

La Cuna

Hospice Care, Death and Memory

by
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TRANSIT

*Does it matter where we are born?
or where we die?
if with death we return
to the cradle and with birth
we ensure our death?¹*

[...]

¹ Translated by Author from Rogelio Echavarría, *El Transeúnte* (The Passer-by), (Medellín, Editorial Universidad de Antioquia, 1965), 38.



ABSTRACT

Despite the growing interest in end-of-life care in Colombia, the concept of hospice care is still relatively new. It is an emerging topic that is controversial and debated due to cultural and societal traditions. The study seeks to find common ground relative to life and death as it tries to redefine and change the perception of death in Colombian society. This thesis is an evolving exploration into conceptualizing and designing a transitional place with spaces that allow for end-of-life care and the acknowledgement of death as a way of generating embodied memories in the city of Medellín. As a guiding principle, the project seeks to examine these ideas through elements that are part of the local culture, social construct, and the aesthetic of both the natural and built environment.

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To my Mother, for your encouragement every step of the way. I am forever grateful.

Thank you for teaching me how to work hard and persevere.

To my dear brother Alejandro and my lovely girlfriend Elizabeth who had me interested in the topic after long conversations on how to improve the livelihood of patients in end-of-life care and the concept of redefining death. Without your continuous support and advice from a medical and psychological standpoint this work could not have been possible.

Elizabeth, siempre mi polo a tierra

*A Mamá, Alejandro y Elizabeth
por su continuo amor, apoyo y comprensión.
Ha sido un camino largo y difícil,
pero siempre han estado ahí escuchándome
y confortándome cuando más lo he necesitado.*

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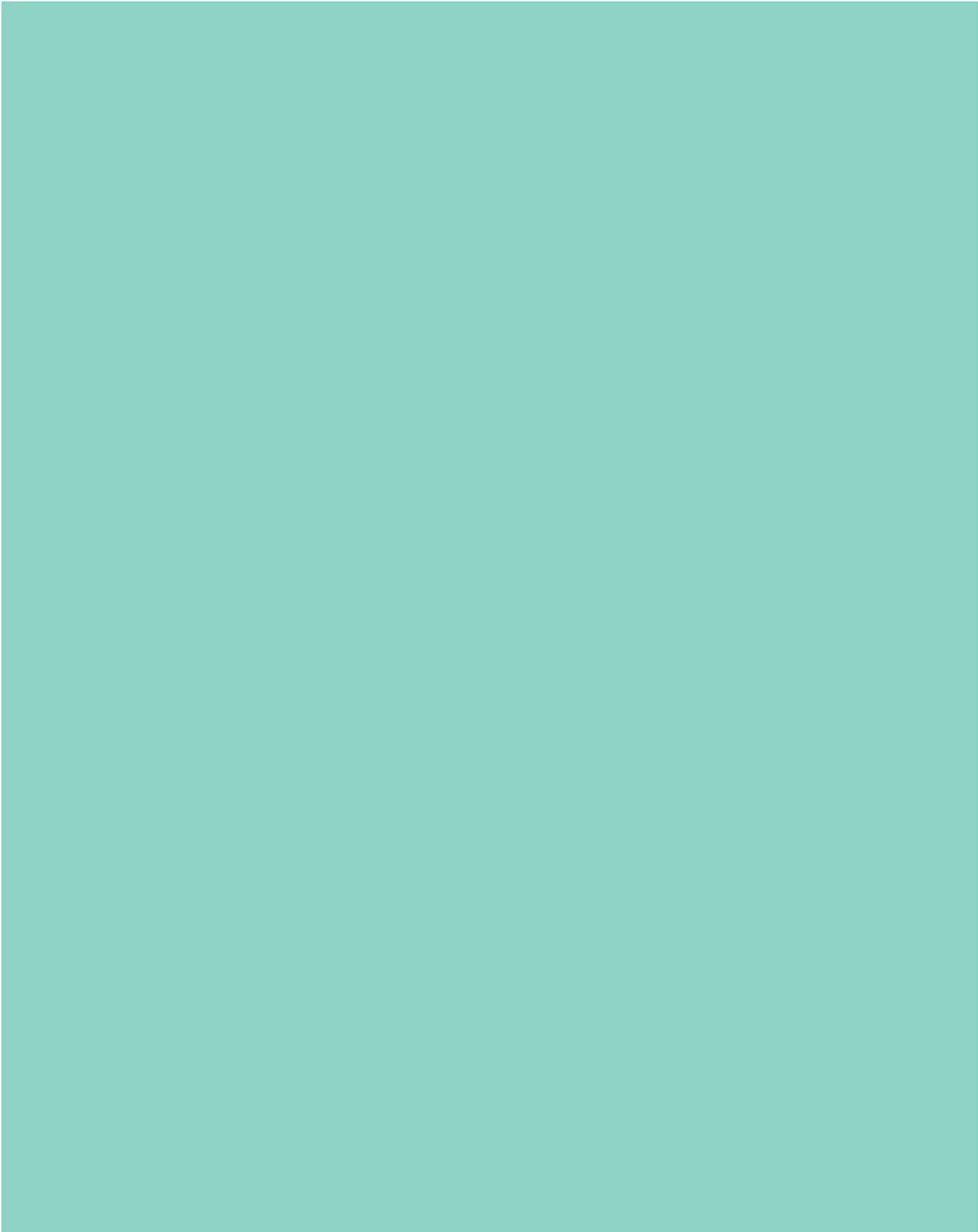


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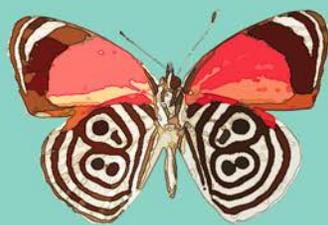
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PREFACE



Halfway through undertaking this project, I realized that the thesis was a personal endeavour to find a poetic proposal through architecture; to give meaning to a particular space and how it can positively influence culture. I envisioned this idea as a pragmatic project that would help those at the later stages of life find peace, specifically through an architectural proposition. Crucial to this idea was the need to understand a typology that is progressively developing in today's society, such as the hospice, and to explore the idea of dying as part of our process in life by analyzing deathscapes. Although the initiative of the project is to conceive a place that is comfortable and sensitive for the dying patient, it is also one that is preoccupied with acknowledging embodied memory as a focal point towards finding an architectural ethos that is proper in the Cultura Antioqueña.² With this in mind, the objectives are reasonably direct: to investigate an architecture that is appropriate and resonant in a contemporary local context, including its iconic potential for the city of Medellín.

Throughout my exploration, there have been various vital elements that have emerged, many precedents, ideas and concepts: Death and Memory became two correlated themes that influenced the main body of the work. Through these themes, architecture offers an essential medium to distill meaning by the way these themes can be interpreted. The goal of the hospice and the crematorium as possibly merging to become one sole architectural

² The popular and cultural identity of the Paisa region in the Antioquia Department, Colombia. Meaning "Antioquean culture."

typology guides the proposal. The thematic essence of these two distinct building types is an underrated topic in architecture, primarily when the conversation is centred around death. As architects, we build the future, the cities we inhabit down to the beautiful dream homes, but what about nurturing life as it nears its cycle? How can we demonstrate that our capacity to create can take us as far as understanding embodied space and how it relates to architecture? Space, not as confinement, but as the embodiment of mind and consciousness, capable of generating a sublime experience: to phenomenologists, a way of place-making. In undertaking this project, it has been challenging to reimagine the crematorium and cemetery. The resulting thesis began as a study of the lack of hospices in the region.³ Within this exploration, it became evident that the lack of hospices in Colombia is not because the hospice movement has not made it yet into the country, but because the population is highly conservative and sees death as something that needs to take place either at home or at the hospital. The project started as a foundational approach to understanding the hospice within a scope limited to culture. As it moved forward, the proposal rapidly evolved into including the crematorium as a fundamental component of the thesis. This addition happened when the introduction of the principal themes of death and memory began to be explored in the research.

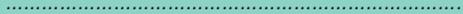
Thus, this thesis has been a path to self-discovery and an exploration of some of my interests in architecture. The proposal responds to those who can no longer voice their thoughts, by using architecture as a construct of social and cultural validity, generating embodied memory, remembrance and eternal presence. As it stands, death is unpredictable and will always be, even if approached from a different perspective. What we can do as architects to engage with this difficult topic is to instill a shift in society by creating responsive compositions and proposals that take into consideration the various facets of culture in a society. By doing so,

³ Although domiciliary service in palliative care is offered throughout Colombia, the lack of hospices is still a major concern as there are only four known hospices. Given the culture and the taboo centered around death, the concept is still developing and needs much attention in order to be a proposal that individuals can become accustomed. Consequently, in proposing a concept that could serve as a precedent, the city of Medellín has been selected to explore this idea as a precedent proposal for emerging hospices around the country.

this shift will slowly transform the current vision into an intuitive and poetic understanding of spatial possibilities. The power of architecture becomes transformative for an individual in a collective society as the sense of place becomes the essence of that individual's being with the world. This essence happens through architecture's potential to embody the memory of place.



INTRODUCTION



The concept of death has always mystified people. It has been a never-ending paradigm created amidst religious, cultural and sociological ideas in any given society and, quite often, manifested as taboo. Human beings fear death, yet it is just a part of life. It is a transitional phase ingrained in one's memory as part of the cultural and social experience. Although the topic of death has always been a fundamental principle instilled in the idea of what comprises a "*good death*," for most societies, death is part of the cycle of life, for others, it is a difficult part of existence. Therefore, what makes the difference in death becoming taboo is how it is perceived and treated by society. With this in mind, breaking away from a conservative perspective would mean creating a coherent narrative of how beliefs and traditions can redefine such a sublime matter as death.

The use of hospice care in the developed world has become the norm when treating dying patients, unlike developing countries where there are still limitations in the understanding of hospice care. End-of-life care has been a persistent topic in modern society. Starting from the 1970s and 1980s, most developed countries in Europe and North America have had a committed hospice movement. Historically, hospice care has focused primarily on treating patients with terminal diagnoses and, although comparatively the same as palliative care. It sets out to respond to physical, emotional and spiritual needs of dying people as individuals: embedded in compassion and spiritual care, advocating for the care of the whole-person. This philosophy has created a progressive practice in treating death, where

better care and services are usually accessible. In contrast to this reality, it is unfortunate that a staggering 33 million people die each year in the developing world alone needing palliative care⁴ (600,000 annual deaths happen in Latin America alone).⁵

In Colombia, although palliative care services have existed since the mid-1980s, there is still a growing need for the development of palliative care. Hospice care is still underdeveloped and in its early stages. With only four hospices known around the country, the challenge lies in finding an appropriate approach that will be beneficial in the next decades as the country struggles to provide an affordable and effective healthcare system. As an emerging topic, its acceptance around the country is uncertain and debated since secular, social and cultural traditions see death from a *conservative perspective*.⁶ Thus, pain management is the standard model when treating patients at the end of life, with the lack of emotional and spiritual assistance yet to be taken seriously. In order to formalize the elemental understanding of death within a culture that is still somewhat traditional, these emotional and spiritual components are essential to relieving this transitional phase both for the patient and the family, needing to be critically developed within the scope of architecture. Memory as an essential part of the process becomes a starting point that guides the project.

Nevertheless, in places like Medellín (Fig.1), death and memory are mostly connected to views born out of social and political injustices; emerging both from past experiences and current daily life. This perception has generated a disconnect of cultural identity, what does it truly mean *to be*, and how is death perceived since it may be associated with violence. In addition, the current social narrative has slowly degraded the local culture and placed

⁴ J. Stjernsward & D. Clark, Palliative Medicine: A Global Perspective, in Derek Doyle et al., eds., Oxford Textbook of Palliative Medicine (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 3rd ed., 2003) pp. 1199-1222, 1.

⁵ J. Ferlay, I. Soerjomataram, M. Ervik, et al: GLOBOCAN 2012 v1.0, Cancer Incidence and Mortality Worldwide: IARC CancerBase No. 11. Lyon, France, International Agency for Research on Cancer, 2013

⁶ In Colombian society, Catholicism is the unifying factor and main influential cultural element that determines social process. This religious factor contributes vastly to how idiosyncrasy is expressed through social behaviour, configuring the way of being, thinking, feeling and perceiving. Thus, religion is a significant influence, especially through moral imperatives and inculturation processes, because religion instills values, shapes behaviour and customs, guidelines norms of conduct, and ways of being individually and collectively. In this regard, the sociocultural values are expressed thoroughly by the emphasis of religious beliefs.

a burden on the character of the region. As a way to actively explore death, embodied memory and habitat of the city are given tremendous importance since these are essential starting points to conceive a place capable of developing the ethos of death. Relative to such sophisticated interpretation, the hospice and crematorium will connect to generate memory-making spaces hoping to influence change.

The central concept behind both the hospice and crematorium entails a *"home."* In the true essence of the word, it is a way to imagine a space for death, dying and the dead. In such a proposal, the notion of a *"good death"* is intrinsic to the embodiment of memory generated through place. In this sense, home is regarded as more than the place where an individual inhabits but as a notion of the cultural and natural habitat, permissible in moving forward to acknowledge death as more to life than life itself. Although the perception of a *"good death"* may vary from individual to individual, at the human and spiritual level, it is about honouring life and finding reconciliation with the surrounding environment. Memory then is an important aspect that alludes to death, both at the bedside for terminally-ill patients as those who have already passed, going back to the cradle of the earth.

The thesis asks how can the process of dying and death be redefined by using embodied memory, cultural character and social beliefs as metamorphic principles capable of questioning the prevalent rhetoric towards death in a conservative culture. How can these principles create a poetic space, one that is both culturally and traditionally rich, a place that nurtures end-of-life care while offering a dedicated natural site to the families and the memorialization of those who have died? The thesis positions El Volador Hill (Fig.2) in Medellín as the test site where a new transitional space prototype for the dying and the dead could be established. This pilot project will provide the opportunity to rethink about how death is treated currently in the Colombian society, creating a place that acknowledges social and cultural norms as viable approaches to transform the

perception of end-of-life care in Medellín. By analyzing the traditional and cultural values of the city, the project digs into modern-day traditions and ancestral interpretations to connect its architecture to the flowers as these are a significant part of the culture. The fact that flowers are more commonly associated with death offers excellent access to use the metaphorical representation of the flowers, their natural habitat, and pollinators to produce an architectural response that celebrates life and death.



Fig.1
Map of Colombia

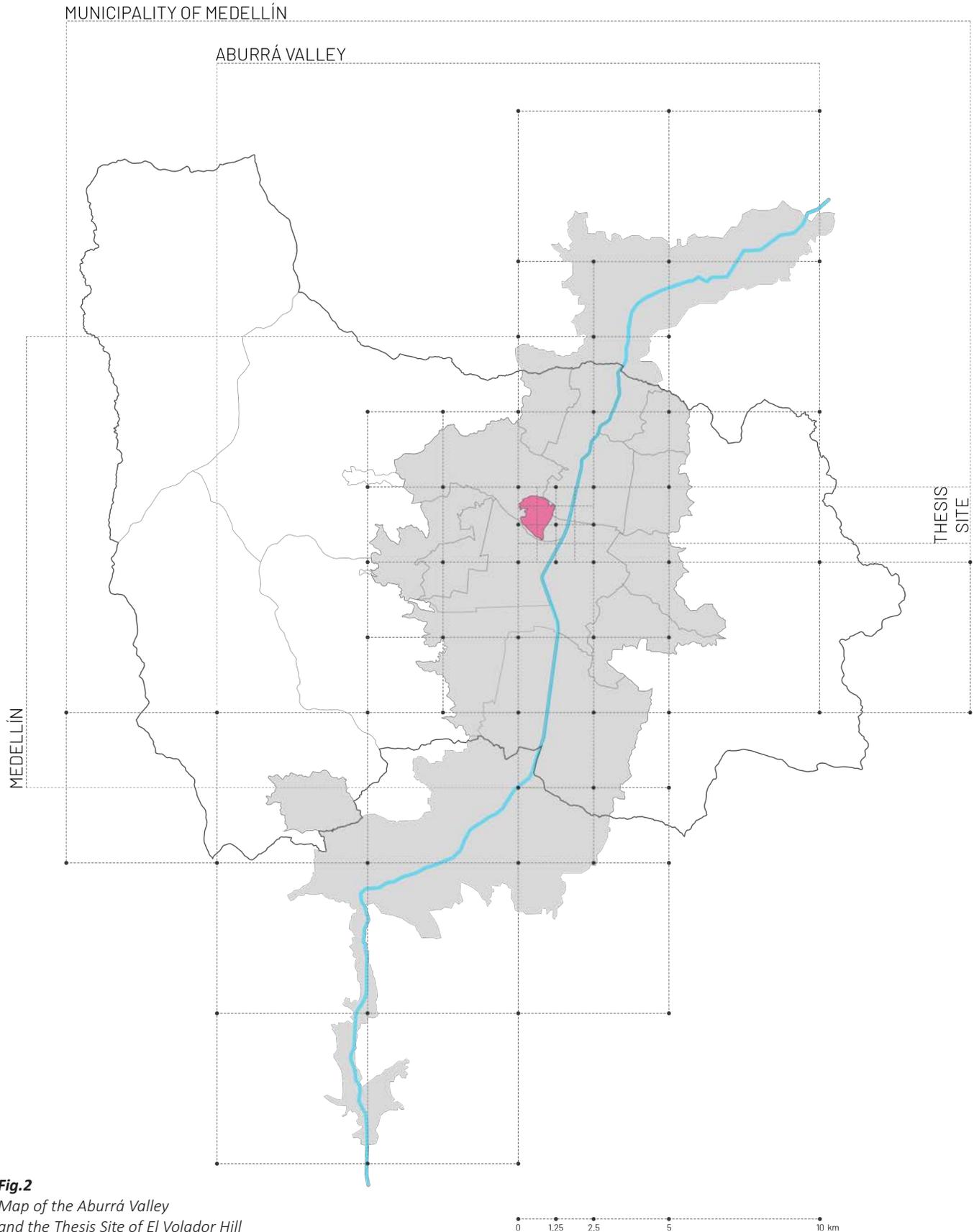
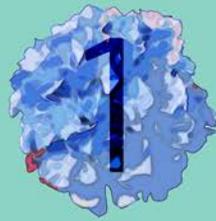


Fig.2
Map of the Aburrá Valley
and the Thesis Site of El Volador Hill

THE INDIVIDUAL BEFORE PAIN AND DEATH



Death is, by definition, an endless conversation in society. Ever since the beginning of time, death has been part of life, and though interpreted as a taboo, it has occupied the mind of man searching for meaning. The idea of dying has always been distasteful to man and probably will always be as death itself is an inconceivable aspect for human beings. Death is often attributed to a malicious act since for the unconscious mind, man can only be killed: it is unthinkable to die of a natural cause or old age.⁷ In some instances, however, religious conceptions and beliefs are associated with the afterlife, divinity of resurrection, and thus permeate the essence of being. Throughout history, there have been many words related to death and dying: “the end,” “conclusion of life,” “culmination,” “destruction,” “extinct,” “faded away.” Death has been seen as the termination of life in the body and the beginning of eternal life. Previously, death was also viewed as a concurrent event where an individual preparing to die recognized his or her faults, forgave any offences, advised loved ones, received spiritual help and said farewell. It was a beautiful domestic death, humanized with social and moral regard to its community, culture and local traditions. Life was lived naturally, and dying was treated similarly, with the perception to resign to life and surrender to death ultimately.

Accordingly, new concepts began to formalize the idea of death, especially as religion became an essential part of society. This formalization in the belief of God emerged

⁷ Elizabeth Kubler-Ross, *On Death and Dying*, (New York, Taylor & Francis Group, 1973), 2.

slowly as a philosophy. With this in mind, the familiarity of heaven and the eternal return were part of the development of religion. Christian ideology, for example, people would unquestionably follow the sacred scriptures offering a broad and beautiful narrative about stories of immortality, the final judgment, and resurrection of the dead. People sought to relieve suffering and pain through these sacred texts; after all, heaven was the ultimate reward. For the common individual who had suffered on earth this reward after death depended on the courage and grace, patience and dignity.⁸ Regarding this context of religion, suffering, pain, and death, a more intricate concept started to emerge as part of the fascination with the eternal; the existence of the Purgatory (Fig.3). This new visual image of death created an uncertainty in the ritual and deprived the individual of hope and purpose, instilling fear and anguish.⁹ By following these religious beliefs with the exchange of ideas suggesting an eternal life, human beings longed for a peaceful parting, a “good death.” It became part of the ritual to find closeness with spirituality as a way to begin walking the path towards the divine, closing the cycle of life. Within the next hundred years, death went from being a manifestation of the body as a glorified purity and spiritual connection at the end of life to a more conscious and hopeless situation where time and existential finitude became an ever-present aspect of life.

Nowadays, a dying patient is treated by mechanical means and at hospital wards. Although there is no denying that the mechanization of treatments is vital to the human being as it allows living, these interventions are commonly viewed in hospitals and treated as such, failing to respond to death as humanely as possible. The objective is evident, as modern medicine prolongs life expectancy and the advances in science prevail in society, the fear of death, dying, and the reality of it becomes more pronounced.¹⁰ According to Elisabeth Kubler-Ross, “dying has become gruesome, more lonely, mechanical and dehumanized

⁸ Ibid., 10.

⁹ Ibid., 12.

¹⁰ Ibid., 6.

at the moment death happens for a patient.”¹¹ Especially end-of-life patients being taken out of familiar environments into spaces like emergency wards that generate anxiety and discomfort. In turn, the uncomfoting nature of these spaces surrounds the patient with no right to an opinion or decision, often forgetting that the sick have feelings, wishes and the right to be heard, slowly beginning to be treated like a thing – no longer a person.¹² In this sense, the integral vision of a patient who is dying has been mechanized and replaced by several processes and applications that visibly exclude the full needs of a terminal patient. Therefore, becoming a phenomenon guided by the lack of support and therapeutic incarceration, especially to patients with a limited life expectancy. Modern medicine and science have successfully prolonged life and improved the health of patients, this has created an illusion that death can be deferred indefinitely.

Additionally, as death approaches the usual perception is that it is more often a medical error, leading the relatives to regard the process as failing to keep their loved one alive. Although not always the case, the consequence may be that patients and their relatives alike feel desperate and helpless as most terminally-ill are faced with a situation where isolation, pain, and suffering are always present. From this idea, hospice care emerged as a philosophy of treating the terminal patient as a whole, improving the quality of life in the last stages and attending the patient’s and their family’s emotional, social and spiritual needs.



Fig.3
Purgatory by Ludovico Caracci

¹¹ Ibid., 7.

¹² Ibid., 7.

“Death is still a fearful, frightening happening, and the fear of death is a universal fear even if we think we have mastered it on many levels.”¹³

¹³ Ibid., 4.

TYOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK



The foremost interest in the central portion of the research was trying to understand the connection between two building typologies: both the Hospice and the Crematorium. By connecting these programs, it is possible to distill the meaning of what “good death” represents to patients. Moreover, the programs would enhance the concept of memory to the relatives of a dying patient. The connecting factor between the two typologies is death, which will eventually generate a threshold for juxtaposing beside each other. Hence, both programs are necessary to explore death in a culture that is still conservative towards it.

The basis for creating a hospice is to serve as precedent in Colombia since this in-service is still developing. On the other hand, deathscapes such as cemeteries and columbaria have become to full capacity given the social history of the country, and so the crematorium as a place for departure serves as a fundamental space for evoking memories. By creating awareness about death and slowly reshaping the principles behind it, the taboo that surrounds death and dying would configure perception. By doing so, the approach seeks to address the concept of place-making¹⁴ by garnering ideas related to memory, recollection, remembrance, commemoration and, the identity of the place and surrounding scape. Understanding and reflecting upon the ethos brought on by death within society and culture would provide insights into who human beings are as individuals and as a community.¹⁵

¹⁴ A term widely used in phenomenology studies – any space that enables human experience and consciousness.

¹⁵ James Friedman, “Death Ethos,” *The Encyclopedia of Adulthood and Aging*, (Edited by S. K. Whitbourne, 2015).

THE HOSPICE

Caring for patients has always been constant and an essential part of the history of humanity. It is a way of providing physical, psychological and spiritual support. For the past 60 or so years, dying patients have had spaces dedicated to them as the use of hospices slowly become the norm when treating dying patients. End-of-life care has been a persistent topic in modern society. Cicely Saunders developed the hospice movement in the 1950s as a way of approaching the management of dying patients differently, treating pain and the total needs of those patients. This philosophy soon emerged as the foundation of the movement instilled with humanist ideals; using a team to treat the whole person focusing on the psychological and spiritual preparation for death.¹⁶

The concept of hospice first came to North America in 1971. By 1974 the first hospice was built in Connecticut. By the mid-1970s the concept began to expand as a small committed movement throughout the USA and Canada.¹⁷ By the mid-1980s, other countries joined, countries like France, Belgium, Italy, Spain, the Netherlands and Poland taking the form of inpatient and outpatient care as well as the construction or implementation of hospices in some cases. The United Kingdom had already progressed in this sense and being the pioneers on the topic, nonetheless became part of this hospice movement. The hospice grew out being mainly a space looking after all kinds of dying individuals, including the poor and the needy.¹⁸

To understand what a hospice encompasses, it is ideal to follow a general misconception that arises in this topic. Most individuals believe that hospice care and palliative care are

¹⁶ Stephen R. Connor, *Hospice: practice, pitfalls, and promise*, (Washington, D.C, Taylor & Francis, 1998), 5.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 5.

¹⁸ Sarah McGann, *The Production of Hospice Space: Conceptualising the Space of Caring and Dying*, (Farnham, Surrey, England, UK, Burlington, VT, Ashgate, 2013), 25.

the same components to standard end-of-life care; these are still separate and distinct systems in the medical practice. This misconception happens due to the lack of reasonable access to the people and limited conversation regarding the topic. In the end, ignorance about the terminology and what they represent creates an underlying confusion for the general public.¹⁹ The North American and European notion of a hospice places it as a concept following philosophy and paradigm of care. To Jennings, et al. in *Access to Hospice Care: Expanding Boundaries, Overcoming Barriers*, hospice is an organizational form of health care delivery:

*Hospice services include professional nursing care, personal assistance with activities of daily living, various forms of rehabilitation therapy, dietary counseling, psychological and spiritual counselling for both patient and family, volunteer services, respite care, provision of medical drugs and devices necessary for palliative care, and family bereavement services following the patient's death. Hospice care is provided by an interdisciplinary care team comprised of nurses, social workers, pastoral counselors, nursing assistants, and other health professionals under the management of a physician, who may be the patients own primary care physician or may be affiliated directly with the hospice program.*²⁰

In today's society, the confusion over the meaning of the word hospice prevails. Many people believe that a hospice may be a place where people die while many others associate it with death and are uncomfortable by the idea of it.²¹ Hospice care and Palliative care are two terms that are often labelled synonymously and interchangeably. Although each term expresses the sense of comfort to the patient, the main difference is that hospice care is geared towards patients with less than six months to live, whereas palliative care happens whenever a patient has a chronic illness with a favourable prognosis and chance of recovery. In this sense, the traditional hospice always includes addressing the patient's imminent death and reaction to that prospect, whatever additional medical and nursing services it might also involve.²² Henceforth, the hospice as a place for the care of the

¹⁹ Bruce Jennings et al, "Access to hospice care: Expanding boundaries, overcoming barriers," (The Hastings Center Report, March-April: S3-S54, 2003) 6.

²⁰ Ibid., 6.

²¹ Stephen R. Connor, *Hospice: practice, pitfalls, and promise*, (Washington, D.C, Taylor & Francis, 1998), 3.

²² Bruce Jennings et al, "Access to hospice care: Expanding boundaries, overcoming barriers," (The Hastings Center Report,

terminally-ill needs to be separated and understood as is, a spatial construct capable of refining professional care with an emphasis on family involvement.²³ To this extent, the term *hospice* has been explored to avoid confusion by the general public and architects. Such as it is the idea of this redefinition of the word, that in the book *Innovations in Hospice Architecture*, authors Ben Refuerzo and Stephen Verderber define their view regarding both terms:

*A hospice is a place for the care of the terminally-ill. Palliative care is therapy that focuses on decreasing pain and suffering by providing patients with medication for relief of their symptoms and with comfort and support. Hospice care, which involves helping ill patients and their families during the last period of life, is an integral part of palliative care. The two terms are deeply intertwined and are used interchangeably in many contexts, and this may be a point of some confusion to the architect.*²⁴

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines palliative care as “an approach that improves the quality of life of patients and their families facing the problem associated with life-threatening illness, through the prevention and relief of suffering by means of early identification and impeccable assessment and treatment of pain and other problems, physical, psychosocial and spiritual.”²⁵ The philosophy of the hospice is fundamental in understanding the possibility of death. The foundations of hospice care focus around a philosophy of humanism, that is, to accept patients unconditionally, offering a comforting space, recognize the paradigm of wholeness and to promote respect for the universal human experience in preparation for death.

One of the critical advantages to the hospice approach is that it allows an opportunity to prepare for death. If one only seeks a cure for the disease against all odds, the reality of impending death is never faced. Facing the imminent possibility of the end of life creates important

March-April: S3-S54, 2003) 7.

²³ Sarah McGann, *The Production of Hospice Space: Conceptualising the Space of Caring and Dying*, (Farnham, Surrey, England, UK, Burlington, VT, Ashgate, 2013), 30.

²⁴ Stephen Verderber and Ben J. Refuerzo, *Innovations in Hospice Architecture*, (New York, Taylor & Francis, 2006), 9.

²⁵ World Health Organization. 2012. WHO Definition of Palliative Care. January 28. Accessed March 5, 2019. <https://www.who.int/cancer/palliative/definition/en/>

*opportunities. It allows people to say good-bye to the ones they love, it allows them to resolve any interpersonal conflicts that have been left incomplete, it allows a time for review of their lives to perhaps find meaning, and it allows practical preparations for death, including all the paperwork and bureaucracy of death that is so hard on survivors afterward.*²⁶

In this context, the concept represents a humanistic approach, geared towards the embrace of spiritual life and values. It seeks to relieve suffering and helping those patients to find an expression of religious representation concerning God. Therefore, the concept needs to be transmitted architecturally to the people that will end up inhabiting the spaces. As a result, architecture would be complacent enough to follow the philosophy of the hospice and establish a space that responds to the physical, emotional, psychological and spiritual needs of the dying people as individuals. Drawing from this idea, author Jacqueline Watts explains that “in the hospice context, knowing and valuing patients as individuals has resulted in high-quality care both in-patient and daycare settings.”²⁷ This holistic approach serves as part of a definitive way of caring and should be evident through not only its philosophy by ingrained in the space within this concept. For developed nations, the concept of hospice care is already embedded within their society, so people understand that a hospice offers a home-like environment and a peaceful way to die. This awareness is necessary for the ambit of the Colombian society and drawing reference from captivating spaces such as the hospice. By doing so, it would be a significant step in reforming the principles and uncertainties from as to what a hospice is and what objectives it follows.

²⁶ Stephen R. Connor, *Hospice: practice, pitfalls, and promise*, (Washington, D.C, Taylor & Francis, 1998), 9.

²⁷ Jacqueline H. Watts, “It’s not Really like a Hospice’: Spaces of Self-Help and Community Care for Cancer,” In *Deathscapes: spaces for death, dying, mourning and remembrance*, by James D. Sidaway and Avril Maddrell, 19-32, (Burlington, VT, Surrey, Ashgate, 2010), 22.

EVOLUTION OF HOSPICE AND PALLIATIVE CARE IN COLOMBIA

According to the Atlas of Palliative Care in Latin America, Colombia currently has a total of four hospices with a total of 40 beds. Besides, there are around 60 domiciliary programs in the country.²⁸ Yet, for a country of almost 50 million people,²⁹ this number is a disappointing factor not only in terms of health care but an important issue that will help formulate the argument about the idea of hospice care, death and memory in Colombia. As an initial point, the city of Medellín will be taken into consideration to prove the argument through architecture, thus exploring the current state of the hospice concept in the city. This limited provision means that there is a small availability of hospice and palliative care services, which may often be home-based and relatively confined to the size of the population.³⁰

| Country | Level of Development | No. of Services | No. of Services per Million Inhabitants |
|--------------------|----------------------|-----------------|---|
| Argentina | 3b | 151 | 3.76 |
| Bolivia | 2 | 6 | 0.58 |
| Brazil | 3a | 93 | 0.48 |
| Chile | 4a | 277 | 16.06 |
| Colombia | 3a | 23 | 0.50 |
| Costa Rica | 4a | 63 | 14.65 |
| Cuba | 3a | 51 | 4.54 |
| Dominican Republic | 3a | 8 | 0.80 |
| Ecuador | 3a | 12 | 0.83 |
| El Salvador | 3a | 4 | 0.64 |
| Guatemala | 3a | 7 | 0.48 |
| Honduras | 2 | 2 | 0.24 |
| Mexico | 3a | 119 | 1.06 |
| Nicaragua | 2 | 13 | 2.14 |
| Panama | 3a | 9 | 2.64 |
| Paraguay | 3a | 4 | 0.61 |
| Peru | 3a | 12 | 0.42 |
| Uruguay | 4a | 23 | 7.00 |
| Venezuela | 3a | 45 | 1.56 |
| Total | | 922 | 1.53 |

Table 1
Categorization of Latin American palliative care, redrawn from original

In Latin America, Colombia is part of the 3a group according to the World Health Organization (WHO) who has classified the global development of palliative care into levels,

²⁸ T. Pastrana, et. al, Atlas of Palliative Care in Latin America APCLA, (1st Edition, Houston, IAHP Press, 2012), 91.

²⁹ National Department of Statistics (DANE), 2011, «Colombia, estimations of migrations. 1985-2005 and projections 2005-2020. National and departmental. » DANE. Last accessed: March 6, 2019. <https://www.dane.gov.co/index.php/estadisticas-por-tema/demografia-y-poblacion/movilidad-y-migracion>.

³⁰ World Palliative Care Alliance; WHO. 2014. "Global atlas of palliative care at the end of life." World Health Organization. January. Accessed December 9, 2018. <https://www.who.int/cancer/publications/palliative-care-atlas/en/>, 37.

ranging from level 1 to level 4 – from not known hospice palliative care to an advanced integration of hospice palliative care in the health system.³¹ Currently, the issue regarding the unawareness of the hospice building and service deals mostly because of domiciliary attention and the use of hospitals are believed to be suitable places for dying. On the one hand, society's prevalence in envisioning the home as the final place for dying is the commonplace of death. On the other hand, it is also logical to die in a hospital bed. More than often, dying in a hospital bed becomes technical as it is sustained, programmed, and decisive, without gentleness or patience; in other words, it is the medicalization of death.

Place of death is a fundamental pillar of the hospice movement. This pillar is necessary to instill a change in the attitude and preference of a terminally-ill patient towards the ideal place for dying at home. In a sense, the separation and uncertainty of hospice care in the country have a relationship to the way death is seen. The lack of case studies in Colombia, a country that is still underdeveloped in the use of professional hospice buildings makes it nearly impossible for individuals to acknowledge the place of death as something else than home. Therefore, the challenge is about the separation that individuals must face moving away from home and so the principal concept of a local hospice would be a nurturing space without disregarding the essence of home.

Historical data in terms of hospice and palliative care in Colombia is limited. The origin of palliative care in Colombia dates back to the early 1980s when Tiberio Álvarez founded the first Pain Management and Palliative Care in Medellín.³² In 1987, Psychologist Ilsa Fonnegra created the first foundation to help the families of terminal patients in Bogotá by the name of *Fundación Omega* (Omega Foundation).³³ In 1988, Psychologist Liliana De Lima introduced the concept of palliative care in an existing foundation, *La Viga*, creating and

³¹ Ibid., 34.

³² Pastrana, T., L. De Lima, R. Wenk, J. Eisenchlas, C. Monti, J. Rocafort, and C. Centeno. 2012. Atlas de Cuidados Paliativos de Latinoamérica ALCP. 1st Edition. Houston: IAHP Press.101.

³³ Ibid.

coordinating the first hospice and palliative care center in Cali.³⁴ Unfortunately, throughout the next decades, only two other hospice care buildings were developed to elevate the count to four in the country which they continue to serve their communities even to this day.

1. *Fundación Omega (Omega Foundation) – Bogotá*
2. *Fundación Casa de Recuperación La Viga (La Viga Recovery House Foundation) – Cali*
3. *Clínica de Alivio del Dolor y Cuidado Paliativo, Hospital San Vicente de Paul (Pain Relief and Palliative Care Clinic) – Medellín*
4. *Hospice Unidad de Cuidados Paliativos Presentes (Hospice and Palliative Care Unit "Presentes") – Bogotá*

Out of all of these, there is only one that follows the true philosophy of the contemporary hospice, *Hospice Unidad de Cuidados Paliativos Presentes* (Hospice and Palliative Care Unit "Presentes") in Bogotá. In addition to this, other services have begun to be introduced, such as *Fundación Valle del Lili* (Lily Valley Foundation) in Cali (Fig.4 and Fig.5), a place for “Special care,” meaning for those terminally-ill patients who can afford to pay for their palliative care.

It is clear that limited documentation exists and even hospitals serve as hospices or foster homes, the basic idea of a hospice building has not been fully explored. This narrative has been the result of a broader framework, not only in countries like Colombia but for the most part a widely debated topic the contemporary western society that suggests the preferred place of death is either the hospital or home. In Sarah McGann’s book *The Production of Hospice Space*, the author suggests that although the place of death has changed over time from home to hospital, to hospice, more recently from hospice to home again to accommodate death and dying, the only architectural typology capable of providing these is the hospice.³⁵ McGann discusses that the hospice is designed to envision that death as

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Sarah McGann, *The Production of Hospice Space: Conceptualising the Space of Caring and Dying*, (Farnham, Surrey, England, UK, Burlington, VT, Ashgate, 2013), 26.



Fig.4
Exterior Fundación
Valle del Lili



Fig.5
Natural context Fundación
Valle del Lili

part of life, yet it is the hospital that continues to be a significant space for death, after all in contemporary society the hospital a machine for healing. In following such discussion, it is crucial to redefine the hospice as a home-like space for individuals in the community, bringing forth ideas of social interest like culture and tradition to generate that association of death and place other than the home without negating those same feeling of place-making.

TOWARDS A NEW HOSPICE MODEL IN MEDELLÍN

Without a standard plan in place, the idea of a hospice in Medellín is virtually non-existent. As noted in the last subchapter, there is only one hospice in the metropolitan area of the city and found at *Clínica de Alivio del Dolor y Cuidado Paliativo* (Pain Relief and Palliative Care Clinic), an intermediary department from *Hospital San Vicente de Paul* (St. Vincent de Paul Hospital). In addition to this, there are currently several domiciliary services around the city from the different hospitals that offer palliative care treated as home-care. Currently, most of the population has a preference for dying at the hospital or home as these happen to be the most cherished way of passing, and so a concept without much pre-existence creates a barrier that needs to be adequately tackled. Integrating the hospice, in terms of location and space, within the confines of the territory could open a unique perspective to newer patients/residents as well as contributing to society to accept this newly proposed setting. That is to say, coming from a sphere inbred in social, cultural and territorial shortcomings in Medellín, a hospice environment will be that threshold that breaks the fear of dying and death in another place other than the home or the hospital. For instance, hospice spaces could offer far better environments to most of the population since poverty and violence prevail in most parts of the city, especially in the periphery, making the access for domiciliary services most than often inaccessible. These barriers impact collective values

and principles that, in the end, diminish the influence of end-of-life care in this particular society. The principle then lies in sharing the concept and its advantages that promote a “good death” to motivate the community into noting the framework of the hospice. A vital attribute to break the current notion of what a hospice encompasses is necessary for the concept to develop.

Hospice care development relates to the socio-political interests of the surrounding location. Although as it is the case with any architectural project, the main idea is always to innovate. Any hospice, regardless of aesthetics and design, could be a threshold for the community to start recognizing its philosophy and how it reproduces through space. The expectation seeks to find a space that is transcendental and close to the heart. To consider a way of connecting to a home environment for the patients that desperately need so. In formulating this idea, a fundamental starting point will, without a doubt, be taking precedence in the standards and guidelines to design eloquent architecture that suffices this proposal eventually. To a broader extent, there is space for learning and researching about this topic coming from other Latin American countries which happen to have an advanced integration of health care system and palliative care in place, such as Argentina, Chile, Uruguay or Costa Rica.³⁶ Even when Colombia is slowly developing this type of care into the healthcare system, the hospice is still an unknown factor that could become a great contributor to the local society. Following Stephen Verderber’s article *Residential Hospice Environments: Evidence-based architectural and landscape design considerations*, he suggests that globally there is not a signature hospice style as its architecture, just as any other architectural typology, may be dependant on place-specific demographic, socioeconomic, cultural, and logistical factors.³⁷ As such, a new vision for a hospice in Medellín could be vital for the community by emphasizing the appropriate nuances of the region that can change patient and family’s condition over time.

³⁶ Enrique Soto-Perez-de-Celis et al, “End-of-Life Care in Latin America,” (Journal of Global Oncology 3 (3), 261-270, 2017) doi:10.1200/JGO.2016.005579, 263.

³⁷ Stephen Verderber, “Residential hospice environments: Evidence-based architectural and landscape design

Nevertheless, becoming a comprehensive model that will gradually transform the paradigm of death from culture and nature. For instance, the prevalence of the city is that it sits in the Aburrá Valley in the central Andes; it is Colombia's second-largest city and boasts a spring-like climate all-year-round. Hence, it would be convenient to explore a *home-like* environment arising from the cultural, natural and built territory as well as furthering a vernacular notion that the city currently offers. To understand this concept as a whole that is embedded into the architecture and its conception, it would be ideal to address it as a place that takes into consideration the "*home*," creating an environment that is far more meaningful and symbolic, while simultaneously supporting functions that hybrid to hospice care. Author Sara McGann discusses a common misconception of the hospice:

The current claim of the hospice movement is that hospice is a philosophy of care not a building or place. Home is now widely considered to be best place to die, a place of familiar surroundings and the company of family and friends. As a result, the contemporary hospice building incorporates many additional functions that support hospice care in the home and has, in many ways, come to form a hybrid hospice community that links the home to the hospice.³⁸

Common to belief, the hospice has directed itself toward being a philosophy for caring rather than being linked to spatial qualities of architecture, or an architectural typology. Full regard should be given as part of the architecture to structure a proposal through holistic planning and design. Although the architecture of the hospice should be dependent on place and demographics as Stephen Verderber suggests, a definite precedent following guidelines and standards must be taken into consideration to propose a hospice for the good of the community as well. Its aesthetic dependency should be geared towards traditional beliefs, ethos, and culture to promote the concept in this conservative society.

considerations," (Journal of Palliative Care, 69-82, 2014), 71.

³⁸ Sarah McGann, *The Production of Hospice Space: Conceptualising the Space of Caring and Dying*, (Farnham, Surrey, England, UK, Burlington, VT, Ashgate, 2013), 25.

DEATHSCAPES

A deathscape is any landscape associated with death and the dead. It is a scape that commemorates individuals, gives meaning through memory and remembrance as a final resting place for disposition. These are emotional spaces full of culture, and social attributes where personal and public interests intersect.³⁹ In this context, a deathscape is the integration that studies the dead, mourning, burial on the spaces for disposal of the dead, commemoration and memorialization; and spaces where a ritual is fundamental to make sense of the separation of body and soul.⁴⁰ Traditionally, landscapes for the dead have been part of societies and cultures, for thousands of years, burial grounds and the landscape became interrelated as one, marking a symbolic reunion of life and death. By doing so, living with the dead was an essential aspect of daily life, elevating the concept of ritual and following a belief system obsessed with the physical attributes of the body in death.⁴¹ While early settlements and the primitive man began evolving, burial practices started to emerge simultaneously, to the point where burial and cremation were the principal methods of disposal of the body. Standard burial practices included the orientation of the body, erection of stones, the use of shrubs and plants, and the dedication of particular sites or settlements. These were general precepts creating place-making for the final resting place of the dead, embedded in culture across time. In addition, the belief system from a particular culture ranged in practice from individual, familial and group burials.⁴² The burial practices remained as part of nature as a way to find a conscious reconnection with the earth.

³⁹ Avril Maddrell and James D. Sidaway, *Deathscapes: spaces for death, dying, mourning and remembrance*, (London, Ashgate Publishing Ltd, 2010), doi: <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315575988>, 4.

⁴⁰ Christien Klaufus, "Colombian deathscapes: Social practices and policy responses," (*Journal of Urban Affairs*, 209-225, 2018), doi:10.1080/07352166.2017.1319220, 212.

⁴¹ Ken Worpole, *Last Landscapes: The Architecture of the Cemetery in the West*, (London, Reaktion Books Ltd, 2003), 20.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 20.

Deathscapes were often meant also for the living. Such ideology was captivated by the early establishment of Christianity where churches were more than frequently erected over places of burial. As religion progressed, there was a significant shift as bodies began to be buried under the church or near it; churches became burial grounds. During the middle ages, Christianity held an intense fascination with death and the exhumation of human remains to the point that it became an obsession with the physical aspect of death.⁴³ Traditionally, the church and cemetery were integrally related as it was a matter of theological significance and symbolism.

Furthermore, as a matter of urban hygiene, cemeteries lost their symbolic meaning used as dumping grounds⁴⁴ for human waste, while the interior of parishes had decomposing corpses in coffins. Richard Etlin in *The Architecture of Death* further explains this idea; there was a point where this “enlightenment” of the body began to be perceived as a dangerous practice to the living while defiling the church.⁴⁵ This hygienic argument gave a new outlook on how religion started to rationalize some concepts and, in the end, the dead were no longer welcomed permanently inside the church. Coffins, decomposing bodies, and skeletons inside the parish church became a “horrid spectacle” to be removed from sight. Likewise, tombs and mausoleums were thought to clutter the church and sometimes inexcusably to obstruct the view.⁴⁶ The logical aspect began to be re-evaluated by architects like Jacques Francois Blondel and Claude-Nicolas Ledoux reinterpreting the ritual process through their architecture rather than to use the church as the place for the dead. Blondel’s exploration relegated the cemetery outside of the city, Ledoux included a precinct close to the church. Consequently, the connection between deathscapes and

⁴³ Richard A. Etlin, *The architecture of death: the transformation of the cemetery in eighteenth-century Paris*, (Cambridge, MIT Press, 1984), 3.

⁴⁴ Before the 1740s, cemeteries within the city fabric became spaces for the collection of garbage and body waste. As a way of developing the cemetery, architects began to explore exciting ideas that placed these sacred spaces outside of the cities and fenced to create enclosed areas for the dead. Such a negative and utilitarian connotation of the word “dumping ground” was eliminated as the cemetery became the primary form of burial.

⁴⁵ Richard A. Etlin, *The architecture of death: the transformation of the cemetery in eighteenth-century Paris*, (Cambridge, MIT Press, 1984), 17.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 17.

the natural environment was related to an enlightenment process guiding change for the disposal of the body.

During the centuries, what remained constant was the notion of physical and ethereal attributes conceived by metaphorical imagery of life and the symbolic meanings that emerged from the world around. Notably, the association of rites of death and burial to representational means to the land and the cosmos was critical in creating a symbolic connection to inhabiting place for man. Such connection involved the association of life with the sun (daylight) and death with darkness and the night, which was common to many cultures.⁴⁷ Regardless of the burial process, the body returning to earth is a transitional action from the social to the natural. Nowadays, for example, the idea of the cemetery within contemporary society has been precisely this, an open and tranquil space among the green scenery of the land, sometimes beautifully decorated with trees. It is human nature to create a narrative intersected with broader ecological and environmental concerns, as author Ken Worpole in his book *Last landscapes: the Architecture of the Cemetery in the West*, explains that within the appreciation of the landscape since the beginning of times there have been profound elements that generate this connection to the land, and these are “based on a mixture of human imagination, learned visual responses, and social perception: part historical, part aesthetic, and part psychological.”⁴⁸ This juxtaposition is typical to this day as societies have placed much interest in the relationship between life and death. By doing so, the deathscape fulfills the role of the natural habitat. In some cases, this comes at a disadvantage because of needed space within a city or town that is taken away for burial practices, its population usually outnumbered by corpses.⁴⁹ Nevertheless, the rising popularity of cremation has given some control over the disposal of the body. This unprecedented impact arising from the use of cremation in the twentieth century

⁴⁷ Ken Worpole, *Last Landscapes: The Architecture of the Cemetery in the West*, (New Ed. London, Reaktion Books Ltd, 2003), 20.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 20.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 22.

has been widely discussed as a profound Catholic ritual, yet in architecture, it is discussed relatively little as an ethical or architectural issue.⁵⁰ As cremation leaves no physical body, the focal point of the grave or tomb has shifted into spatial schemes for precise remembrance. These places are often rose gardens, columbaria or even cremation chapels which may retreat to “*polite formalism*” and thus losing any moral power of the embodiment of the space like it is represented through the historic landscaped cemetery.⁵¹ Ken Worpole suggests that the idea of the cremation, and by that sense, the crematorium is an “antimonumentalist impulse in a non-heroic Age society.”⁵² Although open to criticism, what prevails in such a statement then, is that the response of architecture for the dead is still underestimated and underdeveloped and should be, by all circumstances be explored thoroughly by the architect not only in the proposal of the cemetery. Through these circumstances, the crematorium must look for transcendence; after all, these are commemorative and memorial deathscapes as well. Monumentality should not encompass the role of the cemetery alone, but rather let the crematorium become part of the symbolic nature of the sublime in architecture. Worpole asserts that landscapes of death have followed modern architecture notable use of materials like concrete, steel, and glass. In this sense, materials such as stone, earthworks, crafted metal, wood, and water, materials that are the principal elements of assembly and commemoration are void and seem silent to the matter of death.⁵³ As if vernacular architecture tied with aesthetic elegance has slowly disappeared, becoming an increasingly rare driving ritual and remembrance.⁵⁴ However, as cremation will continue to be the most common form of *body disposal*,⁵⁵ there is a need for finding architectural monumentality within the reach of the crematorium as a typology that surpasses the spectrum of non-crematoriums like Carlo Scarpa’s Brion Cemetery (Fig.6), Enric Miralles’ La Igualada Cemetery (Fig.7), and even Aldo Rossi’s San

⁵⁰ Ibid., 177.

⁵¹ Ibid., 177.

⁵² Ibid., 178.

⁵³ Ibid., 178.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 178.

⁵⁵ Although this term is widely used across different disciplines, in following the context of this work the term should be “renewal of the body.” This prevailing term is explored on Chapter 6, where it is illustrated that a renewal of the body is inspired by fauna and flora, denoting a close understanding of the Kogui people in the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta.



Fig.6
*Brionvega Cemetery
meditation pavilion,
Carlo Scarpa*



Fig.7
*La Igualada Cemetery,
Enric Miralles + Carme Pinos*



Fig.8
San Cataldo Cemetery,
Aldo Rossi

Cataldo Cemetery (Fig.8). Settings like those are place-making deathscapes evoking unique emotions that should guide the understanding of the crematorium as a monumental and symbolic deathscape.

TOWARDS A NEW CREMATORIUM IN MEDELLÍN

As noted in the last subchapter, an important point arose congruent with redefining death in Medellín. The concept itself not only lies in giving formality to a place to treat terminally-ill patients but in understanding death as a space for eternity, thus a deeply-rooted exploration of deathscapes to discern information. Today, the limiting spatial qualities in Latin American cities like Medellín regarding grave space in cemeteries played an essential role in conceptualizing the crematorium. Although there is no particular need to address the topic from a religious perspective, it is vital to have in mind that the Catholic religion is an essential element of the cultural tradition, as a large percentage of the population in the Colombian society are faithful believers.

Cremation of the body has been around for thousands of years, going as far back as early as the primitive man. Many prehistoric sites have been found to have cremated remains as part of the ritual burning of the dead. For many civilizations and cultures, this practice transcends time across the epochs. For instance, throughout the history of Christianity, the custom of burial was not deemed as a sacred practice until later. For the Catholic Church the typical tradition of burying the body is the final disposition of the corpse. This tradition happens due to a doctrine following the narration of scriptures explaining that as Jesus died, he was ultimately placed in a grave for later burial. The practice of burial is unavoidable among those who believe in Jesus since the ideology acknowledges resurrection as the body and soul reunite; therefore, a body destroyed by fire cannot be saved by Him. Grave

burial centres around the hope of resurrection. Even though the Colombian society places its strong religious values in the Catholic Church, cremation has been gradually adopted and accepted as a formal burial practice. In places like Medellín, it has become a vital service in the funerary sector.

It was only until 1980 when a waste incinerator-turned-cremation-oven began offering an alternative way of disposing of the body rather than burying it. Up to this point, the demand for new cemeteries, columbaria, and other ways of disposing of the bodies was essential; so, the crematorium expanded alongside the cemetery. The use of the crematorium was an essential factor during the late 1980s and 1990s due to the high flow of bodies as a result of continuous internal conflict, forced migration from the countryside and unidentified bodies. The unprecedented result of this conflict meant that any burial lands became conglomerated and full to capacity. Today, for a population of about 2.5 million inhabitants, there is only one public cemetery open and a couple of private ones that still operate. The slow development of this typology is due to the rapid urban densification and the result of intense urban violence related to drug traffic in the 1990s that left cemeteries out of graves.⁵⁶ Burial capacity, in a way, has exceeded around the city. Nowadays, with the end of the internal urban conflict, rapid urbanization and severe socioeconomic inequality limit the grave spaces in most of the cemeteries around the city.

The concept of the cremation has been implemented carefully into society, yet Colombian law as a whole in an attempt to continuously use the cemetery allows those in charge of cemeteries to exhume ordinary graves after four years.⁵⁷ “Decomposed remains may be stored in an ossuary, but Colombian law instructs that undecomposed remains be cremated for sanitary reasons. In the majority of the cases, cremation is required.”⁵⁸ Functioning

⁵⁶ Christien Klaufus, “Deathscape politics in Colombian metropolises: Conservation, grave recycling and the position of the bereaved,” (*Urban Studies*, 2453-2468, 2016), doi: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0042098015593012>, 2456.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 2457

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 2457.

cemeteries in Medellín are now multifunctional, meaning that they are both burial gardens as well as offering services for cremation. For instance, in the cemetery Campos de Paz (Peace Fields), the spatial concept is that of a garden, progressively developed into incorporating a cremation unit adjacent to space for the laying of the ashes. Constructed in 1998 by local architect Felipe Uribe de Bedout, the Temple of the Ashes is a crematorium with a space dedicated to the ash remains placed inside niche walls, almost like a vertical cemetery or a contemporary columbarium⁵⁹ (Fig.9).

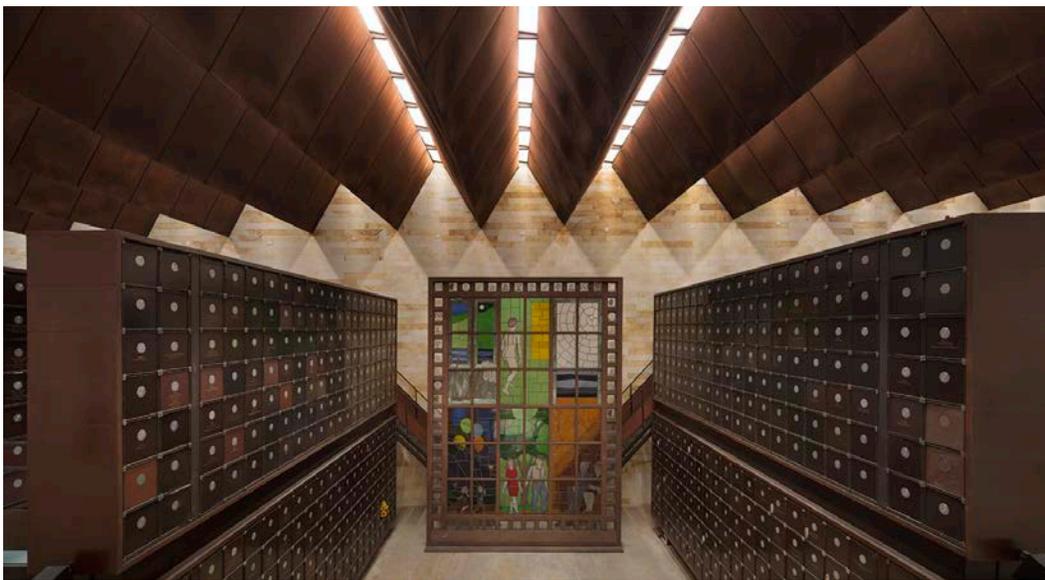


Fig.9
Temple of the Ashes and
Crematory Unit,
Felipe de Bedout Arquitectos

“In the iconic ‘Temple of the Ashes’ at Campos de Paz bodily measurements of the living play a marginal role since most niches are physically out of reach. The massive building hides a crematory from sight and shelters over 20,000 cenizarios⁶⁰ and 1500 osarios.⁶¹ Inside the building, classical music fills the air and uniform dark-brown structures are placed at different heights connected by bridges. The sober aesthetics resemble high school lockers. The efficient design of the niches shows storage in its most rational form. To compensate for the lack of physical and emotional proximity, Campos de Paz offers separate walls inscribed with the names of the deceased.”⁶²

In this sense, the temple has set a transformational approach towards the traditional

⁵⁹ It may also refer to a Mausoleum.

⁶⁰ Columbarium.

⁶¹ Ossuary – A container or room in which the bones of dead people are placed.

⁶² Christien Klaufus, “Deathscape politics in Colombian metropolises: Conservation, grave recycling and the position of the bereaved,” (Urban Studies, 2453-2468, 2016), doi: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0042098015593012>, 2461.

cemetery, integrating the remains inside a space; in doing so, cemeteries may start to become obsolete. Cemeteries in Medellín have been slowly disappearing, the pressure for burial plots which are in a way limited help the narrative of the crematorium as it has become popular in the city of Medellín; it leads the use of cremation across the country as 70% of the population opt for it.⁶³ As the typology gains traction, it becomes vital to acknowledge that the lack of cemetery plots open the exploration of the reconceptualization of the crematorium. Following this foundation of the crematorium already being a fundamental part of deathscapes in Medellín, it is critical to developing better ways to cremate the body or modernize the funerary sector that is currently underdeveloped. Nevertheless, researcher Christien Klaufus notes that there is currently no master plan in Medellín that guarantees a better integration of both cemeteries or crematoria in the territory.

Furthermore, there is a necessity for common-day use of cremation to become 100% ecological, especially in a city overpopulated and highly urbanized as Medellín. Even at times when a crematorium is far used more commonly than a grave burial, gases emitted by such practice may pollute the air. The use of the cemetery may become an outdated service or just an everyday commodity. Instead, an ecological approach to crematorium would be able to provide needed space and since there is a push towards sustainability, new ways of cremation may be convenient to examine; for example, water cremation or bio-cremation which are alternative uses to cremation as well as a new method proposed by American designer and death advocate Katrina Spade's Recompose.⁶⁴ Regardless of such method, the concept of cremation remains a crucial local industry and should be redeveloped to comprise more natural ways of respecting remains and burial process in accordance with the vernacular.

⁶³ Ibid., 2461.

⁶⁴ Recompose is a model that seeks to "offer an alternative choice to cremation and conventional burial methods" looking to "return the body back to earth." In other words, it is the recomposition of the body back to earth. See: <https://www.recompose.life/>

MAKING MEMORY



Making memory happens to be the most fundamental part of remembering a close individual who has passed away. To “make” memory means that there is a constant underlying process of thought embodied through the place. The physical exaltation of anything that surrounds the human being allows for the conception of experience through tangible and sensorial awareness. In this sense, memory is the facility to remember and the mental representation or trace of something that is remembered.⁶⁵ The idea of making memory then happens as a way conceived by the contemporary Western society where memories represent possessions that are “kept” and “preserved” almost to the point of becoming objects embedded in the human being. These everlasting possessions are a personal museum that is instilled both individually and within society, creating narratives and vivid images that reconstruct the past. Memory is an approximation of a fixed imprint that is thoroughly reconstructed to generate a dimension of remembering. It is the perception of the past in the context of the present and in anticipation of the future.⁶⁶ Memory practices within the concept of death are more than often seen as a construct of cultural memory as these encompass the sphere of the personal and the social as a formal representation of loss and recovery. Regarding death, memory is often tangible through objects, memorialization, and space. These elements are bound to create a symbolic connection to culture, starting as hyperbole from the subjective to the collective.

⁶⁵ Elizabeth Hallam and Danny Miller, *Death, memory and material culture*, (New York, Oxford, Berg, 2001), 3.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 3.

Both approaches are essential to memory as a way of imagined communication realized through spatial and visual metaphors that construct architecture.⁶⁷ The relationship of these externalizes an interior lived environment configuring memories and the material space from social and cultural practices. The representation of these practices happens in the form of objects in the act of remembering:

Graves, tombstones, and other material objects are used to mediate memories and feelings. Through rituals and performances in which material objects play a central role, bereaved and other visitors reconstruct their connection with the deceased; the artefacts enable the construction of individual and collective identities. As with any other process of place-making, material culture can be positively associated with meaning-making and identification, but objects can also generate negative meanings.⁶⁸

In Medellín, the principles of collective memory and memorialization happen to be related to violent deaths as a result of social and political violence. Death becomes the antagonist in this particular society through homicides, accidental deaths, and unidentified bodies. This antagonization misleads and misrepresents the way people assess memory and the true essence of remembering. As a collective situation coming from the perspective of a violent society, death creates anxiety and fear more than it should be. The unwanted bloodshed during the past 60 years has reconfigured the way population approaches death as mourning and grief encompass pain. The sphere of this pain over an unwanted death causes memory to reproduce images of physical self-destruction, trauma and loss. For individuals in developed countries where life is lived thoroughly, memorialization and commemoration depict the correct way of life, yet for those in developing countries, death threatens memory. It is part of the social experience and situated in a domain that has been radically affected. It is vital to have a funerary practice that allows for the reconstruction of positive images from the individual perspective moving into the cultural, doing so would allow for

⁶⁷ Ibid., 77.

⁶⁸ Christien Klaufus, "Colombian deathscapes: Social practices and policy responses," (Journal of Urban Affairs, 209-225, 2018), doi:10.1080/07352166.2017.1319220, 213.

the embodiment of memory and further construction of this tough topic as it is death. The idea of place-making through a transitional site becomes a way out of the repetitive stance and misrepresentation of experience. Place-making in this sense would serve to acknowledge space and time; that is, a monumental setting capable of interconnecting human experiences to place, situating an individual in time, orienting that individual in the social world, reconfiguring the past and reimagining the present. Conceived by emotional and imaginative experience where the ephemeral can be constructed, become physical and materialize, giving identity to oneself. Such interpretation would be ideal through the use of metaphors, which are essential for the creation of memories. Their representative nature grows out of the need for the unknown to materialize and generate that ephemeral tangibility that cannot be visualized easily.

Metaphors of memory often highlight the notion of containment and so the ability to remember is frequently represented as the act of storing something in a vessel or structure. On the other hand, the ephemeral or fleeting nature of memories is acknowledged with the recognition that memories 'fade' or threaten to wither or die and consequently need to be 'kept alive'. That memories recede only to be enlivened later can be conveyed through metaphorical chains of association with visible aspects of the elements.⁶⁹

Culturally, the metaphors that often arise in Medellín are the flower, the butterfly and the bee as symbols of life. Spatial and visual images are fundamental ideas not only to the point of becoming objects such as mementos or graves, things that are static in time, but rather organisms that relate to life and return to the land, creating a memory from vivid and candid representational metaphors rather than the commonly used object to symbolize memento mori. Given a social and cultural context, perception may change, and the reception on how death can be represented differently. It could be the case that the physical absence of the body can be reinterpreted and readdressed to what it may be in part metaphorical iconography. Hallman and Miller suggest that just as the "passage of time

⁶⁹ Elizabeth Hallam and Danny Miller, *Death, memory and material culture*, (New York, Oxford, Berg, 2001), 27.

has been represented, in memorials and memento mori, through images of the body, it is also visualized in an iconography that registers the flow of time in a material environment of flowers, trees, earthly creatures and the alternation of light and darkness.”⁷⁰ Imagery creates this idea of memory-making. However, the point is to make a substitution that resonates with remembering and the appreciation of the dead. The absence of the body means that transformation from bones to ashes is often seen as an antagonizing feature for most. It is dematerializing the body and finding visual means to translate the missing physical attributes as a way of remembering and immortalizing the deceased without a marking. In carefully generating this idea, that space is not intrinsically inscribed in the human being, it is a construct of emotions that are pivotal to understanding death from another point of view. Especially for end-of-life patients as they feel a connection closer to home, so death becomes partially geared towards a physical space, yet psychologically using those visual metaphors to create a series of moments interpolated by intimacy, experience, thoughts, dreams, and sensations to recapture a space that existed, namely the *home*. For instance, most people at their end-of-life feel closer to home. Some studies carefully study the way this translates psychologically to both relatives and caregivers when end-of-life care is demanded at home.⁷¹ As Hallman and Miller quote in their book, “The house we were born in is physically inscribed in us.”⁷² What is entailed here is that memory matters and place is not limited to the physical aspects and interactions with it.

*Spatial and temporal dimensions are therefore interrelated. Just as the spatializing of memory and death allows human mortality to be apprehended and given meaning, so the temporal reach of material spaces transcends the here and now, connecting with past and future lives and deaths.*⁷³

⁷⁰ Ibid., 51.

⁷¹ Articles and reviews such as, “The experience of family caregivers caring for a terminal patient at home: A research review.” *International Journal of Nursing Studies*. 64:1-12, 2016 Dec. Martin, J Martin; Olano-Lizarraga, M; Saracibar-Razquin, M.

⁷² As quoted in Elizabeth Hallam and Danny Miller, *Death, memory and material culture*, (New York, Oxford, Berg, 2001), 80.

⁷³ Ibid., 84.

Here, the concept of transcendence in architecture begins to take shape as the physical essence of memory. The juxtaposition of the material world through bodily sensations is embodied to the point of experiencing memory. This embodiment is an unprecedented idea since memorialization has been for centuries, an integral part of a ritual. As ritual evolves, burial practices also become open to different views. In this context, the British are pioneering a concept that returns a body to nature unmarked or to disappear without a trace.⁷⁴ However, the argument is not about a body disappearing or leaving the world without a trace, but rather to return to earth as part of nature itself. Given the era, scarcity of land, environmental damage, possible extinction of the human being by their misconduct and current damage to the natural environment. It is an alternative to becoming what the human being is even in death, a living organism. In this way, embodied memory could potentially reshape the way death is understood and merging these two concepts, what is generated is a threshold that seeks to find a third space, a transitional place. The realization of this space is the “in-between” further explored through tangibility and experience. What arises in this space is the retracing of the memory and the principle of what a “good death” is as it gives visual meaning to the cycle of life. By understanding death and retracing memories, space is embedded with cultural memory as it becomes generating connection both through the individual and collective experience of the people (patients, family and visitors alike) that have been there, transited through and passed on. The underlying perception is to find transcendence over time, building upon memories both individually and in community. In the end, the creation of a newfound cultural memory could be formed by symbolic the embodiment of social and natural norms to redefine death.

⁷⁴ Andrew Copson and A. C. Grayling, *The Wiley Blackwell Handbook of Humanism*, (Hoboken, John Wiley & Sons Incorporated, 2015), 207.

PRECEDENTS



The following three precedents have been explored and analyzed as part of the concepts of death and memory. None of these works are specific to the hospice or the crematorium but have been carefully distilled to understand how collective memory plays a vital role in a significant architectural place. These projects, regardless of scale, have been considerable works that redefine the past through materiality and space. As the project moves forward, precedents such as these are fundamental in understanding how death has shaped the physical realm of an architectural work. As such, these works are not new typologies but rather ones that reconsider space as a transitional domain where the ephemeral is conceived to create a reality of a period in time that has had an impact of existence, be it individually or collectively towards the common good of society and its culture.

CHAPEL OF RECONCILIATION

The chapel stands adjacent to the border of what was formerly the Berlin Wall, separating West from East Berlin. The site was home to a former neo-gothic church built in 1895 and demolished by then the German Democratic Republic in 1985. It was built as part of the Berlin Wall Memorial that extends across where the wall used to be. The overall shape is an oval with an outer enclosure made of vertical wood louvers that encapsulates the entire rammed earth wall. This screen allows for the passage of light and air; it is a perceptible threshold between exterior and interior and marks the beginning of a series of experiences that distance the outside from the inner sanctuary. Remnants of the previous church are embedded in the walls and are visible on the surface – crushed bricks, tiles and nails – these materials were mixed with earth to construct the walls, preserving the tumultuous history of the site. While the thick rammed earth wall adds a second layer of separation, it creates a space for silence and contemplation by the massive noise-absorbing walls. Materiality such as wood and clay encompass the building giving the chapel a unique identity and sacred nature, positing the past and reconfiguring it as a symbolic and spiritual space for parishioners.

Typology:

Religious

Architect:

Reitermann + Sassenroth

Location:

Berlin, Germany

Year:

1999



Fig.10
Exterior façade



Fig.11
Interior materials



Fig.12
Graves in the woodland area



Fig.13
*View towards Almhöjden -
The meditation grove*

Typology:

Deathscape

SKOGSKYRKOGÅRDEN (WOODLAND CEMETERY)

Architect:Erik Gunnar Asplund and
Sigurd Lewerentz**Location:**

Stockholm, Sweden

Year:

1917-1920

Built on top of a former quarry that had been replanted with coniferous trees, the cemetery was an expansive project built and a new kind of urban cemetery south of Stockholm. The proposal evokes a visual sensibility towards the natural as it contrasts poetically with the surroundings. The organization of the site offers a series of places. Each of these spaces is a synthesis of the Scandinavian culture and landscape portrayed through a variety of different elements across the cemetery.

The overall composition reflects serenity and respect for the natural landscape through metaphorical imagery involving death. Its design is minimal, yet the gardens found in the site are a symbol of the reintegration with nature. Therefore, the symbolism is highly spiritual for the relatives of the deceased as a way of remembrance. This intimate exploration of death and nature creates a timeless experience (Fig.12). Visitors are taken through walkable promenades in a carefully delineated journey that takes them across various solemn areas. These include a grassy mound with a birch forest known as the “grove of remembrance” (Fig.13), a wooded forest with carefully arranged tombstones as well as a set of archetypical buildings that showcase classicism and vernacular architecture to emphasize the roots of the traditional local culture. Death, culture, and nature are three important themes that are explored thoroughly in the project. The ability for the person dying to be able to choose their final resting place within the cemetery is a fundamental part of acknowledging death. For the relatives of the deceased, it is also a monumental natural landscape for quiet contemplation.

MEMORY, PEACE AND RECONCILIATION CENTRE

Typology:

Cultural

Architect:

Juan Pablo Ortiz

Location:

Bogotá, Colombia

Year:

2013

This cultural centre seeks to commemorate the thousands of victims of the armed conflict in Colombia. To the thousands of individuals who have vanished without a trace, those who have been found in shallow graves and to those who remain unidentified as the result of years of social and political violence in the country.

The project makes use of vernacular materiality; in this regard, the use of rammed earth gives shape to a monolithic volume emerging from the earth (Fig.14). The emerging monolith represents the heart of the building as it is made in the memory of life, to celebrate life. The project started as a communal approach to symbolize collective memory and used as part of social development seeking to build significant emotional relationships with victims of violence. In order to give meaning to the project, around 2,600 people visited the site before construction to make personal contributions of land brought from their places of origin encapsulated into small glass tubes (Fig.15) and incorporated into the entrance hall where the monolith stands into small openings designed to be embedded (Fig.16). Here, the idea of place-making and making memory within the space through this symbolism of embedding the earth to the monolith plays a vital role in the construction of individual and collective memory and the acknowledgment of death.



Fig.14
View of the monolith



Fig.15
Soil brought from all over the country is placed inside glass tubes



Fig.16
Embedding earth within the monolith

ETHOS, TRADITION AND CULTURE



THE VILLAGE [GENESIS]

The history of Medellín is relatively limited. It is uncertain when the first colonizers arrived through the Andes mountains into the Aburrá Valley, though it is documented that the date could be set back to August 24th of 1541 when an expedition of 23 men crossing through the Central Andes led by Joan Batista Sardella discovered a flourishing valley but decided to keep moving from fear of being decimated by the natives in the area.⁷⁵ While doing so, a fierce battle between the small group of Spaniards and approximately 3000 natives fought, leaving the Spaniards to flee. In 1546, Spanish conquistador Jorge Robledo sent some of his explorers in search of a fertile valley that had been described by former individuals as the “Valley of Saint Bartholomew.”⁷⁶ In its initial exploration, the Spaniards encountered a few scattered tribes that inhabited the land, easily distinguished by their colourful decorative textiles found across the landscape. The valley was renamed to the “Aburrá Valley” by the Spanish explorers as a way of honouring the various tribes. The tribesmen were possible textile makers specializing in spinning and weaving of woven and painted cotton cloths then commercialized to other tribes in the region.⁷⁷

⁷⁵ Pablo Aristizabal, *Aburráes: Behind the traces of our ancestors – an approximation from archaeology*, (1st. Medellín, Secretaria de Cultura Ciudadana, 2015), 118.

⁷⁶ Juan Camilo Villegas Escobar, “The history of Antioquia, between reality and the imaginaries. A closer look at the version of the intellectual elites of the 19th Century” (*REVISTA Universidad EAFIT*, April 30, 51-79, 2004), 60.

⁷⁷ Pablo Aristizabal, *Aburráes: Behind the traces of our ancestors – an approximation from archaeology*, (1st. Medellín, Secretaria de Cultura Ciudadana, 2015), 122.



Fig.17
Aerial view Aburrá Valley

Although full of high fertility and a beautiful, thriving ecosystem, the valley was not populated until two decades after the initial conquest by Spanish administrator Gaspar de Rodas in 1574 who was granted a piece of land to establish a ranch.⁷⁸ Soon after, as the valley began to scale in value and being sought-after by newly established conquistadors and its descendants who started building cattle ranches, the thriving natives started to disappear from their land. It is widely debated that the invading Spaniards enslaved many of the natives across the valley and the surrounding region even when the natives showed some resistance to give up their land. Nonetheless, the result of this cultural clash, many decided to commit suicide by hanging from cotton cloths rather than to be at the hands of the invading Spaniards, while others fled to the mountainous regions. By 1616, the remaining natives were placed in a small village along with Spaniards, founding the city of San Lorenzo de Aburrá. This village would eventually be nicknamed *El Poblado*⁷⁹ as it had been established with a living population of 80 natives from different tribes: Aburráes, Maníes, Yamesíes, Peques, Ebéjicos, and Noriscos.⁸⁰ As growth was inevitable between the two cultures, mestizos⁸¹ and mulattos⁸² began to be the offspring of the individuals within the village. In a move to separate both races, a colonial law was passed in 1646 to establish a new town just north of El Poblado, in a site called Aná along *Quebrada Santa Elena*⁸³ (Fig.18). There, a Catholic church was erected to commemorate the foundation, *Nuestra Señora de la Candelaria de Aná*,⁸⁴ later rebuilt into a basilica and becoming part of a new village that would eventually develop into the modern-day city of Medellín. This site would serve as the foundation spot for what is now downtown Medellín's Parque Berrio⁸⁵ (Berrio Square). Ultimately in 1674, only a hundred years after the first Spaniard became the unlawful owner of the lands in the Aburrá Valley, the remaining natives were utterly

⁷⁸ Ibid., 130.

⁷⁹ The actual translation is "The Village," although from time to time it is also referred as "*La Villa*" which is similar term.

⁸⁰ Pablo Aristizabal, *Aburráes: Behind the traces of our ancestors – an approximation from archaeology*, (1st. Medellín, Secretaria de Cultura Ciudadana, 2015), 130.

⁸¹ In Latin America, a common term to describe an individual of mixed race having Spanish or European and Indigenous ancestry.

⁸² In Latin America, an individual of mixed race having white and black traits.

⁸³ Saint Helen stream.

⁸⁴ Our Lady of Candelaria of Aná.

⁸⁵ The square is named after Pedro Justo Berrio, a soldier, politician and ex-governor of the Department of Antioquia.

vanished by the invading culture, and much of their culture, memory, and folklore was practically eradicated. These traces of the past have remained limited to the current society and yet, it could be considered that light threads of the ancestors of the land are ingrained in the embodied memory. The people from Medellín and the adjacent regions are well known to be farmers, artisans, and textile-makers as part of the great importance given to commercialized trade of goods in the region. Such an unfortunate time in history between the clash of the ancestral peoples and the old-world conquistadors has given structure to the modern urban metropolis located within the beautiful greens of the Central Andes.

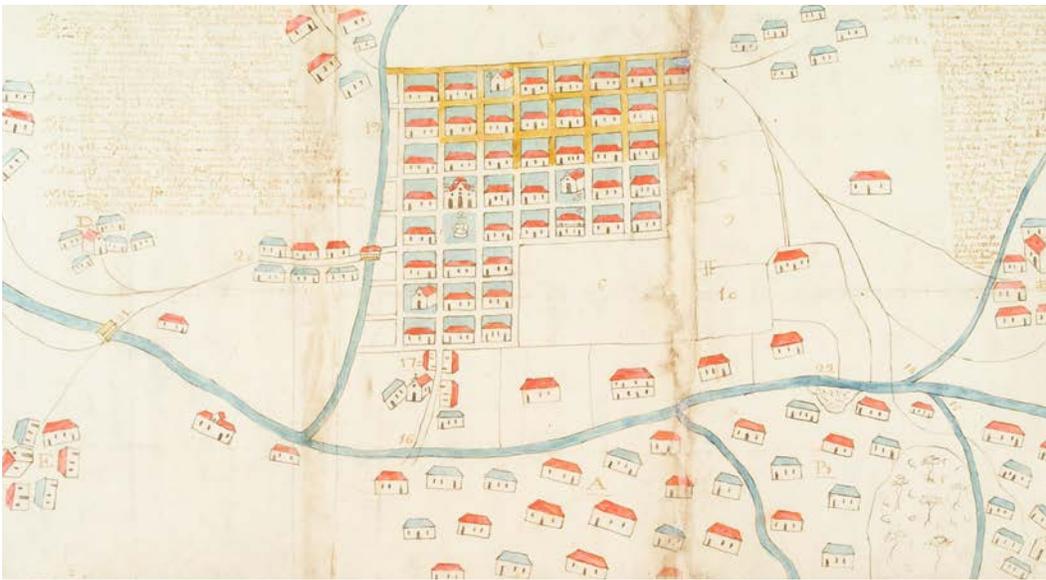


Fig.18
Earliest map of Medellín,
1791

The new inheritors of the land, the Spaniards, brought over infrastructure, principles, and ideas that provided order and structured life; such imposing elements generated the colonial town. The planning of the *Pueblo* or *Poblado* was ingrained in the Spanish tradition, Cartesian planning: in the centre, the temple (Church), presided by a town square or plaza and the city hall and accommodating beautiful vivid dwellings around its perimeter. The town square and temple as generators of urban growth and essential elements in the life of the traditional Paisa⁸⁶ individual, serving the purpose of being meeting places and a setting

⁸⁶ Derived from the Spanish apocope “Paisano,” meaning countryman. The term Paisa may also be interchangeably with Antioqueño (Antioquean). For a more detailed explanation, see Glossary.

for traditional festivities and religious events.

Even though contemporary planning has separated and affected this colonial architecture tremendously, it has to some extent, been translated into new patterns and schemes. Examples of this type of planning are often found in the colonial town outside of the city centre. Various towns in the vicinity still preserve their original colonial layout which has been interpreted as Antioquean Colonial Architecture,⁸⁷ therefore becoming a pillar in the architectural fabric of society. Its distribution simplified by order, yet conveying that of a traditional Spanish colonial town taking primary precedence in a well-placed architectural style of the old-world and expressed in the use of local vernacular materials such as *bahareque*⁸⁸ in dwellings.



Fig.19
Town of Jardín in the outskirts of Medellín, a traditional colonial town

Within this context, the traditional dwelling in times of colonization may be regarded as an element ingrained in the culture. Even the newer generations have grown to acknowledge

⁸⁷ Based on book "Arquitectura de la Colonización Antioqueña" (Architecture of the Antioquean Colonization) written by architect and sociologist Néstor Tobón Botero. It is a style used to describe the architecture and materiality of Colonial settlements and dwellings which have left an important mark in the rural fabric of the region.

⁸⁸ In colonial times, a system of construction material similar to adobe, consisting of clay or mud reinforced with interwoven wooden sticks or canes. Also used by Amerindians before the Spanish Colonists.

the traditional dwelling be it because of their grandparents or through visiting existing towns in the outskirts of Medellín in which this architecture still predominates. A rather simple architecture but full of cultural tradition, part of the heritage and landscape gave the vernacular materials to conceive a legacy of the traditional colonial town even 300 years later. Local materials marked the colonial home as the generators of space; the roof made out of clay shingles or straw, *bahareque* walls and in some instances made of rammed earth, wood and *guadua*,⁸⁹ as well as “beautiful vivid colors taken from the mountainous landscape, greens, reds, oranges, blues to achieve a powerful aesthetic in the architecture which is still true to itself even to this day.”⁹⁰

In the spatial scheme of the colonial home, the patio has been a universal element. The patio is manifested as an articulate tridimensional space that encompasses the ideal home environment where the social and domestic aspects also relate to the broader spectrum of the natural environment – that is, sun, light, air, and visuals⁹¹ (Fig.20). It responds to the local temperate climate that grants brightness and serenity to the interior space that it encompasses. In a way, the patio at the centre of the home and the corridors at its perimeters create a small square, almost to the level of generating a micro-urban complex where there is some utility and functionality of that space. Space is organized around the patio, as so is the typical colonial town; a consecration of the middle, an in-between where the interior becomes the core of an ideal body, conforming the volume of the home that becomes the nucleus.

The transition from the patio to the inside is achieved by employing broad corridors. Hence, the corridor is the element that connects the home to both the exterior and interior;

⁸⁹ Neotropical bamboo found in the temperate regions of Central and South America, especially concentrated close to the Amazon basin. As a construction material, it is characterized by resistance and durability, being lightweight and flexible. Used historically and traditionally in early rammed earth and *bahareque* constructions.

⁹⁰ Lucelly Torres de Restrepo, 1985. Article “Colonización, café y arquitectura,” (Colonization, Coffee and Architecture) in *Arquitectura de la colonización antioqueña* (Architecture of the Antioquean Colonization) by Néstor Tobón Botero, 326-333, (Bogotá, Fondo Cultural Cafetero, 1985), 330.

⁹¹ Hernán Giraldo Mejía, *Revista Credencial*. December. Accessed March 19, 2019. <http://www.revistacredencial.com/credencial/historia/temas/la-casa-en-la-colonizacion-antioquena>, 2017.



Fig.20
*Typical colonial home with
interior patio*

elements such as the balcony and the backyard held by this, the backbone, encapsulating the different rooms of the home. The balcony is the continuation of the corridor towards the street, is a space of transition between the public and the private (Fig.21). This space is exceedingly vivid and colourful, and may vary between the use of balconies and decorative *zócalos*⁹² (Fig.22) decorated along with adjacent windows highlighting beautiful hues. On the other hand, the backyard becomes the bridge to the rural habitat, not only opening the view towards a natural garden but to the plentiful scenery.

To the majority of the population, older and even for younger generations, this colonial architecture is in itself a patrimonial urban fabric that has somehow been embedded in the contemporary architecture of today's society. Although the city of Medellín is now a modern space as it should, traditional landscapes rooted in heritage are freely observed throughout neighbouring towns and regions. The architectural tradition still stands regardless of society's development. It is part of the collective memory in the region and to many individuals acknowledge this as part of the cultural essence and tradition left by the early colonizers and the acknowledgment of the land that is dwelled.

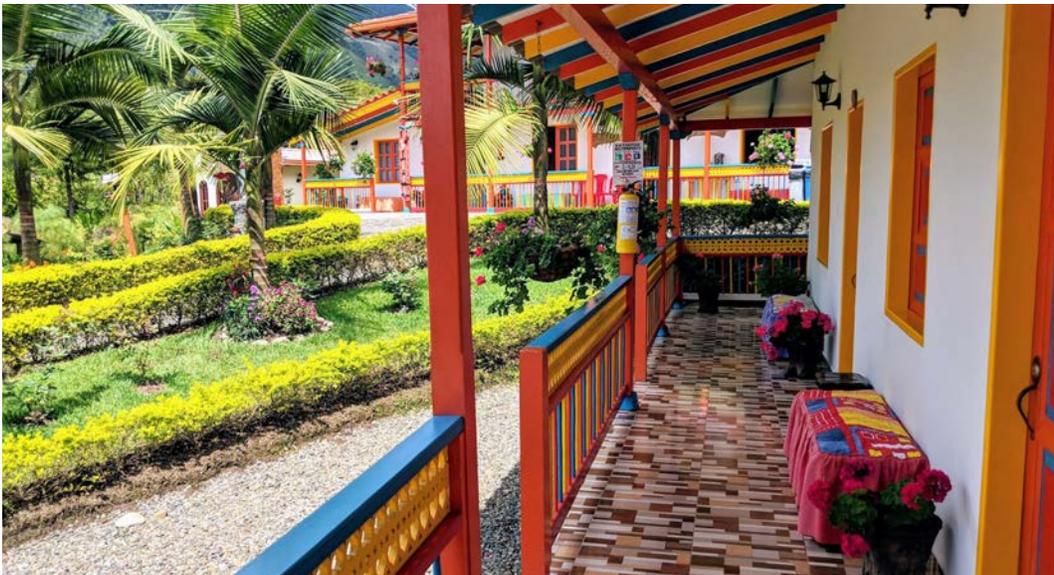


Fig.21
Exterior balcony

⁹² The actual translation is “baseboard” but these are colorful bas reliefs painted on the exterior of houses.



Fig.22
Decorative zócalos

FAMILY, IDENTITY AND CULTURAL TRADITION

To be able to give continuity to the topic of death and memory as it has been implied throughout the discussion, it is fundamental to address the issue of family and identity as it prevails to the understanding of culture as a cohesive factor of tradition. In the last subchapter, the Genesis of “The Village” was explored, which would eventually become the city of Medellín. Ever since its foundation, Medellín has been the capital city of the Department of Antioquia,⁹³ and throughout the surrounding towns, its peoples are commonly referred to as *Paisas*.⁹⁴ In this regard, the word references the broad cultural values and traditions not only of the people in Medellín but to the common individual that lives near or around the region. Just like the diverse mountainous region and beautiful geography, race is a unique asset that generates ethos. This said ethos is highlighted by the Antioquean culture regardless of skin colour. 8 in 10 inhabitants are considered mestizo, 1 in 8 inhabitants are considered white, 1 in 30 inhabitants are considered black, and 1 in 200 inhabitants are considered indigenous.⁹⁵ Even though the traces from the past remain, it is visible that the common *Paisa* is more mestizo than white, yet any physical traits of the Amerindian native have forcefully disappeared from the population.

| Subregion | Aboriginal | Black | Mestizo | White | Raizal |
|---------------|------------|-------|---------|-------|--------|
| Aburrá Valley | 0.1% | 0.5% | 71.9% | 27.4% | 0.1% |
| East | 0.0% | 0.8% | 75.9% | 23.3% | 0.0% |
| Urabá | 2.2% | 22.0% | 70.8% | 5.0% | 0.0% |
| Southwest | 1.2% | 0.6% | 79.6% | 18.6% | 0.0% |
| Lower Cauca | 0.3% | 4.7% | 93.9% | 0.9% | 0.2% |
| North | 0.0% | 0.5% | 92.3% | 7.2% | 0.0% |
| West | 0.7% | 0.3% | 89.0% | 10.1% | 0.0% |
| Northeast | 0.3% | 2.6% | 86.6% | 10.6% | 0.0% |
| Middle | 0.0% | 5.5% | 85.1% | 9.5% | 0.0% |
| | | | | | |
| Total | 0.4% | 3.7% | 80.3% | 15.7% | 0.04% |

Table 2
Population distribution according to physical traits, translated and redrawn from Giraldo et. al. “Values, representation and social capital in Antioquia 2013,” 26.

⁹³ Note that it is the capital city of Departamento de Antioquia – the literal translation is “Department of Antioquia.” The capital of Colombia is Bogota.

⁹⁴ See Glossary for an extended description.

⁹⁵ Jorge Giraldo, Andrés Casas, Nathalie Méndez, and Adolfo Eslava, *Valores, representaciones y capital social en Antioquia 2013 (Values, representation and social capital in Antioquia 2013)*, (Medellin: Escuela de Ciencias y Humanidades Universidad EAFIT, 2013), 25.

The table observed shows that according to the study, a total of 71.9% of the population descended from Amerindians, while white traits are relatively common at 27.4%. The principle that is inset here seeks to extract the different factors in the way culture has been shaped from the clash of those two cultures. Although there is much to be acknowledged from the early Spaniard colonizers, there is also a distant past that needs to be attributed as its memory has been forcefully erased. What has remained goes back when the first colonizers set foot in the Aburrá Valley, as every significant tradition has its roots in the Spanish colonial period, while any traditional value from the ancestors has vanished. Henceforth, local identity was abruptly changed since the invasion by the Spaniards, critically erasing with them any trace of the distant past. The critical decrease of the aboriginal population was to some extent, through the eyes of some local historians a “movement towards social regeneration.”⁹⁶ It is acknowledged that the indigenous population that inhabited this territory were victims to one of the most violent processes – ethnocide and genocide – the product of the Spanish colonization which drove them not only to physical extinction but to the extinction of the history of memory itself.⁹⁷

Family tradition is part of Colombian society as a whole, not only something seen in Medellín or its surrounding areas. That, along with religion, are placed at the top values of identity. Even though from the 1960s onwards these principles have decreased in society, there is still a strong tradition characterized by an influence in Catholic morals. Likewise, following these religious morals, the concept of family has been a fundamental core offering unity and control as the defining precept. According to Giraldo, et al. in the study *Valores, representaciones y capital social* (Values, representations and social capital) done in 2013, religion and family are still by far the most fundamental aspects of life in the region. An estimated 85% of the population remain faithful to the Catholic religion

⁹⁶ According to Manuel Uribe Angel, a physician, geographer and politician, otherwise known as the “father of medicine in Antioquia”

⁹⁷ As cited in Juan Camilo Villegas Escobar, “The history of Antioquia, between reality and the imaginaries. A closer look at the version of the intellectual elites of the 19th Century,” (REVISTA Universidad EAFIT, April 30, 51-79, 2004), 58.

while trust toward family and church are at 73% and 69% respectively.⁹⁸ In the center, the mother, living a domestic life as well as a notion based on obedience and submission. In her article about *Motherhood and Paternity in Medellín*, author Blanca Inés Jiménez suggests that in addition to this domestic life, labour and the acquisition of goods, especially real estate were highly appraised in order to “amass respectable fortunes,” as it was seen as something competent of opening doors to the individual and the family in a higher social stratum given the power.⁹⁹ These are cultural traits that have influenced the way of thinking and life in the city and reproduced in a sphere where family, school, and church are ingrained in the identity. She goes on to say that this identity is especially defined by “*la cultura, la raza y el empuje Paisa.*”¹⁰⁰

In such context, Medellín and its broader encapsulating region, the Department of Antioquia, the social dynamics are marked by elemental identities that give meaning to their life; a construct followed by dogmas, rituals, and behaviours vital to society along the lines of religion. This means that life and death are seen from a conservative point of view and should be relegated with flexibility. Religious participation within the community is relatively central to the construct of spirituality, expectations, and transcendence of being which is formed at its bases with the ideal family in the Antioquean society. In this sense, the influence of religion and family values have dictated identity and cultural traditions. Ultimately, this serves as the foundation of what is known locally as the Paisa Culture, “*Cultura Paisa.*”

⁹⁸ Jorge Giraldo, Andrés Casas, Nathalie Méndez, and Adolfo Eslava, Values, representation and social capital in Antioquia 2013, (Medellín: Escuela de Ciencias y Humanidades Universidad EAFIT, 2013), 28.

⁹⁹ Blanca Inés Jiménez, Paternity and maternity in the city of Medellín: From the certainty of duty to avatars and the uncertainty of desire, (Medellin, Universidad de Antioquia, Centro de Investigaciones de Ciencias Sociales y Humanas, 2000), 117.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 117. This common phrase translates to “Culture, race and the Paisa spirit.”

THE CITY OF ETERNAL SPRING

Every August the city of Medellín celebrates *La Feria de las Flores* (Festival of the Flowers). The festival started back in 1957 as a celebration to recognize the farmers and flower cultivators, and is now a significant local tradition for the people of the region. Lately, it has gone through a transformation, seeking to be incorporated into the global ambit as a way of presenting the local culture as it should be – a cultural rebirth, removed of the political instability and violent urban conflict from earlier decades. Until recently, the festival became a pillar of the *Paisa Culture*. This local resurgence seeks to redefine the way Medellín and its population are viewed in the eyes of the world. It is part of a social and cultural transformation dedicated to refine and readdress memory, trying to find a better narrative to showcase the actual tradition that has somehow been blurred by violence and in most instances, illicit activity. In this sense, the *Feria de las Flores* (Fig.24) seeks to reflect a positive image of the city of Medellín as a continuous link to the past moving towards the future, understanding the roots, yet longing for a transformative social and urban sphere.

At the turn of the twentieth century, one of the most marketed products by farmers and cultivators in Antioquia was flowers. Most of these farmers hailed from a small *corregimiento*¹⁰¹ just off Medellín by the name of Santa Elena – located in a stunning plateau above the city with an exceptionally comfortable climate for the growth of a wide variety of plants and flowers. These flowers are often sold in the urban areas of Medellín and other nearby municipalities by agricultural families as it was the only way of supporting their living and transported in wooden crates by individuals often recognized as *Silleteros*,¹⁰² a popular term in the region to acknowledge them as flower cultivators and growers (Fig.23).

¹⁰¹ In Colombia, it is a subdivision of areas in the rural parts of any given department with lesser population and smaller than a municipality (min. 14,000 people). Similar to a "Township."

¹⁰² Flower carrier or flower-bearer. See Glossary for further description.



Fig.23
Silletero, 1965



Fig.24
*Silletero Parade, an annual
flower parade happens every
August*

The Antioquean *Silletero* was born out of necessity a hundred years earlier, mostly in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Given the configuration of the territory, the Santa Elena plateau was almost unreachable to many. Pre-Columbian and colonial routes offered a way of social and cultural interaction to the Aburrá Valley beneath. In those same routes, men strapped themselves with *Silletas*, wooden saddles on their back to transport people and goods were a common occurrence. Due to the harsh conditions of the land and the treacherous terrain, these saddle-men were used to mobilize across the valley towards the plateaus. Slowly, the *Silletero* began to transport goods, ultimately becoming a flower-bearer.

Two of the main events in the Feria de las Flores are the Silleteros' parade (or Flower Parade), and an exhibition in the botanical gardens called *Orquídeas, Pajaros y Flores* (Orchids, Birds, and Flowers).¹⁰³ The former is a parade by the Silletero community that commemorates their roots; it is a floral exposition through the eyes of these flower farmers. The latter is an exhibition that seeks to bring to light the natural diversity of the rich natural landscape to the local population. In the parade, however, around 500 Silleteros from a diverse *veredas*¹⁰⁴ gather in the city to showcase the beautiful flower arrangements highlighting with them a unique identity of the people and purity of the ample expanse that the region offers.

Many of these Silletero families maintain ties with the city of Medellín through the flower trade in small stalls in markets such as *Plaza de Cisneros* (Cisneros Square), *Mercado de Guayaquil* (Guayaquil Market), *Placita de Flórez* (Flórez Square), among others in downtown Medellín as well as the different local cemeteries like San Pedro Cemetery or Campos de Paz.¹⁰⁵ This relationship with the city linked in the economic needs to the socio-political factors that are acknowledged to the dynamics the Feria de Flores has always been a way

¹⁰³ Now renamed "Orchids, Flowers and Crafts."

¹⁰⁴ In Colombia, it is a term used to define a type of territorial administrative subdivision of the municipalities of the country. This subdivision comprises mainly rural areas, although it can contain a micro-urban center.

¹⁰⁵ Sonia M Pineda, *Silleteros a past that flourishes*, (Medellín, Tragaluz Editores, 2014), 88.

to showcase cultural identity manifested through the idea being also small entrepreneurs and business people; the “*empuje Paisa*”¹⁰⁶ which is in part manifested by the Paisa culture in Antioquia.

The appropriation and valuation that Silleteros as a social group make of Santa Elena, departs out of the nature of considering it as the place that houses their memory, their families, their traditions and the legacies or inheritances they have received from their predecessors. Santa Elena is highly valued because it was where those (“ancestors”) lived, fought, worked the land to raise their families and gave shape to knowledge and practices that were transmitted to their descendants, the current inhabitants, that is, because they have built their history there. Their families are there and from there many of them derive their sustenance, but above all, a preserved heritage of traditions that belongs to them and to which they feel they belong. This allows them to particularize the territory, confer a unique character or to sacralise and exalt it. In addition, the notion of Santa Elena as a cultural territory allows them to precisely circumscribe the cultural manifestation, that is, its presence and expression, to the limits established from this representation of the territory.¹⁰⁷

This is the social narrative that generates the whole ideology of the typical individual from Medellín and the adjacent towns; a *Campesino*¹⁰⁸ – a farmer, a flower grower, someone capable of efficiently working the land, a *Silletero*. For the past three hundred years, the local identity has been built on top of such denominations, *Silleteros* and *Campesinos*, and reproduced through themes of rurality laid upon a strong bond to the broad territory. This rurality is part of a more prominent thematic that connects the *Silletero* culture even to those living in the urban areas of Medellín. Today, the *Silletero* is itself a symbol of the Department of Antioquia, characteristically shown through an unequivocal demonstration of the spirit of the region and a great exponent of the authentic society; an archetypal character of the countryside (Fig.25).

¹⁰⁶ Paisa spirit – Locally, it refers to as someone who has the ability to advance and flourish in life; someone who has the drive and determination to become a great entrepreneur and a business-minded individual.

¹⁰⁷ Translated by Author from Sonia M Pineda, *Silleteros a past that flourishes*, (Medellín, Tragaluz Editores, 2014), 96.

¹⁰⁸ It translates to the word “Countryman,” someone who lives outside the urban centres in rural areas. The actual use of the word is “a farmer.”



Fig.25
Flowers and Silleteros



Throughout the years then, the fascination of the Silletero and his flowers have become antecedents of local expression tied to the Antioquean values in a society articulated by the well-being of territory, home and the religious sphere that confirm their identity and idiosyncrasy.¹⁰⁹ The flower itself is representative imagery that has consolidated Medellín as “the City of Eternal Spring.” This identity is the embodiment of the fragments of indigenous and Spanish heritage converging along with other attitudes that have consequently been embedded as part of a social and cultural construct. Such as the labour of the old *Carguero*¹¹⁰ (Fig.26) and present Silletero with which the Paisa has wanted to be characterized, as suggested by author Sonia M. Pineda, “an individual with strength, wisdom, effort and hardworking, sacred in nature yet a profane character of Spanish origin.”¹¹¹ The *Campesino* is a symbol of the pastoral and rural as a visual paradigm to the contemporary city that originates from its local history and rural scenery. In this way, the Silleteros' parade in the *Feria de Flores* represents a first encounter with the local and regional culture of the people exalt reference of their ancestry, paying homage to the *Campesino* in his history and culture as well as reinforcing every collective value that has unified the broad society. The Silletero as a flower-bearer, a point of incidence of the economic, regional and urban dynamics associated with the flower trade.¹¹² Furthermore, this traditional character is projected as a cultural synthesis that enhances a variety of local and regional values. To author Sonia M. Pineda, this idea of the Silletero as part of the culture is exemplified as part of the identity:

*This cultural event today represents a version of the local and regional identity, not only as a symbolic construction promoted from outside and inside the territory, but precisely because of the history of the settlement and this isolated craft and the inhabitants of Santa Elena, who give an account of an integral history of the present of the region and the nation.*¹¹³

¹⁰⁹ Sonia M Pineda, *Silleteros a past that flourishes*, (Medellín, Tragaluz Editores, 2014), 107.

¹¹⁰ Before Silleteros, *Cargueros* were the individuals transporting people in Colonial times using wooden seats on their backs often in inaccessible roads. Afterwards, these wooden seats were developed to carry goods and other items such as vegetables and flowers.

¹¹¹ Sonia M Pineda, *Silleteros a past that flourishes*, (Medellín, Tragaluz Editores, 2014), 107.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 107.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 108.

Agriculture is a fundamental aspect in the daily life of a Silletero whose direct relation to the land is imperative through cultivation. Not only is it a source of livelihood, but a practice manifesting itself as a way of belonging. He is an artisan dealing with flowers to the point of becoming character with a symbolic ceremonial nature. To author Edgar Bolivar, this is the visual essence of what this character emphasizes as a whole, he writes,

[...] This patrimony of Antioquia's culture is a new way of visual communication in a world of images that is characterized for the instantaneous. However, the silleteros emphasize, underline and accentuate everything that, for having moved a nation or to the world, deserve to endure in the collective memory, in paradoxical contrast with the ephemeral duration of its floral sustenance.¹¹⁴

Hence, the flowers carried by the flower-bearing Silletero have become a fundamental dogma in the Antioquean society, the *Paisa* knows that the memory lies in the natural habitat connecting to the landscape and his territory. It is this epitome of the Silletero cultural manifestation through the visual connection of its territory through the mesmerizing flowers.¹¹⁵



Fig.26
Carguero
in the Colonial period

¹¹⁴ Edgar Bolívar, "La Feria de las Flores." In *Colombia de fiesta: Las tradiciones folclóricas regionales (Colombian party: regional traditions and folklore)*, (Bogotá, Círculo de Lectores-Fundación BAT, 2010), 123.

¹¹⁵ Refer to appendix to see the Catalogue of Flowers – A visual list of the most common flower grown in the vicinity of Medellín.

FOREFATHERS OF THE LAND

According to the limited collected radiocarbon data, the social history in the valley could be traced back to at least 10,000 B.C when nomadic tribes moved further and further down into the uninhabited lands of the South American territory. Little is known about the *etnia*¹¹⁶ that inhabited the Aburrá Valley and will never be clarified because much of the evidence from the past has been destroyed by the early process of colonization and the rapid growth of the urban city. At the time of the Spanish invasion, there were many different smaller tribes along the land. Those inhabiting the valley, especially along where the Medellín River is now located, were referred to as the Aburráes.¹¹⁷ Unfortunately, because of the rapid demise of the tribe, any concrete information has been completely erased, but through the various archaeological findings found across the city, a narrative has somehow been slowly put together.

Only by 1940s, actual archeological and anthropological studies in the region began to take shape propelled by a chamber discovery in the south end of the city where bones of up to 15 individuals along with ceramic fragments were discovered. These fragments became apparent when in 1953, about 213 spindle whorls (Fig.27) made of baked clay were found inside another chamber in the southwest end of the city.¹¹⁸ It was not until the late 1980s and early 1990s when archeologists registered the presence of an ancient cemetery full of tomb chambers. The site, now by the name of *Cerro El Volador* (El Volador Hill), was the focal point of these studies to recover and connect valuable evidence about the past. The hill is a natural ridge, one of at least six others, that protrude naturally within the Aburrá

¹¹⁶ In Anthropological studies, a set of people who have a range of cultural features in common; language, food, religion, art, clothing and festivities. Therefore, sharing a cultural affinity that allows its members to feel identified with each other.

¹¹⁷ Many historians and intellectuals have debated the ancestry of such tribe. Some suggest that the Aburráes descended from the Nutabes or from a larger ethnic group known as the Chibchas. See Glossary for a further description.

¹¹⁸ Pablo Aristizabal, *Aburráes: Behind the traces of our ancestors – an approximation from archaeology*, (1st. Medellín, Secretaria de Cultura Ciudadana, 2015), 34.

Valley. It tops at 175 metres above the plain of the now dense city of Medellín. During the initial excavations made at the top of El Volador, about ten tomb chambers were discovered by archeologists. Through these activities, it was established the existence of both conical chambers and a rectangular shaft accesses to these tomb chambers containing human remains of multiple individuals. The bone fragments had been previously cremated and found along with grave goods such as pieces of clay pottery, spindle whorls and remains from horses and cows.¹¹⁹ These grave goods were part of the funerary ritual of the early Aburráes, most of which happened to be objects of daily life usage.



Fig.27
*Spindle whorls recovered
from burial sites*

The objects found to be often intact were the spindle whorls, these were small ceramic objects used for the fabrication of textile cloth and cotton. Therefore, these tribes were small settlements associated with simple technologies to produce food and an affinity towards a utilitarian and symbolic lifestyle.¹²⁰ For instance, each spindle whorl varies in a decorative pattern and in every tomb found so far, these tiny objects are found as grave goods which may suggest that they were fundamental to the rituals of this tribespeople. According to Pablo Aristizabal, it is important to highlight two things in these findings, one is the clear idea of these decorative spindle whorls turning and generating different figures while revolving around at a certain velocity just like a kaleidoscope, and the other point

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 43.

¹²⁰ Juan David Chávez, "The Sky at Home or the magical connotation of the Pre-hispanic domestic archetype in the Aburrá Valley," (Revista KEPES Year 12, No. 11: 35-58. doi:10.17151/kepes.2015.12.11.3, 2015), 39.

is the association of these whorls to the economic activity and lifestyle of an indigenous village dedicated to textile making at the time.¹²¹ Interestingly, these forefathers have been studied starting from their funerary rituals as a way of constructing an image of who the Aburráes were; as if death becomes the foundation of a life that was lost in time and where memory is built from the ground up. Nevertheless, some reports suggest a parallel between the shape of the whorls and the burial chambers that have been found so far. Their physical aspect is the same, the interior spatial qualities of the tomb area derived from the whorl's shape (Fig.28). The symbolic relationship between the two objects becoming one as part of the social fabric has been fundamental in understanding the conception of life, death and the afterlife. As Aristizabal briefly suggests that the imagery of both tomb-whorl as a dwelling for the dead,

We could think of a dwelling for the dead in the afterlife, in a cyclic conception of life and death, where said cavity would also be representing a female womb from which an individual is born to a new life. The spindle whorl could also be related to the symbolism of life after death as it is a tool for weaving. Some animals, like caterpillars, weave a chrysalid later to complete its metamorphosis or rebirth as a butterfly. These species attracted the attention of pre-Columbian cultures and incorporated them into their symbolic systems as mythical beings and metaphors of the life after death. Lastly, it is very likely that for a textile-weaving people like the Aburráes, one of their most prized assets were the spindle whorls, honoring their ancestors with these objects as part of the funeral offerings.¹²²

Given the nature of the findings across the Aburrá Valley, inside the chambers and the fragments within, it is possible to say that the ancestors of the valley had specific values, beliefs, and rituals ingrained in the ceramic and textile making activities. To some extent, the discovery of these tombs generates a particular connection with the place of death as a way of life. These are not just tomb chambers for bodies, but rather dwellings for the dead. In turn, this may suggest the understanding of cyclical living as developed as a mature

¹²¹ Pablo Aristizabal, *Aburráes: Behind the traces of our ancestors – an approximation from archaeology*, (1st. Medellín, Secretaría de Cultura Ciudadana, 2015), 81.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 108.

society such as the Amerindian cultures where life and death were keenly seen through the eyes of the universe and cosmos. It is interesting that as history suggests otherwise, the Aburráes were potters, textile-makers, and farmers capable of following a set of traditional rituals based on the cosmic symbolism. These were instilled with casual symbolic objects used as metaphors for the understanding of death. In most cases, the chambers were usually shaped like the spindle whorls and its interior finely decorated with lines which may suggest these were used as representational figures of that of a primitive hut. In a sense, such a place became a vital node for these individuals, based upon being a dimensional centre where traditional ritual converged the duality of existence. Discussing this idea, author Juan David Chávez in the article *“The Sky at Home or the magical connotation of the Pre-Hispanic domestic archetype in the Aburrá Valley,”* he discusses how such object as the spindle whorl could be “an abstraction of the conceptual structure of the world.”¹²³ With this in mind, the whorl is a scaled version of the home, a mythical dwelling for the soul where the physical and the spiritual coexist. In the end, the sacred nature of these burials gives rise to a transcendental sense of belonging in the domestic space towards the eternal dimension.¹²⁴

Hence, the embodiment of death on earth may have happened to be these tiny whorls as the memory of a deceased individual, whose remains were cremated and placed beside the whorls in pottery urns. As if the representative nature of these created a connection of the eternal and earthly of a soul striving to grow in the womb of the earth as the notion to be reborn; an individual going back to the cradle and be born again. Thus, becoming a conception of their Spatio-temporal¹²⁵ worldview guiding natural life, its cycles, and social development.

¹²³ Juan David Chávez, “The Sky at Home or the magical connotation of the Pre-hispanic domestic archetype in the Aburrá Valley,” (Revista KEPES Year 12, No. 11: 35-58. doi:10.17151/kepes.2015.12.11.3, 2015), 41.

¹²⁴ Ibid., 41.

¹²⁵ In many ancient civilizations and cultures, the idea of their worldview guided by the Spatio-temporal realm was part of the life and death processes. Everything was observed from an intrinsic nature instilled in the adoration of deities and underlying beliefs evolving out of the cosmos. In some way, this idea relates to the dimensional harmony of the human being with nature and its territory upwards to the celestial realm.

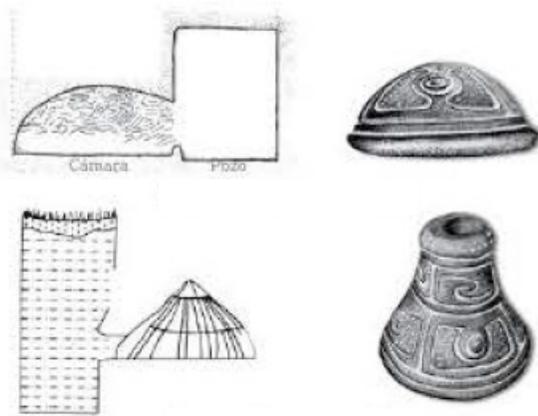


Fig.28
*Comparison between tomb
chambers and spindle whorls*

IN THE BLINK OF AN EYE



Death is an essential node for all cultures around the world, and for some the belief of an afterlife and reincarnation still exists. In this sense, memory is an essential aspect of death as it is the ability to keep intact bursts of moments that may become continuous and never-ending. Spiritual and cosmic conditions allotted in the human being formulates this understanding. The inability to remember measures death, so the forgetfulness of a person who has died becomes imminent to dying. A simple shape like the circle represents these conditions since it depicts transcendence in a given culture and ritual practices around the world. The circle not only as a figure that encases and separates its center from the exterior but rather a universal symbol alluding towards the cosmos, an oculus of indefinite proportions connecting the earthly to the celestial.

To many cultures, life is not a matter of linearity in one direction but rather a concept of cyclical living made mainly to understand death and the afterlife. Time is associated with death, yet the only thing that changes in between these two is the way both are understood by tradition and culture. Metaphorically, a cycle means that a decaying life will eventually be reborn, a rebirth is essential, thus an individual will be forever embedded in its world. On the other hand, time is most often seen as unidirectional, linear, irreversible and progressive. Nevertheless, the idea of death as part of the cycle of life, looping to exist again has been part of the understanding of the organization of human life. Ever since the beginning of civilization, even in its most primitive stance, life and death have been

the amalgamation of human nature. Everyone and everything that exists in this world will eventually decay to the point of dying. It is not just in the perception of the human that the world around him may cease to exist. Following this narrative, as every organism ceases to exist, there will be a point where the lack of natural processes will turn against life itself and the natural world will die as well.

A living being is born, grows, reproduces and dies, that is the fact of movement in time. Temporality is just a part in existence and to humans, fauna, and flora the paradigm of death is distinct, life runs its course. As it is the same with planet earth, it is a living being that needs to be cared for and treated cautiously to avoid any situation that limits the life of all living beings that inhabit it. Modern society has been a factor in the rapid decay of living life. Any ecological thinking has slowly moved away from society as technology and industrialization have made way to progress, which may be essential to evolution. However, this progress has not had any regard for the way the future is approached and how the natural ancestral past was regarded. Mass pollution, rapid urbanization, and deforestation of natural habitats have been implicit in moving forward. Limited or little thought has been implied to save earth from a possible cataclysmic demise. Species are dying and modern-day extinction is inevitable; animals and insects are suffering while humans keep destroying the natural space shared by every single entity. Human nature has gone from being a collective thought to being solely individual, egotistical and damaging. The idea of death surpasses life, but the concept of dying in a place that is slowly fading is even fundamental to acknowledge that not only is the human body leaving its physical realm, but its physical world may also give up, the cyclical nature might suddenly stop. Even as the world revolves on an axis, just like a cyclical stance, one day it will cease to exist. The idea of cyclical time is implicit to nature. Different phenomena nonetheless in the living world can be looked at cyclically; the succession of day and night along with the pattern of the seasons, the observation of the sun and the moon across the horizon, the regular movement of the

stars during the night, down to the rhythmic beating of the heart. In this regard, the lives of plants, animals, and humans are all intrinsic to the cycle of life within time.

Cosmology and religion throughout history have been predominant perspectives that have held together with the model of cyclical time about beliefs, spiritual and mystical interpretations. For example, the Aztecs, Mayans, and Incas reflected the concept of cycle either through architecture, planning and even in the round calendars that suggested continuity of life. The practicality of the circle as a geometric figure representing the concept of continuous looping imposed value and significance to the way life and death were considered. Although the symbolism still exists up to this day, prehistoric and ancient civilizations such as those pre-Columbian tribes worshipped the sun and the moon under that ubiquitous symbol representing a never-ending pattern – the circle. Worshipping has been an essential construct of humanity throughout history. Every civilization has had a different tradition and ideology in regards to its worshipping, be it to nature or gods. Figuratively, the indigenous tribes that inhabited the Aburrá Valley asserted in this traditional belief, the use of cyclical, revolving and round objects, namely the circular spindle whorls which were a physical representation of the cosmological and spiritual beliefs.

From the early Mesoamerican civilizations in North and Central America, such as the Aztecs and Mayans down to the Incas, the circular representation had been an important feature that forms a self and organizes life. For instance, the circular calendars from the Aztecs that proposed a notion of a varying time different to what is commonly known, fundamentally not linear yet associated with a varying degree of solar days where the cycle was temporal and associated with earth, death, darkness, and vegetation.¹²⁶ In its essence, this manifestation through the round calendar was a fundamental symbol to early pre-Columbian civilizations since it condensed the idea of man as a whole, his experiences

¹²⁶ Cited in Elizabeth P. Benson, *Death and the afterlife in pre-columbian america: A conference at dumbarton oaks*, (October 27th, 1973. Cecelia F. Klein, 1975), 74.

ranging from religious, social and cosmic. For example, the Aztec calendar stone where each circle represents a cycle of time and a stratum of the cosmos (Fig.29).¹²⁷ Ancient civilizations regarded the cosmos as the unifying factor through life and death. The day illuminated by the sun and the nights splashed with millions of stars illuminating the darkness traced upon the silhouette of the moon. The conception of cosmology as part of ritual has been part of the culture and explored through architecture in different civilizations around the world where the spatial attributes of the land and light generate a transcendental *place*. In this sense, ancient works such as the Moray Ruins in South America (Fig.30) or Great Britain's Stonehenge (Fig.31), each produces a language from its territory which is more than scenic, but experiential works of the land.



Fig.29
Aztec calendar stone

The Moray Ruins in Peru are circular stair-like terraces. While the purpose of these concentric shapes has not been understood, it is widely believed that the ruins were once an agricultural laboratory used by the Incas. Their depth, design and their orientation concerning the sun and wind are all signs that they have a specific purpose. From top to bottom of the terraces there is a difference of 15°C. Therefore, it is thought that these could have been used as an agricultural research station where the different temperatures

¹²⁷ Ibid., 77.



Fig.30
*Incan terraces at Moray,
Peru*



Fig.31
Stonehenge

meant for the ability to test different crops and experiment with them. These are a set of microclimates at the different levels that may have allowed the Incas to study wild vegetation.

On the other hand, although the facts remain clouded for the construction of Stonehenge, it is believed that it was one of the largest ceremonial sites known in Neolithic Britain. There are about 100 megalithic stones placed upright in a circular layout that make up for a monumental structure. The stones are aligned to the sunset of the winter solstice and the opposing sunrise of the summer solstice. Strong archeological evidence suggests that the site was used as either as a burial site or a religious pilgrimage destination. The stones protruding in the landscape may have been placed as means of connecting two worlds: the living and the dead.¹²⁸ In both scenarios, the idea of the cosmos as a factor earthly life results to be an imminent engine that propels ritual, ceremonial and funerary practices strictly related to territory.

Furthermore, in such cases, the sense of place is generated by the sublimity of the cosmos down to the scale of ordinary life. These are spaces constructed out of a material that is often ethereal; light. The principle of these monumental structures is to reveal a celestial phenomenon through the sun, moon, and stars. Those elements explore the idea of the eternal return. Just like a calendar, it is a dual structure for fertility and a path for the deceased – the world as the spindle of the cosmos. The axis of the universe, rotating continuously and never-ending, in some way captivating those early worshippers to believe in eternity through the cosmos.

As it has been explored and clarified throughout the text, minimal information from the early inhabitants of the Aburrá Valley exists. Therefore, ideas of ritual and ceremony within

¹²⁸ Ken Worpole, *Last Landscapes: The Architecture of the Cemetery in the West*, (New Ed. London, Reaktion Books Ltd, 2003), 100.

the valley will never be certain. What exists is the territory and from it, the memory and secrets that may have been part of the Aburráes. In the book *Metropolivision, a Poetic Re-vision to the Valley of the Aburráes at the Dawn of the Third Millennium*, author Dora Lucía Mejía recounts that just like other ancient civilizations, the cosmogony and mythology of the natives that inhabited the territory of the valley were specific to the natural context. The prodigious vegetation, its flowers, and tropical fruits were essential to the coexistence of man to its territory and climate. The unfortunate demise from the colonization of America left much of the aesthetic and cultural traces erased from memory as it is the case of the settlements in the area. For other pre-Columbian cultures facing destruction and extinction from the Spaniards, historical fragments and traces were left. What remains in the Aburrá Valley though, is the contingency to other civilizations towards the stellar universe, the cosmos. The essence, however, has had to be reinterpreted by scholars to establish such ephemeral traces of culture.

Great cultures like the Chibchas,¹²⁹ who inhabited the central plateaus of our country with equally favored conditions, were very civilized people even if unable to leave vast constructions in stone, as, on the contrary, like great civilizations such as the Egyptians or the great Mexican cultures or the Inca Empire whose material splendor is still latent in its magnificent ruins, it is likely that it arose as a counter-departure to the aridity and rudeness of its natural environment.¹³⁰

It may have been the same traditional principles within the Aburrá Valley before the arrival of the colonists that the natives may have employed; a harmonious outlook and affinity towards the natural context and the cosmos. In a place capable of such sublimity, a hidden valley close to the stars surrounded by enigmatic plateaus and in its center two prominent hills; El Volador Hill associated with the Sun deity and El Nutibara Hill with the Moon. According to author Dora Lucía Mejía, these associations to the cosmos happen to

¹²⁹ It is generally debated that the tribes living within the Aburrá Valley were smaller families, descendants of the Chibchas.

¹³⁰ Dora Lucía Mejía, *Metropolivision – Una Re-vision Poetica del Valle de los Aburraes en los Albores del Tercer Milenio* (*Metropolivision, a Poetic Re-vision to the Valley of the Aburráes at the Dawn of the Third Millennium*), (Bogota, Unibiblos Editorial, 2005), 32-33.

be where archeological findings delineate the movement of the sun, moon and the stars along the zenith in the Aburrá Valley.¹³¹ To which understanding would place the ease of visibility of Summer and Winter solstice atop each hill as well as the observance of some constellations, like Scorpius which happens to rise above another hill by the name of *Pan de Azúcar*, just East of El Volador.¹³²

The idea of the cosmos and the traditional dogmas proper to the acknowledgement of the sublime by the tribes in the valley is fascinating, yet such remarkable views will never be proved certain. What is left, other than the fragmented remnants, is the aura of the physical environment that points towards a possibility of a telluric-stellar system just like other pre-Columbian civilizations.

*As in Teotihuacan, citadel of the gods near Mexico City, in the Aburra Valley there is a pyramid of the Sun: El Volador hill, a pyramid of the moon: Nutibara hill, a processional avenue: the Aburrá river, which make up a similar telluric-stellar system, with only notable difference that these were not built: nature put them there, they had only to be denominated.*¹³³

In Teotihuacan, Mexico the pyramid complex is characterized by the Moon Pyramid, Sun Pyramid, Pyramid of the Feathered Serpent and the Avenue of the Dead running on a north-south axis. It was a religious centre built a thousand years earlier than the Aztec civilization. It is suggested that this was a ceremonial complex as many bodies and grave goods have been found in and around the complex, meaning that there was an association with death, the natural rotation of the earth around the sun and that of the moon around the earth.

¹³¹ Ibid., 33.

¹³² Ibid., 33.

¹³³ Ibid., 33.

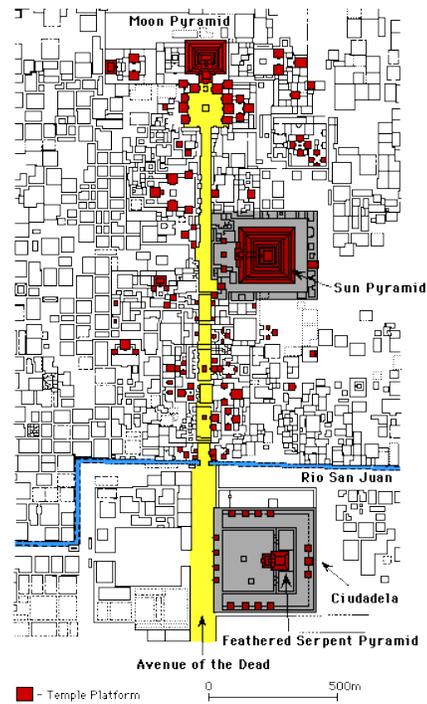


Fig.32
 Ceremonial complex in
 Teotihuacan, Mexico

In this sense, the casual configurations of the natural ridges across the valley, which happen to be coincidentally in the middle of the land may be evidence to suggest that they were part of a solar calendar.¹³⁴ Part of the essence of space being part of a cosmological congruity linking the territory to a telluric-stellar system. Perhaps establishing cyclical analogies during annual events throughout the year; be it the emergence of certain groups of stars, the position of the sun and even the periods of rainfall and drought.¹³⁵ Relative to the understanding of this cycle, the occurrence of time as a Spatio-temporal principle is instilled in the interpretation of the cosmos and the analogy of the zodiac. This may have been part of a ritual or ceremonial activity that transcended the function of time through the underlying idea of space directed by the cardinal points (Fig.33).

¹³⁴ Ibid., 35.

¹³⁵ Ibid., 35.

Fig.34
North-South view towards El
Nutibara Hill protruding in the
background

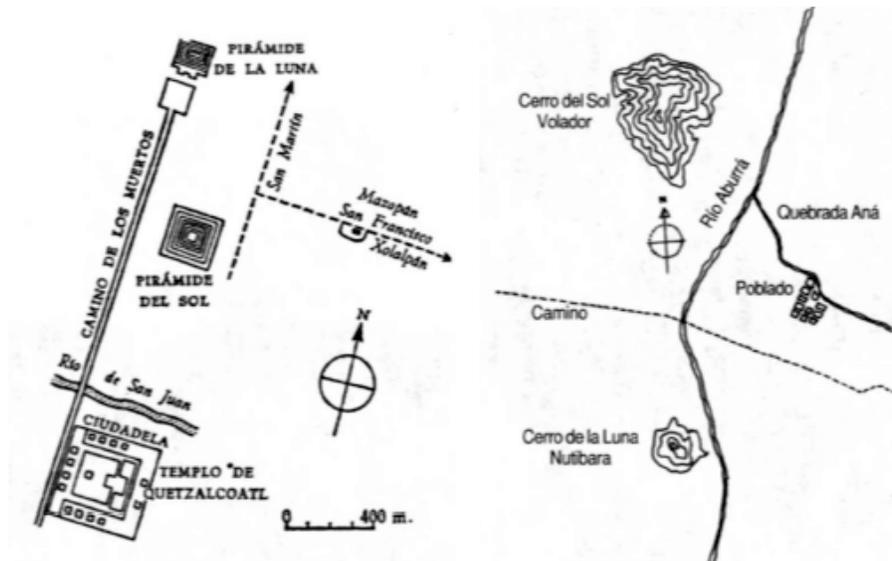


Fig.33
Comparison between the
ceremonial complex at Teotihuacan
(left) and the composition of the
Aburrá Valley (right)



A RELATIVE SPHERE

As part of the discussion and regarding the limited documentation found on the Aburráes people of Medellín, it is important to provide some perspective and relativity to inform the argument of the project. In order to draw comparisons with rituals and beliefs, there is a need to find a living precedent from where to proceed as the local indigenous ideologies have been lost, an approximation to what it could have certainly been. For this reason, an existing tribe in the Northern region of Colombia can be an exemplary derivative as to being introduced to the understanding of the natural habitat and ritual traditions from an indigenous point of view; the Kogui people of the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta¹³⁶ who survived the Spanish colonization and still prosper to this day. As a cultural block and Amerindian group, the Koguis are the reflection of many of the lost cultures in the region as a result of colonization. Although such general argument may be disputable, there is some reflection that can be used to understand the aboriginal groups that existed before the arrival of the Spaniards. In turn, by interpreting the essence of the Koguis, it is possible to distill meaning and create an image of the people that lived in the Aburrá Valley. The contextual affinity of the Koguis is geared towards nature, their territory and their place to it, this being the *Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta*. So, geography and culture generate an essential pillar that produces a symbiosis to the space.¹³⁷ According to their beliefs, the *Sierra* is the centre of their world, a microcosm capable of supporting life itself and full of guardian spirits, which to many Koguis may have been part of the reason why civilization has been kept off their sacred grounds. The whole *Sierra*¹³⁸ is treated as a single system

¹³⁶ Mountainous range located in the North region of Colombia close to the Caribbean coast boasting multiple prominent peaks and known for its local biodiversity as a protected National Natural Park. It is home to a large number of aboriginal Tairona descendants which include the Koguis inhabiting in an Indian reserve in the mid-highlands of the Sierra Nevada.

¹³⁷ Juan Carlos Orrantia, "Matices Kogui. Representaciones y negociación en la marginalidad" (Koguis' nuances. Representations and negotiations in their marginality), (Revista Colombiana de Antropología, January-December: 45-75, 2002), 49.

¹³⁸ Mountain range.

and a copy of the world in miniature and which happens to be their deity personified and materialized through a common concept, *Aluna; The Great Mother*, whose embodiment is represented through Earth, more specifically the *Sierra*. Its vegetation is seen as a vast garden that separates the world of Kogui from the dense world. It is the barrier that keeps those sacred lands intact from people; this relation is defined by the idea of fertility, which implies a constant reawakening of spirit and matter.¹³⁹ The essence of this tribe has been based upon a construct of spirituality embedded in the natural environment inherited from the past civilizations in the region. In this sense, the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta is a sacred native land closed off to civilization where Koguis' identity, culture, and tradition still exists. In doing so, their existential nature is given towards the coexistence with the Earth and as part of the importance given to it, the Sun and the Moon are celebrated harmoniously in their sacred center, the *Sierra Nevada*. Within the *Sierra*, a larger hut represents *Nuhué*, the cosmos, which has two ceremonial openings directed East-West axis; each door is an opening for sunrise and sunset, it welcomes the Sun and gives its farewell. This gives allusion to their calendar, and so it is a corporeal representation of such imagery:

*The Kogui calendar is based on the observation of the solstices and equinoxes. This occurrence is seen as the representation of “the sun is in his house”, then “leaving through a door” and goes through the space to the point of the summer solstice to “turn” there and return to his home where it goes out the other door to walk to the winter solstice. According to the constellations visible at dawn, the year is divided into 18 months of 20 days each [...] the horticultural calendar coincides with the ceremonial and the main ceremonies of the winter solstice were celebrated to end the summer season and call the rains, while those of the summer solstice were celebrated to end the rain season and introduce the summer.*¹⁴⁰

Through this substantial manifestation of the sacred nature instilled in the Kogui people, the representation of the calendar expressed as a vision to ecological life, order, and

¹³⁹ Ibid., 50.

¹⁴⁰ Gerardo Reichel-Dolmatoff, *Los Kogi: Una tribu en la Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta (Koguis: A tribe in the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta)* (II vols., Bogotá, Procultura, 1985), 236.

organization of the cosmos. This in a way, is a complementary mythic image that could be deduced as part of the culture and tradition of many Amerindian tribes and that which gives meaning to the “system of their world,”¹⁴¹ much like what has been lost in the Aburráes people. By acknowledging natural habitat and the cosmos, these are intimately embedded in the way society views the physical and ephemeral; life and death, good and evil, positive and negative, man and woman. These are manifestations articulated by the idea of cyclical time on earth and the generating capacity of it to nature. Therefore, it is the idea of natural space that consecrates the body to the universe. Comparatively, it could be argued that such rituals and beliefs in the cosmos were adopted, just treated differently. To a broader extent, the use of the natural landscape may have played an important role for the Aburráes as it is seen how important it is for the Koguis. Thus, the natural context could have been more than a symbolic interpretation but a spiritual expression and connection to the eternal time, the cycle of life. As the last subchapter suggests, given the idea of those two natural ridges within the Aburrá Valley, El Nutibara and El Volador, it is the latter a possible representational metaphor as Axis Mundi of the Aburrá people at its centre , just like those found in different cultures (Fig.35).

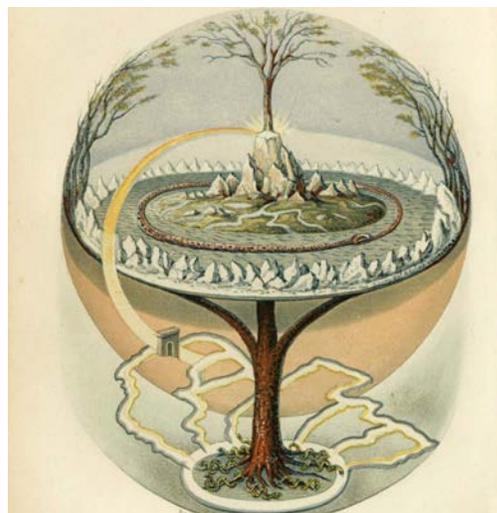


Fig.35
*Axis Mundi according to
Norse mythology*

It may have been treated as a microcosm within the world that surrounded it in the valley.

¹⁴¹ Mircea Eliades, *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion* (Translated by Willard R. Trask, New York, Mariner Books, 1968), 37.

Hence, this Axis Mundi in El Volador Hill allows for the connection of the four compass directions as part of a cosmic pivot or even as a pillar that supports and structures the vertical space from the earthly upwards to the sky, ultimately opening a third dimension or zenith.¹⁴² Following this idea, the alignment of the four sides intersect with the three cosmic levels of the universe: the celestial pole inhabited by gods and goddesses; the geographical pole, inhabited by man; and the underworld, the final place of rest of the ancestors of the land.¹⁴³ In essence, the sacredness of such cosmic ideology brings it down to an understanding of the Amerindian to the cycle of life and death and its afterlife. This centre as the cradle where everything originates – nor the beginning nor the end; back to the cradle where it all began and now that it ends, to be reborn in nature. That itself is the spirit of such a place where the natives may have been aware of their surroundings and as the earlier chapters suggest, the acknowledgment of life and death drawing symbolism from the earthly and the celestial. These two concepts bring to light the idea that the people of the valley may have understood their essence and relation to the world in which they inhabited, ranging from the smallest organism to the cosmos.

In this way, the early tribes in the Aburrá Valley were aware of death and memory, yet acknowledged the vast significance of the natural habitat, animal and plants. This dependency was an important part of sharing the planet and its resources towards the principles of traditional rites and beliefs regarding death and the everlasting life on earth. Such an idea could be related to the Koguis where every single entity inhabiting the *Sierra* is a spirit of those who have died. Consequently, these same spirits are the guardians of their Axis Mundi. Therefore, this allegorical imagery could be manifested in the way insects and plants coexist with humans to produce a place in the context of the natural realm, these are fundamental for the continuation of ecosystems and fundamental to this Axis Mundi. In

¹⁴² Pablo Aristizabal, *Aburráes: Behind the traces of our ancestors – an approximation from archaeology*, (1st. Medellín, Secretaria de Cultura Ciudadana, 2015), 22.

¹⁴³ Further reading on the topic for in-depth understanding – Mircea Eliades, *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion*, (Translated by Willard R. Trask, New York, Mariner Books, 1968), 36.

the thesis site particularly, life could be approached from an ecological standpoint and the acknowledgement of the body as an entity inhabiting the world is important for the cycle of life and to that body the world. The coexistence of man and nature would be an ideal expression for society to treat El Volador Hill as a sacred place just like the *Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta*.

Comparatively, this discourse of man in nature could play an important role as a place-making practice in Medellín. For instance, flowers and pollinators, which are vital for the ecosystem could be seen as the spirits of that transcendental space in El Volador. These would generate an imposing awareness of death not only as an individual factor of life but as a cultural and collective belief marked by the constant acceptance of existence and nature; being in the world. Like the Koguis (Fig.36), place-making lies in the acknowledgment of space as part of spirituality, ecology, and tradition. These notions articulate the awareness of a narrative that defines the essence of that said space within the boundaries of its territory and relative to the biodiversity that inhabits that space. Notably, the natural ecosystem of El Volador Hill could have been the centre of the whole valley and as part of making a memory by understanding the concept of death, this embodied memory will return the existence of this place and its spirits as a cultural reconstruction of Medellín.

FLOWERS AND DEATH

Since the beginning of times, burial places have been associated with ceremonial goods, especially as part of the human ritual to convey relationships to gods and deities. These burial places have also been adorned with flowers as part of the ritual of death and reaching an everlasting life. According to Stephen Buchmann, in ancient Egypt flower arrangements were used for special occasions were floral arrangements were given in the form of



Fig.36
*Kogui people of the Sierra
Nevada de Santa Marta*

bouquets to the relatives of the deceased at the time of burial as well as “on various festive occasions and anniversaries at the necropolis and mortuary temples.”¹⁴⁴ During the Greek Empire, the gods and goddesses who loved flowers were also worshipped. In doing so, their temples were beautifully decorated with colourful flowers to the point where “priests and poets insisted that their gods had sacred plants, and some of these bore beautiful flowers.”¹⁴⁵ The Aztecs also followed customs around flowers to symbolize a “spiritual-afterlife paradise world, universal creation and the blood of human sacrifice.”¹⁴⁶ Following this, flowers began to expand into universal principles; for instance, the Romans began using flowers into lush gardens and greenery. At the moment of death for both Greeks and Romans, “scattered flowers on the grave and both cultures believed that planting herbs and sweet flowers around the burial site purified the earth.”¹⁴⁷

Different cultures throughout the history of civilization have used flowers as part of their traditional rituals where these are deeply rooted in the symbolism of not just death but beauty, fertility, and prosperity. The beauty found in flowers is what often comforts the human being; scent and visual attributes by which these connect man to the natural habitat. Possibly as Buchmann suggests, flowers as grave goods began to be used as a way of masking the odours of decomposition and now are part of the ritual.¹⁴⁸ Even when different customary traditions arise in different cultures, the ceremonial use of flowers persists. In this case, flowers as part of an important part of religious rites and ceremonies. For instance, the Christian church has embraced this association with flowers since the Middle Ages and to this day, Christian services and funerals are bound to be complete by flowers; these are part of the ceremonial nature of worship. For example, Medellín’s mainstream religious beliefs as suggested in the earlier chapters is Catholicism. Therefore,

¹⁴⁴ Stephen Buchmann, *The Reason for Flowers: Their History, Culture, Biology, and How They Change Our Lives*. (Old Saybrook, Tantor Media, 2015), 108.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 110.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 116.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 110.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 107.

the connection of the dead to the use of flowers is an integral part of the traditional beliefs. In the Catholic Church, floral arrangements are used throughout services and usually placed behind the altar and though the colour may vary according to certain celebrations throughout the year, white flowers are most often used.¹⁴⁹ This is not necessarily followed to honour the deceased since a variety of colourful flowers are often used and can be observed throughout deathscapes across the city. Hitherto, as the narrative has asserted in the last few chapters, the use of flowers in Medellín is a central attribute that generates the ethos of its culture. Flowers are seen not only as an extension of the Paisa culture in the region but pieces that could potentially be used to reconstruct or develop the tradition. As though it is already the case, some of the Silletero families sell their grown flowers outside of different cemeteries in the city (Fig.37 and Fig.38).



Fig.37
*Flowers are commonly sold
outside cemeteries*

Comparatively, much of the Central and South American continent has followed such close tradition with flowers. Conceptually these traditions are a hybridized practice coming from both the ancestors of the land as well as the Spaniards who brought the Christian religion with them to the New World through missionary work.¹⁵⁰ In Mexico, for example, the

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 115.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 115.



Fig.38
Columbarium at San Pedro
Cemetery, Medellín

traditional *Día de Los Muertos* (Day of the Dead) on November 1st is an annual occurrence celebrated to honour deceased relatives. Across the country, families will honour the memories of the loved ones who have passed on. For this reason, burial plots are lively decorated with flowers, glowing candles, and offerings.

Custom tradition has embedded civilization with the concept of flowers as part of socio-economic stratum, belief or superstition. Flowers enchant place – olfaction, vision and touch – their fragrances, colours, and textures decorate space, giving an ephemeral sensitivity to the physical realm, associating death with everlasting beauty and memory.¹⁵¹ It is this appreciation across cultures that makes flowers sacred, generating a sublime nature in the physical world. Therefore, for places like Medellín, flowers are part of the livelihood and as sometimes seen as undervalued symbolic elements. The flower is, in fact, an extension of the culture and even when other neighbouring countries follow this common practice, nevertheless in the region flowers happen to be embedded and reciprocal to what it means to live but not yet have that nurturing symbolism as an appreciative value to death. To authors Elizabeth Hallman and Danny Miller in *Death, Memory and Material Culture*, observe that flowers are seen as expressive materials of memory explained paradoxically in terms of their fragility; their rapid discoloration and premature putrefaction, relating to human life.¹⁵² There is a symbolizing aspect of the flower to death, it is a sign of hope and everlasting life; its radiant colours give meaning to a peaceful stance after the passing of the body. In the Christian world, these two will always go together and will consequently be used as a visual expression of sympathy to the deceased. History and anthropology have shown that human beings have been captivated by flowers as part of life-death rituals. It is this representation of the flower, and possibly its cycle of life receding to nature and growing again, that metaphorically becomes an interconnected element depicting the search for eternity, with the delightful and vivid colours capable of foreseeing death.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 107.

¹⁵² Elizabeth Hallam and Danny Miller, *Death, memory and material culture*, (New York, Oxford, Berg, 2001), 5.

Even when there is a delicate life, it must cease to exist, yet what persists is the idea that this life had to culminate. Regardless of the end, what captivates the understanding is that a body will return to the cradle where it originates from, to bloom back again as a new living organism. For instance, Vincent Van Gogh's still-life paintings showcasing *Sunflowers* (Fig.39). The symbolic meaning and representational nature of the sunflowers give a glimpse of the idea of colour as the yellow balances the painting in a foreseeable death. It is a soothing way of acknowledging death through flowers, specifically here through sunflowers as well as their decorative nature. Although bright yellow petals almost a metaphor of the sun is characteristic of this flower in the Christian symbolizing adoration and longevity, in Van Gogh's painting the underlying nature that represents the meaning of slow decay. In a way, what becomes apparent is the connection and acknowledgment of death within the paintings, even when there is beauty, somehow somehow death is sitting there as if it is the essence of that entity. The expressive nature of the flower as an object that imitates the fragility of human life has been an iconic image that invokes the ephemerality of nature, so rapid discoloration, fragility, and putrefaction.¹⁵³ These elements, in turn, have been reproduced as part of social and cultural space that conceives the flower as a concept of memory and remembrance as a death-related object that is capable of fostering the emotion of both the individual and collective. Consequently, giving rise to a visual interplay that embodies the physical meaning of transience and death in society.

¹⁵³ Ibid., 6.

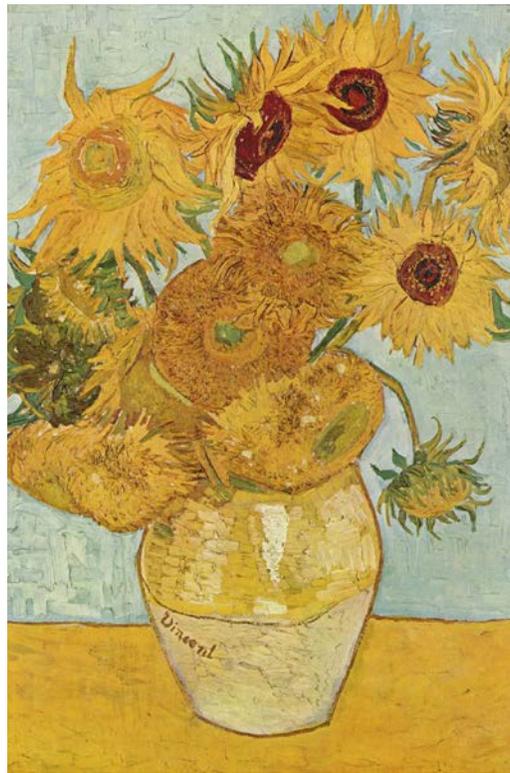


Fig.39
Vase with twelve sunflowers

A CASE FOR BUILDING WITH HUMAN ASHES



It is impossible to understand the scope of the argument unless a significant point is made; building with human remains, specifically cremation ashes. Although the conceptual base for the project seeks to follow the principles found in the Stockholm's Skogskyrkogården (Woodland Cemetery) where several spaces along the natural landscape offer the ability for the relatives of a deceased to lay the body in whichever way they decide. In following this idea, multiple monumental and spiritual spaces are located throughout the entire complex and so death, landscape and architecture blend to create a powerful place. The case to make would be the same: offering a grand and beautiful natural space for relatives to decide how to best lay to rest their loved ones, with the addition of using human ashes as a possible construction material in the hospice. As hospice care develops and grows in time, the concept of death and the separation it creates can slowly start to shift.

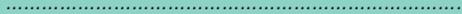
A few chapters back, the discussion centred around the history of the cemetery as a fundamental funerary deathscape furthering the idea around the development of a new crematorium model. During this narrative, a few points arose regarding the historical obsession towards the human body, especially the decomposing human body and bones during the Middle Ages. Churches and catacombs under these would be covered by human remains. It was a dreadful spectacle as it has been suggested, and surely enough, from a conservative perspective a somewhat unreasonable act for most. Logically, that soon came to a halt and the bodies were separated from the architecture and laid into cemeteries.

However, modern times have brought forth different ideologies, beliefs, and traditions. Although the importance of such conventional ways remains including the utmost respect to the body of a deceased person, there will come a time when the human being will have to choose to live along with remains or find a better way of disposing of the body. As the world evolves, technology and the human mind alike progress, yet the only place that holds these together, Planet Earth, deteriorates as time goes on; air pollution, plastic pollution, excess of garbage, loss of land, and limited space. A fine line in what is believed as a traditional ritual and what is regarded as rational will be drawn in the next future generations when the Earth has run out of space; notably when grave burial now regarded as common practice for burial, is known to pollute the Earth. As a way of counteracting possible future events of global warming and decay of the earth a case for reusing the remains must be made as vernacular elements that will help to produce a more natural environment in the long run.

Moreover, the discussion has also given a glimpse of rapid urbanization and densification locally affecting Medellín. Limited land space in the city means that reconfiguration of funerary ritual will need to be radically changed. As mentioned before, 70% of today's funerals in Medellín end up in crematoria, yet the human ashes are mostly placed in columbaria and other small niches offered around the city for these. To that end, it always comes down to two funerary options; it is either cremation or traditional burial. As a way of generating collective memory, this radical argument arises. Starting as a possibility that can be studied and researched, hence the concept of redefining death, not only within the boundaries of temporality but reasonably to human existence. Ideally, the way should be to explore new ecological ways to replace burial or cremation. Ultimately to transform the funeral approach to connect harmoniously with nature. The idea of the possibility of building with remains arises in a way, by *making memory* and *preserving* that memory in the landscape. By doing so, this process responds to the concept of the eternal return,

mixing the remaining ashes with soil to create a more diverse habitat for pollinators and flowers. In this regard, the space that is created is one offering a sublime experience for the dying individuals understanding that their remains will produce life. In this sense, two concepts that have been proposed lately, water cremation or the other one being the use of remains as composting soil. Either way, should be explored to great lengths to improve the relationship of death to the world as part of making a memory, acknowledging death and promoting ideal hospice care locally to find transcendence to these topics.

PROJECT CONCEPT AND DEVELOPMENT



DEVELOPMENT

As a way of understanding the notions and exploration of memory and death, a transitional space for the dying and the dead will develop an architectural place in hopes of redefining and reinterpreting death in the city of Medellín. By proposing two major typologies, the project seeks to bring into an association for the locals the acknowledgement of dying and to see it as more than mere taboo. These two typologies, located at different areas within the same site, are relevant to distilling meaning to individual and collective memory. The Hospice and the Crematorium are the typologies that surround themselves around the concepts that have been carefully explored throughout. However, the lack of information regarding how to architecturally connect these two has been apparent. This has been possible by the fact that each typology has been understood collectively rather than individually, meaning that one cannot exist without the other; both coexist mutually and develop progressively as time passes. This approach has been essential as a means of acknowledging both space and landscape as well as working to propose a transitional-phase space for the people of Medellín, namely, a space for dying, death and memory. The taboo surrounding death has been a major factor in this proposal that seeks to find a connection between what is currently known as the hospice and the deathscape. In their final state, these spaces will embody a new typology, one that has been neglected since

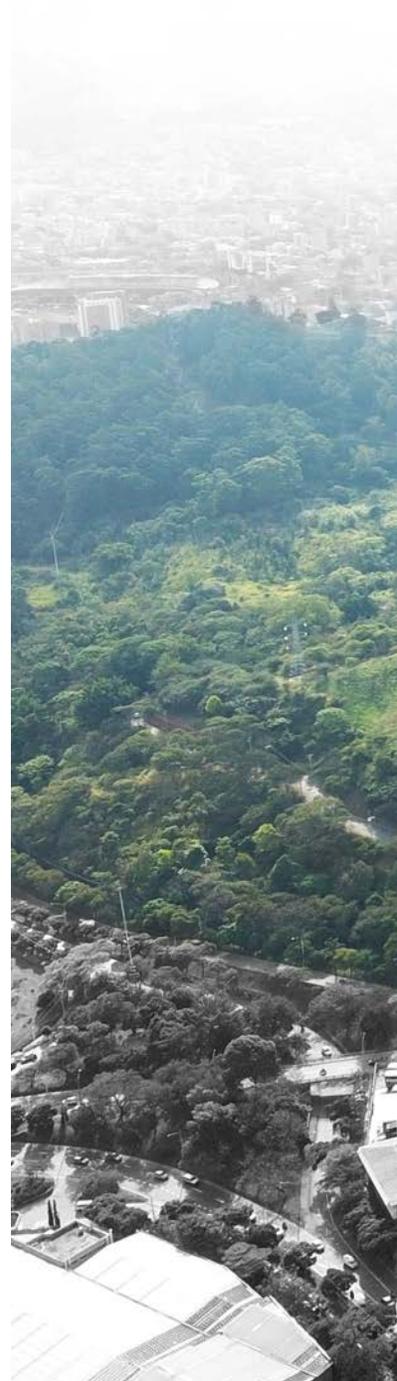
the start of civilized society; due to societal and cultural paradigms or just because it has not been fully proposed.

SITE SELECTION

From a general perspective, *Cerro El Volador* (The Flying Hill) (Fig.40) may seem to be the typical natural park within the metropolitan area in the city of Medellín. It is a 107-acre urban ecological park bordering three neighbourhoods and two university campuses. The site is rich not only because of its vibrant and thriving ecosystem but because of its historical and cultural value. The chronology of the site places the earliest aboriginal settlements from the 5th century BC. Stratigraphic documentation along with many artifacts found suggest the hill served as both a place for dwelling and burial. This dual expression positions the hill as a significant historical, archaeological and anthropological site. Its previous funerary complexes and terraced housing have validated the place as the center of the earlier cultures living in the valley. For the locals, the site is part of a purely ecological stance, yet its history suggests otherwise: El Volador Hill was an agricultural, cosmic and spiritual node for the ancient tribes that inhabited the area.

Until the end of the 19th century, the hill was only considered as a natural space that embellished the city. By the twentieth century the hill gained much interest to be urbanized, leading as early as the 1920s to the development of a few settlements at its base. By the 1940s, *barrios* like San Germán and La Iguaná bordered the southwest perimeter of the hill. While their construction was spontaneous as the result of disorganized urbanization, the city stopped further development of construction in the area to avoid any damage to the natural state of El Volador Hill.

Fig.40
View of El Volador hill facing
South-West





The site is still a somewhat unappreciated place for locals, although for the most part, it remains an area that many are aware of for its natural ecosystem, while its historical and cultural value remain foreign. The site is widely used by individuals looking to exercise, run and sprint throughout its diverse landscapes. It is a family-oriented space and during the month of August families get together across the walking trail at the top of the hill to fly kites as northern winds are more prominent during this month. The area is connected atypically with neighbouring barrios that since the early days of urbanization began to erode the natural landscape of El Volador. The uncontrolled and rapid urbanization of the site in the borders of the hill has stopped, and now it functions as an ecological park surrounded by natural green spaces inside the cityscape. The hill is one of the few remaining natural spaces and the one with the most historical data, yet still a fragment of the cultural heritage of the land. In a way, it has become a memorial to the ancestors but unfortunately, its importance has not been acknowledged as much as it should. For many, it is just a green space, a residue of the land. Its embodied memory has never fulfilled its true characteristic nature relative to the past and what it means to present and future generations.

The hill is now part of an ecological network of parks and green spaces in the city of Medellín, with its extensive area making it the largest hill inside the Aburrá Valley. Recently, the site has been declared as a protected area both naturally and culturally by the nation. Various natural species predominate the area, ranging from small animals, flora, and insects. El Volador has kept and revealed the memories of the original settlers, as multiple archaeological sites have been unearthed throughout the past 50 years. Although, the existence of these aboriginal people has always been acknowledged, unfortunately, the lack of information about their traditions, values and even their beliefs have been forgotten and lost. What is left are the traces, fragments and a broken memory of those who died, and in some instances, the difficult relationship of the modern individual with the indigenous community and ancestry. In this sense, El Volador Hill plays an instrumental

role by giving an ethereal concept a physical presence, reconstructing a memory that has been collectively lost. The place is a key node in the city as it remains a place to experience nature and memory. It offers an appropriate location for a transitional space for the dying and the dead, redefining the notion of death and comparatively discerning individual and collective memory. It is on the basis of the archeological sites that the hill has since been seen as providing the city with an open space that contributes to the recovery of the ecosystem. In doing so, it contributes to the conservation, recovery and acknowledgement of the ancestors of the past while providing a view to the future of society.

LA CUNA

Throughout most of the documentation process, significant elements were analyzed in order to conceive an appropriate proposal. The underlying themes constituting the thesis project were hospice care, death and memory; the latter two became the nodes holding the project together. Perception of life and death in connection with cultural artifacts have prevailed along with the history of the site. Through this, metaphors with references to cultural and traditional artifacts become a central component of the project. Reshaping the culture of death in Medellín can be done through place-making, memory, its embodiment, and by exploring in-depth the concept of hospice care.

A major portion of the work has explored how the three themes mentioned earlier, can be incorporated through tangible means. As such, the project began to be developed through a double metaphor that links the spatial concepts and design strategy with the overall proposal. This double metaphor combines the concepts of death and memory through the more tangible construction of architecture: This concept or design strategy is *“The Orchid and The Butterfly”* (Fig.41). Naturally, the orchid and the butterfly represent relevant entities



Fig.41
Architectural concept
"The Orchid and the Butterfly"

in Medellín and the neighbouring region. The essence of these metaphors is observed from both the traditional sense of the people of Medellín, as well as the inherent symbolism that both ideas represent regarding to death.

From a symbolic standpoint, the orchid is a typical funeral flower with an alluring meaning of love and beauty often found in this type of flower. The orchid, this living organism, as any other plant or flower, develops and grows relative to time. Its petals, sepals and lip (labellum – lowermost petal) begin to slowly grow from its node (stem) and from it, several orchids blossom. In time, this growth makes for a grouping of orchids from and around the same node. This idea of growth through time is cyclical; the flower grows, blossoms, dies and its seeds are returned to earth to be born once again.

Furthermore, the butterfly, as the pollinator of the flower, is an important living organism of El Volador. Around the site, much attention is given towards the butterfly and other pollinators, so these living organisms and their relationship to the site is important. There is a lot of historical symbolism and spiritual meaning associated with the butterfly. The cycles of the butterfly hold spiritual meaning for different cultures. As the butterfly grows out of the egg, it becomes a caterpillar in its earlier stages. Soon after, it retreats within the pupa or chrysalis to undergo a remarkable transformation that sees the caterpillar turn into a butterfly. Symbolically, its life is closely associated to the process of the spiritual transformation of human beings. As the caterpillar surrounds itself inside a cocoon, it can symbolize the way someone can interact with one's inner being in prayer and meditation, to re-emerge in the world. Similarly, in the local culture, for people who have passed away the butterfly is seen as an insect that foreshadows the reincarnation of the body. This transformation is attributed to spiritual ideals, representing human experience at the end of life.

Although there are specific reference to the butterfly, ideally the projects seeks to explore the possibilities of a home for many of the pollinators in nature: moths, bees, beetles, flies, birds and other small vertebrates (Fig.42). Thus, it is not only about recreating a place for the butterfly, but for other insects that help the ecosystem in completing its natural cycles. Living organisms, such as insects and animals, are fundamental components in complex ecosystems and their death will bring about the possibility of the end of life, individually and collectively



Fig.42
*Some of the pollinators
in the ecosystem*

Metaphorically, there is a relationship between both buildings as one transitional place. At the root is the crematorium, while the hospice slowly grows like petals as death is acknowledged, blossoming into an orchid where the fear of death is suppressed. These petals are the tangible means that generate the interior spaces of the Hospice. The conceptual nature of the butterfly is embellished through this process as well, but focused on the crematorium where spiritual transformation and rebirth takes place.

The overall design addresses the three fundamental concepts – it includes two settings where dying and death are fostered and nourished, as well as breaking ground for a possible future proposal for sightseeing and birdwatching in the site. The two projects are situated at the top of the hill (Fig.43). Access has been conveniently proposed as an extension of the existing surrounding road. In this sense, there are two main ramps located at the north and south for easy access. While the north entrance has been proposed as the main entrance pointing towards the Hospice, the southern access is conveniently placed as a pathway for public access to the Crematorium. Each project sits atop of two of the three peaks on the hill, and between them, a 3m-wide trail connects them. Although these typologies have a different programmatic resolution, their essence remains the same as their objective is to reshape the conservative nature of death in the local culture. The configuration from this standpoint allows the project to guide and formalize these buildings to accommodate better spatial and material development design decisions. Recognizing this, the project is defined as a “Cradle,” where the body finally is able to rest within the hill. In this sense, the protruding landscape links the city to this natural park as if there was an everlasting thread to the urbanscape. The cradle is the place where a body is born and where it consequently rests, it is viewed from the city as the city is viewed from the hill’s boundaries. In this context, the project acknowledges the ethos and traditions as it addresses cultural themes, symbolic imagery like flowers, pollinators, local architecture and the local biodiversity. Architecture thus becomes a device in support of reshaping the narrative surrounding death, creating moments of spiritual embellishment and transformation in many scales as a metaphor for eternal living.

An understanding thus arises where architecture and memory-making practices merge, generating a more profound landscape. The Crematorium metaphorically represents the root of a flower; perpetual, timeless, and capable of growing as many times as the pollinators help spread its seeds throughout the land. The Hospice generates the space



Fig.43
Site plan La Cuna,
El Volador Hill

that blooms beautifully as an orchid, its petals are the rooms that point towards the different neighbouring *barrios* of the city. These petals express the vision of each terminal patient as observing home in the distance, feeling at home as if it were to be *at home*. The continuity between the Hospice and home constitutes that metamorphosis and, following the dual metaphor is seen as an adult butterfly being reborn – a patient acknowledging death and understanding that dying is part of the cycle of life and memory being forever ingrained on the site. Since body and mind leave this world, memory is what makes death everlasting. Relatives of a patient are able to explore the hill and perceive the flourishing ecosystem, with insects, mammals, plants, flowers or trees as representations of the individual who has died. Although death involves sentiments of grief, it is important to traverse the different emotions and generate intimacy with the natural habitat because from it, memory is dependant. As the body returns to the earth, as the ashes are given back to the soil, conscience and soul inhabit the place. Thousands of souls end up becoming the guardians of this natural park, recalling the Amerindian tribes, like the Koguis, who are protected by their fauna and flora.

Overall, the project has several prominent attributes: First is the use of vernacular materials that make up the tectonics of the two projects. Standard components in the buildings include rammed earth, wood and stone. These elements become the armature around which the spaces must exist and interact with the inhabitants and visitors. Their placement is significant to the functional considerations that each building has, yet delicately operating way without compromising experience. Both buildings emerge from the ground and in doing so, the natural green roofs are just a continuation of this remarkable site. They are extensions of the land seeking to appear as light as possible. Even when the monumentality of the Crematorium is observed through its significant structural components, its verticality forces a redefinition of the horizontal forces at play, generating powerful momentum towards the experience of the place, that is perceived as a blossoming flower (Fig.44). In

the Hospice, the layout varies the way in which horizontality is experienced and distributed. Spatially, the interconnected circulation by the ample corridors creates three garden pockets, ending in an interior patio (Fig.45). These pockets create a vertical connection to the sky while the horizontality accommodates a wide range of views towards the city below. Secondly, the project addresses the broader scope of dying and death by trying to scale these to the level of experiences. The Hospice is where dying takes place, the Crematorium becomes the final resting place where the body is separated from this world and where the soul is reawakened. The multiple access pathways and connecting trails, along with the overall characteristics of the buildings become an iconic location for society. As a whole, the project is a transitional place, a natural path for the afterlife. Thirdly, the project envisions the acceptance of hospice care in Colombia. Although a limited and definite program does not currently exist, this transitional space serves as the rationalization behind the concept of death and its perception as a taboo and subject.

The spatial strategies of the overall project evolved from a much larger parti than expressed so far. The conceptual nature of both projects was inspired by cultural artifacts and fragments that are either part of the environment or the history of the site. The spatial distribution of the Hospice alludes to a flower with its petals growing in time (See Appendix E- 1E). These delicate petals generate the bedroom spaces, while the interior programmatic configuration wraps around to define the other spaces (i.e., healthcare unit, social and dining). In the Crematorium, the spatial strategy differs with the interconnection of the spaces distributed under an extensive circle. The configuration of this space is composed of a set of rooms and exterior spaces that house the diverse program. Its conceptual origin arises from a common archaeological artifact, the spindle whorl (See Appendix E- 2E); it is an object that has been found throughout the site, holding a sacred component in the ritual practices of the Aburráes. Inspired by the spindle whorl, the Crematorium is made up of fragments and borderlines that define the iconic interior elements.



Fig.44
Crematorium
Eye-level view of structure



Fig.45
Hospice
View from Garden to
the Common space

The initial programmatic element of the project is the Hospice (Fig.46). It is located towards the north peak of the site with ample views to the city in every direction. It has been positioned on the landscape to allow for access from the west. The bedrooms for the patients are the most vital part of this area as they wrap and enclose the delicate rammed earth walls and the colourful gardens. The hospice consists of 14 bedrooms available for those at the end-of-life, with additional suitable spaces required to make a primary unit with sufficient space for one patient. The accessible washroom is located towards the back of the room with a spacious closet across and adjacent to the entrance. A small kitchenette with extra cabinetry is located within where the space opens up to the balcony, pointing towards the beautiful valley beyond.

Overall, the design is closely related to the architecture found in the adjacent towns, a typical Antioquean Colonial Architecture which is part of the local tradition. Through this strategy, with a more contemporary approach, the enclosed spaces have a special connection to the way the home is perceived in the local culture. The architectural components bring together colourful elements from the environment, opening to the landscape as well as the sky through the courtyards (Fig.48). The interconnected spaces are essential for individual and collective living. This is achieved through ample interior corridors and exterior balconies. Through this element, social and communal life is a foundational aspect of the building. The rammed earth walls and wooden structural members provide the connection between the vernacular and traditional (Fig.49). The interior gardens contain a variety of flowers found across the region, including their pollinators. This creates a connection between the patients and their relatives who are able to plant their favourite flowers and care for them both in the gardens and inside the bedrooms. This results in a graceful ritual whereby relatives will remember the specific type of flower their deceased relative loved, and in turn symbolizes their everlasting soul. Each bedroom is envisioned as looking towards a different area in the city. With the city beyond the hill, the beautiful views are provided

Fig.46

Hospice floor plan

1. Entrance
2. Common Space
3. Bedroom Unit
4. Patio / Garden
5. Family Unit
6. On-call Unit
7. Doctor's Office
8. Counselling / Psychologist
9. Administration Office
10. Nurse Station
11. Social Space
12. Dining Room
13. Kitchen
14. Laundry Room
15. Storage
16. Preparation Room



Fig.47

Crematorium floor plan

1. Common Entrance
2. Body Entry / Exit
3. Lobby
4. Terrace
5. Ceremony Room
6. Garden
7. Reflecting Pool
8. Courtyard of the Sun
9. Ashes Receiving
10. Alkaline Hydrolysis Chamber
11. Cold Storage
12. Equipment Storage
13. Control Room
14. Access to Roof
15. South Entry / Exit Trail
16. Family Room
17. Chapel
18. Administration Office



specifically for a terminally-ill individual to feel closer to home and area where they lived (Fig.51). In a sense, the hospice stands above the city, creating a ritualistic connection to the ethos of the Aburrá Valley (Fig.52). As death occurs, the body leaves the Hospice: before going through the trail towards the Crematorium, a small *Preparation Room* has been provided for the body to be prepared before being placed in one of the *Ceremony Rooms*.

The final programmatic element of the overall project is the Crematorium (Fig. 53). Located at the south peak, this space brings together a sense embodied memory through all those who have passed away. Metaphorically, the Crematorium follows a circular plan that grows like a flower out of the fertile land, providing a moving experience for the relatives of the dead and the overall community (See Appendix E for Axonometric view - 6E). This symbolic experience resonates with the surrounding forest on the hill, the cultural history, and natural ecology of the area. A forest of glulam beams support the green roof above, providing both shading and ventilation. The building is characterized by its sloped circular roof, overhanging above the programmatic elements below. Recalling the spindle whorl, the spaces and their distributions are inspired by this cultural artifact. The structure, however, carries the sloped roof much like a *Silletero* carries his or her *Silleta* in *Feria de las Flores* (Festival of the Flowers). Through this local reference, the roof houses a colourful and vivid collection of blossoming flowers over the skies of Medellín (See Appendix E for Roof Plan- 5E). The open plan generously provides luminous spaces opening towards the sun throughout the day. The large central opening provides a much-needed vertical view towards the sky from the "*The Courtyard of the Sun.*" In the centre a reflecting pool creates a contemplative and introspective space for remembering (Fig.54).

The spatial sequence is cyclically organized with the common entrance at the north end, where the body of the deceased is separated from the relatives and brought into the *Body*



Fig.48
Hospice
Interior patio - View towards
the corridors and garden



Fig.49
Hospice
Interior patio - East view



Fig.50
*Hospice
View of Garden from
the Common Space*



Fig.51
Hospice
Bedroom view
towards the city at night

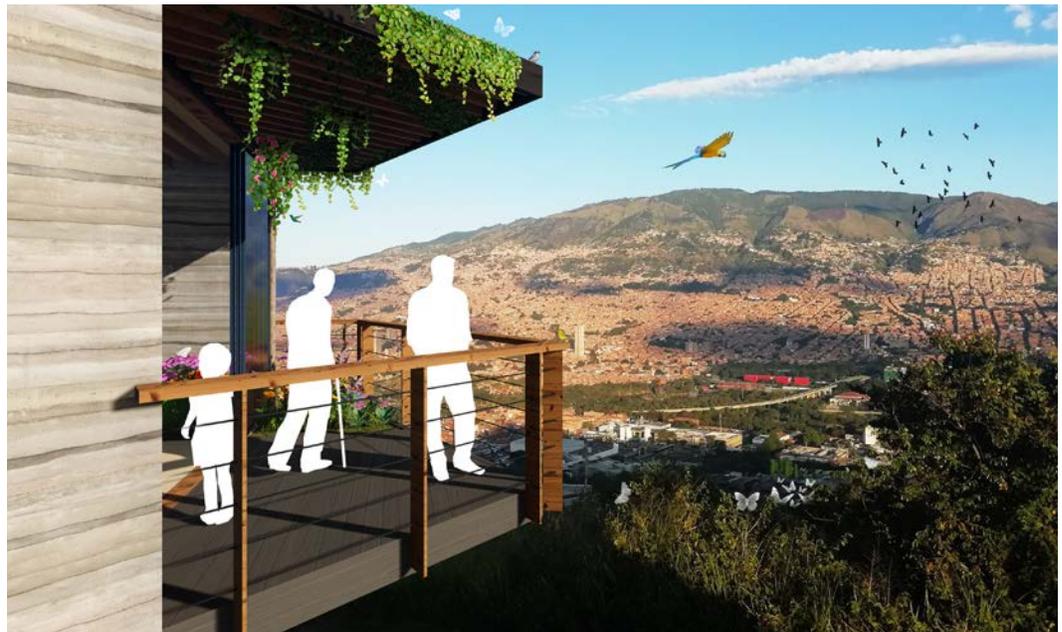


Fig.52
Hospice
Exterior view
from the balcony



Fig.53
Crematorium
Entrance

Entry area. This occurs during the morning before sunrise, as the relatives make their way to the lobby below, eventually walking through the east terrace as the body is brought in through the north side. This procession-like journey occurs as separation of the body from this world begins to take shape and provides a reflective and memorable experience. Concurrently, as the body enters the space, it is moved through a 3m-wide corridor that borders the garden to reach one of the two *Ceremony Rooms*. These rooms point towards the east sunrise, and in doing so, the body is placed on a flower bed since it is essential for the body to feel the new daylight (Fig.55). These ceremony rooms are very private and ingrained with vernacular materials such as stone and wood allowing for a peaceful presence within the existing space. The gabion wall generates a connection to the exterior ecology of the site as its small voids visually connect the inner space with the outside (Fig.56). As the relatives and the deceased are finally reunited, they make their way towards the *Alkaline Hydrolysis Chamber* for the final farewell of the body. As the rotating door is closed, the relatives walk towards the adjacent *Family Room* where they can once last time see their loved one before it is placed in one of the chambers (Fig.57). This is essential to the ritual process because it is the acknowledgment of death. After the completion



Fig.54
*Crematorium
View towards the reflecting
pool, gardens and South
terrace*



Fig.55
Crematorium
Interior view Ceremony room



Fig.56
Crematorium
Ceremony room
View towards the East Sunrise

of the process, the open-air *Chapel* offers a place to worship and pray, as it is customary in Colombian society (Fig.58). Family members gather and pay their last respects to the deceased before they take the urn to the *Roof Garden* (Fig.59), where two terraces at both ends of the roof are located. While the south terrace offers a larger space to observe the landscape, the north terrace sits above the space framing views of the mountainous valley and the cityscape. The roof garden consists of thousands of flowers found in the region and, as the relatives make their way through the garden, pollinators can be observed (Fig.60). Similar to the Woodland Cemetery previously discussed, relatives have a variety of options regarding the final resting place for the deceased: The ash remains could be used as compost soil for the flowers in the roof garden; They could be scattered throughout El Volador Hill; Taken away to other cemeteries in the city; or used as part of the architecture embedded within the materials. In the end, remembrance and memorialization is made possible within the natural environment and following traditional cultural rituals.



Fig.57
Crematorium
View of Alkaline hydrolysis
chambers and towards family
room



Fig.58
Crematorium
Interior view of chapel



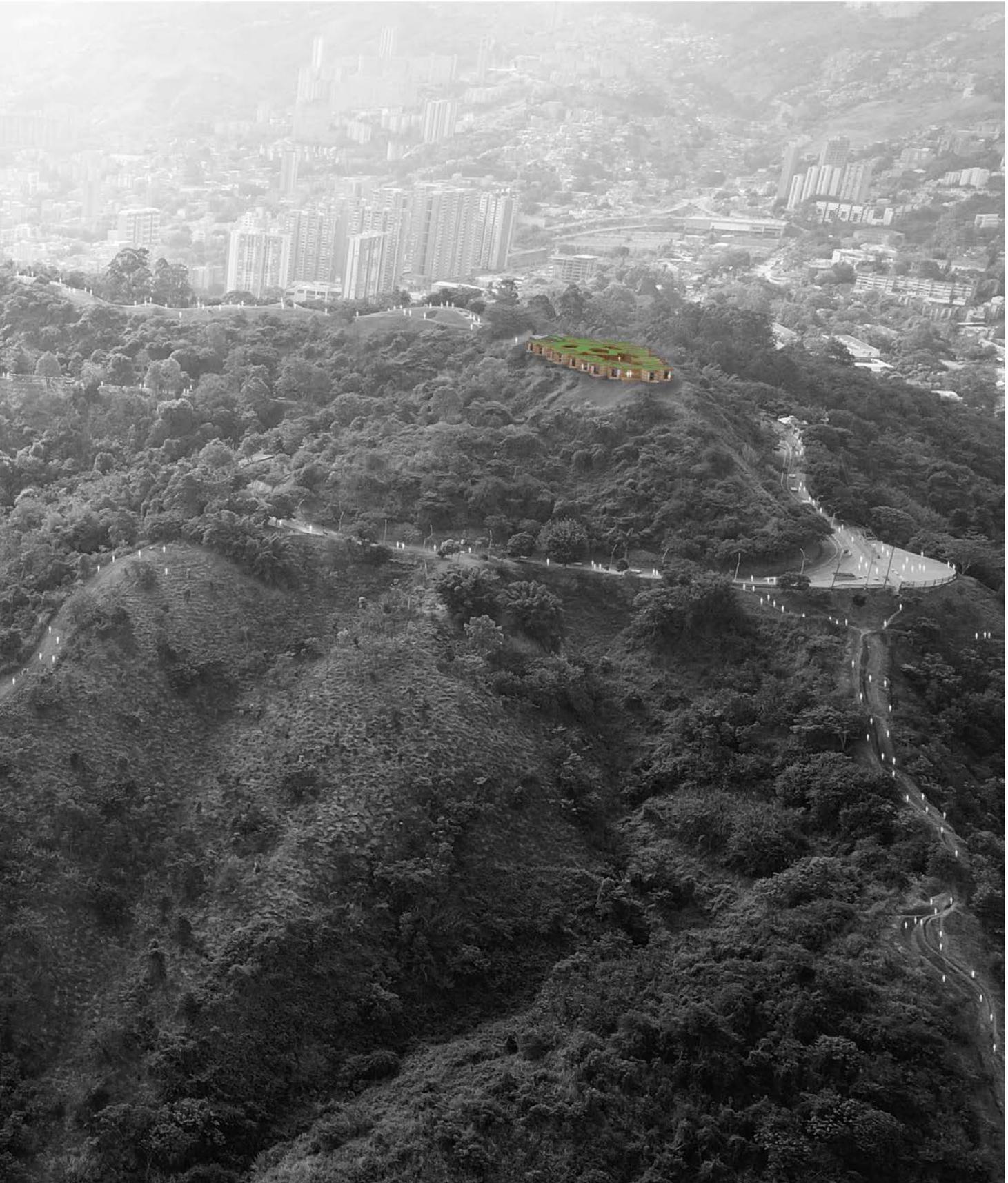
Fig.59
Crematorium
View of the roof gardens



Fig.60
Crematorium
View from gardens towards
South terrace



Fig.61
Aerial view of the project



CONCLUSION

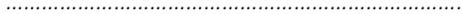


With the Colombian city of Medellín as the focus for the development of a Hospice and a Crematorium, tangible experiential presence has been achieved regarding a topic that is often debated in society, that is, death and dying. Fundamentally, ideas arising from such a problematic topic would be interrelated to memory, with the hospice serving as a space generating a new perspective within the community. This space happens at the typological level, using architecture to reconstruct cultural memory. Through the hospice and the Crematorium, redefinition can be achieved regarding death, perhaps changing the current paradigm of fear of dying and dying away from home, thus bringing to light the essence of a place of transition. Both typologies establish the foundation towards an approach that emerges from cultural traditions to help promote the controversial narrative within this conservative society. The thought-provoking synthesis achieved through the project, challenges the values and principles currently established in the local culture.

Through the development of this thesis, memory-making practices following culture, traditions and beliefs introduce a way of transitioning towards the possibility of reconstructing the notion of what a *“good death”* could mean as an experiential element of life. Death is a transitional phase that involves loss and adjustment, a life crisis of changes and transformations for those involved. The analysis in this overall project has addressed the process of dying, mourning and grief through a diverse range of physical, ethereal and material concerns within the local site of El Volador Hill. These have been explored through

the use of metaphors, ethos, cultural artifacts, and natural space to shape memory, social and cultural processes. By establishing a transitional place, anthropological and archaeological themes can reveal new perspectives towards the reconstruction of social and cultural memory in death. As a result, the variety of spaces create a traces of the past while connecting the present and future generations to the memories of loved ones who have passed on. The proposal has the potential to promote a new typology towards end-of-life practices and reimagine the current funerary practices in Medellín. In order to generate a new narrative that can vastly affect and influence the uncertainty of palliative care practices in the region, it is crucial to explore the concept of death from a radical point of view, and redefine the current notions on the topic so that the concept of hospice care can become readily accepted and understood. By using visual and evocative metaphors, memories can influence the sensual experience of end-of-life patients. This provides a newfound meaning to the *"good death"* that will not only adequately fulfill the subjective experience, but the collective as well, positively pointing towards the embodiment of resonant cultural memory.

APPENDIX A:
GLOSSARY OF TERMS



| | |
|---|---|
| Aburráes | Indigenous ethnic group who inhabited the Aburrá Valley and along the Medellín river at the time of the Spanish colonization in 1616, unfortunately disappearing within the next hundred years. Descendants of the Chibchan family and Nutabe culture, these aboriginals were farmers, working with maize, beans, fruit trees and even cotton. Fishing and mining were also important economic fields of the tribe. Much of the mestizo population in Medellín may have aboriginal roots tracing back to this ethnic group. |
| Aburrá Valley | Natural basin of the Medellín River and where the current metropolitan area exists oriented from North to South. Its name alludes to the original settlers as well as serving the departing point of the city of Medellín when it was founded under the name of El Poblado (The Village) in 1616 and later in 1646 as Nuestra Señora de la Candelaria de Aná (Our Lady of Candelaria of Aná). |
| Aluna | The Great Mother, meaning the world that is inhabited. This concept has been followed throughout the centuries by a variety of ethnic groups in the Andes as it pertains to a way of understanding of the cosmos in relation to being in the world. As part of it, the concept dwells in deeper ritual traditions at the terrestrial and cosmic sphere where man is in permanent contact with the natural habitat as a vital way of interacting with the context in which he inhabits. |
| Antimonument | As opposed to the concept of monumentalism where a space may symbolize an ideology or philosophy to influence its historical narrative. |
| Antioquean Colonial Architecture | Rooting in the early Spanish architectural tradition and using local vernacular materials as part of construction such as bahareque and rammed earth. It has characteristic elements like long hallways, vibrant colours, an interior courtyard or patio, large windows, colourful zócalos and terracotta roofing tiles. |
| Amerindian | In Anthropological and Linguist studies, an indigenous individual from the pre-Columbian era and its descendants traditionally from the American Continent; North, Central and South America. |
| Axis Mundi | Following different beliefs and philosophies around the world, it is the concept of the centre point connection between Heaven and Earth. This means that two realms merge at the centre, the celestial and the terrestrial and expressed as an intermediary space where the four cardinal directions meet. |
| Bahareque (Wattle and daub construction) | Construction system where wooden sticks or guadua is interwoven into mud. The generation of the interweaving latticed wood strips is called wattle and daubed with a sticky material with a combination of materials such as wet soil, clay, sand, straw. |
| Barrio (Neighbourhood) | In Colombia, a geographical area within any urban area that determines a local boundary and used to refer to socio-economic classes within society. |
| Carguero | At the time of the Spanish colonization and colonial times Silletteros |

were commonly referred to as Cargueros. An individual used as porter or bearer to transport people in wooden seats and their belongings through passages often inaccessible by horse or carriage. Afterwards, these wooden seats were developed to carry goods and other items such as vegetables and flowers.

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| Campesino | In Colombia, a farm labourer from the neighbouring rural areas. |
| Cenizario (Columbarium) | See Columbarium. |
| Chibchas | Also known as the Muisca, were an ethnic group of South American aboriginals who occupied the coastal and central regions of Colombia. These were notable for having numerous smaller districts or tribes across the territory, each with its own chief. Their society was based on intensive agriculture and craft making. Some of the products employed were pottery and cotton cloth as well as gold used for ornamentation and ritual offerings. |
| Columbarium | Building containing small niches for cinerary urns. |
| Corregimiento | In Colombia, it is a subdivision of areas in the rural parts of any given department with lesser population and smaller than a municipality (min. 14,000 people). A "Township" or rural areas. |
| Cultura Antioqueña or Cultura Paisa | Used interrelated to mean the local culture, meaning the Antioquean or Paisa culture. This includes specific cultural traditions established out of the natural and social environment. This identity is embedded into both the ancestral and colonial roots in which it is highlighted by the kindness, perseverance, entrepreneurial spirit, devoutness and the desire for adventure of its people. |
| Cultural Memory (also referred as Embodied Memory) | It is the conscience of the past shared within individuals in a collective representational perspective. This happens as a result of dialectics, tensions, conflicts, interactions and social negotiations in society, translated through a constructed narrative of the present in which the memories of events lived are transmitted or projected by cultural means. |
| Department of Antioquia | One of the 32 departments of Colombia, located in the central northwestern part of Colombia and bordering the Caribbean Sea. Most of its territory is mountainous with some valleys, much of which is part of the Central Andes mountain range. |
| Ethos | It is the character that represents a community, nation or ideology influenced by emotions, behaviours and morals; the spirit of a culture. |
| Etnía (Ethnic Group) | In Anthropological studies, a set of people who have a range of cultural features in common; language, food, religion, art, clothing and festivities. Therefore, sharing a cultural affinity that allows its members to feel identified with each other. |
| Guadua | Neotropical bamboo found in the temperate regions of Central |

and South America, especially concentrated close to the Amazon basin. As a construction material, it is characterized by resistance and durability, being lightweight and flexible. Used historically and traditionally in early rammed earth and bahareque constructions.

Hospice

A building typology or facility that serves the community as it is able to provide care for patients who are terminally-ill. The thesis seeks to promote the term as a standalone building since support and quality care are fundamental elements shared in that space. However, in some parts of the world hospice care may be provided in any setting – home, nursing home, assisted living facility, or inpatient hospital.

Hospice Care

Concept for healthcare delivery to those dealing with a life-limiting illness. The fundamental aspect is to create a natural and comfortable end-of-life experience for those confronted with a terminal condition. A range of palliative, medical, nursing, psychosocial, and spiritual care is provided by an interdisciplinary team of experts whose objective is to manage symptoms and provide comfort to a terminal patient when cure is no longer possible.

Koguis

Indigenous ethnic group who currently inhabit the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta in Colombia. They are descendants of the Chibchan family and Tairona culture, pre-dating the colonization of the Spaniards and who continue to thrive today.

La Cuna (The Cradle)

Meaning the place one originates from. Paradoxically, it is used to symbolize the place of death: a transitional place where the body returns back to Earth to be born once again and transformed into a living organism.

Mesoamerica

Historical region extending from what is currently Mexico and Central America, where a number of sophisticated indigenous empires and kingdoms developed, most notably the Aztecs and Mayans.

Mestizo

In Latin America, a common term to describe an individual of mixed race having Spanish or European and Indigenous ancestry.

Mulatto

In Latin America, an individual of mixed race having white and black traits.

Paisa

Derived from the Spanish apocope 'Paisano,' meaning countryman. Although many refer to Paisas as an ethnic group, they are part of a cultural identity in Colombia. At the time of colonization, the initial Paisa population occurred primarily through the admixture of male Iberians, mostly from various Spaniard ethnic groups, and female Amerindians. Throughout the next decades, the continuous flow of Spaniard immigrants into the region increased the overall European component resulting in a racial whitening as males would often marry the descendants of the founding mixed-race individuals while preventing mixed-race individuals from marrying among themselves or further marriages of Spaniards with female Amerindians. This led to the overall predominant ancestry in the region to be European.

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| Palliative care | An approach to care that focuses on comfort and quality of life for those affected by progressive, life-threatening illness, including both patients and their families. The goal of is to control pain and other symptoms; to support emotional, spiritual and cultural needs. In some parts of the world, the term “palliative care” is used interchangeably with “hospice care” to refer to services provided within the home, in a residential care hospice, in long-term care facilities and in palliative care units within hospitals. Comparatively, Hospice palliative care relies upon an interdisciplinary team of nurses, physicians, social workers, personal support workers, pharmacists and volunteers. |
| Place-making | Term widely used in phenomenological studies to suggest a place that enables human experience and consciousness. Physical and sensorial attributes give dimensionality to memory of a place to define personal identity of an individual, eventually translating experience from memory to create familiarity. |
| Poblado (Village) | A small grouping of primitive dwellings with a limited population and the most basic and elementary services. An isolated settlement with little or no contact with civilization in the middle of the natural landscape. |
| Pueblo (Town) | A rural community dedicated mainly to activities of its immediate natural environment, such as the agricultural, livestock, fishing, mining and forestry. Antioquean pueblo follows the early Spanish town distribution and organization, the main square is located in the centre presided by the church and around the park the town hall. The main streets of the town are normally aligned to direct the pedestrian towards the square as these lead to the centre. The square is a fundamental element in the planning of the Antioquean pueblo as a meeting point for the local society; used as a marketplace, meeting space and a setting for folk or religious festivals. |
| Recompose | Think tank proposed by designer and death advocate Katrina Spade that seeks to develop a sustainable alternative to the current burial practices as a natural process that converts human remains into soil. Also known as human recomposition. |
| Remembrance | To remember the dead through a ceremonial or ritual process embedded in the memory of those who recollect past experiences in a present stance. |
| Shaft and chamber tomb | Type of burial used by ancient civilizations where a rectangular, squared or circular shaft is dug out. At the bottom, it connects to another space leading to a chamber where typically the body is placed along with grave goods and ritual offerings. |
| Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta | Mountainous range located in the North region of Colombia close to the Caribbean coast boasting multiple prominent peaks and known for its local biodiversity as a protected National Natural Park. It is home to a large number of aboriginal Tairona descendants which include the Koguis inhabiting in an Indian reserve in the mid-highlands of the Sierra Nevada. |

| | |
|--|---|
| Silleta | The object by which the Silletero bears the flowers to be showcased and usually made out of wood. |
| Silletero | See Carguero. Nowadays, an individual who is part of a rich traditional cultural heritage of the region in the Department of Antioquia. A Flower-bearer who showcases beautiful floral arrangements on a wooden structure during the annual Feria de las Flores (Festival of the Flowers). |
| Spatio-temporal | Space and time. A logical way of perceiving physical life for ancient cultures. The cycle of life and death was dependant on representations and symbolism instilled in the cosmos and governed by their spirits and deities. For instance, the Sun, Moon and the stars, as well as the planet itself as part of the cycle of life. |
| Spindle whorl | Small spherical object used for textile making. It is inserted into a spindle to give steady weight as it maintains the speed of the spin, helping to maintain a consistent thickness to the fibers and avoiding an uneven appearance. |
| System of the world | Sequence of religious conceptions and cosmological images prevalent in traditional societies. |
| Telluric-Stellar System | A planetary relationship from the point of view of Earth (made out of minerals) and the people that inhabit the planet to the constellations and stars that orbit a common centre of gravity. The acknowledgement of the human being living in the natural world parallel the orbiting stars, generating a mystical presence from the universe. |
| Transitional Space | Any space that dwells in the 'in-between,' growing out of the connection of the inner and outer experiences with culture and the world. A place for meditation and understanding the fulfillment of life. Following Dr. Donald Winnicott's concept of the transitional object as a way of objectively perceive what is actually real. |
| Vereda [be'reða] | In Colombia, it is a term used to define a type of territorial administrative subdivision of the municipalities of the country. This subdivision comprises mainly rural areas, although it can contain a micro-urban center. |
| Water Cremation | Also known as Bio-cremation or Alkaline Hydrolysis. An alternative process for the disposal of human remains where the body is placed inside a pressurized stainless-steel chamber. A mix of water and alkali are added into the chamber and heated to a temperature of 350 degrees. Pressure and heat slowly decompose soft tissue leaving bone fragments similar to those found in the traditional cremation process. |
| Zócalo ['sōkə, ō] (Baseboard) | Colorful bas reliefs painted on the exterior of traditional houses and a fundamental element of the Antioquean Colonial Architecture. |

APPENDIX B:
ILLUSTRATED CATALOGUE OF FLOWERS



Fig.1B
*Illustrated catalogue
of flowers*



APPENDIX C:
PHOTOGRAPHIC DOCUMENTATION

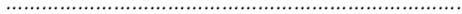


Fig.1C
Compilation of photographs
at Thesis Site -
Cerro El Volador



Access



East view towards the city



Vegetation



Forested area



Height of trees



South access trail



Low vegetation



Variation of vegetation



Building at lower access



Tectonics



View of peak elevation



Roof access building



Green roof



Interior shot building



South peak access



Vendors' stalls and space



Flowers depict Butterfly



Steps to peak looking down



Medium size flora



Steps to reach the peak



South side view of peak



Trail and trees South peak



South peak view towards South



View towards Northwest



South peak view to West



Trail access to North peak



View towards North trail



South peak West sunset



View towards Northwest



View towards South peak



Northeast view



East view



Trail



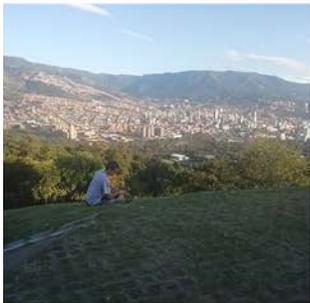
West view to mountain range



View to middle peak



Middle peak looking down



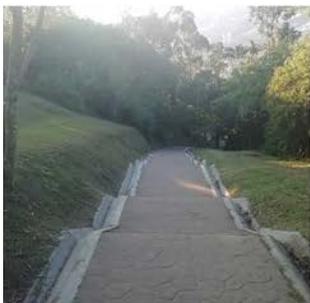
Teen flying a kite



View of middle peak



Access to North peak



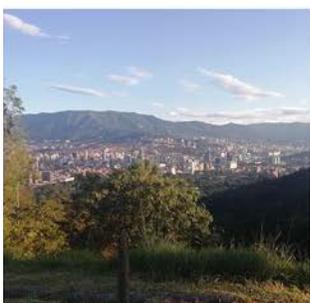
West access to North peak



Markings on asphalt



North peak view towards North



North peak view to South



Current state of North peak



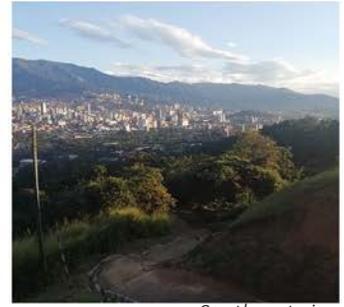
Unused building



North view



East view



Southeast view



Northwest view



"Covered" archaeological site



View towards city centre



West access stairs



Wooden markings



Cicada and beetle



Road ring around peak



Site has been renovated



Butterfly information



View towards South peak



Butterfly information



Flora and butterfly information

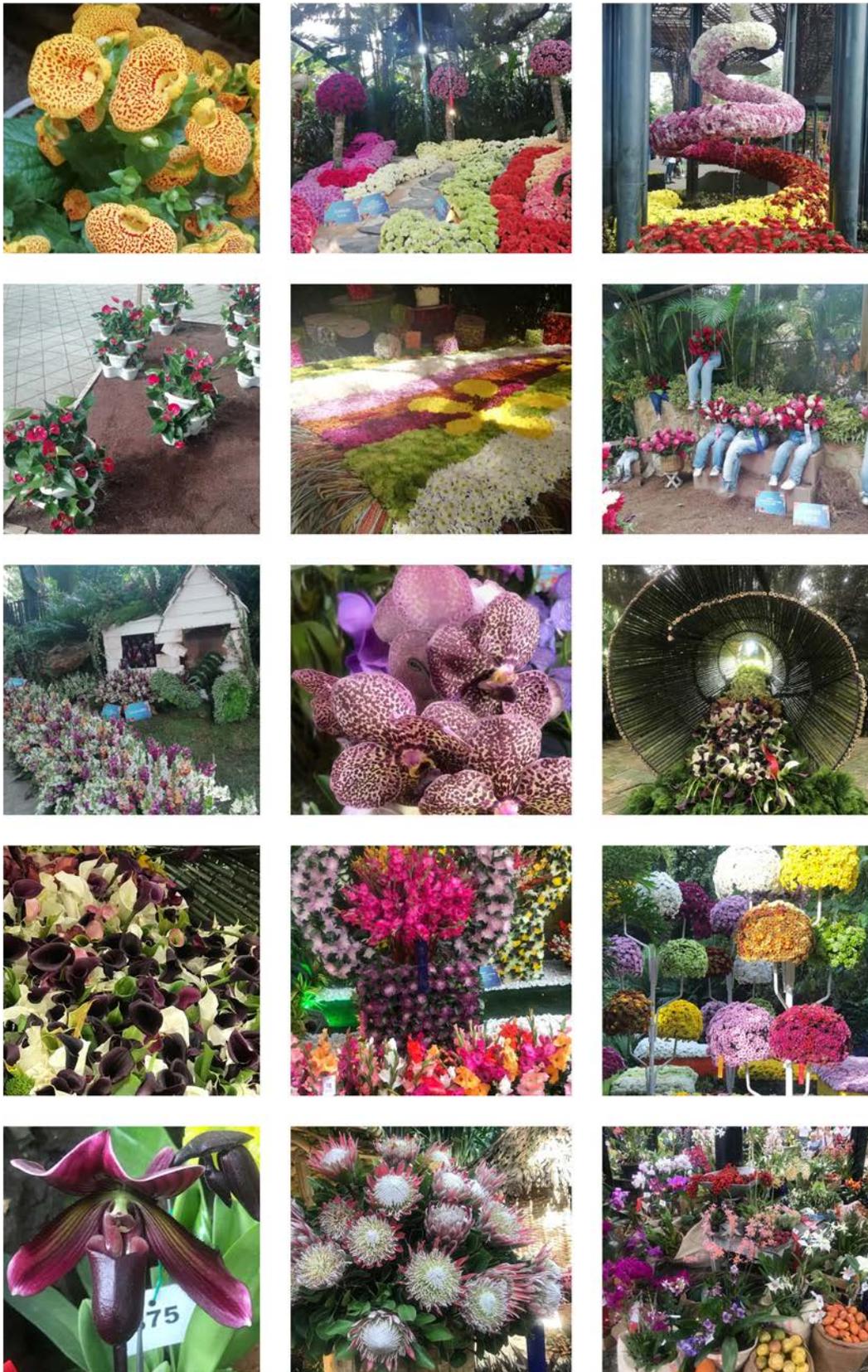


Fig.2C
Annual exhibition "Orquideas,
Flores y Artesanías" (Orchids,
Flowers and Crafts) at the
Botanical Gardens in Medellín
during Feria de las Flores

APPENDIX D:
MATERIAL STUDIES EXPLORATION

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Fig.1D
*Plaster and Burnt Wood cast,
vertical placement*



Fig.2D
*Plaster and Burnt Wood cast,
horizontal placement*

EXPLORATION 1.0 PLASTER AND WOOD CASTS

The main objective of this material study was to understand memory – to generate a footprint out of something that existed before. This footprint is created when two materials such as wood and plaster are taken away for a third material to come to light. The burnt wood arises from the removal of the other two elements. It gives the object a place for remembrance converging to shape a new space while leaving a trace of its past form.

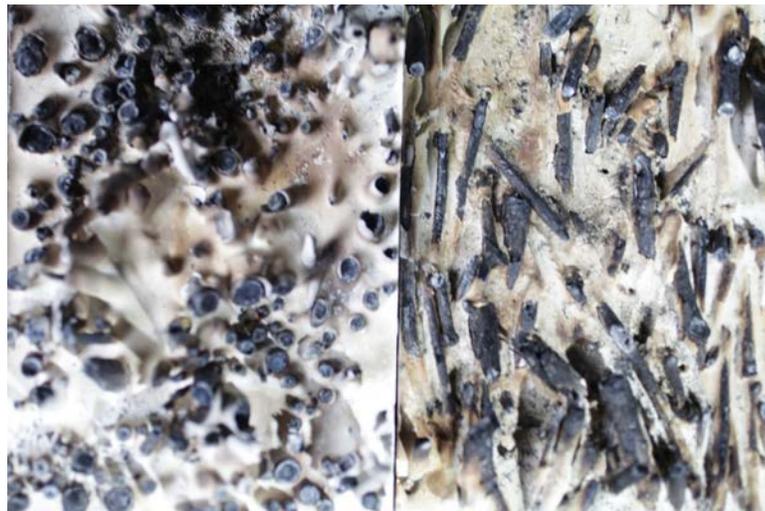


Fig.3D
Texture of exploration 1.0

When I began exploring the concepts of death and memory, I felt that it was necessary to acknowledge the narrative and to illustrate it as close as possible. My initial thought process was to make comparisons between the architecture I had created and these blocks. Just like the blocks, the hospice and the crematorium follow the same concept. Both projects are about creating consequential spaces fit for remembering a relative who has died, leaving a trace, and instilling a shift in the way death is seen. In a sense, the idea of the “good death,” which I have focused on for the most part of the research, becomes symbolic and spiritual – the person that is dying will know that his/her body and mind will forever

be embedded with the natural surroundings. Memory will be part of the habitat and just like a stratum of layers the history created in these specific spaces will keep progressing and leaving memories of those who have been there before: the land, the forefathers, the ancestors, our family members.

These two blocks are a result of my early exploration of what I call the “transitional space.” Each is a block made out of plaster and wooden branches. The elements of my current research here are implicit, death and memory through the artifact. As a start, we have two different objects – Wood and Plaster – The process was to burn away the additional material. By doing so, the residual element consolidates with the “true nature” of that object – it is the reintegration to what is invisible to the eye. What begins to take shape is the idea that as humans, we know exists as a third space. The inclination for this third space begins as the deconstruction of any extra material so that the new material emerges from its ashes. In this regard, the new space is “the transitional space” that the overall project seeks to envision. It is the “in-between” space of an object that through its fragments materializes another object. It creates a perception and reconfigures the way the original object is viewed.

Memory is concealed in the intimate space of the plaster block. If we begin to assimilate this idea to the whole aspect of the project is that what is left from these artifacts is a “carving” (analogically as it will be burnt) of intimate spaces that have a relationship to its ethos, to what it really was supposed to be in the first place. In the end, it becomes more than an object or an instrument but a palpable aggregation that links the two materials into one that exists as they both disappear.



Fig.4D
Cremation Ashes cast



Fig.5D
Crushed Ceramic cast

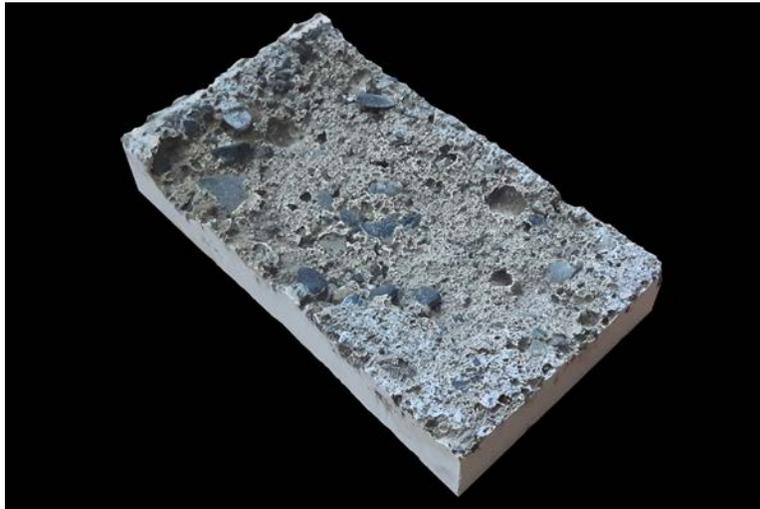


Fig.6D
Plaster and Gravel cast

EXPLORATION 2.0 PLASTER AND BODY ASHES, CERAMIC AND SOIL CASTS

Soon after I had made the exploration 1.0, my attention shifted in using different materials as part of understanding the process behind a fragment that leaves a trace. As a way of incorporating separate materials to the wood casts, textures such as ceramic, soil and body ashes complimented the earlier plaster casts. The second part of my exploration began as a way to build on knowledge from tectonics and as a materiality study. Following the first exploration, this one was particular in that it illustrated three main textures that could



Fig.7D
Texture of exploration 2.0

be used to generate the walls of the two projects. As it was explained throughout the thesis, there is an underlying nature in the project that ties the cultural and traditional to the site. Vernacular materials are essential to the creation of place and serve as a place-making component for remembrance and memorialization. Wood, rammed earth and stone are the three elements that begin to shape the space. However, the project envisions the embodiment of memory through the tangible and as suggested during exploration 1.0, the objective was to find that third space of an artifact. In this context, cremation ashes, crushed ceramic and gravel were used as possible textures that may

embed in the rammed earth walls of the project. This embedding is essential because it gives the project a narrative of continuity in memory and its acknowledgment. The physical nature of the material becomes a defining factor that unifies architecture to the concept of death, seeking to reconfigure the understanding of it. Since the ashes are embedded in the architecture, there is not exactly a place where a relative is placed, instead it becomes part of the sacred fabricated spaces (Hospice and Crematorium) and the natural space as the body goes back to nature (El Volador Hill). The crushed ceramics generate a depiction of the past cultures that inhabited the place. Although many archaeological findings have taken place throughout the years at the site, the ceramic would be made in its entirety to be placed within the walls as it gives way for memory to be sensed. Finally, the soil connects the individuals with the surrounding landscape, its ecosystem, fauna and flora, giving meaning to the physical world.

The process of these three blocks was the same as the wood casts, any extra material was cleaned off the cast leaving “residual matter” embedded in the artifact. Again, the remaining material creates that third space, a transitional component of the one that existed before.



Fig.8D

Rammed earth block with mixture of cremation ashes, crushed ceramic and wood dust

EXPLORATION 3.0 RAMMED EARTH AND ASHES BLOCK

The last exploration is a 30x10x20cm block of rammed earth. I envisioned this block as the concluding element of my theoretical research before moving into the generation of architecture. This block was created typically by the ramming of earth as this process starts to leave a layered texture. Rammed earth is a vernacular technique that uses raw materials such as clay, silt and aggregates placed inside a common formwork. The earth was rammed manually using a ram with flat base. The concluding texture offers a construct of the actual topographic nature representing Earth's strata. In a sense, this block is just a small part of a wall, made by mixing clay, silt, soil and water. The technical aspects of the process brought me to repeat the process multiple times in order to find stability of the final product. When the process was thoroughly understood, I began to experiment with different mixtures. For instance, the final block has a mixture of cremation ashes, bone fragments, crushed ceramics and wood dust. These are spread in the different layers of the block and give prominence to the embedded elements. In the end, the materials that stand out the most are the cremation ashes and bone fragments. The small white particles observed are those fragments, which generate a beautiful texture from the block.

APPENDIX E:
IMAGES, RENDERS AND PROCESS



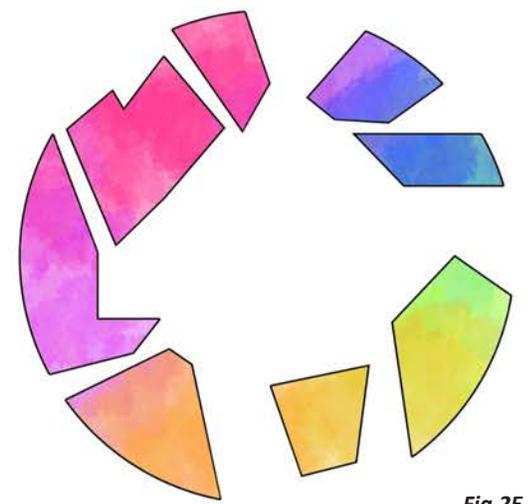
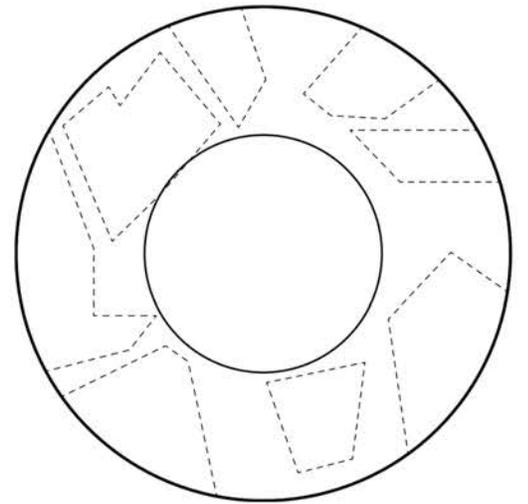
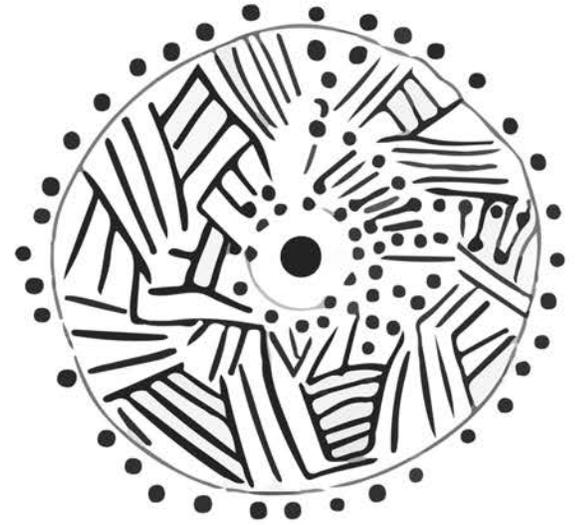
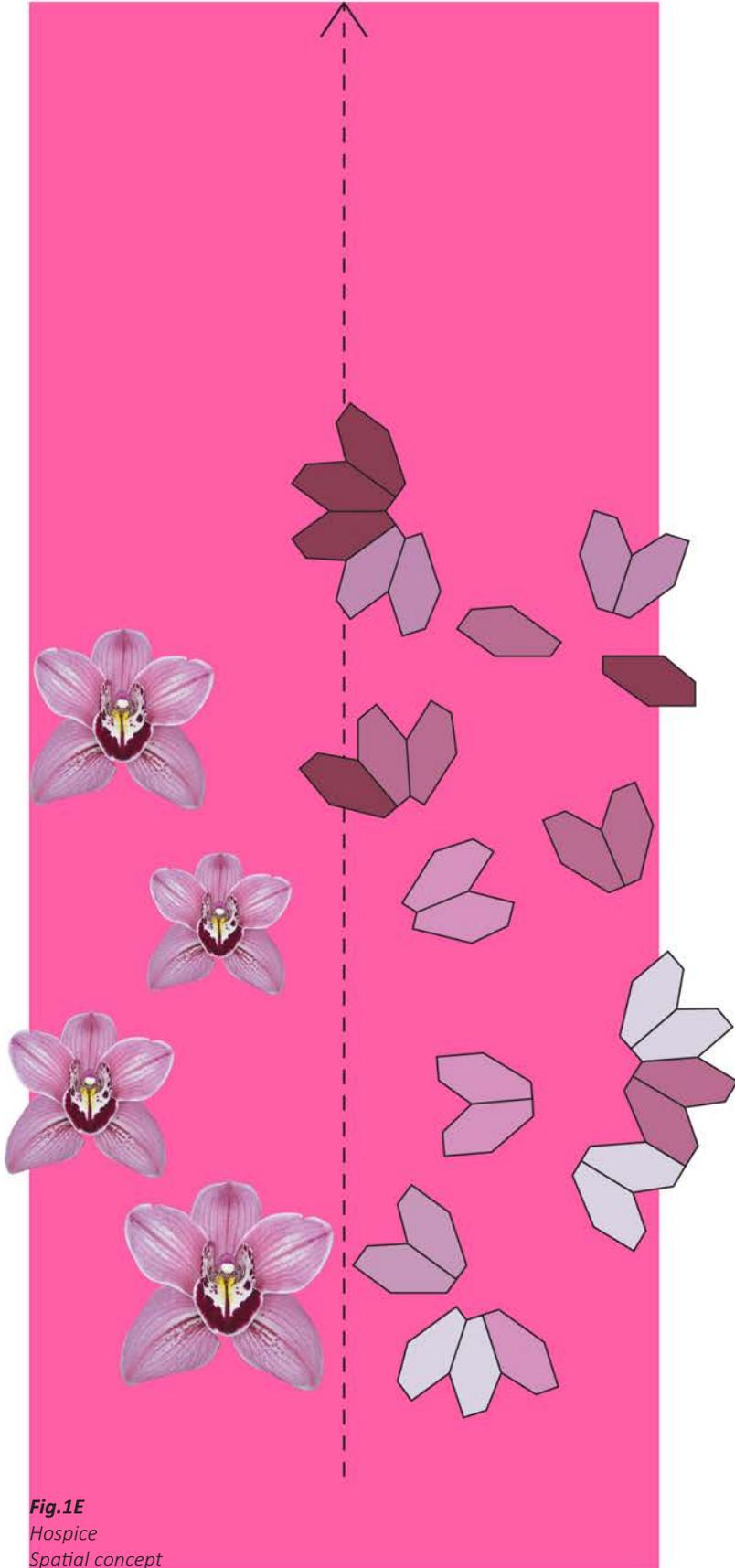
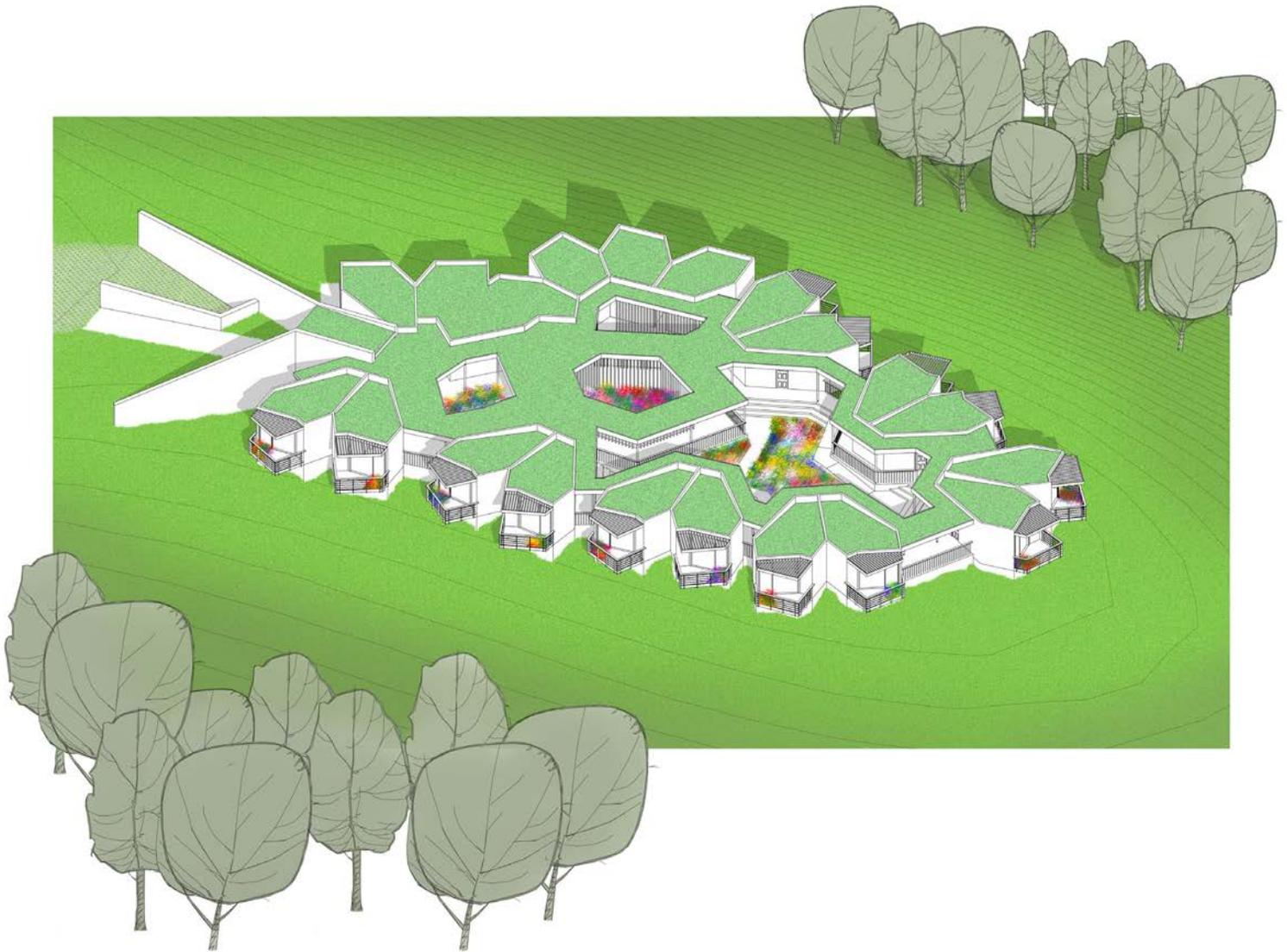


Fig.2E
Crematorium
Spatial concept

Fig.3E
Hospice
Axonometric SE view



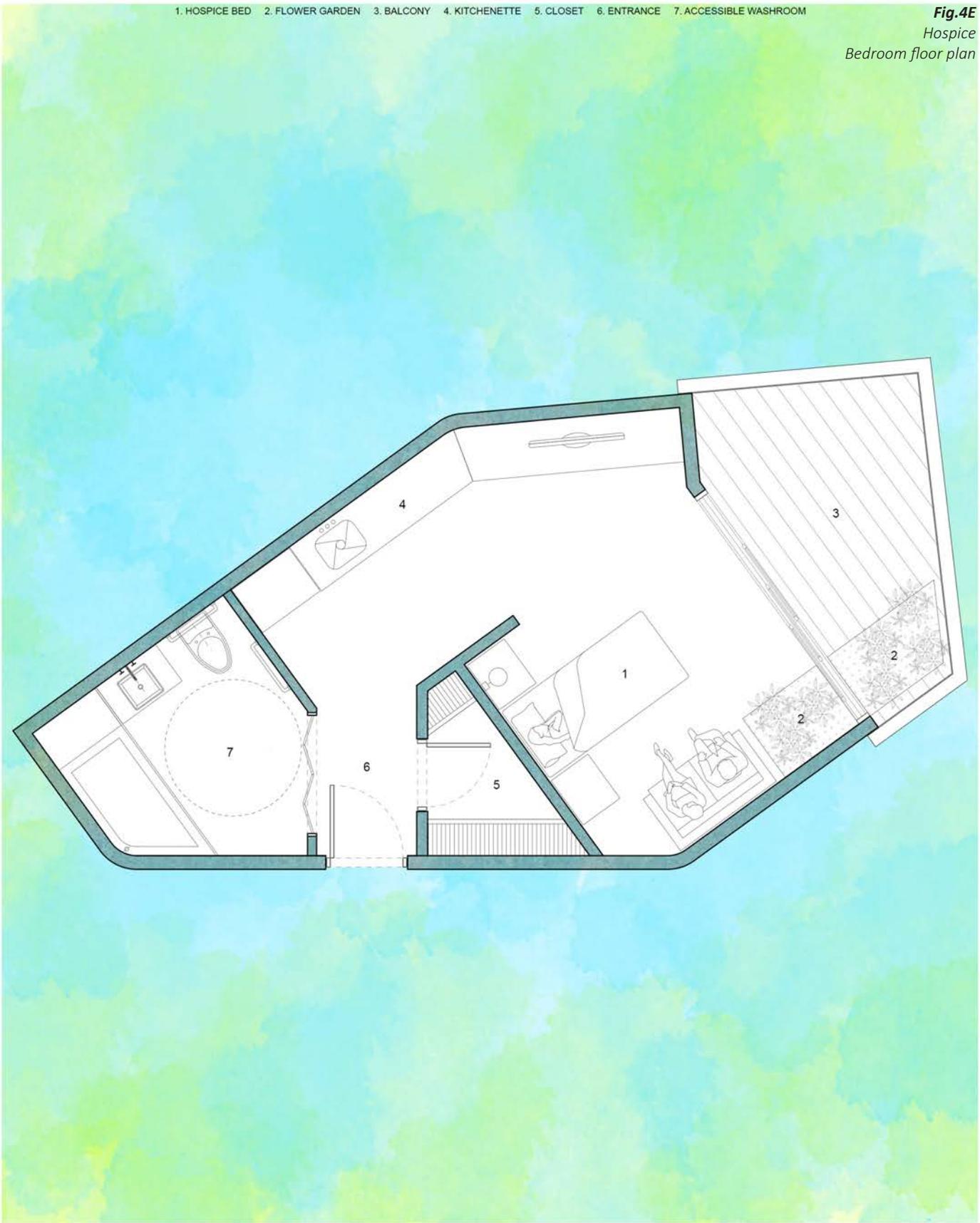


Fig.5E
Crematorium
Roof plan



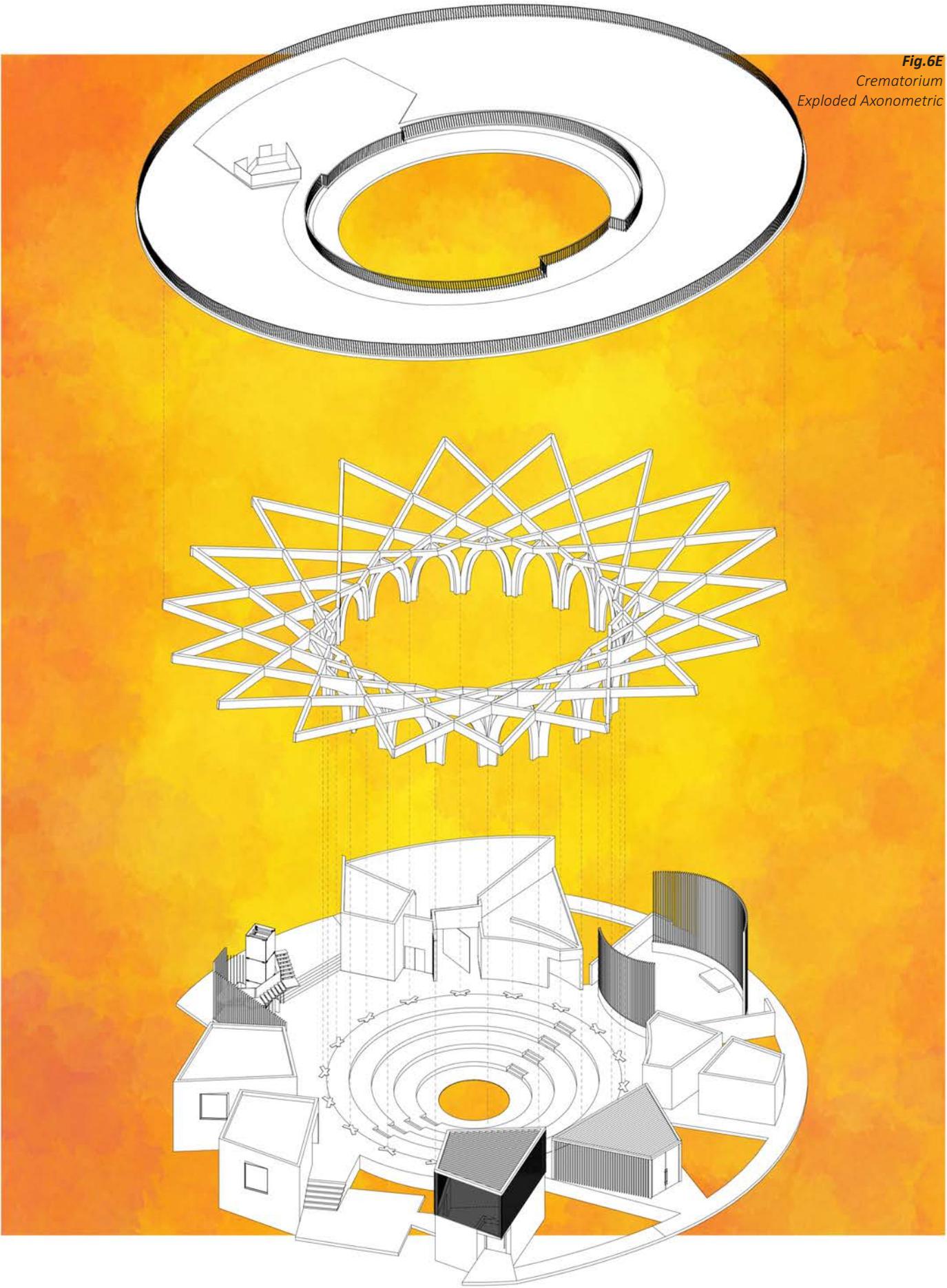
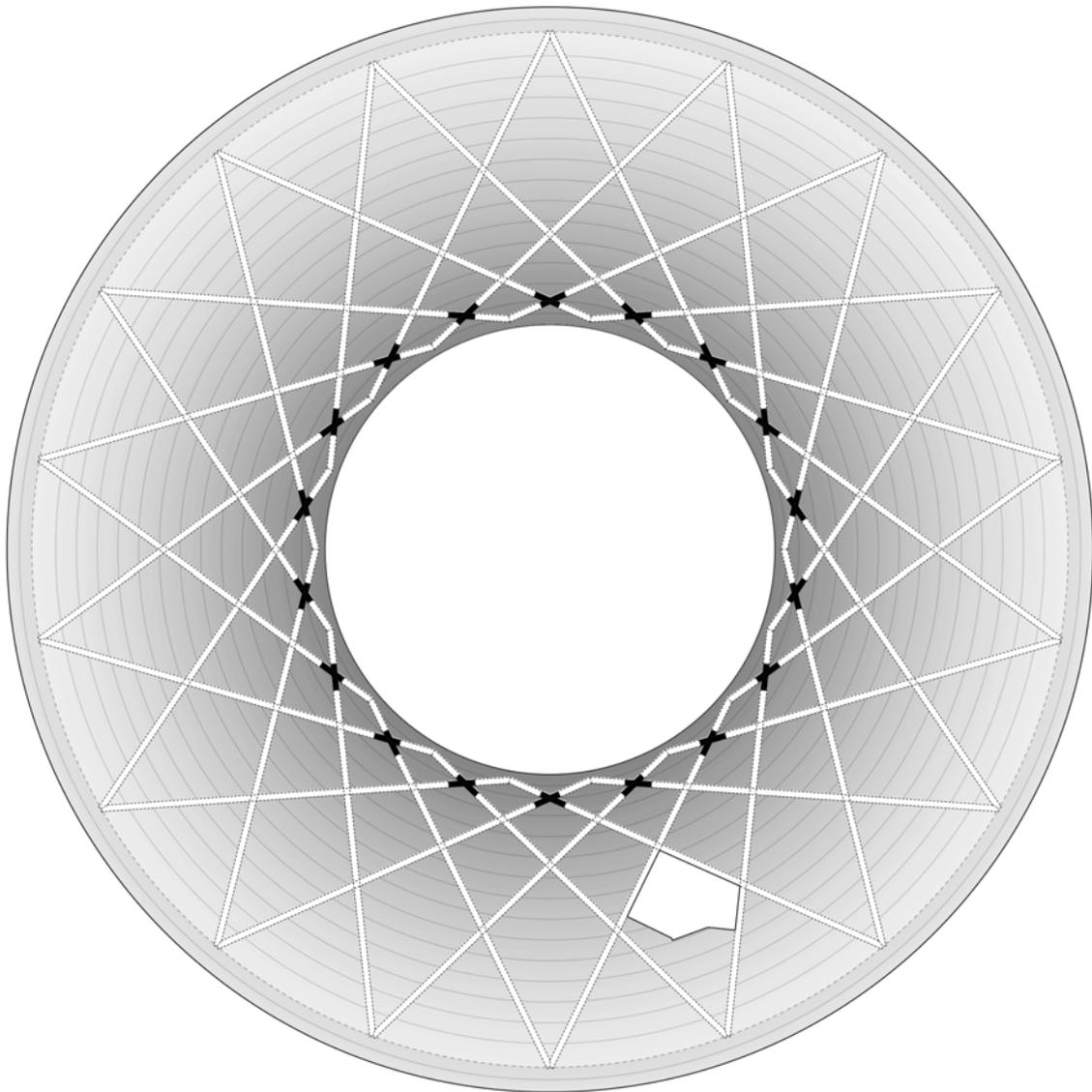


Fig.6E
Crematorium
Exploded Axonometric

Fig.7E
Crematorium
Reflected Ceiling Plan



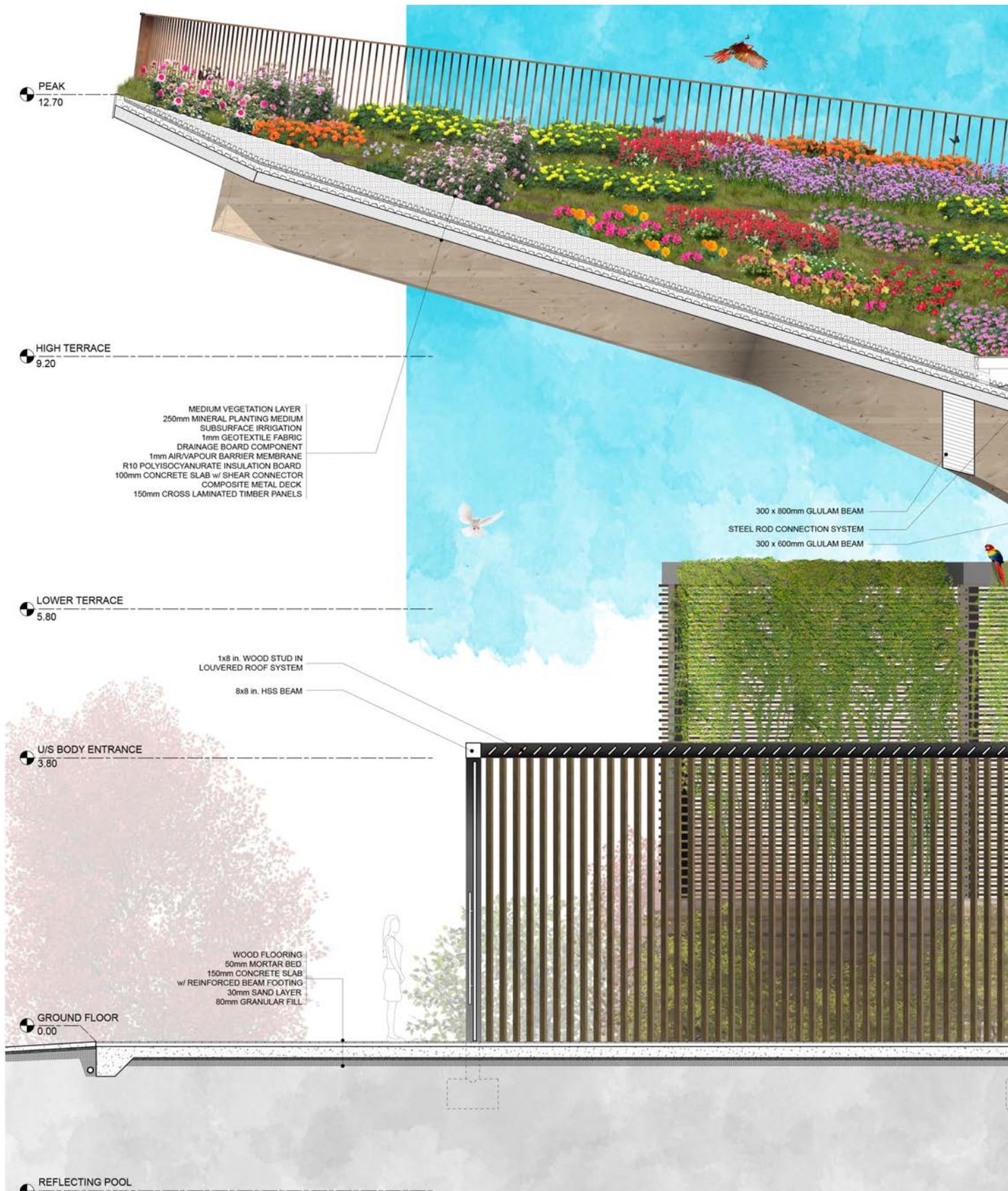


Fig.8E
Crematorium
Technical / Atmospheric
Detail section



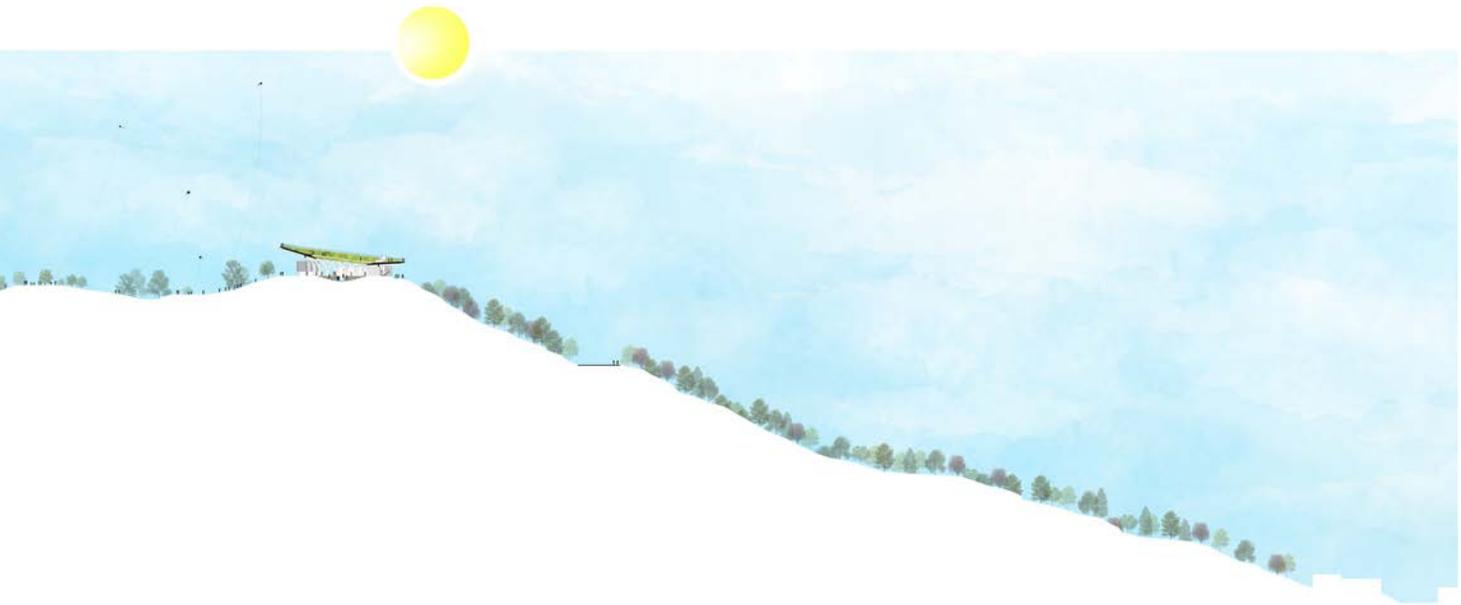


Fig.9E
Hospice
Technical / Atmospheric
Detail section





Fig.10E
Section through site



APPENDIX F:
THESIS DEFENSE





APPENDIX G:
REVISIONS AND CLARIFICATION



Colombian society and new ideas related to death.

The research of the thesis has positioned social and cultural beliefs as the most critical elements that define the ethos of the population of Medellín. While acknowledging that this is just limited to that region, the proposal seeks to expand the concept of hospice care as an alternative way to dying in Colombian society. The proposed crematorium emphasizes the need to re-evaluate funerary practices by reconceptualizing the acknowledgment of death. It is imperative to explore how society can envision new ways of altering ritualistic behaviour towards death. Through such changes within this particular society, the concept of hospice care would be better received.

Paragraphs and Quotations

Most of the quotations from non-English sources have been translated by the author from Spanish to English. From these quotes, the author aims to distill core concepts in order to better approach the thesis theme.

Comments on Hospice Care

In the introduction (pg. 3), the author states how Colombia is struggling to provide an affordable and effective healthcare system. The current healthcare crisis is overwhelming throughout the national territory, where public and private healthcare have become an expensive commercial activity, obliterating the fundamental right of the population towards

good health and well-being. This is due to a separation between private healthcare provider companies (PHPCs, *EPS in Spanish*) and publicly subsidized contributions providing universal coverage to an obligatory plan (OPS) from the PHPC. Since the power was transferred to private companies, there soon followed the realization of complex corruption cases. Additionally, these companies began to attract the attention of insurance companies that have monopolized the healthcare sector, thus limiting clinical availability. This is a complex issue that the author is aware of and further research would be needed in order to understand the depths of such an intricate topic. While assuming a clear presentation of the current notions of healthcare, the relevant concept is that hospice care can be a beneficial approach for the healthcare system since it considerably reduces the costs of healthcare.

Following the current state of the healthcare system, most people forgo going to the hospital to die (pg. 23). Instead, a terminal patient and the relatives decide that it is in the best interest to die at home. Throughout the text, it is established that domiciliary palliative care has been provided to patients since the 1980s. Many of the statements from the author allude to understanding this particular society as conservative. Therefore, it is implied that dying at home is the preferred way of passing. However, social, socioeconomic and territorial challenges, such as violence, poverty and inaccessibility in certain areas of Medellín, make the domiciliary services an impractical solution to care for terminally-ill patients. In this regard, for relatives caring for a dying patient, it is often difficult as the services needed are only provided by professionals in the healthcare sector. Inadequate care of terminally ill patients often ends in suffering not only for the patient but also for family members. Therefore, the hospice must be centralized, that is, safely located within reach of all inhabitants of the city. Although the idea of being at home and dying is the most cherished way of passing, the thesis seeks to change this perspective by undertaking this through cultural traditions and beliefs. By doing so, the hospice offers a transcendental,

intimate, and familiar space, well-suited to the needs of the patients, with all the services required to die peacefully *as if it were home*. Thus, this would recall cultural and societal norms, with the hospice offering an option for patients and families by taking them closer to “home,” while providing respite to those at the end-of-life.

Trail between Hospice and Crematorium

The connecting trail between the Hospice and the Crematorium has not been addressed, but it does offer a transitional space where the ritual of moving the body takes place. Located at the top of El Volador Hill, enclosed by trees, the trail can be inspired by the Avenue of the Dead in Teotihuacán, Mexico. The idea would be to generate a procession-like environment decorated with plants and flowers. The trail could be used as a road where the body is carried in a ritualistically, recalling the *Silleteiros* in the *Feria de las Flores*. By doing so, the development of a sustainable way of transporting the body could be explored. For instance, the ritual would be comprised of a wooden “*Silleta*,” to move the body in a bed of flowers.

Emphasis on ecology, environmentalism and sustainability

Throughout the work, there is an essential argument and component that places water cremation as an alternative to burying the body or the standard practice of cremation. It is proposed for the body to be regenerated ecologically and sustainably addressed (see *Chapter 7*). Essentially, multiple possibilities for laying the remains of the body are crucial to the proposal. The ashes can be scattered, placed as biodegradable urns in the land so that flowers and plants alike can grow, used within the architecture (basically using the ashes for construction), or just blended with the soil to provide nutrients that will eventually be fostered by pollinators as part of the cycle of life on Earth (*recomposting*). After carefully re-evaluating the various alternatives, it was established that a final alternative could also be proposed. Green burial offers an excellent way to have minimal environmental impact

by aiding in the conservation and preservation of the natural environment. By offering this alternative for end-of-life patients and families, El Volador Hill would become a precedent for *green burial* in Colombia. Through this, the body is naturally placed in the land to decompose with no destructive chemicals that would damage the soil.

APPENDIX H:
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Fig.62
Medellín panorama



“Tal vez sabiendo que fuimos y lo que somos, podremos vaticinar lo que seremos; quizás conociendo de dónde venimos, sabremos para donde vamos.”

— Manuel Uribe Ángel

Perhaps in knowing what we were and what we are, we can predict what we will be; maybe, knowing where we came from, we will know where we are going.