

INSPIRATION

A SHORT PRESENTATION OF SELECTED INSPIRING PROJECTS AND MY
REFLECTIONS ABOUT EACH OF THEM

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EXAMPLE 1_

GROTAO COMMUNITY CENTRE - SAO PAULO, BRASIL (2014)

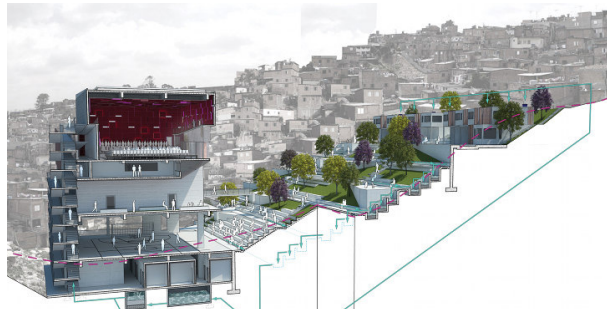
URBAN THINK TANK

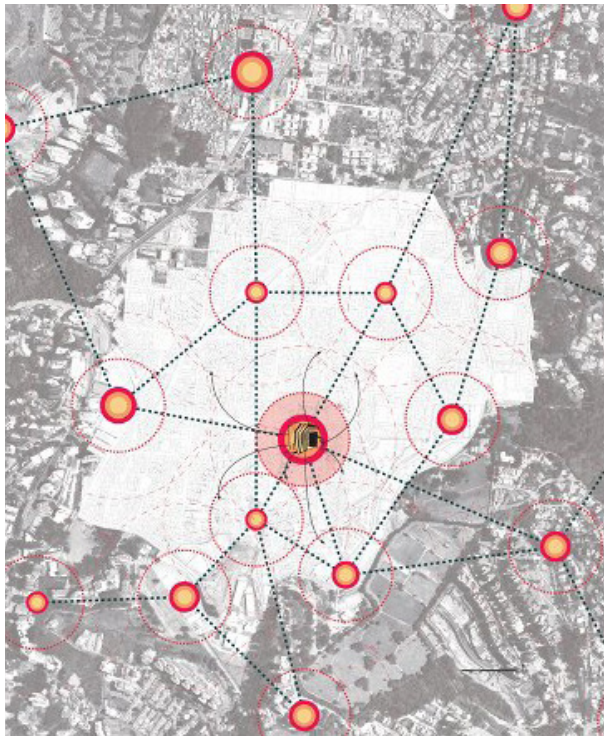
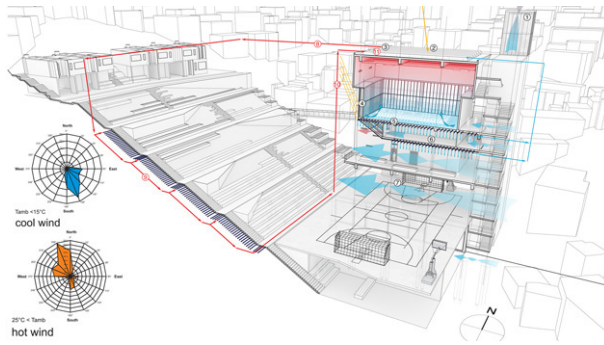
Urban Think Tank's research and development approaches architecture from a humanitarian standpoint in which the main focus of their work over the past decade has been aimed at increasing the understanding of the informal city, rethinking the former physical limitations of contemporary architecture, and shifting the emphasis from form-driven to purpose-oriented social architecture.

One of their most recent proposals is an urban remediation and civic infrastructure hub located in Grotão - the heart of the Paraisópolis favela of São Paulo, Brazil. The challenging topography and informal settlements are transformed into a productive zone and dynamic public space through social design – a process of analyzing the local effects of rapid growth and improving marginalized settlements through social structures.

The lower zone contains the fábrica da música, which stacks diverse programs to maximize the site's potential. These include public transportation, sports facilities and the music school, which provides practice and rehearsal spaces, studios, a performance hall, and auxiliary classrooms. This is a vital catalyst in the area, expanding music and cultural programs into the favela while forming a new network that serves the youth from all levels of society.

The upper level will host new replacement housing for those displaced from the high-risk areas.





Commercial spaces are introduced on the first floor as an economic vehicle that activates the street space and stimulates the micro-economy of the urban agriculture on site.

The project proposes that architects eschew their conventional role in traditional hierarchies to serve as an enabling connection between the opposing forces of top-down planning and bottom-up initiatives. By creating common ground for these two forces, areas can eliminate divisiveness and generate productive interactions. The priority becomes equipping this peripheral neighborhood with infrastructure, water, sewage networks, lighting and services in addition to social infrastructure in the areas of education, safety, culture, public space, and sports.

The new urban model aims to translate a society's need for equal access to housing, employment, technology, services, education, and resources – fundamental rights for all city dwellers – into spatial solutions.

- WWW.INHABITAT.COM/URBAN-THINK-TANK-AWARDED-SILVER-HOLCIM-AWARD-FOR-INNOVATIVE-COMMUNITY-CENTER-IN-SAO-PAULO/GROTOA-COMMUNITY-CENTER-URBAN-THINK-TANK-3/
- WWW.U-TT.COM/PROJECTS_GROTOAHTML

WHY_1

This example is inspirational in the way that it shows an infrastructure hub that also has a social purpose. It is a building that responds to different needs in the area, and becomes a dynamic public space. The space is used vertically, to maximise efficient use of space where there is little of it. Culture programs are also introduced into the area, which aim to form networks between youths.

It is especially interesting how the thought behind it is for “architects to eschew their conventional role in traditional hierarchies to serve as an enabling connection between the opposing forces of top-down planning and bottom up initiatives”. I believe that this is the core of a lot of problems - the large distance between these two ways of achieving things. A project like this challenges the conventions that are laid down, and aims to make a connection.



EXAMPLE 2_

BARUTA VERTICAL GYMNASIUM # 2 - CARACAS, VENEZUELA (2013)

URBAN THINK TANK

Urban-Think Tank's Vertical Gym is a prefabricated kit of parts, adaptable to any locale. The base of the structure is superimposed upon an existing community basketball court, soccer field, or vacant lot, transforming it into a multi-level sports complex that can accommodate hundreds of people at a time. In this way the design maximizes the potential of any city space, particularly areas with a dense urban fabric.

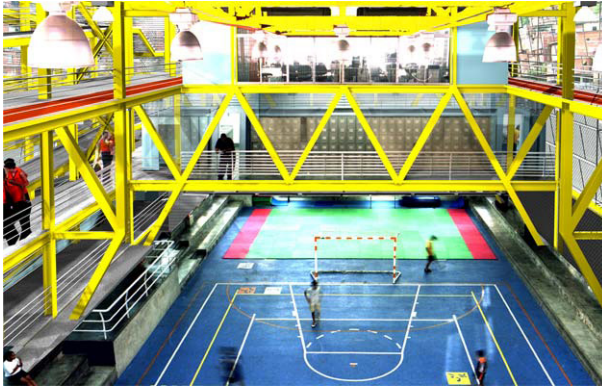
U-TT's Vertical Gym prototype serves as a safe haven for children and whole communities. In neighborhoods constantly caught in the crossfire of gang wars and other forms of violence, the Vertical Gym is as a safe space for exercise and social interaction. U-TT believes that engaging in exercise and social activity is a right of all citizens in the city, no matter their social and economic backgrounds.

Given the dire need for such facilities in low income neighborhoods and informal settlements around the world, U-TT wishes to partner with municipal governments, private business, industry, and community organizations that are interested in bringing a vertical gym to their respective cities.

The new gym in Baruta, Santa Cruz del Este, incorporates the use of recyclable materials, wind towers, solar panels, and rain water collection as part of the design initiative to make the prototype a responsive design object that complies with the Kyoto protocol.

This new version of the gym is today planned for the Barrio of Santa Cruz del Este in the Municipality of Baruta (Caracas). Basketball courts, a dance studio, weight lifting, a running track, a rock climbing wall, and an open-air playing field for soccer, combine with a covered area for gatherings before and after the training sessions. The structure will also be used for cultural, entertainment and conference events.





- [HTTP://GIMNASIOVERTICAL.COM/](http://GIMNASIOVERTICAL.COM/)
- [HTTP://WWW.U-TT.COM/PROJECTS_BARUTAVGHTML](http://WWW.U-TT.COM/PROJECTS_BARUTAVGHTML)

WHY_2

The vertical gym concept is inspiring in many ways. The concept of taking an existing public space and maximising its potential for the benefit of the society is a very strong idea and I really believe it can work well. This idea of creating such a nexus of sports and social activities is something that has caught on in South America since Urban Think Tank first launched their scheme. They have built several buildings using the similar ideas in different locations.

In low income and informal areas with severe physical decay, there is a tendency to not put much focus on some of the things that contribute to a stronger community and equity - the ability to engage in exercise and social activities. I believe that we as architects and planners have a great role in putting emphasis on this.



EXAMPLE 3_

MEDELLIN'S CABLE CAR TRANSIT SYSTEM, COLOMBIA (2006)

PROYECTO URBANO INTEGRAL NORORIENTAL, ALEJANDRO ECHEVERRI

PARQUE BIBLIOTEKA ESPANA - MEDELLIN, COLOMBIA (2007)

GIANCARLO MAZZANTI

The city of Medellin is - like many other cities on the same continent - facing severe problems in regards to a problematic city structure resulting from internal migration, population growth and the emergence of shanty towns. Since his election as mayor in 2003, Sergio Fajardo was trying to counteract this process by means of integrative urban development. In the city's worst slums he commissioned prestigious architects to design public institutions with a focus on education, public spaces and transport. The strategy was a simple one: investment in civil commitment instead of in public security.

Five libraries make up the library park and they are all located in socio-political problem areas. "Our most beautiful buildings", said Fajardo, "must be in our poorest areas." The facts speak for themselves: since 1991 the murder rate in this city





- [HTTP://WWW.ARCHITONIC.COM/NTSHT/PARQUE-BIBLIOTECA-ESPANA/7000385](http://www.architonic.com/NTSHT/PARQUE-BIBLIOTECA-ESPANA/7000385)
 - [HTTP://WWW.ARCHDAILY.COM/2565/ESPANA-LIBRARY-GIANCARLO-MAZZANTI/](http://www.archdaily.com/2565/ESPANA-LIBRARY-GIANCARLO-MAZZANTI/)

with its population of two million has fallen by a factor of 13.

The local transport system set up in the Medellín area is the Metro de Medellín, Columbia's only overhead railway line. It was established less as a means of mass transport for the city's working classes and more as an important cultural axis which integrates minorities and undermines the border between rich and poor. It floats above the slum of Santo Domingo Savio with its population of 170'000. As it leads directly to the Parque Biblioteca España, it is especially important to the lowest strata of the population, in that many of them live up on the hill and, after finishing work in the city centre, used to be faced with a two-hour climb up the steep slope.

Built by Giancarlo Mazzanti in 2007, the Parque Biblioteca España contains a library, an auditorum, internet access, a day-care centre and an art gallery.

Medellin has been a very important example to look to throughout my project. The main inspiration is the focus on “the best for the poorest” and public function follows public space. It is admirable that that focus was to put all efforts into civil commitment instead of public security. I believe this can be the key when you work in such situations – the authorities need to be willing to make a commitment and be visible for the people. They need to gain trust and recognition, because it is with mutual trust that cooperation and development for the future can be achieved.

The Medellin example also shows how infrastructure and mobility is very important when you want to improve the lives of the urban poor. That is where the main task for the authorities lay. It is only through good infrastructure and connections in the city that people can feel free and minimise the large gaps between rich and poor.



EXAMPLE 4_

THE FAVELA-BAIRRO PROJECT - RIO DE JANEIRO, BRAZIL (1995)

JORGE MARIO JAUREGUI ARCHITECTS

Under Brazil's military dictatorship of the 1970s favelas were demolished and their residents displaced. Since then there have been attempts at upgrading but these have been piecemeal with no clear strategy. In 1994 following Cesar Maia's election as mayor of Rio, the city established a nine year programme called Favela-Bairro, which was the largest squatter settlement upgrading programme in Latin America at the time. JMJA won an open competition to lead the project and in contrast to earlier strategies they advocated a holistic approach to the favelas that builds on the existing and addresses the physical, social and economic aspects.

Translating as 'slum-neighbourhood', the city-run project tries to come up with an integrated solution where each favela is addressed separately by a team of engineers, a sociologist, legal, cultural and communication consultants, led by an architect. This ensures that each proposal is specific to its particular



social and geographical conditions. Beyond providing the necessary infrastructure of water, drainage and electricity, this approach also looks to mend the social infrastructure of the area, providing schools, sports centres and community facilities that are grafted into the existing fabric. An important aspect of the projects is land tenure regularisation, the building of new roads for refuse collection and emergency services, and the upgrading of paths. Sometimes controversial ideas are employed, such as bringing tourists into the favelas; in one project JMJA proposed a funicular railway from the beach to the heart of a favela area, where local youths would be employed to act as tourist guides, a project that was eventually implemented.

Whilst the Favela-Bairro project has been criticised by some for not devolving enough power to local groups, it has been a major improvement on previous attempts at such work. JMJA's approach in particular is successful for working within the

logic of the favela, recognising that established neighbourhoods have their own organisational and support structures, which should be enhanced and protected whenever possible. One of the notable features of their approach is the requirement that architects and planners involved should have a daily presence in the communities they are working with.

- [HTTP://WWW.SPATIALAGENCY.NET/DATABASE/WHERE/ORGANISATIONAL%20STRUCTURES/JORGE MARIO JUREQUI ARCHITECTS](http://www.spatialagency.net/database/where/organisational%20structures/jorgemariojurequiarchitects)

This is one of the earliest governmental slum upgrading programmes I have heard about, and it is one that gained international recognition. The concept where they put down a group of people from different disciplines to approach different situations individually, is something I see as a good idea. But as mentioned - the programme received criticism because of the lack of “bottom up” involvement. I believe that the key in such situations is to find a good balance between the professionally trained and the people actually living in the respective areas. How can good ideas function if things are super-imposed and the users don't see the need and take no ownership?

It is worth mentioning here that The Lima Municipality has several programmes for upgrading of different areas of the city today, but I have not been able to get an impression on how successful they are. The ones I have found out about, were both initiated by the current Mayor, Susana Villarán.

One is called Barrio Mio ([http://www.munlima.](http://www.munlima.gob.pe/barriomio/que-hace-por-ti-barriomio)

[gob.pe/barriomio/que-hace-por-ti-barriomio](http://www.munlima.gob.pe/barriomio/que-hace-por-ti-barriomio)), and this is a programme to improve the neighbourhoods of the city. Specific areas are prioritised, but the particular area of MIRR (my focus area) is not part of this. It is more focused on marginalised areas outside the city centre.

The second one is Presupuesto Participativo (<http://www.munlima.gob.pe/gobierno-abierto-municipal/transparencia/pgrlm/participacion-ciudadana/2013-07-02-23-14-08/presupuesto-participativo-2014>) - Participatory Budgeting. This is said to be a programme to strengthen the democratic relationship between state and society. It chooses different areas and they ask what they need and what they wish for in that area. This programme has been active in MIRR, and they have had two sports areas upgraded, as well as the current plans for Av. Materiales.



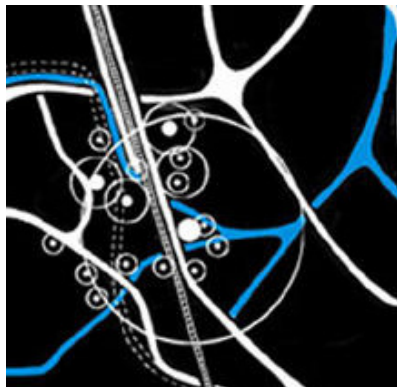
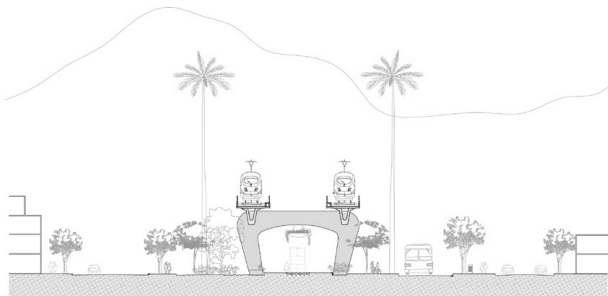
EXAMPLE 5_

MAGUINHOS COMPLEX - RIO DE JANEIRO, BRAZIL (2005-2010)

JORGE MARIO JAUREGUI ARCHITECTS

In 2005 the city commissioned Metr polis Projetos Urbanos, J uregui's firm, to undertake an urban-planning study of Manguinhos. The architects conducted interviews and hearings with the district's inhabitants and representatives to understand both their immediate concerns and their long-term requirements, developing a detailed analysis of the area.

The result is a plan for the elevation of a major rail line adjacent to the district's main road and the creation of a long public park in the space beneath. Raising the rail line will remove a physical and psychological barrier between Manguinhos and



Rio at large and create a new public amenity equipped with scenic walkways, bicycle paths, and athletic fields. The park will be a central meeting place, thus enabling social connections. The architects have limited the number of people who will need to be relocated during construction and have incorporated replacement housing into the design. The project represents a new approach to slum upgrading: the entire community enjoys new infrastructure, and existing social networks remain largely untouched.



- [HTTP://WWW.MOMA.ORG/INTERACTIVES/EXHIBITIONS/2010/SMALLSCALEBIGCHANGE/PROJECTS/MANGINHOS_COMPLEX](http://www.moma.org/interactives/exhibitions/2010/small-scale-big-change/projects/manginhos_complex)

I find this project to be a good precedent, as it looks at a particular area within the city and has similar situations to deal with.

One of the main ideas when working in an area like this, I believe, are the abilities of coexistence. Social relations and structures should largely be kept, and it is a matter of “filling in the gaps” and creating relations and meeting needs that exist. In this situation we saw a lack of public space and a barrier through the railway, and by the means of adjustments and rethinking public space, there was a solution.



EXAMPLE 6_

FRONTSIDE GARDENS - LONDON, UNITED KINGDOM (2012)

FRONTSIDE

Frontside Gardens is a project run by people in Hackney Wick, London. Making use of the remaining floor of a demolished warehouse that is temporarily available, waste and reclaimed materials, and enthusiastic locals, they built a temporary skatepark and events space.



- [HTTP://WWW.FRONTSIDE.ORG.UK/](http://www.frontside.org.uk/)

This project is in a very different context to the one of my project. But it has some similarities: there is unused industrial spaces within the city with great potential. It has become somewhat of a regular trend in Europe to squat or find interim uses of empty space in the city, and I see this potential in Lima too. A lot of issues do of course come into play, but the basic idea is clear: In a city that struggles with space inequality and availability - why let these empty lots stand there without being used? Can there be initiatives where people are encouraged to use the spaces for a set period of time? I believe that such initiatives can encourage bottom up initiatives and thereby create well integrated functions and uses, and some might even go from interim to be a set function in the future.

EXAMPLE 7_

THE DEPTFORD PROJECT - LONDON, UNITED KINGDOM (2008)

STUDIO MYERSCOUGH

This converted train carriage is located in Deptford, which is one of the poorest boroughs of London and suffers from high crime rates, insufficient housing, and many other problems. The Deptford project is a collaboration between the developer, The Cathedral Group, and Studio Raw, an organisation that focuses on community design and regeneration projects. The carriage has been converted into a café and bistro as part of a larger regeneration scheme for the borough called the Thames Gateway Project, an ambitious effort to revive various areas along the Thames. A part of the scheme is also to construct new buildings in the area, including a mixed-use commercial and residential high rise designed by Richard Rogers. The aim was for the carriage is to act as a catalyst in bringing art, film, music, and creativity to Deptford.

Various events designed to involve the community take place at the Deptford Project. Events have included a Barn Dance, Silent Movie Night, and



art exhibitions. Since the carriage was converted and installed, other cafés, bistros, and independent businesses have opened their doors on the High Street, where before there were only pound shops and second hand stores.



- [HTTP://WWW.DESIGNWEEK.CO.UK/NEWS/MYERSCOUGH-DECKS-OUT-DEPTFORD-TRAIN-CAF/1138863.ARTICLE](http://www.designweek.co.uk/news/myerscough-decks-out-deptford-train-cafe/1138863/article)
- [HTTP://WWW.HEATHERSHIMMIN.COM/ADAPTIVE-REUSE-TRAIN-CARRIAGES](http://www.heathershimmin.com/adaptive-reuse-train-carriages)

WHY_7

This project was very inspiring when I was looking to explore my idea of the library train. It is a well known process to use converted train carriages or similar to use as a catalyst. Here in this project it was used to introduce culture and creativity to an area where such was lacking.

I believe that things like this can have an affect on social processes. If an area is moving in an unwanted direction or stuggling with different problems, a nudge and initiative like this can give a boost towards a new direction.



EXAMPLE 8_

BRIDGE SCHOOL - XIASHI VILLAGE, CHINA (2008)

LI XIAODONG

The “Bridge School” bridges the two parts of the small village of Xiashi that lie on either side of a small creek that runs through the village. The structure is created by two steel trusses that span the creek with the space between them housing the functions of the school. Suspended from the structure and running below it is a pedestrian bridge for the people of the village to use. Small and modern in design, with no reference to the area’s traditional building style, the school has nonetheless become the physical and spiritual centre of what was a declining village.

Placed in such a way that it addresses its surroundings, the Bridge School connects the village together, providing a central, social space. The broader social aspect of the project was part of the brief, which was developed with the school principal and head of the village to answer community needs rather than simply those of a primary school. A public library separates the two classrooms and the ends of each classroom, or the two ends of the school can

be opened up, creating open stages at either end of the building that are integrated with the public spaces outside. The stage at the northern end can be used for performances, with the toulou as a backdrop. The result is a project that has successfully invigorated the entire community, encapsulating social sustainability through architectural intervention.





- [HTTP://WWW.AKDN.ORG/ARCHITECTURE/PROJECT.ASP?ID=3796](http://www.akdn.org/architecture/project.asp?id=3796)

This structure has a very clear social agenda as well as functional. It is a concrete example where a very well developed piece of architecture has not only an appealing aesthetic, but it is an important element in the development of the community. It is note worthy how the community and principal of the school were able to lay down what they needed in terms of the social aspects in the brief.

It is an example of how a building can have multiple functions and the structure itself is constructed in an unconventional place, something which earns the project attention and creates an indentity for the area.

