDPs
result in the slow transformation of the social space into a permanent space of IDP activity and high quality consumption.

Figure 4: Parque Berrio. Photo taken on November 11, 2010.

I would like to propose that an intrinsic aspect of public space is that it implies some form of temporary occupancy. By-laws and regulations against loitering, squatting, vending, performing, or sleeping in public spaces restrict the activities that can be undertaken in the space to more temporary practices such as walking, sitting, reading, and conversing. For those who have permanent spaces in the city (i.e., migrants, locals, tourists), these restrictions are welcome
and encouraged, as they are seen to conserve particular aspects of the public space. For spaceless IDPs, however, the temporary nature of public spaces excludes them socially, economically, or physically from that space. IDPs often seek recognition and inclusion in public spaces (Uribe 2000a: 38) but in many cases, their acts are instead perceived as invasions of public space. While INDER creates circumstances in which IDPs can go to a park or sporting facility, meet their friends, participate in sporting or recreational activities, spend their free time, and have fun (Interview 7: September 9, 2010), IDPs who vend, perform, build their ranchos, or congregate in public spaces without some form of institutional support are frequently subjected to harassment or eviction by police and public space enforcement officers from the Subsecretaría de Defensoría del Espacio Público (the municipal Sub-secretary for the Advocacy of Public Space – see Figure 5) (Interview 10: September 15, 2010; Interview 12: September 20, 2010). As I argue more extensively in Chapter 2, the temporary state of IDPs means that they lack non-public venues for their activities, thus relegating them to public spaces on a permanent basis. In the face of such resistance, however, IDPs face grave difficulties incorporating into city life, despite the transformative effects that their activities have on the social space.
According to Doreen Massey, it is necessary to look at spatial transformations in relation to the changing structure of the national and international economy (1994). As I alluded to above, in Medellin, as in many other developing-world cities, the informal economy absorbs most of the city’s poor, and the vast majority of IDPs. Therefore, the transformations taking place in parks and other spaces that IDPs occupy directly reflect IDPs’ informal economic activities. Massey defines the identity of a place as “laying claim to some particular moment/location in time-space when the definition of the area and the social relations dominant within it were to the advantage of that particular
claimant group”, and it derives, in large part, “from the specificity of its
interactions with ‘the outside’” (1994: 169). The social, economic, and cultural
activities that IDPs carry out within the spaces of Medellin all help to identify the
place, or space, but also help to define the social relations therein. The
temporary or ambiguous status of IDPs contributes to the construction of a
temporary/permanent dichotomy in social relations between IDPs and locals in
the city, with the former group on the “outside” and the latter group on the
“inside.” This dichotomy reflects Massey’s argument that spaces and places are
gendered (1994: 179). Therefore, by working through the informal economy to
occupy and transform public spaces, IDPs overcome the gendered dualism
inherent in the space by including themselves in the city permanently alongside
locals, as well as migrants and tourists.

Bordering between being an informal economic activity and
unemployment, walking is a typical IDP activity that leads to the transformation of
social spaces. In Michel de Certeau’s The Practice of Everyday Life, he argues
that “space is a practiced place” and practices such as walking or stories can
transform a place into a space (1984: 117). De Certeau explains, “the act of
walking is to the urban system what the speech act is to language or to the
statements uttered”: an appropriation of the topographical system on the part of
the pedestrian (as a speaker appropriates language); a spatial acting out of the
place (as speech is acting out language); and relations among differentiated
positions through movements (1984: 97-8). Similarly, stories can found or
provide spaces to undertake actions, by creating a field, for example, which can
serve as the walker’s base and theatre for practical actions (de Certeau 1984: 124).

The process of transforming spaces through walking occurs through the changing of spatial signifiers. De Certeau explains:

“[T]he walker transforms each spatial signifier into something else. And if on the one hand he actualizes only a few of the possibilities fixed by the constructed order (he goes only here and not there), on the other he increases the number of possibilities (for example, by creating shortcuts and detours) and prohibitions (for example, he forbids himself to take paths generally considered accessible or even obligatory)” (de Certeau 1984: 98-9).

The act of walking by or through a particular space vitalizes certain elements within that space, altering the spatial signifiers, and creating a series of possibilities or prohibitions. As opposed to changing the physical space itself, as through construction, walking changes the spatial signifiers, such as the flow of traffic, the type of people frequenting the space, social relations and interactions, and the economic activities undertaken in the space. Many IDPs in Medellin are walkers. As temporary residents of the city without a permanent space either for living or for their social, economic, and cultural activities, IDPs wander around parks and busy areas selling tinto out of thermoses; they get on and off of buses, and walk through the streets, parks, and squares selling candies and chewing gum; and just as some IDPs play music in parks or squares, others spend their days riding buses with their guitars, traversing the city entertaining hundreds of passengers each day. Some IDPs are beggars, who walk through the business, commercial, and tourist sections of the city centre to try to appeal to the good nature of tourists and Medellin’s permanent residents to earn a living. In all of
these cases, IDPs change the spatial signifiers through the act of walking, creating new spaces for social relations and interactions between themselves and locals/tourists/migrants, and undertaking a wide range of social, cultural, and economic activities. Although police and public space enforcement officials attempt to prohibit many of these IDP activities, IDPs are resilient, finding effective ways to challenge these prohibitions, thus increasing their possibilities for social, economic, and cultural inclusion in the city. It thus becomes clear that IDPs who carry out an activity such as walking occupy space, change spatial signifiers, and transform spaces in the city.

The description I have provided about IDP activities and their potential to transform spaces in the city can be contrasted with Angel Rama’s description of “the lettered city,” which he describes as a constant, non-transformational space that is maintained as such by the letrados: “The city of letters would like to be as unalterable, as atemporal as the order of signs, in constant opposition to the material city whose existence is merely historical and therefore bound to the ongoing transformations of society” (Rama 1996: 39). Rama argues that the letrados were unable to adapt to the social transformations of the material city and its changing spatial signifiers, and therefore tried to uphold the integrity of the lettered city as a rational order of signs. Facing the reality of an increasingly literate society, however, the letrados were eventually forced to accept the transformations – many of which were carried out through individual expressions – that would alter spaces in the city.
The *letrados* of Rama’s lettered city can be likened to local *medellinenses* (people born and raised in Medellin). *Medellinenses* have a history of being incredibly conservative and somewhat resistant towards allowing outsiders – and particularly IDPs – into their spaces, despite their reputation for friendliness and good hospitality. This attitude, in effect, severely restricts spaces in Medellin. Although spatial exclusion is widespread throughout the Americas – as can be noted through fortified enclaves and physical barriers within the city (Caldeira 2000) – in Medellin it helps to uphold the spaceless state of IDPs. Evidently, locals would like to maintain the temporary nature of their spaces, as can be noted with local authorities who exclude IDPs from public social spaces accusing them of (inappropriately) squatting, loitering, and performing. Because IDPs have become part of the Medellín reality, however, with 218,033 registered in the city as of October 2010 (Personería de Medellín 2010b), locals are being forced to accept IDPs, their activities, and the transformative effects they have on the city. Through occupying, appropriating and transforming spaces in the city, I believe that IDPs are overcoming the restrictions of the *medellinense* “lettered city” to change their ambiguous status in the city to a permanent one. Locals, police, and public space enforcement officials will eventually have to face reality in Medellin: IDPs are a part of the city, a part of the changing national and

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3 The term *paisa* (Antioquian) is used far more frequently than *medellinense*. However, because many IDPs in Medellin are actually *paisas* displaced from other parts of the department, for the purposes of this project, it is necessary to differentiate between locals who were born and raised in the city (*medellinenses*) and *paisas*, who although sharing many of the same characteristics of *medellinenses*, also constitute a large portion of the IDP population in Medellin.
international economy, and a transformative force on public social spaces in the city.

Conclusions

In this chapter, I have established a theoretical framework to understand who IDPs are in the city (vis-à-vis migrants, tourists, and locals), what activities they carry out to occupy spaces and enact or claim their right to the city, and how these activities have a transformative effect on the spaces they occupy. I illustrated that although similar in many ways, IDPs and migrants are in fact very different, particularly in the way that they self-identify and the way that Medellin’s institutions and society identify them.

As I have demonstrated, IDPs are a spaceless people in the city with an ambiguous, dichotomous status. Bordering between temporary and permanent, IDP and non-IDP, migrant and non-migrant, IDPs end up facing stigmatizations and exclusion for, among other reasons, the challenges they face in accessing, occupying, and appropriating spaces in the city on a permanent basis. I argue that by performing, vending, and walking, IDPs can accomplish this task and simultaneously attribute their own use value to spaces in the city. This process does not occur through the sudden recognition and acceptance of IDPs in the city – although institutional support and public acknowledgement could greatly facilitate it – but rather through a slow process of social, economic, physical, and cultural incorporation into the city. I believe that this process is crucial in redefining the IDP status in the city as permanent, rather than temporary or ambiguous.
Whether establishing permanence in the city simply leads to blending with other poor migrants is irrelevant; what matters is whether IDPs can overcome their experiences of stigmatization and exclusion and establish themselves as dignified, permanent residents living and working within the formal or informal life of the city. This would allow IDPs to establish roots and develop a long-term connection to spaces in the city, helping them respond to their experiences of being uprooted from their lands and territories. Migrants have established spaces in the city by integrating into the labour market and settling and establishing popular neighbourhoods throughout the city. The process of converting ranchos and asentamientos into permanent dwellings and established neighbourhoods, and carrying out social, cultural, and economic activities in the formal and informal life of the city on a permanent basis can accomplish for IDPs what migrants have accomplished in the city: a connection to space.

In the following chapter, I analyze two cases from Medellin to carefully examine how IDPs are transforming spaces in the city. The first case I explore is the CDCM, a cultural centre in a Medellin neighbourhood that has a long history of both receiving and displacing IDPs. The second case I examine is Parque Berrío, a central park in downtown Medellin largely appropriated by IDPs. Through interviews, observations, and secondary materials, I attempt to demonstrate more clearly how IDPs occupy, appropriate, and transform spaces in the city.
“As so-called ‘decent’ society began its exodus toward new residential districts far from the centre of town and recent immigrants continued to swell poor neighbourhoods, also on the periphery of the city proper, the old downtown area preserved and even intensified its public function … The area around the central plaza still brought together public and private administration, finance, commerce, and entertainment, so that people engaged in one activity rubbed elbows with those involved in another” (Rama 1996: 113).

Rama’s depiction of the transformation of the lettered city is the story of most Latin American cities, and is especially the case in Medellin. Currently a city of approximately 2.6 million inhabitants, Medellin’s history of receiving migrants and IDPs has had a tremendous impact on the transformation of the city. Most significantly, Medellin has become characterized by a high degree of social, economic, and spatial inequality. Roldán explains: “The inequitable distribution of power and the location and use of public space in Medellin also reflect broader political, economic and cultural changes affecting not only Medellin but Colombia and the world as a whole since the 1960s” (2003: 138). Naranjo asserts that a lot has been written about the transformation of the urban structure of Medellin, especially in the popular sectors, by contributions of IDPs and immigrants (2008). She also claims, however, that the political and sociocultural re-signification of these spaces needs to be newly explored (2008). By analyzing how IDPs transform spaces through their activities and walking, in
this chapter I attempt to provide a framework in which this exploration can take
place.

The former and current administrations of the Medellin municipal
government have undertaken a number of urban development projects
(Proyectos Urbanos Integrales – PUI) in recent years to improve the quality of life
of the city’s inhabitants. This has been accomplished through promoting integral
and sustainable human development, improving the environment, public spaces,
public services, and mobility, strengthening community participation, and
fostering cohabitation. While institutional actions are necessary for the
transformation of the city, I argue that many institutional projects on their own will
be unable to carry out long-lasting transformations for three main reasons:
changes in administration, funding cuts, or the redirection of necessary operating
funds to other projects could effectively stunt or dismantle the project; from the
community level, the imposition from above, and insufficient consultation and
dialogue with community members about their needs and desires can lead to
less community participation and a diminished use of the space; and from the
individual level, a great degree of agency is lost as a result of IDPs not initiating
their own activities. Nevertheless, I believe that projects that are designed and
implemented through close cooperation with the community have the potential to
produce long-lasting effects, and can lead to the transformation of the city.

One institutional project that has been carried out in Medellin using a
cooperative, consultative methodology is the CDCM. Moravia, a neighbourhood
located in the northwest of the city centre, has been a major receiving community
for IDPs. Moravia has also produced a lot of intra-urban IDPs, however, because of violence and threats by and towards community members. As part of the Macroproyecto de Intervención Integral de Moravia y su área de influencia (the Integral Intervention Megaproject for Moravia and the surrounding area) designed to improve all aspects of life (namely social, cultural, and economic) and spatiality in the neighbourhood, the CDCM was conceived, designed, and built through close consultation between community members in Moravia and the municipal government (Alcaldía de Medellín 2010). The CDCM was designed as a Casa de Cultura (house of culture) that facilitates the dissemination of information and community participation through a number of resources, activities, and displays (Alcaldía de Medellín 2006a). As such, the CDCM has physically, aesthetically, socially, and culturally transformed the space it occupies (see Figures 6 and 7).

Figure 6: Centro de Desarrollo Cultural de Moravia. Photo taken on November 4, 2010.
Another space of significance, yet one that has not had the institutional support of an *intervención integral* or otherwise, is Parque Berrío. Located in the bustling commercial and tourist centre of Medellín, the park has long served as a *punto de encuentro* (meeting point) for IDPs searching for solidarity and economic opportunities. In particular, a group of (mostly displaced) musicians come to the park daily to form ensembles that play traditional Colombian folk music. Some of the groups that play are well established in the park, and others form *ad hoc*. All day long, musicians play with crowds forming around them, transforming the park into a space for social, economic, and cultural activity. Additionally, walkers use the park as a point of orientation from which they begin...
to walk the city, and vendors use it as a space to create economic opportunities (see Figure 4 above).

Both the CDCM and Parque Berrío are central spaces in Medellín that have been appropriated by and for – although not exclusively – IDPs. Both spaces have a particular stigma attached because of the segments of the population who occupy them, but both spaces, I argue, are demonstrative of the occupation and transformation of space by IDPs in Medellín. In this chapter, I demonstrate how IDPs, either through their own means or with institutional support, are occupying and transforming these two spaces through performing, vending, and walking. In both cases, these actions help to lead to the permanent establishment of IDPs in the city, contribute to changing the perceived identity of IDPs, and enable IDPs to respond to their experiences of stigmatization and exclusion.

Moravia and the CDCM

Moravia is located near downtown Medellín, Río Medellín (Medellín River), the Terminal del Norte (North Bus Terminal), and alongside the former Antioquia Railway tracks. Between 1977 and 1984, the area also housed a large city garbage dump. Moravia’s location is significant for two main reasons: its proximity to the bus terminal turned the neighbourhood into a major receiving community for IDPs arriving in the city; and the river and garbage dump attracted IDPs, migrants, and Medellín’s poorer inhabitants to the neighbourhood in search of economic opportunities in the recycling business (Sanín 2008). However, between the closing of the garbage dump and the onset of drug trafficking and
armed violence from the 1980s until the present decade, *moravitas* (Moravia inhabitants), and the numerous IDPs among them, were left without many employment opportunities, in precarious environmental conditions, and in a state of physical danger (Henao 2010: 25-27; Alcaldía de Medellín 2006b).

Moravia was originally founded as a squatter settlement in the 1950s and 1960s as a result of the massive displacements caused by *La Violencia* in the countryside⁴. Since then, Moravia and the *moravitas* have always existed on the margins of Medellin society (Alcaldía de Medellín 2006b). In the wake of student, church, and revolutionary movements sweeping Latin America in the 1960s, *moravitas* began to consolidate, form community groups and organizations, establish their permanence in the community, and claim their neighbourhood as a space of their own (Henao 2010). Father Vicente Mejía, working in the vein of liberation theology, was an important figure in organizing work committees to preserve the community and consolidate the sector, thus facilitating *moravitas’* ability to enact their right to the city (among other rights) and to occupy and establish spaces. In 1965, one of his primary focuses was creating public spaces for the gathering of community members, a priority that *moravitas* have held until the present day (Alcaldía de Medellín 2006b: 3).

*El Plan de Desarrollo Municipal* 2004-2007 (the municipal development plan) had the banner “*Medellín, Compromiso de toda la ciudadania*” (Medellin,

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⁴ *La Violencia* was a political confrontation between Liberals and Conservatives. Warring factions used horrific acts of violence in an attempt to settle unresolved land disputes pending since the nineteenth century and to challenge the unequal distribution of resources (Ibáñez & Vélez 2008: 660). A peace deal was finally reached in the late 1950s, after tens of thousands of people had been murdered, and none of the land disputes had been effectively resolved (Hylton 2006).
commitment to all its citizens) and was focused on the “integral human
development” of the city and its inhabitants (Alcaldía de Medellín 2006d). Despite the temporary/ambiguous identity of IDPs in the city and their overwhelming presence in Moravia, one aspect of this citywide plan was to fulfil a social debt to Moravia and all its inhabitants: after decades of neglect and marginalization by institutions and Medellín society, the municipal government developed a megaproject, the *Macroproyecto de Intervención Integral de Moravia y su área de influencia*, as a strategy to draw Moravia and its inhabitants out of the margins and into the city, and improve their environment and their quality of life (Sanín 2008). This megaproject attempts to dignify the lives of *moravitas* and acknowledge that Moravia could be an ideal place from which to build a society that promotes the construction of citizenship (Alcaldía de Medellín 2006c). While this expectation may be optimistic, the efforts of the municipal government were realistic with *moravitas* citing significant and notable transformations in the community today.

Two major focuses of this megaproject are significant here: the objective to improve all aspects of spatiality in Moravia, and the objective to create a space for social and cultural activity, where *moravitas* can express their diversity while enacting their right to the city and establishing and *denoting* their permanence in their neighbourhood and in Medellín. The CDCM is a space that responds to both of these challenges. First I discuss the concept of spatiality in Moravia as

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5 The *macroproyecto* is actually being carried out through two municipal development plans of successive administrations (2004-2007 and 2008-2011) under the banner of the Plan Parcial de Mejoramiento Integral del Barrio Moravia. The total investment of the Plan Parcial is estimated at COP 150 billion (approximately CAD 75 million) (Alcaldía de Medellín 2000c).
related to the CDCM, and then I discuss the significance of having a centre for social and cultural activity in Moravia. This examination will determine how IDPs establish their permanence in the city by occupying and appropriating a casa de cultura built by the municipal government.

Spatiality

Moravia is 42.7 hectares in size and has a population of approximately 42,000 – 45,000 inhabitants (Alcaldía de Medellín 2006b; Henao 2010). This extremely high population density translates into a mere 0.26 meters square of public space per inhabitant, or 7% of the Medellin average of 4.01 meters square meters per inhabitant (Alcaldía de Medellín 2006c: 95; Henao 2010: 32). In an attempt to increase public space in Moravia, and more specifically space where IDPs and other moravitas can carry out their social and cultural activities, community leaders conceived and proposed the notion of a casa de cultura as part of the macroproyecto where community members could participate in a wide range of social, cultural, and educational activities. The CDCM, la Casa de todos (everyone’s home), opened 1,628 meters square of installations and 316 meters square of public space to moravitas on May 24, 2008. Use of the facilities and all activities are free of charge and open to the public (with course registration limited to moravitas and inhabitants of the Comuna 4 surrounding district) (Interview 8: September 9, 2010). The facility contains one of the largest auditoriums in the north sector of Medellin, a library/documentation centre, an Internet facility, soundproof rooms for rehearsing, a digital recording studio, administrative offices, community archives, a cafeteria, a music school, a dance
studio, and large classrooms (Alcaldía de Medellín 2006b; Comfenalco Antioquia 2010). In its first year of operation, 587,068 people made use of the facilities to watch movies, play games, use the Internet, practice music, take dance and art classes, receive training in artisanal trades and product marketing, and attend lectures, forums, and concerts by dignitaries, activists, academics, and artists from all over the world (Alcaldía de Medellín 2010; Red de Bibliotecas 2009). In short, through participation in a series of social, educational, and cultural activities, courses, events, and displays, *moravitas* have occupied and appropriated a public space created and funded by the municipal government. The CDCM’s users take advantage of the resources provided to them to transform a marginalized space that had been stigmatized for the violence and environmental degradation present, into a social space of inclusion, acceptance, interculturalism, camaraderie, and community involvement.

Rogelio Salmona, widely considered the preeminent contemporary Colombian architect (Romero 2007), designed the CDCM based on his principles of transforming urban space to facilitate interaction among community members in a context of violence and crime and to recreate the cultural imaginary of Moravia (Alcaldía de Medellín 2006b; Henao 2010: 67). Salmona sought to incorporate his buildings into the surrounding environment and viewed space as both a concept and a proposal. Upon approaching and entering the CDCM, it becomes clear that the Centre effectively accomplishes Salomana’s goals. *Moravitas* occupy and appropriate this social space by participating in interactive courses and workshops, attending lectures and meetings, and developing their
skills in dancing, singing, and numerous other activities. Additionally, the space has become a popular meeting place for moravitas.

Moravia is a community with many walkers (i.e., vendors, recyclers, street performers, and those who do odd jobs around the city) and the CDCM has become the space they lacked to congregate, rehearse, perform, or obtain a safe shelter from the streets (Interview 6: September 7, 2010; Interview 8: September 9, 2010; Interview 9: September 14, 2010). Although many moravitas continue to walk (see activities below), the CDCM serves as an inclusive space for this faction of the population that is stigmatized and excluded from society as a result of living in a marginalized community and being relegated to the informal labour market.

Furthermore, the CDCM directly responds to issues of self-respect and self-esteem. The Centre is a “prestigious” space where moravitas can elevate their status to equals with others in Medellin (Interview 8: September 9, 2010). A “prestigious” space refers to the fact that the centre boasts some of the best facilities and training in music, art, and dance in the city, and provides community members with the best opportunities possible to develop their talents (Alcaldía de Medellín 2006b). This, in turn, increases the self-respect and self-esteem of the centre’s users, making them feel that they are worthy of the best, and that they can achieve success in the fields of dance, music, or art. Although these effects are significant, based on my observations, formal interviews, and informal conversations with staff, instructors, and participants between July and October 2010 at the Cultural Centre, I believe that the CDCM also produces a larger-
scale outcome in the community: the Centre is a *permanent* space in which *moravitas* can develop a response to their socioeconomic, sociocultural, and spatial exclusion in Medellin through social and cultural activities.

Almost all of the *moravitas* I spoke to are proud to be from Moravia. As one singer/dancer says: “Wherever I go, I’ll carry the Colombian flag up high with [the shield of] Moravia in the middle … I will always carry Moravia in my heart …” (Interview 9: September 14, 2010). *Moravitas* also want to see an improvement in the situation of violence and the image of their community, however, but are willing to work towards this goal. The CDCM has been an effective vehicle for transforming the community in two keys ways: it architecturally and aesthetically improves space in Moravia and it serves to inspire to carry out transformations in the community. Young *moravitas* proudly assert that Moravia has ‘*swing*,’ an attitude, a style, and a blend of urban street culture (see ‘urban music’ below), which they recognize as a product of their social and cultural activities and their environment. By having the CDCM as a stage from which they can project their urban culture, *moravitas* define their identity vis-à-vis locals, Colombians, and other inhabitants of the world. If *moravitas* were to remove themselves completely from this space and adopt the functions and activities of any other migrant or local in Medellin, the space would remain stagnant and unchanged. By occupying and appropriating the CDCM as a space to rehearse, train, and perform, however, *moravitas* transform the imaginary and space of their community.
Similar experiences of appropriating and transforming spaces in marginal areas can be found in Brazilian cities where spaces are separated by physical barriers in the form of walls and fortified enclaves (Caldeira 2000). Inside or outside these enclaves, spaces are transformed by and for groups in the community. Because of experiences of police brutality, structural inequalities, drug violence, marginalization, stigmatization, and exclusion, affected community members use artistic expressions to denounce these experiences in an attempt to transform the spaces they occupy (Arias 2006; Neate & Platt 2006). Caldeira explains:

“Situating themselves in a periphery conceived as a space of despair, hip-hop artists elaborate the imaginary of a city where differences, inequalities, and distances became unbridgeable and where demands for inclusion make little sense. Paradoxically, however, as hip-hop denounces these conditions and creates one of the strongest forms of class confrontation ever seen in Brazil, it also generates new kinds of separations and distantiatiion” (Caldeira 2008: 75).

In the case of São Paulo or Rio de Janeiro, the idea of creating inclusive spaces where people of different classes mix is elusive. This may explain Caldeira’s argument that hip-hop in fact creates a larger gap between social classes, rather than closing it. For marginalized groups who have been defeated in their attempts to access spaces, enact their right to the city, and include themselves in society, many react by countering society through artistic expression, rather than trying to become a part of it. Regardless of the intention, however, the outcome of the action is the same: groups appropriate spaces on the periphery, which they subsequently transform through artistic expressions, thus challenging the problems afflicting the community.
Freeman argues that both the wealthy and the poor share certain “key, public spaces” in Rio de Janeiro, such as the beaches in the wealthy Zona Sul. “[O]n a good day,” he adds, these spaces are seen as “spaces of democracy, citizenship, and conversation” (2008: 533). I would argue that the vast majority of Rio’s (poor) population is not able to access these spaces because of economic barriers (i.e., the inability to pay for transportation to get there if they do not live in a neighbouring favela) and/or safety barriers (i.e., needing to pass by or through a hostile favela). Therefore, most often it becomes necessary for marginalized groups in Rio or São Paulo to appropriate spaces on the periphery, from which they may not be able to enact their right to the whole city, but can claim their right to that space within the city. By claiming this space, a gang, drug cartel, or armed group is unable to do so. Thus, the community group can carry out its artistic or cultural expressions in response to experiences of structural, systematic, and institutional violence that afflict the community, transforming the space into a more accessible and less violent environment. This case is frequent in marginal areas of Medellin, and has especially been the case in Moravia.

As Riaño describes, many individuals want to transform their surroundings into “meaningful places of their imagination” (2002: 297). The CDCM is distinctive from the surrounding community, and is especially significant in that it clearly denotes a spatial and attitudinal transformation in Moravia. By using this social space, moravitas transform the imaginary of their community to become recognized as equal, but distinctive residents of Medellin. As a staff member at the CDCM described to me, the Centre projects a better image of Moravia and
*moravitas* to Medellín, Colombia, and the world (Interview 8: September 9, 2010). In the context of this public social space, locals, migrants, tourists, and dignitaries come to appreciate the value of *moravitas*’ artistic expressions in changing the imaginary of Moravia. Additionally, the CDCM becomes a permanent space for *moravitas* to spend time and carry out activities that positively transform their neighbourhood.

**Activities and Diversity**

As a major receiving community for IDPs and migrants, Moravia houses people from nearly all regions of Colombia. The diversity of its inhabitants has translated into a rich display of cultural and artistic expressions that serve as a tool to resist threats and formulate responses to illegality and domestic and community violence (Alcaldía de Medellín 2006b), and give Moravia a particular identity vis-à-vis other neighbourhoods in Medellín. Because of the evident effects of these expressions, community members, community leaders, and municipal government officials decided that Moravia could greatly benefit from a space that would foment the talents of its inhabitants. Their logic was to create a space in which *moravitas* can carry out a wide range of social and cultural activities to enact their right to the city, respond to their individual and collective experiences of stigmatization and exclusion, and redefine their identity (Alcaldía de Medellín 2006b). Violence, displacement, and images of the garbage dump have created a stigma that has stained Moravia in the eyes of other Medellín inhabitants. In response, *moravitas* are using the CDCM to challenge this image.
The notion of ‘culture’ is believed to be a protagonist in the transformation of space in Moravia and the CDCM was conceived to “consolidate this sector and space as an example for dialogue and meeting between cultures” (Alcaldía de Medellín 2006b: 9). Described as an “espacio de encuentro intercultural” (space for intercultural encounter), the CDCM fosters interculturalism through facilitating encounters between individuals and groups of different backgrounds, recognizing the ‘other’, and appreciating different perceptions, beliefs, histories, and practices. In *Intercultural Utopias*, Rappaport defines interculturalism as “the selective appropriation of concepts across cultures in the interests of building a pluralistic dialogue among equals” (2005: 5), arguing that interculturalism “seeks new ways to forge conditions of equality and consensus while enhancing minority voices” (2005: 130). As a vehicle for negotiating diversity and equality, culture is arguably the main tool used in Moravia in general, and at the CDCM in particular, to transform the social space and the identity and status of the IDPs within it. Within this intercultural framework, *moravitas* create a dialogue amongst themselves, and with locals, migrants, and tourists in Medellin.

An intercultural dialogue takes place in dance classes at the CDCM, where I observed weekly while engaging in a series of informal conversations with the instructor and the student-performers. In these classes, the instructor choreographs a multimedia performance with young adults from the community. The storyline of the performance is drawn from daily life experiences of youth in Moravia (i.e., dating, fighting, wandering the streets with friends, etc) and the music incorporates the participants’ diverse backgrounds and abilities in hip-hop,
salsa, reggae, reggaeton, and Colombian folk music. This dance, accompanied by songs written and composed by some of the participants, demonstrates the merging of diverse social and cultural experiences from Moravia, and their, or their families’ places of origin from which many were displaced. The very nature of this performance embodies the merging of different traditions, styles, and people, transforming this social space from one of stigmatization, exclusion, and discrimination to one of diversity, inclusion, and acceptance. Additionally, the students perform for Moravia, the Comuna 4, and locals and tourists around Medellin, fostering a dialogue between them and the city in an attempt to overcome their experiences stigmatization and exclusion. The instructor eventually hopes to tour with this group to create an intercultural dialogue between moravitas and audiences from around the world, transforming spaces to promote inclusion and diversity.

In conversations I had with young moravitas who attend the CDCM on a daily basis, they illuminate the significance of having a space in which they can carry out their social and cultural activities on a permanent basis. One of the Centre’s users explains:

“The only cultural source that we have here is this Cultural Centre. Here we meet up, spend our free time, and it’s where they lend us space to practice, because here [in Colombia], common spaces [sedes comunales] aren’t used for these things. So here we can practice and learn, because they offer courses and training in vocal techniques and dance, and we can even organize events. You come in here and feel like you’re entering another world …” (Interview 6: September 7, 2010).

The foremost theme that emerged through conversations and interviews is that young moravitas attain self-respect and self-esteem through developing their
dance, music, or art skills and performing. One singer/songwriter expresses a sense of accomplishment when describing how fellow *moravitas* recognize him after listening to a song that he wrote and performed (Interview 9: September 14, 2010). Additionally, he and a fellow performer both discuss their newfound role of inspiring youth through their music, both in their *comuna* and in others around Medellin, and are seeking ways to create opportunities in music and dance for these youth (Interview 6: September 6, 2010; Interview 9: September 14, 2010). In this sense, music, dance, and performing have given these *moravitas* a goal and a sense of purpose to inspire and transform their surrounding community.

Additionally, these *moravitas* appreciated that the CDCM is an inclusive space that is open daily and is permanently at their disposal. “They’ve given us spaces here to practice and … here is where we’ve accomplished what we’ve done, because here they’ve supported us a lot” (Interview 9: September 14, 2010). Naranjo illustrates why this is so significant for *moravitas* by explaining how dispossession and exclusion directly affect IDPs and marginalized inhabitants of the city: “If a subject is systematically denied determined rights, the subject is not being considered equal to other members of society. The dispossession of rights is linked to a loss of self-respect” (Naranjo 2004: 150). With the CDCM available to them on a permanent basis as a space to participate in social and cultural activities, *moravitas* gain self-respect and dignity, while forging their inclusion in Medellin and enacting their right to the city.

For Bourgois, respect is about “a personal concern for autonomy, self-assertion, and community within constantly changing social hierarchies of
statuses based on kinship, age, and gender” (1995: 324). In the streets of Moravia, where many of those who frequent the CDCM formerly spent a lot of time, a social space did not exist in which they could establish their permanence and assert their identity. As Bourgois describes about East Harlem, “inner-city street culture” is “a complex and conflictual web of beliefs, symbols, modes of interaction, value and ideologies that have emerged in opposition to exclusion from mainstream society” and “offers an alternative forum for autonomous personal dignity” (1995: 8). I believe that the CDCM is a space in which moravitas can hone in on their “inner-city street culture” and attain a degree of personal dignity and self-respect unachievable in the streets. As demonstrated in the previous chapter, a lot of the social and cultural activities that take place on the street (i.e., begging, vending, performing, walking, etc) are perceived as temporary and constantly changing, and this perception is exacerbated when those carrying out these activities are considered temporary residents of the city (i.e., IDPs). While the activities themselves have the potential to change spatial signifiers, foster intercultural dialogue, and facilitate inclusion, the CDCM provides participants with a social space where they can foment self-respect and self-esteem by gaining support and recognition for their activities. The element of self-respect is crucial in the transformation of Moravia and moravitas, who, to a great extent, are IDPs or from IDP families. If institutions and society formally recognize “inner-city street culture” as a dignified form of artistic expression, moravitas can participate in city-sanctioned social and cultural events, and thus
enact their right to the city. This last point is vital in that it symbolizes the inclusion of *moravitas* into Medellin society.

Finally, I would like to examine the significance of “urban music” in Moravia. Urban music can be understood as a form of intercultural dialogue that is initiated through the appropriation and exchange of a diversity of expressions and backgrounds. “Urban music tends to be like poetry, but it’s sung, the singers are empirical, they simply let the rhythm of the music carry them away … it comes from the street” (Interview 6: September 7, 2010). Musicians blend genres from the countryside (e.g. *trova*, *parrandera*, *boleros*, and other types of Colombian folk music) and the city (e.g. rap, hip-hop, reggaeton) to create *música urbana* (urban music) (Interview 6: September 7, 2010; Interview 9: September 14, 2010). Urban music is created on the streets of Moravia and reflects the identity of IDPs, and *moravitas* more generally, who live on the margins of the city. Similar to graffiti artists in the neighbourhood, urban musicians walk the streets and activate spaces by transforming the spatial signifiers around them (see de Certeau 1984), facilitating interaction between themselves and their audience, challenging armed actors, racism, and economic marginalization, and enacting their right to expression, and by default, their right to the city (see Lefebvre 1996). The CDCM provides these urban musicians/walkers with a permanent space to rehearse, perform, and embark on ‘walks’ around the city: they tour high schools, perform in street festivals, and participate in cultural events to facilitate interaction and dialogue, attain recognition, and when they can, earn some money.
Moravitas have long existed on the margins of Medellin society. Their activities, however, along with the multi-dimensional support of the CDCM, are facilitating their incorporation into the city. Additionally, the stigmas associated with Moravia are being challenged through the continued efforts of moravitas to transform the imaginary of the community, and the physical, cultural, and social space. These transformations in this predominantly IDP space are a manifestation of the temporary-come-permanent status of IDPs in the city and their peaceful incursion into Medellin society.

Parque Berrío

Parque Berrío was established in 1675 as the Plaza Mayor in front of the Villa de Nuestra Señora de la Candelaria church. The park, later renamed Parque Berrío after the Antioquian governor Pedro Justo Berrío, has always been a main focal point in Medellin: Political executions, the announcement of political campaigns, the signing of the treaty of independence from Spain in 1809, and the manumission of slaves in 1814 all took place here (Bravo 2007: 100-102). Additionally, in the early part of the twentieth century, Parque Berrío was the nodal centre for all of Medellin's tranvía routes, which today constitute the main roads and bus routes that lead to Medellin’s main residential neighbourhoods (Correa 2002). Although Medellin is now a pluricentric city with multiple nodal points, Parque Berrío still holds great importance as the “heart of the city,” and to some, the “heart of Antioquia.” The park rests amid businesses and banks, witnessing the commercial and industrial rise of Medellin, the
installation of the Metro system, and the constant movement of people and peoples between locals, migrants, tourists, and IDPs.

From the mid twentieth century until today, Parque Berrío has served as a marketplace, a *bolsa de empleo* (job market), a performance stage, a *punto de encuentro* (meeting point), and a site for politicking, petitioning, and protesting. Most significantly, numerous IDPs come to Parque Berrío in search of camaraderie and solidarity, to make contacts, and to find or create economic opportunities. As one park user explains, Parque Berrío is a job market where you can find any kind of worker you need (Interview 10: September 15, 2010). The results of a study conducted in 2010 by the *Asociación de músicos populares de Parque Berrío* (the Association of Parque Berrío Popular Musicians) concluded that the vast majority of musicians, shoe shiners, and vendors (most of whom sell *tinto*, *minutos*, or fruit) in the park are IDPs (Interview 10: September 15, 2010). Many of these IDPs arrived in the park on their own in search of opportunities in the city, and continue to come on a daily basis to congregate with friends, work, look for economic opportunities, or to use it as a point of departure for walking the city (Interview 11: September 20, 2010; Interview 12: September 20, 2010; Interview 13: September 20, 2010).

The major markers surrounding the park are the Medellín Stock Exchange building, the *Banco de la República*, the metro, and *La Candelaria* church. In times passed, the buildings overlooking the park used to have large balconies where politicians rallied for their political campaigns; in the campaign to ‘modernize’ the centre of Medellín, however, these symbolic balconies were
demolished. Alongside La Candelaria church, an alley runs into the park lined with venteros ambulantes (street vendors).

The spaces surrounding Parque Berrío host a certain amount of petty crime, fighting, and other forms of delinquency. Being located in the tourist, commercial, and nodal centre of the city, however, the park sees a high flow of pedestrian traffic that leads to the confluence of city dwellers, campesinos (rural inhabitants), and international tourists, thus diminishing the potential for crime in this space. As the former mayor of Bogotá Enrique Peñalosa discusses in a recent lecture at the London School of Economics, when people are out walking or congregating in parks, on sidewalks, or in any other public space, they are happier, and thus less likely to commit a crime (Peñalosa 2011). Additionally, if people are walking, or engaged in the production or consumption of economic, social, and cultural activities, the likelihood that they will engage in criminal activity is also reduced. Although difficult to evaluate precisely, the perception of performers, spectators, and passers-by is that in the park itself, amid the vending, music, and begging, criminal activity is significantly less than in the spaces surrounding it (Interview 13: September 20, 2010; Interview 14: September 23, 2010). They attribute this phenomenon to the activities and the occupants in this space:

“Music isn’t guilty of thefts, music isn’t guilty of anything … it brings people forth. Look at how happy everyone is … When people listen to music, their thoughts can change … They come here upset [aburrido] and they become happy … This prevents many things …” (Interview 13: September 20, 2010).
The park has a certain aesthetic value: it is a relatively green space with many trees, ample seating, and an imposing statue of Pedro Justo Berrío (see Figure 8). Although the park is by no means tranquil, it attracts many people who want to enjoy a public space in the heart of the city, have a coffee, and listen to traditional Colombian folk music. In this sense, the park does in fact have many of the features of a traditional place of leisure that tourists and wealthy local inhabitants would occupy on a temporary basis. Although tourists walk to or through Parque Berrío, however, and well-to-do locals pass through the space going from the metro to the church, banks, or businesses, it is primarily poorer people who occupy the park, and particularly IDPs. IDPs come to the park for a number of reasons, but most significantly, according to everyone I interviewed and spoke to in the park, they come to look for, or create economic opportunities. These opportunities primarily consist of playing music with other musicians in the park, selling tinto and minutos, and shining shoes. One musician explains:

“I’m working here in this park because jobs are hard to get. So we’re appreciative of the people who come to the park; it’s because of these people we’re surviving” (Interview 13: September 20, 2010).
Parque Berrío also serves as a point of orientation from which IDPs begin to walk the city. As a displaced *trovador* who plays on buses around Medellin explained in an interview, Parque Berrío was the place he first came to upon arriving in Medellin from southeastern Antioquia. He came up with the idea to play *trova* on city buses and a shoe-shiner in the park lent him some change to pay for his bus fare. He returned to the park the following day to return the money he had borrowed from the shoe-shiner and for the past eight years, has continued to use Parque Berrío as his base from which he embarks to perform on buses around Medellin on a daily basis (Interview 12: September 20, 2010).
Medellin is a visually pleasing city and beautification projects and large-scale events are further contributing to this. The city cannot just be beautiful, however; it needs to be liveable as well. As many of the park’s occupants argue, for Medellin to become a better and healthier city, the heart of the city, Parque Berrío, needs to have a strong beat. As history has demonstrated, and observing the park can confirm, the park is healthy if social, economic, political, and cultural activities are taking place freely, and without significant restrictions. However, if the protagonists of these activities - IDPs and Medellin’s poorer inhabitants - are denied access to this space, many argue that the park will die (Interview 10: September 15, 2010; Interview 14: September 23, 2010).

Conversely, by recognizing these activities as forms of social, cultural, and economic production, IDPs can use the space on a permanent basis, enabling them to enact their right to the city, challenge experiences of stigmatization and exclusion, and transform the park into a permanent place of opportunities.

**Activities, Meeting, and Walking**

One of the most popular activities in Parque Berrío is the performance of Colombian folk music. For over forty years, musicians from the Colombian countryside have converged in Parque Berrío with their instruments to form ensembles, or play on their own (Interview 10: September 15, 2010; Interview 11: September 20, 2010; Interview 13: September 20, 2010). Over the past two decades, the majority of these musicians have been IDPs (Interview 10: September 15, 2010). Some of the more common styles of music heard in the park are *parranda*, *ranchera*, *pasillo*, *bolero*, and *trova*. Musicians, some of
whom continue to wear their traditional campesino clothing, share a part of rural Colombia with locals and tourists in exchange for financial contributions. During performances, the atmosphere becomes lively, as members of the audience dance and sing along.

Through extensive participant observation during my frequent visits to the park, and formal interviews and informal conversations with the park’s regular occupants between September and November 2010, I discovered that music in Parque Berrío is significant on a number of different levels. The activity generates economic opportunities for musicians, draws crowds who consume coffee, have their shoes shined, and buy other products from vendors in the park, and creates a pleasant atmosphere. Music effectively serves to transform the park into a meeting point where economic opportunities can be sought and created. For occupants of the park, the effects of this transformation frequently translate into a sense of self-worth and self-respect. One musician describes a positive feeling when performing for others since it serves as a sense of comfort, or consolation [consuelo] for his audience (Interview 13: September 20, 2010). Another musician appears proud as he explains to me that when he performs, he evokes smiles and joy among his audience (Interview 12: September 20, 2010).

For most of the musicians, vendors, and walkers occupying the park, the most significant challenge they face is earning a living. Many of those who have been working in the park for a long time complain that the space has become overcrowded with people seeking economic opportunities (Interview 11: September 20, 2010); those who are newer to the park complain that not enough
space exists to create economic opportunities (Interview 13: September 20, 2010); and, observant third parties in the park argue that despite being many, spectators are frequently the same from day to day and do not contribute enough money to support all those trying to eke out a living in Parque Berrío (Interview 14: September 23, 2010). Mesa et al argue the opposite, however, about the Medellin street vendors' clientele in general: “The customers are not fixed. On the contrary, the people who come and go, the common people, the people who pass by, are not the same people all the time” (Mesa et al 2001: 42). What can possibly explain this ambiguity is that specific groups of people, such as IDPs and poorer inhabitants of Medellin, are more likely to spend longer amounts of time in Parque Berrío than those who simply pass through. This occurs because these segments of the population do not tend to be employed in the formal labour market and they do not have permanent spaces in the city to reside and pass their time. On the other hand, locals and tourists traverse the city regularly going to or from work, school, home, or their activities, typically stopping only in their spaces designated for leisure activities. As a result, Parque Berrío’s economy is not as large as it needs to be to support all those trying to earn a living in this space. These challenges, combined with the resistance they face from police and public space enforcement officers (as explained in Chapter 1), make it difficult for many musicians to establish their permanence in the park. Nevertheless, many of these IDP musicians are resourceful and resilient, and when faced with the challenge of integrating into the city economically and socially, they find ways to “get ahead.”
For musicians who have a difficult time earning a living in the park, Parque Berrío can turn into a point of orientation to begin walking the city. Using the example of the *trovador* cited above, this means taking a bus on one of the many routes that deploy from around the park to entertain passengers for tips. Additionally, musicians occasionally use the park as a place to make contacts, which can result in performing in public or private events around the city or in nearby towns. Therefore, not only does Parque Berrío serve as a space to generate economic opportunities and integrate into the city on-site, it also serves as a starting point to walk, generate opportunities elsewhere, and include themselves in other spaces in Medellin, similar to the performers at the CDCM.

The difficulties that IDPs and *venteros ambulantes* face in their attempt to create economic opportunities in Medellin are immense, and as many argue, unlawful. Mesa *et al* write:

“The vendors live from the public spaces in which they work, using them as a means of survival, a resource, a right, a will, and an urgent need to work. In this sense, the limitations, barriers, restrictions, and expulsions assimilate into an offense [on the vendors], a dispossession, and an act of violence against their livelihood. This action is exercised by municipal government officials through the entity called ‘Espacio Público’ [Public Space], which is in charge of prohibiting vendors from remaining in the same spot, preventing them from working, being in the way, disrupting the movement of passersby and the constant flow of people in public spatialities” (Mesa *et al* 2001: 42).

In interviews, musicians asserted that they also endured similar experiences at the hands of public space enforcement officials and police, while one musician even cited a violation of Law 742 of 2002, referring to a violation of his right to improve his quality of life through carrying out economic, political, cultural, and social activities (Interview 10: September 15, 2010; Interview 12: September 20,
2010; Republic of Colombia Law 742 of 2002). Observations and interviews with IDPs in Parque Berrío revealed that authorities consider playing music and congregating in the park for extended periods of time to be impermissible occupations of space. Authorities control and restrict performing and vending to the point where they decry it an illegal activity; in fact, these officials are violating the rights of musicians and vendors, depriving IDPs and Medellín’s poorer inhabitants their right to improve their quality of life. IDPs carry out these activities in public spaces on a permanent, or continuous basis, rather than a temporary, or one-time basis, because their spaceless reality implies that only public spaces exist for them to carry out these activities. Therefore, by ejecting IDPs from this public space, authorities deny IDPs not only their right to access public space, but also their right to improve their quality of life.

Despite significant resistance, the musicians of Parque Berrío managed to avoid their ejection from the park. Vendors, performers, walkers, spectators, and consumers all approve of the activities of the park, as demonstrated through a petition signed by 2,600 park users (Interview 10; September 15, 2010). This petition, along with lobbying from musicians, vendors, and group leaders, succeeded in granting many of the performers and vendors in the park official permits to carry out their activities in the space. As Lefebvre notes, marginalized groups are not granted the right to the city from above, but instead, they define it and redefine it through political action and social relations (1996). This was accomplished in Parque Berrío through petitioning for the legitimization of the social, cultural, and economic activities.
Returning to Rama, he explains that the *letrados* (men of letters) managed to uphold the social hierarchy in Latin America for so long because of “their ability to manipulate writing in largely illiterate societies” (1996: 24). Effectively, the *letrados* held all the power simply because of their unique ability to formally make institutional demands through writing (i.e., petitioning). As Rama indicates, the “use of art to convey political messages … was extraordinarily frequent in colonial Latin America” (1996: 24), however this practice was almost exclusively employed by the *letrados*, especially during the colonial period, who would use it as a tool for ascendancy. Over time however, as the masses became literate, they too would begin to use letters, or *letrados* who “made partisan appeals to the poor and recently educated” (Rama 1996: 105), as well as other cultural expressions, to create opportunities for upward mobility. Namely, hired scribes, graffiti artists, and thinkers and authors like Fernández de Lizardi whom the marginal social base largely supported petitioned institutional bodies in an attempt to advance the causes of marginal segments of the population. These causes were related to enabling access to a physical, political, cultural, and economic space in the city, particularly, but not exclusively in the agora, the “place and symbol of democracy limited to its citizens … [which] remains for a particular philosophy of the city the symbol of urban society in general” (Lefebvre 1996: 98), central plazas, and the streets.

A case similar to the petitioning of musicians and vendors in Parque Berrío is the urban politicking of street vendors in Morelia, Mexico during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This politicking not only advanced the
citizenship rights of street vendors, but also had the ability to demonstrate
resistance to global transformations, such as modernization, imposed on the city
‘from above’ (Jiménez 2008). Through their political acts (mainly petitioning),
street vendors managed to carry out a number of important transformations of
the spaces they occupied. Jiménez states: “everyday petitioning between
subjects/citizens and the state, often mandated by state-generated regulations,
constituted an accessible and legitimate form of political engagement for popular
groups” (Jiménez 2008: 215). Street vendors would frequently familiarize
themselves with the laws that guaranteed them the right to petition and receive a
response, to hold “authorities accountable to protect their right to conduct
commerce freely in public space”, to “free trade”, and to dedicate oneself to
whatever livelihood one chose (Jiménez 2008: 223). They also “employed the
rhetorical discourses of modernity, beautification, morality, and public health.
They argued about their rights, needs, and contributions to city life, and
associated their small businesses with consumer culture, local trade, and
revenue” (Jiménez 2008: 223). This petitioning by street vendors challenged the
vision of city spaces that modernizers attempted to impose by legally securing
public spaces for production, commerce, and consumption. Therefore, instead of
frequently trafficked spaces in city centres such as plazas being ‘beautified’ for
the enjoyment of tourists and the elite (which according to the discourse, would
have involved preventing street vendors from operating in these spaces),
petitioning created more physical space in central areas “for new production and
employment opportunities. It also generated possibilities for new forms of
political engagement for working residents” (Jiménez 2008: 221). This transformation facilitated the sharing of urban space that “tended to bring people of diverse social classes together, thus subverting simple systems of social control” (Jiménez 2008: 221). Numerous people came to benefit from this transformation of space, which further illustrates the value of petitioning as a tool for transforming spaces:

“For the men and women who earned their livelihood working in public spaces as gardeners, night guards, street sweepers, vendors, petty entrepreneurs, shoe shiners, newspaper hawkers, leaflet distributors, porters, water carriers, domestic servants, prostitutes, latrine cleaners, and public works agents, as well as in numerous other low-level service jobs, city life embodied other experiences, agendas, and aspirations. Specifically, the transformation of urban public space offered new potential sources of employment, access to public services, exposure to new experiences, and new possibilities for popular politicking. Thus, in addition to survival strategies, new urban identities, alternative forms of political engagement, and popular urban activism were produced in relation to urban space” (Jiménez 2008: 221).

In Parque Berrío, IDPs continue to use petitioning as a tool to facilitate their social, economic, and cultural activities and enact their right to the city. The purpose of petitioning is to formalize the activities of IDPs, and thus elevate them to a status of permanence in the city, and prevent them from being excluded from public spaces for using them on a non-temporary basis. As migrants become legitimate inhabitants of the city through joining the labour force and occupying spaces on the margins of the city, IDPs use petitioning as a tool to make the community and institutions recognize their acts in the city as permanent.

Another effective way for IDP vendors, musicians, and walkers to establish their permanence in Parque Berrío is through camaraderie. In 2008, the Asociación de músicos populares de Parque Berrío was formed in an attempt
to help formalize the economic activity of the musicians in this space. Through this association, musicians receive identification cards with official approval from the municipal government to carry out their economic activities in the park (see above), and they establish specific stages, schedules, and expectations. All of these actions are intended to formalize performances in the park. Additionally, the association attempts to prevent quarrels between musicians, ensure good behaviour in the park (i.e., no drinking, no fighting, etc), and create, to the best of their ability, equitable opportunities for the musicians. Because many of the musicians are IDPs, and many have experienced violence or witnessed the murder of immediate family members in their places of origin, they form bonds with one another as a means to create a family (Interview 13: September 20, 2010). Thus, the brotherhood, or hermandad, already exists in this space, while the association formalizes these bonds by creating compañerismo, or companionship in their attempt to integrate into the city and create opportunities. Sixty-three groups are registered with the association, while eighteen are especially active and perform regularly in the park (Interview 10: September 15, 2010). Through the association, musicians are expected to uphold a higher degree of professionalism, to practice, and to organize (Interview 10: September 15, 2010). In return, the idea is that the public, and possibly institutions, will formally recognize and accept these social, cultural, and economic activities in the park, including this demographic into Medellin society.

The Asociación de músicos populares de Parque Berrío (which forms part of ASOADEAN - the Asociación de ancianos desplazados en Antioquia), with the
The support of the Alcaldía de Medellín and ASENCULTURA (the Asociación de entidades culturales, a 26-year-old association designed to support cultural activities in Medellín), produced a recording featuring traditional songs, and original compositions by several of Parque Berrío’s musical groups. Approximately twenty individuals and groups collaborated on this CD, and although it has barely generated any income for the musicians, it attributes a great deal of self-worth and self-respect to the artists. Although self-respect does not translate into economic gain, CD sales signify musical accomplishment for the artists, a public acknowledgement of their musical acts in the park, and the acceptance and encouragement of their presence on site (Interview 10: September 15, 2010). All musicians want to be recognized for their work, and seeing in that many of these musicians are IDPs, they also want to be acknowledged as equal and permanent residents of Medellín. Their occupation of Parque Berrío, performances, petitioning, compañerismo, and the collective effort of producing a CD all contribute to accomplishing this goal, while challenging experiences of exclusion and stigmatization in the city.

As a final thought, it is worthwhile to note that musicians and vendors, by nature, are walkers or wanderers. For centuries, merchants and musicians have established themselves economically, socially, and culturally through their trade. In downtown Medellín, IDPs, migrants, and poorer locals carve out spaces for themselves in the city. In spaces like Parque Berrío, an association formed that succeeded in legitimizing the musicians’ and vendors’ activities in the park. For those who are unable to formalize their trade and establish themselves
permanently in a particular space, however, they wander, changing spatial
signifiers and appropriating sidewalks and streets as their own. In describing the
vendors selling tinto in downtown Medellin, Mesa et al explain:

“They traverse places, bringing coffee to the bank, to the park, to the
street, and to the street worker, appropriating elements of socialization as
if the cafeteria was moved to the street to break up routine with an
invitation to a tinto” (Mesa et al 2001: 44).
Through their omnipresent wanderings in the centre of the city, tinto vendors,
street performers, minutos vendors, and numerous others practice their trade
through walking; in doing so, they begin to blend into the cityscape and provide
services for locals, tourists, and all others who occupy the city’s streets and
sidewalks. Thus, walking, like vending and performing, serve to transform the
centre of Medellin:

“Earlier, downtown was for the elite, by the 1980s all classes were
present, and today downtown is considered to be popular ... Many believe
that downtown has been taken by the people, that there has been a
change in status, not just in the population, but also in the activities, which
are now much more popular. The popular base of the population is
appropriating more of the city centre all the time, signifying that downtown
is becoming the centre of the periphery of the city” (Mesa et al 2001: 165).
Through their activities in determined spaces, and on their walks around
the city, (IDP) vendors and musicians make downtown their focal point for their
social interactions, livelihood, and their exchange with the city (Mesa et al 2001:
165). In downtown Medellín, and in Parque Berrío in particular, IDP musicians
and vendors challenge the authorities that seek to eject them from these spaces.
Through both formal and informal acts in Parque Berrío, IDPs are challenging
their experiences of stigmatization and exclusion in the city by occupying and
appropriating a social, cultural, and economic space where they can establish themselves as permanent residents of Medellin.

**Conclusions**

The CDCM and Parque Berrío are both examples of spaces in Medellin that IDPs have occupied and appropriated through performing, vending, and walking. These spaces are centrally located in Medellin, not on the margins, and therefore allow IDPs to articulate their presence in the formal and informal life of the city. Through a display of their diverse expressions from across Colombia, IDPs engage in an intercultural dialogue with their compañeros and spectators. This dialogue allows them to establish their presence as permanent purveyors of music, dance, minutos, tinto, or chicles in Parque Berrío or at the CDCM.

The permanent IDP occupation of Parque Berrío and the CDCM are significant for two main reasons: they are central spaces with stigmas attached that IDPs are transforming through their activities; and in both spaces, IDPs are re-establishing a connection to space. IDPs congregate in these spaces on a daily basis, build networks of friends and acquaintances, and create economic opportunities, all of which are fundamental to being a permanent resident of a city. Furthermore, IDPs' continued presence in these spaces facilitates their recognition as permanent occupants of the CDCM and Parque Berrío. As such, locals and institutions inadvertently come to identify IDPs as permanent residents, associating them with the park and the CDCM, which they occupy on a permanent basis. This recognition gradually facilitates IDPs' incorporation into the city and the demos.
CONCLUSIONS

Throughout this thesis, I have attempted to present IDPs in Medellin in a particular light: as resourceful individuals who are attempting to carve out a space for themselves in the city and “get ahead” through a number of social, cultural, and economic activities. Many authors depict IDPs as a distraught and embattled people who need humanitarian aid and social services in order to survive (Barakat 2005a, 2005b; Frelick 2007; Global IDP Project 2002; Jones 2005; McDowell & Van Hear 2006; Weiss Fagen et al 2006). Humanitarian aid is certainly necessary when IDPs first arrive in the city, but is neither practical nor sustainable on its own in the long-term. Additionally, by turning IDPs into recipients of charity, the (perhaps accurate) perception of IDPs is that they put a strain on the welfare system, which brings the public to resent them. Meanwhile, other authors focus on IDPs as being subjects of rights, and use this framework as a means to analyze IDPs as equal citizens who are entitled to the same rights and benefits as all other citizens (Brennan & Martone 2007; Cohen 2007; Grabska & Mehta 2008; Kent 2007; McAdam 2008; Molyneux & Lazar 2003; Sánchez 2008). While IDPs certainly deserve to be acknowledged and treated as equal rights holders in the city, most of this literature is overwhelmingly normative in its claims and does not generally translate into practical solutions. Furthermore, these authors seldom acknowledge actions being taken by IDPs to become equal rights holders, and instead focus on institutional and
organizational responses, or a lack thereof. My goal in this thesis was to fill this gap in the literature: namely, I have attempted to paint a picture of IDPs and what they do to challenge their experiences of stigmatization and exclusion, and integrate socially, culturally, and economically in the city.

To briefly recount, this thesis focuses on IDPs once they have arrived in the city and have made the decision to stay in Medellin. By staying, they choose not to exercise their right to return, and consequently relinquish a connection to space. In a spaceless state of liminality, bordering between temporary and ambiguous occupants of the city, the question emerges as to whether, and how IDPs reestablish a connection to space in an (often unfamiliar) urban environment. From the moment they arrive in the city, IDPs are perceived as victims of a humanitarian crisis, without a home or a productive role in the city, and are constantly being rejected and ejected from ‘public’ spaces. By participating in social, economic, or cultural activities in public spaces, however, IDPs occupy and appropriate spaces in a non-violent and non-insurgent way. The results are two-fold: IDPs manage to claim, or enact their right to the city, and they establish a purpose in the city and a sense of belonging.

In Chapter 2, I examine two cases in which IDPs have occupied spaces in Medellin: the CDCM and Parque Berrío. In Moravia, in response to the diverse nature of the community and the wealth of artistic expressions present, a casa de cultura was built as a means to foster the talents of moravitas and give them tools to respond to the challenges they face in their community. The CDCM has been occupied by the (mostly IDP) community and is used as both a
performance stage, and a point of departure for walking the city. Many perceive
the purpose of the Centre to be to change the imaginary of Moravia and
moravitas vis-à-vis Medellin society. From this space, moravitas attempt to
overcome their stigmatizations and include themselves in the city. In Parque
Berrío, IDPs congregate, look for, and create economic opportunities. Musicians
and vendors eke out a living by performing traditional Colombian folk music,
selling tinto or minutos, and shining shoes, while walkers take advantage of the
park’s central location as a starting point for creating opportunities while walking
the streets of Medellin. These performers, vendors, and walkers incorporate into
the city socially, economically, and culturally through occupying and
appropriating the park as a base for their activities. Through this process, the
imaginary of the park as a temporary place of leisure is being transformed into a
permanent place of social, economic, and cultural activity.

All permanent residents in Medellin – despite their numerous and
contradictory interests – participate in activities in the city’s spaces. Since IDPs
are not permanent residents, however, they are often not included in the same
social spaces as migrants, locals, and tourists, forcing them to occupy and
appropriate their own spaces and undertake their own activities. A key difference
exists between the practices carried out by migrants, locals, and tourists, and
those carried out by IDPs: the former group’s practices do not necessarily lead to
the inclusion and acceptance of IDPs, whereas the latter group’s practices
transform the perceived, conceived, and lived aspects of the space facilitating
inclusion, access, and acceptance. IDPs, despite their temporary or ambiguous
status in the city, become a permanent part of the city through their occupation and transformation of spaces.

IDP activities reconstitute the spaces they occupy, altering not only the physical spaces and the spatial signifiers, but also the social relations within these spaces. By moving out of the traditional ambit where norms of economic growth, progress, and a social and political status quo are rigidly upheld, and envisioning and enacting a social space that can be appropriated and transformed by and for a marginalized segment of the population, IDPs construct, appropriate, and establish a connection to a space in which they can enact their right to the city, construct a new set of social relations and interactions, and transform their status from temporary to permanent.

Recommendations

Institutional support is undeniably necessary to ensure that IDPs have an adequate quality of life in the city. The focus of this support, however, needs to shift. IDPs are dignified human beings who want to be able to support their families through their economic activities; for this to occur, however, IDPs need to be allowed to carry out these activities uninhibitedly. To demand that institutions and Medellin society simply respect and recognize IDPs as equals is fair, but likely unproductive. Instead, what is more reasonable is to lobby for the acceptance and acknowledgement of the activities IDPs are carrying out in an attempt to survive and integrate. Building the CDCM and granting official permits to musicians and vendors in Parque Berrío constitute a step in the right direction. Walkers, however, and those who perform or vend in other parts of the city, still
face considerable resistance from public space enforcement officials and police. This resistance is unwarranted and to a large extent forces IDPs to depend on the welfare system and aid organizations for survival. Not only does this produce a culture of dependency among IDPs, it diminishes the self-respect an IDP can attain by being able to earn a living and provide for his or her family.

Throughout this thesis, I discuss IDPs’ attempts to change their status in the city from temporary to permanent, but did not determine whether this transition has been completely realized. Additionally, I determine that IDPs succeed in challenging experiences of stigmatization and exclusion by permanently occupying and appropriating spaces in Medellin through their activities, and in transforming key central spaces in the city. It remains unclear, however, whether these occupations of space translate into citizenship. Thus, I propose the following research question as a point of departure from which to continue this study: Do IDPs become full and equal citizens of Medellin by virtue of the fact that they occupy and transform key central spaces in the city? The answer to this question would determine if IDPs actually become permanent residents and equal citizens in the city as a result of their occupation, appropriation, and transformation of spaces, or whether institutions and locals continue to view them as others on the margins of society.
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