

Winka Dubbeldam: Why Cities Need To Be Developed From The Bottom Up



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Chair of Architecture at UPenn shares why it is important to see any city as a growing organism and to look at it dynamically rather than statically.

WINKA DUBBELDAM 7 APRIL 2013

(<https://www.psfk.com/2013/04/city-planning-citizens.html/mic-why-cities>)

'My Ideal City' (<http://www.miciudadideal.com/>) is a project fueled by PSFK.com (<https://www.psfk.com/my-ideal-city>) and directed by the city planner Gary Hack and architect Winka Dubbeldam, that aims to restructure downtown of Colombian city of Bogota from the roots up. Instead of handing over the entire process to outsiders, the concept aims to give an average citizen a say in how his or her urban environment is redesigned. PSFK.com spoke to Winka Dubbeldam, Chair of Architecture at UPenn and Principal at **Archi-tectonics** (<http://www.archi-tectonics.com/>) about her involvement and her vision for Bogota:

Why did you decide to embark on the 'My Ideal City' project?

I was asked by Prodigy's Rodrigo Nino to lecture in Bogota on the Future of the City and a few projects I was doing at Archi-tectonics. After I spoke, he came up to me and said that he would like to discuss something he was doing. When we were back in New York, he came by my office and said that he wanted me to be the lead architect of the project that he was considering—a bottom-up redesign of downtown Bogota. The city's general development was progressing well, he said, but downtown was lagging behind.

Once you agreed to join the project, what were your next steps?

We needed to assemble a team, so I started thinking about who we needed to pull in. For example, we needed people who could work on large urban schemes, someone internationally knowledgeable about large-scale green areas, and PR representatives. As a lead architect office, we would do our own research and develop potential scenarios in a bottom-up way. We were not going to make an old fashioned city plan—we wanted

more open-ended scenarios in which we could involve the people of Bogota in a greater capacity. We came up with 5 scenarios for downtown Bogota.

What unique challenges do you face as an architect when working on a project concerning this particular city?

It is important to see any city as a growing organism and to look at it dynamically rather than statically. You also need to think about developing a very long-term plan, but also allowing for spontaneous interventions and new interactivity. We left static design behind us a long time ago, and anyway, in architecture we always look at optimization models and dynamic ways of designing, like using 3D generative software. When you look at the whole city you are mostly observing dynamic systems that are interactive, rather than static buildings in a fixed urban scheme.

What is the ultimate goal behind your plan for an improved Bogota?

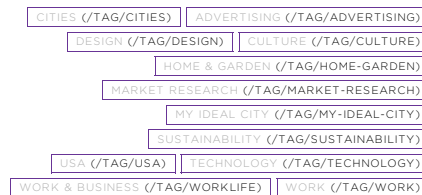
We plan to test our ideas with the inhabitants of Bogota, and see what they think. We can use those interactions to further develop our proposals. If you want to compare our method to playing chess, you could say that we set the first move in action in order to start the game. The group of architects and planners is an active participant, but the other player is the people of Bogota.

How can the average citizen have an impact in the final decisions concerning the redevelopment of the city?

Rodrigo Nino has invited W Radio hosts to ask the people questions on the subject between 6 and 8 in the morning, when they are stuck in rush hour traffic—there are a lot of traffic jams in Bogota! This will create a discussion in which they will tweet, send images and generally communicate their reaction. We will be able to obtain feedback and see trends from what they are saying, which we can then incorporate in our plans, to make them active players in the game.

Thanks Winka!

Over the next 6 months, we want to start a conversation around what you envision as 'My Ideal City'. Stay tuned each week to PSFK.com and **MyIdealCity.com** (<http://www.miciudadideal.com/>) for new ideas around the future of the city.



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