

History and Evolution of the Urban Framework in Colonial, Republican and Modern Times in Ibagué

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Abstract: The founding framework of most Colombian cities is rooted in the territorial organization adopted by the Spanish monarchy. In the case of the municipality of Ibagué, changes in its physical structure are evident, allowing for contextualization of its gradual development within the Tolima region. From the city's urban structure, the historical description of the colonial and republican periods through the modern era is provided, highlighting the different arguments found in each period. Bibliographic and cartographic exploration allows us to describe the urban conditions of each period over time. To conduct this territorial study, the temporal analysis method was used with a qualitative approach, allowing for the collection of descriptive data on the urban context in the different historical periods.

Key words: environment; city; culture; urban structure; landscaping

1. Introduction

To define the cultural, economic, and political conditions in a country like Colombia, it is crucial to understand the landscape changes at various stages of its history. One of the causes of these changes is the formation of urban settlements, which played a significant role in territorial development. Initially, the first concepts of Spanish architecture emerged, including the form of the urban layout, the designs of the main buildings above the central plaza, the church, the town hall, and the residences of civil and religious officials.

Since the beginning of colonization, Spanish troops conquered the "Villa de San Bonifacio de Ibagué del Valle de las Lanzas", currently the capital of the department of Tolima. This municipality has had a close relationship with internal events that largely influenced the territory's progress. For example, between 1946 and 1958, rural violence spread throughout the department, leading to forced displacement from the countryside to the city. Later, the Armero natural disaster in 1985 caused thousands of residents to migrate to the city due to the devastation of their homes. The contrast between modernity and urban planning overrides the concept of prosperity, reflected in various environmental problems with the massive expansion of informal settlements in the foothills and along the banks of rivers and ravines.

Ibagué, known as the musical city of Colombia, has been a notable example of a city with numerous social, economic, and infrastructural complexities (Nuevo Día, 2022). The latter has been a negative aspect for the development of the territory; therefore, this article aims to describe the development and historical importance of its urban evolution, as well as the contributions and transformations that have occurred over time. The main objective was to extract a synthesis of urban evolution addressed in three historical periods (colonial, republic, and modernity) and to collect chronological information

on its history and the progress achieved in each of its stages.

To define the methodological scope, a qualitative approach was chosen, as it encompasses the current urban dynamics of the municipality of Ibagué and emphasizes the urgency of studying the pre-colonial period and progress in various historical periods. The territorial study was based on documentation and cartography, which are useful for unraveling the impacts of the colonization process based on the urban model implemented by the Spanish, the transformation during the Republican era, and, finally, the modernist era of the 21st century. In this way, the city's urban history, as well as its current practices, customs, and social dynamics, can be understood from the context of Latin America.

2. Methodology

A qualitative approach was adopted for the study of the urban context. This, in general terms, allows for a longitudinal perspective of urban transformations throughout the different eras of the city's social formation, understanding the context and the various events that were articulated in the stages of territorial development. In this way, it is possible to create a homogeneous descriptive language, according to Miller (2000) and Verd & Lozares (2016), authors who defined this type of research as very useful for the analysis of linear processes. In addition to being qualitative, the approach is aimed at investigating different urban phenomena based on historical events. Various bibliographic sources were studied to reveal advances in the colonial, republican, and modern periods, taking into account social and territorial aspects.

This process used complementary tools, such as bibliographic sources and historical maps that illustrate the evolution of urban morphology in two dimensions.

2.1 Bibliographic sources

The bibliographic material used to provide the information and details that define the qualitative assessment of the historical bibliography is comprised of various accounts of specific periods or historical events in the municipality. These are consolidated in biographical sources, such as reliable studies cited by authors such as Cifuentes-Segovia (2016), Cuartas (1994), and Francel (2015), which serve as the foundation for the documentary structure. Furthermore, they allow for the consolidation of concepts and social facts that inform history and provide a better understanding of the continuous flow of urban transformations over time.

2.2 Urban cartographies

It is also important to use historical urban cartography as part of the article's construction. This involves deciphering the cartography of each historical period in order to interpret the city's development in its various stages. This tool is based on cartographic analysis, which complements the quantitative analysis method based on the transcription and identification of elements represented in historical sources using plans to reconstruct and illustrate urban form (Martínez-Silva, 2003). The result is a cartographic series that shows the continuous process of evolution leading to its most recent form.

3. Results

3.1 The conquest of the Pijao territory

The town of San Bonifacio de Ibagué in the Valley of the Lances was named in honor of a European saint, as was the tradition during the conquest when a place was consecrated. This settlement was founded by the Spanish captain Andrés López de Galarza in 1550. The general and his soldiers crossed the Magdalena River and reached the territory they called the "Valley of the Lances", because the Pijao natives had long, sharp-pointed antlers made of guadua, with which they intimidated and attacked the Spanish troops. Fray Pedro de Aguado (1956), in his text "Compiled History", refers to this tribe as: "Fierce warriors who have the habit of feeding on human flesh, leaving their homes to invade their neighbors, who gained a reputation for being brave and feared by all other peoples" (as cited in Montoya-Guzmán, 2022, p. 99). The

occupation of this region was an express order of the Royal Audience, which had the mission of carrying out the foundation of a transit city that would serve as a commercial and military route between Popayán and Santa Fe de Bogotá. (Martínez-Peñas & Fernández-Rodríguez, 2011).

This expedition was contingent on the discovery of several gold and silver deposits along the Magdalena River. Therefore, there was an urgent need for a less difficult access route between the towns of Tocaima, near Santa Fe de Bogotá, and Cartago, in the Cauca Valley, to transport treasure. These reasons led the Royal Audience of the New Kingdom of Granada to decide to send a contingent of soldiers to put down any resistance that might hinder the free movement of Spanish campaigns. The Pijaos represented a constant threat, marking a milestone that can be considered the final episode of the conquest and the definitive step toward colonization (Salmoral, 1965, p. 93). The occupation of this region was an express order from the Royal Audience, which aimed to establish a transit city that would serve as a commercial and military route between Popayán and Santa Fe de Bogotá (Martínez-Peñas & Fernández-Rodríguez, 2011).

When Andrés López de Galarza entered the present-day territories of the department of Tolima, he did so by entering into conflict with the settlers on the banks of the Magdalena River. He fought for the Coyaima and Natagaima territories and, in the midst of the campaign, entered the most hostile zone, guarded by the Pijao natives. López de Galarza strategically requested reinforcements under the command of Captain Melchor Valdez, who arrived in time with his soldiers and managed to decimate the pressure generated by the warring tribe. On October 14, 1550, the city of Ibagué was founded, designed as a resting place and supply base for the troops with which the military incursion into the entire Tolima territory would begin.

When Spanish explorers began the colonization process, they described the Pijao settlements as lacking technological or architectural development, as their lifestyle was that of a nomadic people. According to Friar Pedro Simón in his chronicles, Salmoral (1963) describes them as:

Settlements characterized by scattered round and rectangular dwellings, strategically located on hillsides and near bodies of water, so that the enemy faced the water currents and the enemy's ascent was more difficult due to the mountain slope. (Salmoral, 1963, p. 371)

These characteristics allowed them to have temporary homes in case of an attack by enemy colonies.

3.2 Spanish colonization and conquest

Colonization, according to Portillo-Lugo (2015), is a form of migratory movement that allows for the exploration and conquest of territories by force. In this model, decisions are made by the city-state, based on its governance model. The founders are made up of small groups of colonizers who impose their traditions and knowledge on the colonized territory. It is essential that the subjugated culture be less entrenched and, therefore, more receptive and adaptable to cultural changes.

This period is defined as a period of Spanish presence and political dominance through their incursion throughout the territory of New Granada. The conquistadors undertook the task of dominating different regions by establishing their customs and systematically and permanently controlling the territory and its natural resources (Schäfer, 2003). During this period, it is worth noting three momentous events that marked the initial development of indigenous cultures in Colombia:

- The first was the arrival of Friar Nicolás de Ovando as governor general in 1502. He was the forerunner and designer of the Crown's systematic plan for the creation of urban settlements in New Granada. During his administration, the largest city-building campaign undertaken throughout the conquered territories was initiated (Rodríguez & Gil, 2006, p. 15). This process enabled the Spanish Empire's expansionist plan through control of the territory's population and natural resources.

- The second was the Crown program of Friar Nicolás de Ovando in 1503. After consolidating the founding of cities to accommodate the Spanish colonies, the goal was to civilize the settlers and organize the establishment of "Indian villages". In this way, the way of life of Spaniards and Indigenous people was regularized and standardized (Catelli, 2011, p. 217). The need for places that would provide security for the conquistadors' campaigns increased territorial development in some urban centers in the New World.

- Finally, the change from the native lifestyle led to a Spanish regime (Castilian Municipal Regime), where the main colonial cities were established. From this process of urban settlement formation, urban development and planning emerged, and thus, activities were organized around the plaza and surrounding blocks (Ots-Capdequí, 1946, p. 75).

- Colonial cities were planned and built according to the "laws of the Indies". The blocks or "islands" were perfectly symmetrical, with each side having the same dimensions. To populate a territory, according to Salcedo, all the advantages of the location had to be considered to meet the basic foundational needs: abundant natural resources; water; stone and wood for construction; and a disease-free climate (Salcedo, J. S. 1996).

The colonization process represented the eradication of the Pijao people and, primarily, of the spiritual, cultural, and military authority figures known as the Mohanes, who symbolized the protection of saltwater sources and served as protectors of warriors. This tribe fought fiercely for their lands in 1602, only to lose almost all of their forces and be finally defeated in 1608 (Calderón-Rodríguez D., 2018, p. 26). During this time, a shift in the territory's sociocultural types took shape, as the customs of the native inhabitants merged with the practices of the Spanish. This situation spread throughout the conquered territories and resulted in a diversity of cultural expressions according to the geographical context.

3.3 The city in the colony

The colonial period saw the development of the founding nucleus of the first urban settlements in New Granada. Portillo-Lugo (2015) argues that the original urban grid (or grid pattern) remains in place today, being particularly representative at the initial settlement site. This model of city formation in Colombia has been prominent since its inception. The symbolic and physical occupation of the territory, together with the implementation of urban planning regulations under the *Laws of the Indies* in 1573, entitled "The order to be followed in discovering and populating", mark an important milestone. These laws are considered the first urban planning code, inspired by Vitruvius and Alberti, on the subject of founding towns and cities (Brewer-Carías, 1998, p. 20). In other words, the notion of order in the founding of conquered territories was explicitly established. This allowed towns to maintain their orderly structure as they developed, by establishing themselves in an organized manner from the outset. This strategy responded to the need to apply a grid plan that would ensure a coherent layout of urban space (Brewer-Carías, 1998, p. 23).

It is essential to highlight the means used by the Old World to travel on land during this period, such as the introduction of horses, accompanied by the use of carriages that facilitated the transport of goods. In addition, wooden vessels emerged that allowed navigation on the Magdalena River. These mobility options interconnected the territory, giving rise to new trade routes that fostered trade between distant regions and made it possible to reach difficult-to-reach places in what would later be called "Great Colombia".

It should be added that, according to García-Portillo (2017), the colonial city was conceived based on the value of the landscape and the characteristics it offered for obtaining wealth. The importance of a place depended on the conditions and resources it could provide, as these were crucial to guaranteeing the means of subsistence necessary to establish any settlement and carry out campaigns. Furthermore, population growth had to be anticipated, so free areas were delimited as land reserves for future urban development.

The city was conceived according to a grid model that allowed for precise but indefinite perimeter growth. This had already been considered in the "Ovandine Ordinances" and in the imperial decree of 1526, which dealt with the configuration of new towns. The eight sections of Philip II's ordinances establish:

Planning a new settlement, which was to distribute the urban area into squares, streets, and lots, using a ruler and string, began from the main square and extended the platforms to the gates and main roads, leaving a wide perimeter, thus allowing the urban layout to continue consecutively. (Arbouin-Gómez, p. 22)

Within the social structure, a new political expression was established under the rules of the Municipal Council, with the purpose of establishing order and a form of governance. From this moment on, according to Salcedo, "through capitulation or commission, the conquest culminated with the founding of cities, the election of Councils, the allocation of lands and plots, and the distribution of Indians in encomiendas among the most prominent landowners of the day" (Salcedo J. S., 1996, p. 11). As for trade routes, the cities only allowed temporary transit for those passing through the area.

As a result of this situation, the Cabildo showed no intention of encouraging the occupation of vacant lots in the town of San Bonifacio, as the government's apathy regarding the urbanization of the territory prevailed. According to Morales-Parra (2015), the Attorney General intervened and decreed that "all residents of the jurisdiction be required to build settlements in Ibagué within six months, so that it can be populated" (p. 6). This order also addressed the encomenderos to occupy the houses located in the town. The municipality's historical archive still preserves numerous references to this particular event during the colonial period.

Given the conditions that preceded the events described, according to Cuartas (1994), an urban center was established that enabled the—forced—passage through the mountain range via the legendary Quindío Road. Upon their return, exhausted by this same route, the few travelers who wished to settle as residents of Ibagué petitioned the Cabildo to be assigned communal land lots for rent to build their homes, in addition to receiving land in the Combeima plains to support their families. Similarly, the few existing public buildings, which rarely exceeded two stories, were occasionally whitewashed on their facades and, in the best cases, the precarious palm roofs were replaced with others of the same material, in order to preserve the settlements of traditional families. It is worth mentioning that Francel (2017, page 129) describes urbanistically in the epic of the colony "the predominant buildings were the main square or the main square on which the main buildings were erected", a small square called Santo Domingo (Figure 1).

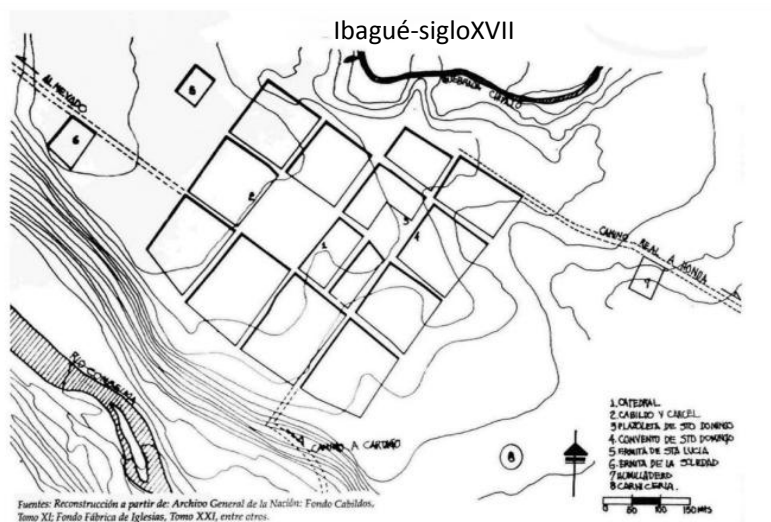
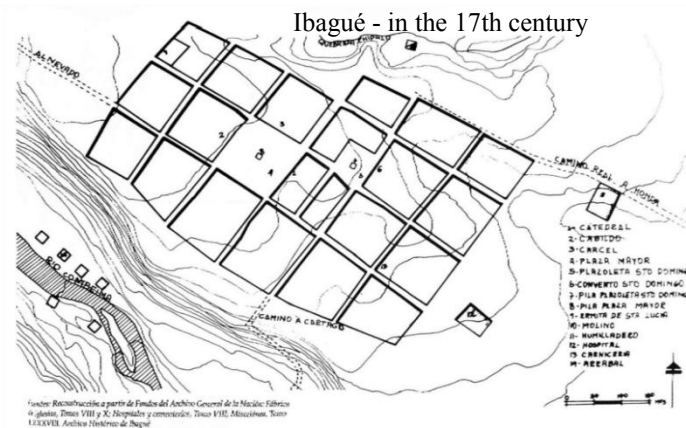


Figure 1. Ibagué in the 17th century. 14cm x 21.5cm. Graphic scale indicated.

Source: Guzmán (1987).

The characteristics of the materials used in construction in the city during the colonial period did not include stone, not even baked clay tiles; the homes maintained highly indigenous typologies. This type of construction can still be seen in some houses from the period, which, although deteriorated, show that there had been no changes in the construction and stylistic model. Compared to settlements of the time such as Tunja (1539) and Pamplona (1549), the urban development of Ibagué at that time was quite rudimentary. The urban settlement had few residences, few residents, and numerous empty lots. The demographic pattern of Ibagué in 1778 was a population of 3,423 people throughout its jurisdiction, while approximately 700 lived in the urban center (Cuartas, 1994).



Source: Guzmán (1987).

One of the primary reasons for the conquest was the discovery of deposits of precious metals, such as gold, silver, and copper, which became the cornerstone of the Spanish economy for more than three centuries. This exploitation was so significant that it is estimated that, from gold extraction, an annual production of approximately three to four, or even more, metric tons was achieved (Poveda-Ramos, 2022).

The Spanish recognized it as a valuable reservoir of labor, with the possibility of controlling lands known for their mineral wealth and fertility, as well as strategic importance in terms of communication with other colonies. It was only after the threat posed by the Pijaos was eliminated by the conquistador López de Galarza that the foundations were laid for the construction of the urban area.

3.5 The city in the Republican era

The republican era of Ibagué, marked by independence and the transition from Spanish rule, represents a second specific historical period for Ibagué. This phase saw an evolution from post-colonialism to pre-democracy. It should be added that during this period, urban developments and public spaces such as the main square, streets, and small squares were established and consolidated, as well as architectural buildings representing religion (temples), the administration of the town council, and the metropolitan authority (palace), thus reproducing the context of Spanish civilization. According to Isabel Portillo-Lugo (2015), the first part of the 19th century is primarily characterized by the incorporation of formal elements from other styles of the past, such as Classical, Gothic, and Eastern influences.

In the second half of the same century, values characteristic of an independent society were incorporated, and the influence of foreign ideas and agents began to change both the urban landscape and social development. As new road profiles were integrated and adapted to the existing urban fabric from colonial times and in emerging areas on the outskirts, the republican city of the 19th century was shaped.

Later, beginning in the second decade of the 20th century, changes in building construction began, with the substitution of materials (such as clay tiles for zinc ones and adobe bricks for fired ones) and the introduction of physical renovations that included plaster moldings and the use of concrete. New architectural styles emerged, such as Art Deco, which became significant trends in the city's aesthetics.

A distinctive feature of the Republican era was the replacement of traditional centers of power. According to Zambrano-Pantoja (2013), this change began with the enactment of the Law of June 25, 1824, which reformed the country's political structure by dividing it into departments, provinces, and cantons, thereby eliminating a system of privileges that had long persisted under the previous administration. The purpose was to establish equity among all municipalities. This initiative marked the beginning of a transformation of the hierarchical order of existing population centers by redesigning a regime inherited from the colonial period that no longer fit contemporary social dynamics.

This led to a profound rethinking of previously established urban conditions, as described by Andrés Francel (2015). This involved recognizing the real context, since in several regions by the end of the colonial period the territorial landscape had begun to change in a similar way to the transformation of the territory. This marked the beginning of the disintegration and control of traditional cities and, in some cases, led to the emergence of new regional centers. However, throughout the first half of the 19th century, the urban distribution of the population remained unchanged, largely preserving the architectural development that had taken place during the colonial era.

As a result, Ibagué's urban morphology remained largely the same as it had been in the decades since the colonial era (Figure 3). This was due, in part, to the lack of optimal technological and physical development of its public buildings. Furthermore, the city lacked adequate accommodation and food services to accommodate travelers.

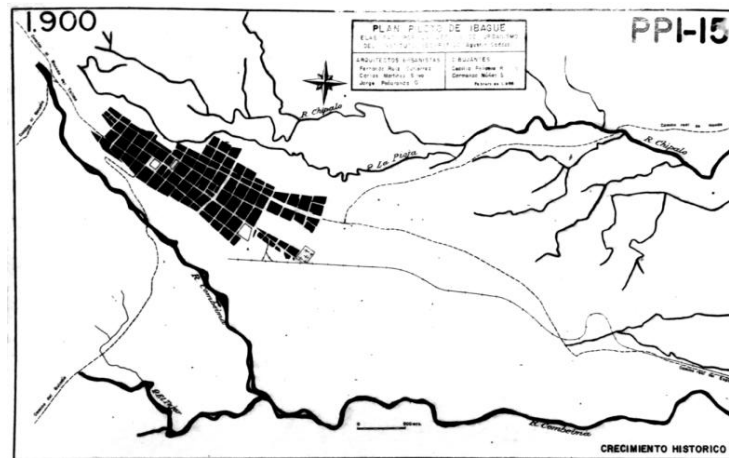


Figure 3. Ibagué in 1900. 21 cm × 27 cm. Graphic scale indicated.

Source: Ibagué Pilot Plan (1966)

The town of Ibagué was designated as the site of the National Convention by a decree signed on July 28, 1862, by General Tomás Cipriano de Mosquera. The Convention's objective was to issue a new Political Constitution. However, due to logistical difficulties, as not all the necessary infrastructure was available for the event to be held, the municipality was unable to hold this momentous national gathering (Francel, 2015, p. 17).

Following this event, Ibagué directed its efforts towards a development that revolved around the layout of the railway tracks, as evidenced by the studies issued by the Municipal Council in 1920. Thus, the construction of the Pedro Nel Ospina railway station was approved, whose land had already been selected and approved for development a decade earlier by the engineer Benjamín Dussán (Francel, 2015, p. 17).

State regulations on urban expansion, as Andrés Francel (2015) points out, drove the city's development, resulting in urban planning projects that differed significantly from earlier colonial-era constructions. The arrival of the railway station also changed the outlook and brought the city closer to a modern metropolis.

The architectural regulations of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, along with the incorporation of technological advances that quickly adapted to the region's conditions, enabled the development of both urban planning and municipal architecture during the Republican period. However, the intensification of the armed conflict at the beginning of the 20th century resulted in an urban explosion. This was due, first, to economic conditions and, on a social level, to the mass migration of people to the cities to avoid conflict.

For this reason, and despite the fact that the government had planned a progressive model based on the implementation of advanced technologies in use at the time, such as the telegraph and the railroad, what had the greatest impact on the very structure of society were the shifts from artisanal production processes to industrial models. This transition required improvements to the existing transportation infrastructure to establish a network that would connect the entire national territory and thus allow for the centralization of products and access to other regions.

The railroad (Figure 4) became the first axis to achieve this goal. It facilitated a change in the national development structure by linked in a productive and effective way different production centers with high consumption areas. In this way an agrarian model was established that had the purpose of expanding to the international market. From this initiative, the country was planned as an exporter of agricultural products, and for this purpose the creation of the necessary infrastructure began, such as railway lines and roads. This situation generated a great demand for workers in the construction of roads, which stimulated various economic incentives in agricultural production. In the case of Ibagué, this promoted the expansion of large cultivation areas with the aim of achieving large -scale production.

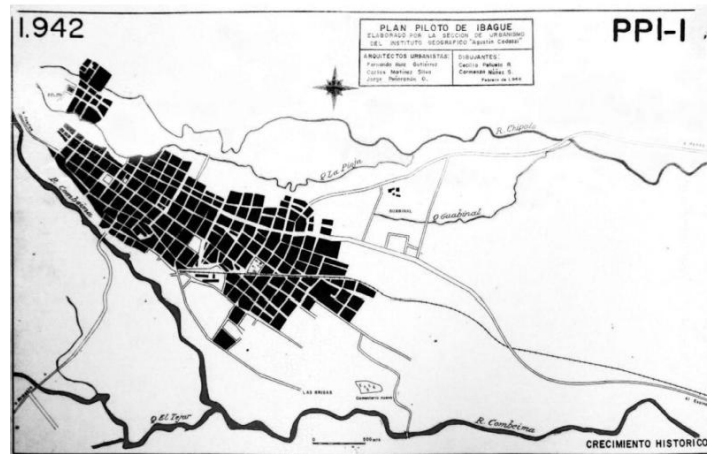


Figure 4. Ibagué in 1942. 21 cm × 27 cm. Indicated graphic scale. Source: Ibagué Pilot Plan (1966).

According to Vásquez-López, the country's first railroad lines were driven both by the desire for modernization and the prevailing need to integrate into the industrial world and the free market (2021, p. 33). This impulse materialized through the extraction and export of raw materials, which marked the beginning of a new economic and technological era. Functionality and durability were priorities in the execution of these works, above adherence to a defined architectural style. Even so, architecturally, the railroad stations were influenced by the neoclassical style, which is characterized by simplicity and the prioritization of the architectural over the decorative. This style is mainly constituted by basic elements of classical architecture, such as Doric and Ionic columns, as well as pediments and domes with materials such as steel and glass, which contributed to consolidating a distinctive image associated with the State. This neoclassical style reflects the ideals of liberty, equality and fraternity that inspired the revolutionary spirit of the French and Americans.

This phenomenon not only brought with it various international architectural styles, driven by local rulers who hired foreign architects, but also established the parameters for urban appearance through architecture. This made it possible to project the image that the state wanted, which adapted to the specific conditions of the country. The architectural styles implemented were built using indigenous materials, due to the lack of professional Colombian architects.

On the contrary, it happened in Bogotá, where the buildings that housed the National Government Center adopted an urban system for the construction of neoclassical style buildings, prior to eclecticism prevailing at the time. In intermediate cities such as Ibagué the neoclassical style constructions only manifested in the second half of the twenties, with the first remodeling of the governorate and the subsequent construction of the railway station in 1926 (Niglio-Corriente, 2019).

At this time the parameters for the first eclectic style constructions were established. This unequivocally confirms that neoclassical influence was after this period. In addition, the influence of English architects who participated in the construction of the railroad was manifested in this context, so it can be inferred that the implementation of the railway system promoted architectural projects that experienced various combinations of international styles.

In the city of Ibagué, in the urban field, various improvements were being implemented, such as the installation of the public lighting network in 1904, the expansion and sanitation of the aqueduct and the sewerage in 1908, and the paving of some streets, which was completed in 1911. Before 1926, no architectural work purely inspired by the neoclassical style or any other style that would serve as a model for other constructions had been erected. It is for this reason that the eclectic style predominated in Ibagué, which was developed in buildings of an educational nature, such as the Cloister of San José, located on Carrera Quinta, and the Cloister of San Jorge, located on Calle XIX.

3.6 Organic growth (1930-1940)

In the thirties, the architecture experienced a rapid consolidation. A new approach to architectural design was

promoted, with the introduction of new construction systems that transformed traditional buildings. During the forties and fifties an urban process began that included the construction of apartments of five to seven floors in the central area of the city. At this time there was a growing influence of industrialization and transition in the use of materials such as concrete and steel.

In this period of changes, the demolition of emblematic buildings of great heritage value for the city, such as the Governor's Office of Tolima and the train station, proceeded (Ruiz-Guzmán, 2018). By then, real estate movements were triggered through heterogeneous parceling processes that had already been implemented in the municipality since the nineteenth century. These, as the city progressively expanded, led to improvements in buildings, without yet observing a dissolution of the urban fabric in the city center.

In relation to 17th Street, it is remarkable that, towards the west (the closest part of the center), the constructions are composed of a single floor and exhibit underlying colonial characteristics enriched with historicist motifs, as well as the incorporation of Art Deco elements. The eastern sector is different, where two-story buildings predominate, with clear characteristics of the mature and precious Art Deco period. This contrast in architecture clearly reflects the growth of the city, with the economic position of the traditional class being a determining factor in this pattern.

3.7 Urban growth and equipment (1950-1960)

In 1950 the fourth centenary of the Foundation of Ibagué was commemorated. At that time the implementation of an equipment construction plan was viewed, but it was postponed immediately due to the lack of budget. As a result, the construction of administrative, sports and health infrastructures was bound to a slow development. The homes of this era were wide, they were adapted to the needs of the urban development of that period and were built with materials such as brick and concrete, and with asbestos, cement and zinc tiles. Over time, popular neighborhoods began to emerge, driven by growth caused by phenomena such as forced displacement. The city continued to expand and the degradation of the city's landscape towards the tutelary hills was forming the neighborhoods as farms (Francel, 2015).

As illustrated in Figure 5, the phase of new settlement formation began in 1958. Despite the noticeable changes in the urban fabric, the housing still sought to retain avant-garde characteristics. The aesthetic developments of these neighborhoods are notable because they represented grassroots efforts to adapt the current architectural style to their own concepts of beauty, which, however, were marked by the social, economic, political, and cultural differences existing in the city.

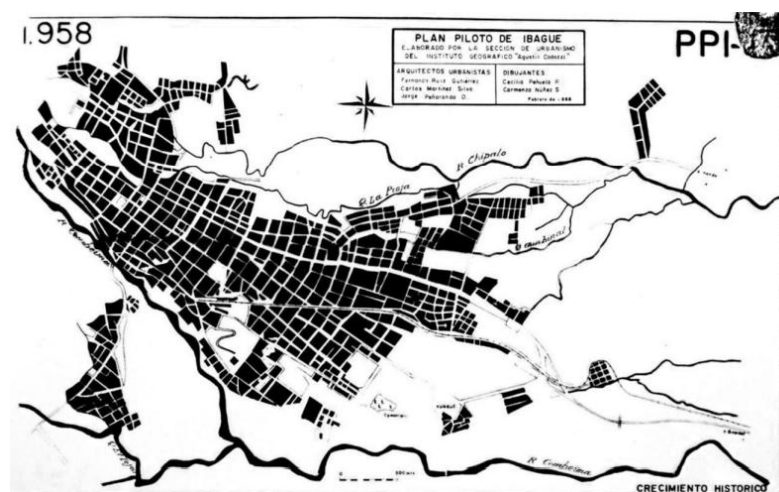


Figure 5. Ibagué en 1958. 21 cm x 27 cm. Graphic scale indicated.

Source: Ibagué Pilot Plan (1966)

3.8 From 1970 to 2019

Ibagué experienced a moment of transformation when it was selected as the headquarters of the IX National Athletic and Sports Games in 1970, which initiated a stage of development in terms of urban and architectural infrastructure. During this period, the construction and delivery of various sports scenarios were carried out in the fifth race with 42nd Street, such as the Olympic pools, the covered coliseum, the gyms and some residences.

The homes built at this time reflected an adhesion to the urban model that focused on public space. Important neighborhoods such as La Macarena and Interlaken emerged, and interventions were also carried out on the main roads of the city, such as the Railroad Avenue and the Fifth race, based on a transformation of the road profile.

In 1972, the popular neighborhoods began to spread towards the peripheries, specifically towards the areas near the Combeima River, the tutelary hills and the main water bodies, such as the Chipalo River, La Pioja and Ambala. At that time, Ibagué lacked planning entities responsible for leading urban control from an administrative perspective. There was only the Territorial Credit Institute (ICT), which encouraged the development of land for social interest housing (VIS). During this period the Jordan stages are made up of the tutelary hills, such as the Ambala neighborhood, among other settlements, which emerged spontaneously and did not take into account the long -term urban conditions, which resulted in an excessive growth of the city.

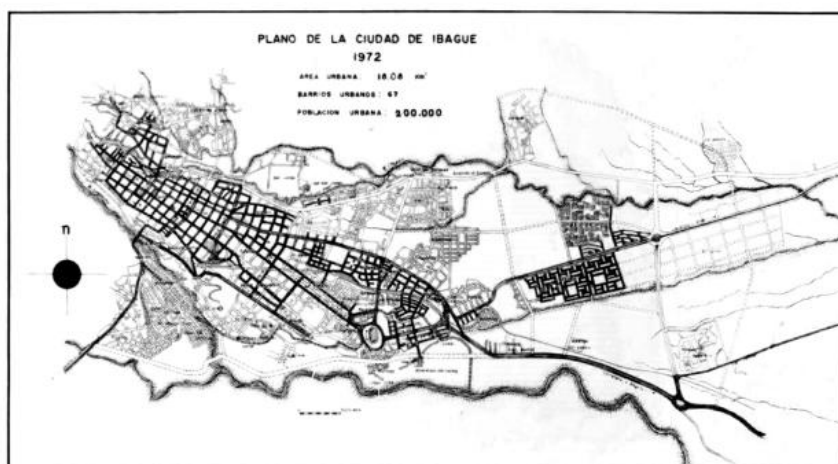


Figure 6. Map of the city of Ibagué from 1972. 70cm x 120cm. Graphic scale indicated every 50 meters.

Source: Map library of the Darío Echandía Cultural Center of the Bank of the Republic (1966)

The municipality incorporated the Territorial Planning Plan (POT) through Agreement 116 of 2000. This plan was established as a way to introduce an urban control mechanism in line with Law 388 of 1997, which includes what is known as the "POT". Despite the administration's efforts, the lack of administrative management and urban control that had prevailed for decades resulted in a disorganized city. Access roads were deficient, urban infrastructure was dispersed, and there was a notable lack of public spaces and green areas, which hindered the municipality's development (Vargas, 2015, p. 31).

The original character of Ibagué's urban fabric and its historic colonial patterns were voraciously demolished by territorial development, while so-called urban modernization sought to adapt to the transformation process using materials such as cobblestones, concrete slabs, and prefabricated curbs. Although these changes allowed for a partial renovation of the environment, they also led to a partial rupture of the cultural space and the loss of the city's historical identity. This is evident in emblematic neighborhoods of the time, such as La Pola, Belén, and Interlaken, which represent clear examples of a radical transformation characterized by the loss of the architectural richness of the area's cultural heritage sites.

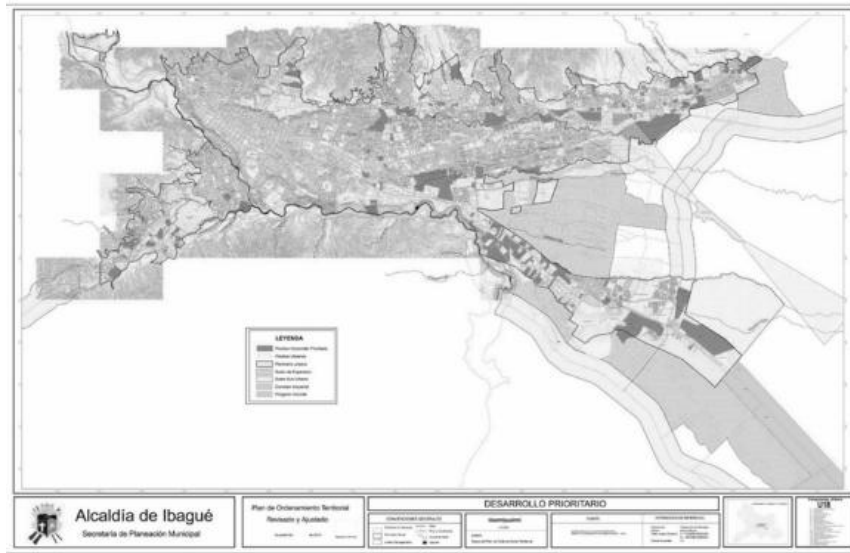


Figure 7. U18. Priority development. Ibagué Land Use Plan (2014). 70 x 100 centimeters. Scale: 1:15,000

Source: Municipal Planning Secretariat, Ibagué City Hall. <https://www.curaduriaunoibague.com/cartografia.php>

Although the POT (Law 388 of 1997) adopted heritage zones of influence, the administration and municipal entities lacked the necessary legal and regulatory tools from the Ministry of Culture to protect the BINs. This created a legal loophole that allowed both construction companies and individuals to carry out various housing projects, both single-family and multi-family, leading to the belated destruction of the municipality's historical memory.

Despite the ongoing development to date, this area is currently regulated by Decree 1000-0823 of 2014, which delimits the zones of influence of cultural interest in the downtown area. Some assets remain, such as the Cathedral, the Town Hall, the Rectory, and the Urrutia Building, which, despite the passage of time, resist total disappearance and represent only faint traces of the original urban fabric (Cifuentes-Rojas, 2002).

4. Discussion

This article seeks to provide a chronological description of the events that link urban development, architecture, and infrastructure creation in different eras or events in Ibagué. It is based on studies such as those by Martínez-Peñas & Fernández-Rodríguez (2011), Portillo-Lugo (2015), and Rodríguez & Gil (2006), which have managed to capture in their chronicles the characterization of events ranging from the conquest to the present day. These reflect the contribution and influence of Spanish culture on the territorial development of the Tolima region, which gave rise to what we know today as the city of Ibagué.

Throughout this process, social actors, both from the Pijao tribe and the Spanish, led by General Andrés López de Galarza, left their stories recorded in countless accounts. They capture their methods of struggle and the drastic reduction of the native population, as well as the formation of the first urban settlement in Tolima. This is recognized by Salmoral (1963), who, in narrating the characteristics of indigenous settlements, describes in detail the vernacular techniques used by the natives in the development of their settlements based on their control of mountainous areas and water sources, strategically located sites to protect them from potential enemy attacks.

With the arrival of the Spanish, a cultural and customary shift took place. The population shifted to a city lifestyle, with the Spanish dominating and controlling the rural areas completely. This process was consolidated by the first recorded cartographic representation in the history of the city, which illustrates this change and the transformation of the territory.

During the colonial period, the Spanish urban planning model was implemented in the territory of Ibagué through a grid layout that connected the most emblematic buildings, such as the Santo Domingo Cathedral, the Cabildo, the prison, and the residential area, around the main square. This settlement was originally intended to temporarily shelter Spanish troops and supply them with weapons and food. The urban planning regulations of the colony of Ibagué were based on the "Laws of the Indies" promulgated by the Spanish Crown. These were of strategic interest, both due to the location and the area's natural resources, although at that time, urban expansion was not considered an alternative for territorial development, as it was understood as a transitory or transitional settlement. The colonizer's vision was to modify the environment for exploitation and, at the same time, adapt it according to the urban planning principles established by the Spanish Crown, while for the natives, the priority was to safeguard their territory and population.

With these military and social peculiarities, the municipality was finally colonized and remained under a rather slow territorial development, amid constant bloody struggles that were waged to decimate the Pijao tribe. It is important to highlight the emergence of means and forms of transportation during this period, such as boats and horse-drawn carriages, which, according to Salcedo (1996), Morales-Parra (2015), and Cuartas (1994), allowed for the connection of new trade and access routes between important cities such as Santafé de Bogotá and Tunja. In the case of the city of Ibagué, land and plots were allocated so that it would have a greater number of settlers who could populate it progressively.

From post-colonialism to pre-democracy, authors Cuartas (1994), Portillo (2015), Zambrano-Pantoja (2013), Francel (2015), Vásquez-López (2021), and Niglio-Soriente (2019) highlight the continued presence of violence in the country and a constant armed struggle. This conflict resulted in a stagnation in both urban and architectural progress in Ibagué. The buildings of this period reflected a timid and progressive image due to the adverse circumstances. For this reason, Ibagué aspired to remain at the forefront of architecture and chose to include neoclassical and eclectic style elements on the facades of its main buildings, marking a crucial stage that drove population growth and urban expansion.

This period was also characterized by the importance of the railroad, which allowed for the transportation of agricultural products and raw materials to other regions. Thus, the train became a preferred option over other conventional means of transportation. Despite the geographical difficulties in building roads to the mountain range and despite being considered a transit point, Ibagué became a strategic commercial center.

Land transport and the implementation of the railroad brought with them new civil works that spurred further progress in the region. Notable examples include the iconic Tolima Conservatory, the Government building, and the arrival of electricity, which boosted urban development. This development also enjoyed the support of both foreign and government architects, who contributed to creating a progressive image for the city at the height of modernism. All of the above can be identified in the city maps registered in 1900.

From the 1930s to the present, according to Ruiz-Guzmán (2018), Francel (2015), and Vargas (2015), the remodeling of the downtown area of the musical capital has been taking place, marked by the regrettable destruction of emblematic architectural works. This period is also characterized by significant changes in the urban distribution of the city, with the inclusion of popular neighborhoods and informal settlements. This demographic transformation was driven by the forced displacement of families due to the violence experienced throughout the department of Tolima. Consequently, this event was followed by slow urban development and the gradual incorporation of new infrastructure in terms of facilities and civil works.

One characteristic of the municipality was the siege it suffered due to armed conflict and violence, which led to the influx of migrants and displaced persons into the urban area. Furthermore, natural events such as the Armero avalanche and the Armenia earthquake, although not mentioned in relation to the urban transformations of Ibagué, did have an impact by

turning the city into a place of welcome for residents from other regions of the country. This enriched the city's cultural life and helped consolidate it as a niche for many people seeking refuge and opportunities to rebuild their lives in a developing city.

In 2001, due to the already evident irregular growth patterns, the city found it necessary to implement a planned structure through the POT (Plan for the Development of Urban Land) and territorial management, as embodied in Municipal Agreement 116 of 2000. This agreement established strategies for the design of access roads and improvements to public spaces, thereby promoting more appropriate land development and positively impacting the quality of life of its residents in the future.

Despite all these efforts, it must be kept in mind that the city continues to experience uncontrolled growth. The lack of urban control has led to the depletion of some environmental resources and limited land development in industrial, commercial, and infrastructure sectors.

5. Conclusion

During colonial times, Ibagué's population was not significant. Its role as a service center and crossroads, coupled with the increase in trade due to the reactivation of the mining industry, enabled the city to remain a transit city. This situation explains Ibagué's initial strategic position: being considered a transit city, it did not arouse much interest from the Spanish Crown. This prevented a push for development in both urban and infrastructure terms, leading to the city's limited territorial reach during this period.

During the Republic, the city maintained its infrastructure and productive model inherited from the previous period. This situation is reflected in urban plans and led to relatively slow territorial transformations. The physical structures, from an urban and architectural perspective, were not characterized by imposing buildings; most homes were single-story, almost always constructed with local materials, although they possessed great value for being rooted in colonial and republican architectural typologies, which are now rare in the founding area.

Similarly, the quadrangular grid remained in use throughout the Republican and Modern periods as part of the municipality's urban layout. However, the city's gradual development, the lack of heritage preservation, and the influence of the prevailing modernism had a negative impact on land use and territorial appropriation. This phenomenon is reflected in the urban transformations from the colonial and republican eras to the present day, which were captured in historical maps, an invaluable resource for describing the city's evolution over time.

Finally, public buildings, especially those built around the park, continue to be distinguished by their sober dimensions and materials, as well as by the restrained use of ornamentation on the homes that make up what is considered the historic center. In the expansion areas, one notices the presence of streets with basic profiles, a lack of amenities, and the excessive expansion of housing. This situation has contributed to a limited urban imagery in terms of territorial development, especially in matters related to urban planning, social growth, and environmental preservation.

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Conflicts of interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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