



ARTICLE

Follow the River: City Regeneration in Tension as Works of Water

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ABSTRACT

The article looks at some examples of the urban regeneration strategies and initiatives in Medellín, Colombia. Being part of the process of regeneration of the country after the decades of the armed conflict the initiatives transform the city at least by creating the discourse that facilitates the social change in the city. The ontological proposal of feminist more-than-humanism focusing on materiality of water, particularly its rhizomatic connectivity, allows rethinking the concept of the city and its regeneration as generation of the inclusive space that provides habitat and life for anyone who wants to live in, around, through, and with the city. The revised initiatives are symbolically divided into two groups: *water plans* of connection-fragmentation policy and *traces of water*—mostly grassroots connectivity in response to the dominating power structures. They are not uniform groups and are the products/processes of tension between opposite tendencies. Creative tension is *works of water*. Water looks at limitations as at the opportunity to create the new. Its regeneration is not re- but generation of the inclusive habitat that provides life for anyone who wants to live in, around, through, and with the city.

KEYWORDS

feminist more-than-humanism, Medellín, rhizome, civil disobedience, molecular revolution

The year of 2021 became the year of mass insurrection in Colombia against the oppressive system of violence, racism, and classism. The level of mass consciousness, courage, and decisiveness was impressive. The processes, thoughts, ideas that were covered or suppressed for decades were revealed, the alliances got stronger. The government applied the violent *dissipated* strategy of

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reaction to the mass protests heavily based on the doctrine by Chilean politician and journalist López Tapia (Blanco, 2021). The doctrine misuses the Guattari's concept of the molecular revolution (1984), which he develops as an individual and social resistance to fetishism and reductionism imposed by capitalist system, as the implicit vitality of the society that ensures the resilience of the body under the necropolitics. Guattari unfolds the concept in appraisal of the social transformation in Brazil in 1982 (Guattari & Rolnik, 2008). The context of the contemporary social movement in Colombia reconfirms the importance and productive potentiality of the analytical lenses that the article presents.

The article revisits the water as a theoretical lens and discusses its applicability to understand the urban regeneration dynamics. I would like to start with looking at the materiality of water before I can unpack aquatic logic or thinking with water as an inspired in water onto-epistemology that shapes different branches of feminist more-than-humanism.

Water

In TV series *Longstreet*, Bruce Lee's character summarized the potential of water: "Be formless, shapeless, like water... Now, water can flow, or creep, or drip, or crash. Be water, my friend" (Silliphant et al., 1971). This stance, first, indicates the possibility of acting like water, and, second, elaborates on its meaning: it emphasizes the adaptability and plasticity yet resistance of water, its dynamic and ever-changing nature yet its ability to maintain its own structure. In other words, this passage teaches that one can reach one's goals even more surely and strongly when working together with something or someone, maybe despite but not against them.

Water metaphor can be developed further. Its molecular structure makes it the substance that sustains life on this planet thanks to its quality of cohesion, or its bonding ability. Its molecular electric asymmetry enables adaptive temperature balancing for organisms and transmission of the nutrients. Roughly speaking, drinking is breathing and eating. Translating the chemistry to social language, water suggests the crucial importance of asymmetry or decentralization for better understanding, of diversity for true sustainability (Kagan, 2011), of deconstruction as creation (Deleuze & Guattari, 2005). Its adaptability stresses the idea of universality of locality or situatedness, relationality principle over the principle of relativity that informs the processual thought such as feminist more-than-humanist approach (Ulmer, 2017).

As larger bodies of water, lakes, rivers, and oceans introduce the concept of the active, constructive, unpredictable, and diversifying diffraction in addition to rather one-dimensional, linear, passive, and representational reflection (Barad, 2007; van der Tuin, 2014; Geerts & van der Tuin, 2021). While the concept of diffraction comes from optics, one can observe the phenomenon in the water bodies, both in the diffraction of the light waves and the actual water waves: the phenomenon of waves' response to appearance or disappearance of an obstacle. The process of the creation of waves in the ocean as an ever-going process of energy movement between objects and forces is inspirational. So is the ocean's power to shape weather, climate, landscapes miles away from the shore.

Both the fact that life on the Earth appears in water and the ability of water to transform and magnify the forms of the objects makes water a real and metaphorical laboratory. Diversity of the forms of life in the water bodies and its ecosystems is an endless source and inspiration for studies in many disciplines.

To sum up, water questions the instrumental and teleological—destination oriented, Western imaginary and refocuses attention from the goal to the dynamism of process and relations that emerge in it. This focus brings at first sight spontaneous, but in actuality knowledge more grounded in the reality's diversity (Guattari & Negri, 1990) and its intra-active performativity (Barad, 2007). As a universal solvent, water dissolves and reassembles the existing structures; in the terms of the social theory, water as a theoretical framework deconstructs the imposed conventionality of the norms and reassembles them in the new more vivid manner.

Is water a metaphor though? Fiction, speculative, experiment, and statistics-based literature speak of the “principle of similarity” (Bakhtigaraeva, 2017) in the world and compare the vein structure of the leaves with that of the river's networks (Figure 1), roots, bronchial and cardiovascular systems (Bakhtigaraeva, 2017; Bredinina, 2020; Deleuze & Guattari, 2005; Pelletier & Turcotte, 2000; Sánchez et al., 2003; Thoreau, 1854/2019).

Figure 1

Leaf's Vein Structure as the River's Network



Note. Source: The Author.

Biological studies (e.g., Pelletier & Turcotte, 2000; Sánchez et al., 2003) based on the statistical similarity of such networks argue that they are most optimal for transporting nutrients. Constituting 60–65% of our body and 71% of the Earth's surface, water shapes the logic of life and our thought and enables our mutual understanding and relatedness with other creatures in the planet, making us an integral part of the planetary processes instead of being outside or above them (Neimanis, 2016; Marzec, 2019). As Thoreau (1854/2019) poetically elaborates: “No wonder that the Earth expresses itself outwardly in leaves, it so labors with the idea inwardly. The atoms have already learned this law, and are pregnant by it. The overhanging leaf sees here its prototype” (p. 179).

Thoreau (1854/2019) sees the whole world organization impregnated with the river logic; he traces it in the human vocabulary, compares bodies with frozen drops and wonders “what the human body would expand and flow out to under a more genial heaven” (p. 180). In her influential for feminist more-than-humanism theorization, Barad (2003) expresses a similar idea when she explains the world as an “ongoing flow of agency through which ‘part’ of the world makes itself differentially intelligible to another ‘part’ of the world” (p. 817).

The influence of water on our everyday life, bodies and minds is well documented in the myths all around the world, as well as in the contemporary world literature, plastic arts, music, media (Chen et al., 2013; Golovátina-Mora & Golovátina, 2014; Jue, 2020; Helmreich, 2011; Strang, 2004). The co-authored volume *Liquid Antiquity* (Holmes & Marta, 2017), for example, develops the argument of how the thought of water defined not only the plot but also the forms of ancient art and through that at least the Western contemporary art.

Considering this, water is not a mere participant of social, economic, political or cultural life, but it shapes the aquatic or amphibian thought itself, framework, logic of thought, intuition (Roca-Servat & Golovátina-Mora, 2020). Water builds or encourages, indicated the alliances and clues to understand the course of the event. All one needs to do is look for the river and follow it.

Aquatic Lenses

An image of a woman washing dishes and clothes in the river is probably familiar to many cultures and can be often seen even nowadays. The river takes away the dirt with or without an improvised or real detergent. The long and fast river takes it miles away from a small settlement without any immediate consequences—out of sight, out of mind. As a universal solvent, water can both nourish the body when clean and poison it when contaminated. Materiality of water defines rhizomatic bonding or interconnectedness of the world and reminds about it. From the perspective of processual thinking, direct cause-affect relations are always locally defined or situated and should not be perceived as universal (Barad, 2007; Deleuze & Guattari, 2005; Latour, 1996). What is universal, though, is the complexity and deterritorialization or constant deconstruction and renewal of the rhizomatic structures.

Analyzing the networks of the gorgonian corals, Sánchez et al. (2003) propose that the nature of their branching is tributary, “the product of a complex interaction between an intrinsic self-organized process and environmental effects that could vary from the physical properties of the habitat to the changing environment of the colony itself” (p. 137). These findings resonate with Barad’s elaboration of the world’s “ongoing open process of mattering through which ‘mattering’ itself acquires meaning and form in the realization of different agential possibilities” (Barad, 2003, p. 817). Focusing on the local causal relations may explain a local spatial-temporal condition but inhibits larger understanding of things or foreseeing their further development. Artificial blinding is both counterproductive and unethical as it silences the rich variety of forms of knowing, impedes the constructive creativity of this diversity, and intentionally ignores the already existing processes

The structural social and ecological crisis is civilizational because it is stipulated by the dominating and excluding Western patriarchal anthropo-, logocentric form of thinking. It produces an urgent need for the mindset that would be inclusive, equitable, and responsive (Neimanis, 2016) and would enable honest understanding of the actual origins and consequences of the crisis. Colombian sociologist Fals-Borda (1987) argued that without a holistic view, which connects theory with everyday practices in all their diversity and totality, it is impossible to achieve a more versatile understanding of the reality and even more impossible to actually transform it. Such praxis-oriented approach, where praxis means continuous and mutually enriching-enhancing interaction of theory and practice, informs different branches of the critical thought, including postcolonial, feminist, indigenous, and more-than-humanist thought and constitutes the aquatic lenses of thinking with water.

Materiality of water does not offer a new paradigm as such but rather re-channels our thinking towards equity, inclusion, and plasticity. In fact, its plasticity challenges the idea of the necessity of paradigm understood as a totalizing or directing ideology. It rather offers “the prospect of an ethico-political choice of diversity” (Guattari, 2015, p. 98). Water calls for recognition and coheres different seemingly unrelated components—people, phenomena, events, texts or happenings—in a “unified disunity” or “fluidarity”—“a pragmatic solidarity without solidity” (Guattari, 2000, p. 15), “in absolute respect of their own times” (Guattari & Negri, 1990, p. 120). If water offers any paradigm, it is intuitive, spontaneous and self-renewal rather than imposing, which is only possible in open free movement that is not anarchic or chaotic, but rather self-governing or performative (Barad, 2007), liberated of the imposed order (Feyerabend, 1975; Thoreau, 1849/2007).

The very nature of water, its materiality suggests the approach. Hybrid, unifying and connecting, adaptable, at the same resilient and resistant, water becomes a central element for the development of the critical thought and an eloquent framework to contest the existing methodologies starting with their ontological principles and the ontological dimension of the relations with the otherness: water-nature-society. Water is a mediator, a background, and a form, epistemological (knowledge), ontological (worlds), and methodological (ways to look at it) for the social-environmental relations. Aquatic logic implies emergent (Somerville, 2013)

thinking in relations with the multiple others, which includes social relations, practices, and processes. It cannot be applied to analysis of something as an external method but emerges out of and in the process of analysis. It is there. It is not thinking instead or like water, but rather with it, in connection to it, recognizing that we are part of it (Roca-Servat & Golovátina-Mora, 2020, p. 15; Chen et al., 2013, Introduction).

The City-Water Relations in Medellín: An Overview

As a conceptual category, water calls for rethinking social dynamics, relations of power and politics of othering and reveals the systemic violence against any other—water itself, weather, hills, mountains, forests, animals or marginalized human groups. If we see the city as a human habitat within and in coexistence with the broader environment, it becomes clear that the city as a human-centered space cannot provide conditions for dignified human life and development without mutually enriching interaction between not only human but also between human and non-human, living and non-living beings. While such interaction is inevitable, it has to be conscious and cherished in order to be mutually enriching.

In the heatwave of summer 2019 in London, the posters in metro reminded its visitors to carry water with them at all times. The informational materials on COVID-19 in 2020 recommend washing hands regularly to avoid propagation of the disease. Taken for granted and unquestioned access to water is the sign of privilege. Paraphrasing Cox's statement that "theory is always for someone and some purpose" (Cox, 1981, p. 128), water as a political body: it is never neutral, it is always for someone and some purpose.

Environmental and water justice sees water-society relations as hydro-social cycle, the on-going process of hydro-social metabolism, a social-natural process of mutual co-creation between water and society (Swyngedouw, 2009). From this perspective, the meaning of water differs across groups and territories. These multiple waters challenge, deconstruct or reconfirm the existing normative system regulating water-society relations, and create the sites for emergence of the new systems through everyday practices (Botero-Mesa & Roca-Servat, 2019; Botero-Mesa & Roca-Servat, 2020; Roca-Servat & Botero-Mesa, 2020) whether directly related to water or not.

Water in all its forms, rivers and precipitation or its absence, is the subject of constant debates in Medellín, the second largest city of Colombia. The Medellín River and its multiple tributaries define the relief of the valley and the infrastructure of the city of Medellín. Shaping the landscape and so the city itself, the river Medellín was rather opposed by the city than cooperated with. The city river and its multiple tributaries have been often seen as a nuisance, a monster that contests the existing social-political and economic order (Golovátina-Mora & Mora, 2013; Roca-Servat & Golovátina-Mora, 2020). The most common solution has been to make the river, and water generally speaking, invisible by channeling it, preferably under the surface, silencing or ignoring it. Stratification of the city organization defines the water landscapes, but not the relations with water. There is a common failure to connect

multiple waters of the city. The same district can paradoxically suffer from flooding and from the absence of the regular water supply.

Multiple waters define and are defined by the multiple cities within the city (Figure 2). While their relations are rather asymmetrical, they do exist as parts of one metabolic process, and the strength or existence of one force or movement incites the challenge, paraphrasing Vision (Russo & Russo, 2014). The restrictive policies are reproduced in other spheres of city organization and contributes to the further alienation of the city itself. Alienation results in the regular air contamination orange alert, increasing dominance of the gated communities, restricted public space, and recurrent violence (e.g., Valdés, 2017). At the same time, within last ten years urban movements, groups, and organizations that offer, employ, and appropriate ecological thinking became significantly active. Ecological thinking implies environmentally conscious behavior but goes beyond it towards looking at oneself not as a detached organism but as a part of the organism-environment-circumstances system.

Figure 2

Image of the Channeled Marginalized Creek and the Homeless Person on Its Bank. Medellín, Barrio Laureles



Note. Source: The Author

The urban regeneration movement sees the city as a complex system that includes nature, traffic, streets, human and non-human inhabitants. It aims at visualizing the opportunities for interaction with the urban environment for the sake of city regeneration they are part of. The discourse of the city regeneration, however, is often framed within the popular and accepted discursive lines. The articulation of the goals is repetitive and often aligned with the official national and local urban development plans: developing citizen culture, building community, creating conditions for better together living of all the inhabitants of the city including the nature. This could be the mere use

of the buzz words but also the only possible tactics of the holistic development within and with the city. Being part of the country regeneration and peace process, they also create a certain discourse that facilitates more inclusive regeneration.

Environmentally conscious actions become an integral part of the ecological and holistic effort in the context of the recently signed peace, debates about forgiveness, inclusion of the members of FARC (Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia) in the political process, recognition of homosexual marriages, granting legal rights to the Atrato river even if within certain limits (Mount, 2017; Vargas-Chaves et al., 2020). Progressive laws are especially impressive in a generally conservative and rather right-wing prone country, such as Colombia. The weak state that became the reason of the long-lasting domestic armed conflict and violence at the same time is the possible reason for the progressive civil achievements. Yet again, the weakness of the state does not guarantee the implementation of the laws. So, “strength incites challenge. Challenge incites conflict” (Russo & Russo, 2014).

Tension within and in connection to these progressive forces, rather than the achievements themselves, is the works of water. Its deployment in the city can be generalized in two tendencies of water in the city: *water plans* of connection-fragmentation policy and *traces of water*—mostly grassroots connectivity in response to the dominating power structures.

water plans

This section revises the officially accepted often private initiatives of the city regeneration by means of regeneration of the public space. Quite a few of them use water or rather a river in their names. The river, however, appears rather as a memory than the actual material being; as an imitation that is easier to keep under control.

The River City (*Ciudad del Río*) is an open public place actively used for picnics, dog training, outdoor sports, skateboarding, and public artistic workshops. It is a place for crafts and arts fairs and farm markets. The remodeling of the Modern Art Museum of Antioquia, which offers its space to free talks and discussions among other events, made this area even more popular among younger and bohemian public. The area is surrounded by spectacular graffiti murals. The space was extended over the road to the River Market—a more sophisticated food court that became popular soon after it was opened. It regenerated the area around turning it into an attractive both indoors and outdoors place of encounter.

The park was built on the site of the demolished old steel factory. The use of the word river in the name is rather symbolic. As the web site presenting the project states:

Medellín prospered in the long and deep valley. Like those plants that grow in the ruins demonstrating certain stubbornness and the adventurous spirit determined to find a loophole for the life to sprout. [...] Ciudad Del Río is an urban project that gave life back to an area that used to be polluted by industrial activity. Where before there were only chimneys, ovens, and machines, today we see nature, color, art, and life sprout. (Botero & Botero Villegas, 2016, ch. 3; my translation—P. G.-M.)

The project continued to grow and is embedded in the overall urban strategy “to enjoy the river”. The river became a metaphor for life, and urban life is conceptualized as public space and friendly atmosphere even if still stratified (Golovátina-Mora & Mora, 2013). By its nature water inescapably corrected the discourse: organized in chapters that reflect the phases of the project, the project website shows the green past of the Medellín River and its present encaged in concrete (Botero & Botero Villegas, ch. 1). With the time public and private tendencies were getting more mixed in the space that continued demonstrating the diverse forces sprouting and interacting in it.

Days of the Beach (*Días de Playa*) was an event that was held the first weekend of every month with the support of city administration and executed by different official and private organizations, collectives, and individuals in the city center that from the actual center of city life turned to a precarious and dangerous place with dusty buildings and polluted air. The Santa Elena creek that gave the name to the area suffered pollution with the further urbanization until it was perceived as a health hazard and a nuisance and put underground. Days of the Beach were part of the general effort of public space recovery: “A pilot project of building the city and the citizenship. We change the planning paradigm of our cities from the closed scheme towards the collaborative, open and free” (Días de Playa, 2018a; my translation—P. G.-M.). The place was chosen both symbolically and strategically: “The Beach Avenue is a place where we can dream together to create the future of the Centre and of the City”, said the slogan of the event (Días de Playa, 2018b; my translation—P. G.-M.).

The symbol of the event pictured a yellow round sand beach (or the sun?) framed by the blue river and green leaves of the plants. The event commemorated the river and recognized the victims of the progress and urbanization that was mirrored by The House of Memory Museum constructed at the end of the avenue in 2006 as part of the Program of Recognition of the Victims by the City of Medellín. Its goal, according to the official web page of the Museum, was to

understand and resolve the armed conflict as well as different violent acts and scenarios by exercising memory in the form of open, multiple, critical and reflexive dialogues... live the cultural transformation that Colombia is longing to [...] to see in order not to repeat [...] meet new hope and think other possible futures. (Quienes Somos, n.d.; my translation—P. G.-M.)

The web page of the event Day of the Beach complemented its vision. It was teaching about the past, the present, and the future of the place—the river, the city, and the society. The past was telling the story of the river-city relations showing the pictures of the organized walking tours along the river. It was emphasized with the reference to the indigenous tradition that walking is an important tool of learning and knowing. The *Días de Playa* web page (Días de Playa, 2018c) indicated where the remnants of the river could be found: hidden underground bridges, people, and “permanent inhabitants of the area”—the trees and animals (my translation—P. G.-M.). The page did not make the distinction between plants, constructions, and people, they were all called inhabitants. The future of the river-beach-area-city-society was part

of the initiative: fishing for dreams and ideas—a fishnet with pieces of papers where anybody can write its vision of the city. The web page revealed that some proposals made a direct reference to the river reflecting the need of being in touch with water.

The final for this section example is the River Park (*Parque del Río*)—“an integral strategic project for the urban transformation, transformation of the public space and mobility, which will convert the River Medellín in the environmental corridor of the city as well as a public space of the city and the region” (Alcaldía de Medellín, 2014, p. 18; my translation—P. G.-M.). Its overall goal was to “return life to the river and the river to the city and its inhabitants” (p. 2; my translation—P. G.-M.). The plan was to visually emphasize the river by making its embankments an encounter space and put the yet increasing, almost double according to the plan presentation, traffic underground. It also included the regeneration of the city hills that would contribute to this environmental corridor for all the city dwellers—humans, plants, and animals.

The projection images showed happy young people playing, walking among tall trees through which you can see diffused sun light. The river, however, was not seen anywhere there. The general plan image presented trees but no actual access to water. The river remained visually separated from the human inhabitants and domesticated animals. However, the project has been developing and may overcome the formal institutional fear of the waters. By now the project has been not just an engineering exercise and construction but included educational and creative workshops, community-based activities, sport events aimed at drawing attention to the project but also at raising general awareness about the state of water in the city and establishing closer emotional relations with it.

These three but not the only projects were grouped as one conflicting tendency that evidence the tension. The dominating idea, yet, is to allow creativity sprout in an organized and controlled “good clean fun” (Ramis, 1993) way.

traces of water

traces of water symbolically bring together ecological community-based and grassroots often scattered movements and initiatives that are not directly connected to water but form the overall discourse of the holistic social transformation and like water drops eventually reach the critical mass that becomes recognized and institutionalized.

The Pet Friendly movement is one of the examples. The number of pet friendly cafes, restaurants, and malls is growing in Medellín. They do not have special playgrounds for pets but allow the pet owners enjoy the service together with their pets. There are countryside day-care services, occasionally run by trained animal psychologists, that offer training, hotel, and transportation services for pets. This service is, however, limited to dogs and cats.

When the data analyzed in this paper was collected in 2017–2018, there was a strong tendency in the public discourse: the company EcoPoop offered an alternative to plastic dogs’ excrement bags and process excrements to plant fertilizers, thus, “creating citizen culture for improvement of health, cooperation, and well-being of the community and the environment” (Nosotros, n.d.). “With us your pet enters the natural

process of the cycle of life and returning to earth”, summarizes the advertisement of then local pet burying service company Animal Compost (Despedida Natural para tu mascota, n.d.). Signs educating dog owners portrayed a happy but busy looking puppy with a dust pin. Volunteer rescue organizations scattered all over the city, actively used social media to publish announcements for adoption, fundraising, and updates on the lost pets. The direct result of such campaigns was that pet stores in Medellín stopped selling animals and restricted their offer to pet products and services.

All together this created a certain civil culture, more open, sensitive, and conscious. People in the streets, although mostly in the richer neighborhoods, are more likely to stop and talk to a dog and by extension to a dog owner. The overall language both among pet owners and general public includes such words as “my pet is my family”, “pet parents”, “fluffy children”, “my love”, “my prince” or “my queen”. A few dog owners prefer to use the word *perronalidad* (dog’s personality) to emphasize that dogs have their own way of being and their own character as a person could have. There are still, however, very few dog parks, and the streets are not designed to walk a dog; there are almost no playgrounds for children either.

These practices, often spontaneous and individual initiatives, became part of the official process of the construction of peace and overcoming violence and prepared background for the bill 1774 passed in January 2016 that recognizes the animal rights and makes the subjects of protection by Penal Law instead of the Civil Law as it was before. Since then, no building or apartment owner can officially ban presence of a pet.

Now a popular touristic destination—Salento, Quindío—a little town that used to be the armed conflict zone territory, embodies this process: plants, land, people, dogs, cats that roam freely the town streets and are taken care of collectively, altogether form an alliance of peace reconstruction. “United with social meaning”, says every street sign of the town.

Usage of the recycled materials in the craftworks and designs together with the campaigns for recycling and garbage processing, second hand and clothing swaps, anti-disposable utensils and face masks movement raise awareness of the overuse of plastic and disposable materials in our everyday life. The institutionalized policies work hand in hand with grassroots initiatives and new business opportunities.

There is a strong movement towards a healthier lifestyle that also aims at increasing knowledge of the local communities, territory, agriculture, and rural areas. Some examples are promotion of the organic, slow, vegetarian, and vegan food; support for small coffee and chocolate farms and the from farm to table initiatives; ecological walking tours in the city outskirts, marathons and *ciclovías* (cycling routes) that often extend their trajectories to the countryside and smaller towns; city gardening and compost making classes. Continuous cutting down trees for construction purposes coexist with the park extension strategies.

Yoga studios started as hipster urbanism tendency (Cowen, 2006; Hubbard, 2016), yet prepare the society for inclusion of alternative practices and ways of thinking. They act as a community building centers, even though they become the centers rather for expats and Colombians who lived abroad. Sessions in both Spanish and English are common. They organize potluck meetings, seminars, and activities to

bring people together, exchange experience and ideas and promote integral thinking. Co-working areas in a form of renting office spaces and coffee place as a community building space have become within last few years a new business opportunity among designers, artists, and intellectuals in Medellín.

Many of the above-mentioned groups and initiatives cooperate with each other based on the common values and goals. Not working explicitly with water, they are the secret works of water or traces of water. Limitations of these initiatives imposed by the urban segregation, differences in the access to the resources and the dominating economic model generate criticism and new spaces for discussion, merge initiatives and include new initially marginalized groups. All this slowly but steadily transforms the city towards recognition of the importance of the public space as urban regeneration that also implies greener, bluer, and more breathable city.

Water can be traced further towards the off grid urban, peri- and semiurban and rural communities contesting the dominating structures and power relations in tension and unfortunately as part of the continuous conflict (Roca-Servat & Perdomo-Sánchez, 2020).

Conclusion

Regeneration of multiple waterfronts in the city can create more sensibility towards water together with more-than-human inhabitants of the city, however, it can also—even if temporarily—reconfirm the oppressive system and its structure. At the same time, water reveals structural incoherencies on the molecular and intuitive level, social injustices in all its complexity and the profound nature of the problem by bringing to the surface or magnifying the oppressive structures, conditions, and practices that people are not always aware of. Without this awareness, any action aimed at social and environmental change will be more difficult or even fruitless. Water is present in the social discourse as a memory, nostalgia, and the public motivator. It indicates the sites for possible solutions that have always been there. Social longing for water evidences the role of water as a social solvent which yet coexists with fear of water and the desire to control it. Recognizing and supporting *traces of water* can facilitate and strengthen critical progression in the society, based on more-than-humanist justice and care.

Aquatic logic, as water itself, has an enormous regenerating power of self and the other in the city and beyond it. It is always the same and never the same all together. It does not work within cause-and-effect paradigm but operates with non-linear unpredictable and multidimensional affects. It does not destroy the limitations of the imposed structures but just goes over, around, through or with them to produce what better fits the momentous circumstances. It looks at limitations as at the opportunity to create the new. Its regeneration is not re- but generation of the inclusive habitat that provides life for anyone who wants to live in, around, through and with the city.

“In order to control myself, wrote Bruce Lee, I must first accept myself by going with and not against my nature” (as cited in Popova, 2013). What the city of Medellín, and possibly any other city, needs, is naive honesty in its relations with water.

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