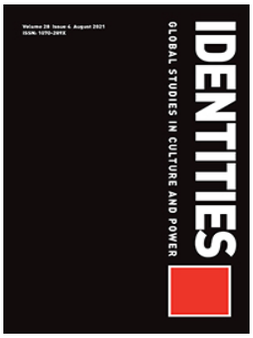

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The governmentality of multiculturalism: from national pluri-ethnicity to urban cosmopolitanism in Bogotá

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ABSTRACT
Using a combination of discourse analysis in policy documents and ethnographic fieldwork, this paper interrogates the relation between Colombia's pluri-ethnic turn and the governance of cosmopolitan multiculturalism in the capital city, Bogotá. Focussing on the city's most important development framework, the POT (Plan de Ordenamiento Territorial), it reveals the controversy that exists between the multicultural discourses of the public administration (rooted in claims of ethno-racial equality and Affirmative Action) and their operationalisation in urban planning. In doing so, the paper conceptualises the *urban governmentality of multiculturalism* as the apparatus through which the municipality has been removing anti-racism and a race-informed understanding of socio-spatial dynamics from Bogotá's official agenda of 'cosmopolitan multiculturalism'. By drawing on Latin American racial theories of *mestizaje*, the paper thus extends the understanding of how neoliberal urban governance, while celebrating cultural diversity, denies the racialisation of space in the city.

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Introduction

Since the colonial invention of 'Latin America' (Mignolo 2005) the institutional politics of managing diversity in the region has often entailed a racial-colonial formula of social organisation and differentiation. Yet, while the coloniality of difference persists in Latin American societies (Mignolo 2000; Grosfoguel 2004), in most recent years virtually all Latin American countries have seen a multicultural and pluri-ethnic turn in their national constitutions. In Colombia, in particular, the constitution of 1991 introduced radical changes for what concerns 'ethnic and cultural diversity' (Republic of Colombia, 1991: art. 7, p. 2), especially for Afro-descendant communities who, unlike

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indigenous citizens, had not yet been officially recognised as an ethnic group (Wade 2010). Above all, the new constitution 'eliminated [the] assimilationism' (Arocha 1998, 70) that had characterised postcolonial nationhood until then.

While the focus of these national changes has mainly been on rural lands, over 82% of Afro-Latin Americans now live in cities (The World Bank 2018). In spite of this, urban studies have yet to engage with several questions regarding pluri-ethnicity in the region.

These have to do, among others, with the construction of ethnic territories beyond the rural; the urbanisation of ethnic groups in the aftermath of violent internal conflicts, forced displacement, structural racism, and ecological extractivism; the growing number of city-born Afro-descendant and Amerindian citizens, whose cultural articulations and political subjectivities constitute new sites from which to interrogate citizenship and placemaking; the social and spatial implications of the previous points in the context of majoritarian white- mestizo cities.

Among the consequences of the points above we can find that urbanism in Latin America has long overlooked, when not outright denied, the role played by racism and racialisation – as two of the clearest examples of the coloniality of managing 'diversity' – in affecting urbandevelopment strategies. My own angle is that this does not merely mark a gap in the understanding of indigenous and Afro-descendant modes of spatial occupation:it is, first and foremost, a gap in the understanding of the Latin American city as a whole, its pluri-ethnic urban histories, everyday transactions, political economies, and possible urban futures.

Consequently, in this paper I ask what the national pluri-ethnic turn has entailed for urban planning frameworks in the predominantly white-mestizo[1] Colombian capital city, Bogotá, in the light of the rapidly changing demographics of its ethnic population. Through a critical analysis of the first *Enfoque Étnico Diferencial* (Ethnic Focus, or Ethnic Approach) in the making of Bogotá's latest Plan for Territorial Organisation (POT),[2] my intention is to reveal the ambiguities inherent to Colombia's pluri-ethnic turn at the urban scale. This approach can shed light on the ways in which the effectiveness of anti-racism and reparative justice is hindered in current neoliberal urban development frameworks and direct towards alternative paths to collectively imagine and shape more socially just and sustainable urban futures.

Methods and objectives

This paper stems from urban ethnography that was carried out in Bogotá between August 2017 and July 2019 and featured 88 semi-structured and in-depth interviews. In particular, here I analyse the data stemming from 16

interviews with Colombian planning officers and other urban experts who have been involved in and in charge of the design and implementation of the first Ethnic Focus in Bogotá's POT. I also analyse local policy documents and the planning practices observed during the fieldwork at the *Secretaría de Planeación Distrital* (Department of City Planning) from a methodological perspective informed by Critical Race Theory.

The interviews for this research were conducted in Spanish in Bogotá, transcribed and translated to English by the author and analysed through a conceptual conjuncture between Latin American race theories of *mestizaje* and multiculturalism and a decolonial reading of Foucault's governmentality (Castro-Gómez and Restrepo 2008).

As the capital city of one of Latin America's most emblematic pluri-ethnic countries and the second for the concentration of Afro-descendant population (after Brazil), Bogotá represents a relevant standpoint to analyse the connection between the city and the nation in the aftermath of Latin America's multicultural turn. While indigenous and black presence in Bogotá has risen over the past two decades, often following the country's internal displacement, research on the articulation between ethnicity, racism and spatial formations has remained surprisingly scarce, with exceptions being usually approached from a quantitative perspective (e.g. Urrea and Botero 2010; Duarte Mayorga *et al*., 2013; Rodríguez Garavito *et al*. 2013; Villamizar 2015; Urrea and Viáfara 2016).

Furthermore, using Bogotá as a field of inquiry is instrumental to provincialising knowledge in urban studies (Sheppard, Leitner, and Maringanti 2013) from an often under-represented Latin American locus of enunciation. This is especially relevant due to the scarcity, at best, of urban debates that conjugate urban policy-making and planning with Critical Race Studies and the Latin American pluri-ethnic turn.

In this sense, the recent experience of Bogotá that I analyse in this paper contributes to questions of how the urban space and the national space unfold relationally in the deployment of multiculturality, how they are inserted into social and cultural global tendencies, and how the articulation of these forces influences the definition of 'belonging' in the twenty-first-century city, beyond the epistemic dominion of Euro-American modern epistemology, debates and case studies.

1. From mestizaje to multiculturalism

The representation of Afro-descendant people in the Colombian nation has started to be thoroughly studied in academia only recently, anticipated by the precursory works of anthropologists like Nina De Friedemann, Jaime Arocha and Peter Wade. Several studies on Afro-Colombian cultural, social

and political formations followed, yet racial injustice and taxonomies persist in Colombia across both rural and urban territories – such as in the racialised socioeconomic 'peripheries', that are simultaneously regional and urban, and in their dystopian depiction in political speeches and cultural imaginaries.

After Independence, the postcolonial era was sanctioned by the constitution of 1886, through which national unity took the image of the republican assimilationist project. Controversially, however, this was also emblematised by the ideology of *blanqueamiento* (whitening), which alleged that superior and inferior 'races' existed naturally and was sustained by practices of 'blood cleansing' (Hering Torres 2010, 130). As Wade (2010, 31) recounts, during that epoch 'ideas about race were crucial elements in discussions about national identity … Latin American elites wanted to emulate the modernity and progress of [European and North American] nations' but they did not accept coming to terms with the more miscegenated nature of their societies.

As a consequence, between the last decades of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century, political discourses in Colombia still largely emphasised the superiority of the 'white race', despite being paradoxically enmeshed into national narratives of *mestizaje* (racial mixture) that ideologically celebrated racial equality under the auspices of a mixed-race national identity. Following Wade (2010), it can be contended that 'the type of mixedness invoked [by *mestizaje*] was often itself biased towards whiteness [and] the whitening of the population' (*Ibidem*: 31). The racial ideology of *mestizaje* was, therefore, as much about difference as it was about equality and as much about particularism and exclusion as it was about universalism and inclusion.

This circumstance is detectable not only at the national level but also at the urban scale. Despite Afro-Colombians never being exogenous in the production of space and culture in the capital city, most of the modern history of Bogotá has represented the city more as the Europhile and white-centric 'Athens of South America' (Zambrano 2002) than as a city where black people belonged to (Mosquera 1998). In spite of this modernist conjecture, research evidence has testified Afro-Colombian presence in the city as early as its colonial foundation in 1538 (Díaz 2001) and that the first migratory waves (mostly of young, educated Afro-Colombians) arrived to Bogotá in the early decades of the twentieth century, often from families who sent their sons to study in the universities of the capital city (Pisano 2012).

Yet the ethnographic evidence that I collected between 2017 and 2019 indicates that Afro-Colombians are often still deemed to be alien bodies in Bogotá. My interlocutors shared several anecdotes about being continuously asked to justify 'where they are *actually* from', thus implying a racialised association between blackness and the *topos* of the non-urban. At the same time, however, Colombia's constitutional turn towards a more pluri-ethnic understanding of national identity has opened new spaces to rethink the

location of blackness in Bogotá. For example, academic scholarship has started to document the statistical (Urrea 2010), historical (Díaz 2001; Pisano 2012) and labour (Ródriguez Garavito *et al*., 2013) invisibility of Afro-descendant urbanites. Nonetheless, the urban planning and governance aspects related to the construction of ethno-racial 'difference' in the city have been considerably less explored.

Here I want to suggest that an urban analysis of Colombia's multiculturalism can add more nuance and depth to the understanding of the relationship between the national pluri-ethnic turn and the neoliberal mode of governance in cities. Notably, it can uncover how an uncritical acceptation of multiculturalism has diverted attention from structural racism in the spaces of the city – much as *mestizaje* used to do. Therefore, in the following sections I explore the tangled relationship between pluri-ethnicity, neoliberalism, urban planning, and racism by focussing on the introduction of new, key frameworks for the deployment of multiculture in urban development strategies.

2. Cosmopolitan re-branding and ambivalent urban imaginaries

In an interview that I carried out at the beginning of my fieldwork, the former Director of the Ethnic Affairs Directorate[3] (EAD) emblematically argued that Bogotá *had* to be multicultural in order to be both progressively cosmopolitan and internationally competitive. The first step in this direction, according to the municipal administration (2016–2019), was to inaugurate what several spokesmen of the Municipality described to me as 'the first anti-racism campaign of Bogotá': #RacisNO.[4] Importantly, this happened only after a case of racial discrimination in Bogotá's upper-class nightlife district *par excellence* – the so-called Zona Rosa – was brought to public attention by the media.

The campaign was launched in July 2018 with a public concert in Bogotá's most emblematic square, where the internationally acclaimed Afro-Colombian music band ChocQuibTown were the guests of honour. Over one year after the launch, however, the results of the campaign were limited to a few Twitter posts and some catchy posters in the city's most affluent and media-visible spaces. Moreover, the pervasive absence of the campaign from the areas of highest Afro-descendant concentration, the lack of municipal interventions under the banner of anti-racism to the benefit of vulnerable urban dwellers, the promotion of anti-racism as an intermittent utterance rather than a sustained social struggle that is also aimed at the improvement of material conditions, and the complete dissociation of the campaign from the long-standing social processes of some

of the major Afro-Colombian organisations based in Bogotá (such as Cimarrón, CNOA and AFRODES) raise concerns about the social and political agenda of #RacisNO.

A similar approach reflects the ambivalence inherent to the simultaneous inclusion and exclusion of Afro-Colombians in the multicultural project of citizenship. In Bogotá, in fact, 'multiculturalism' appears to be a notion limited to a handful of circumscribed geographies that allegedly represent the city as a whole in the cosmopolitan imaginary: from the wealthy urban North-East (in particular, the boroughs of Chapinero and Usaquén, approximately between 53th-134th Street and Avenida Caracas/Autopista Norte), to the financial, university, and government enclaves of the city centre. However, those are urban geographies where Afro-Colombian presence – that is crucial for the multicultural assertions of Bogotá's cosmopolitanism – is either absent, scarce, or limited to unwaged and precarious commuters (Urrea and Viáfara 2016; Villamizar 2015; Rodríguez Garavito *et al*. 2013).

The most recent socioeconomic study of Bogotá's ethnic population that is currently available (i.e. Urrea and Viáfara 2016) shows that the precarity of Afro-Colombians in Bogotá is structural and systemic. Such disadvantage also cuts across virtually all indicators: from access to education, health and the formal labour market, to basic living conditions and housing (*Ibidem*). These forms of exclusion clearly conflict with the 'national branding of Bogotá as a cosmopolitan city and Colombia as a diverse, multicultural nation' (Williams- Castro, 2013: 106).

A similar lack of correspondence between the (anti-racist) narrative and the (racial) social reality is to be found in the first Ethnic Focus (*Enfoque Étnico Diferencial*) of the city's Plan for Territorial Organisation (POT). The latter designates the 'basic tool defined by Law 388 of 1997, by which districts and municipalities can plan and order the territory' (Alcaldía Mayor de Bogotá 2019). It consists of 'politics, strategies, objectives, programmes, operations and norms that address the physical development of the territory and the land use' (*Ibidem*).

The current POT dates back to 2004 and several attempts to renew the planning framework have subsequently failed. However, since the first half of 2019 a new POT has been under review. While the construction of Bogotá's overdue first metro and the economic and ecological extractivism of the private real estate industry in the city's Eastern mountains have been among the most debated themes of the new POT, what is particularly interesting from the perspective of multiculturalism is the process that set the ground for the POT's first Ethnic Focus.

As the Director of the Equity and Population Policy Directorate[5] (EPPD) of the Department of City Planning[6] (DCP) told me in an interview, this was the first 'successful attempt' of the Municipality to include 'vulnerable groups', or 'special groups', in the first phase (Analysis) of the POT-making

process, in order to draw up the lines of its Affirmative Action plan.[7] As more interviews with the local administration revealed, these groups included ethnic minorities but also 'women, members of the LGBTI community, victims of the internal conflict, tall and short people [*sic*], disabled people, informal vendors, the homeless, and children, among others', as one of the municipal officers in charge of the plan told me.

Such an omni-directional broadening of the meaning of multiculturalism deserves further attention. By coming to include an amalgam of 'special groups' with no common historical genealogy nor similar experiences of 'difference', the Ethnic Focus was depleted of any ethnic specificity and, consequently, of political contention. In the current 'post-racial' era, a similar approach is not unique to Colombia. As Lentin (2011, 163) poignantly argues, '[t]he relativisation of the experience of racism which characterises post-racialism is accompanied by a focus on diversity that blurs the specificity of a variety of marginalised experiences by collectively labelling them 'diverse''. This form of inclusion by dilution ultimately waters down the specificities of the Afro-Colombian urban condition in Bogotá, thus concealing the racialisation of the urban space and the structural socioeconomic inequality that affects ethnic minorities in the city.

Furthermore, planning officers from the EPPD reaffirmed that this was the first instance of a connection between DCP and Afro-descendant communities in Bogotá. A senior officer from the EAD meaningfully told me in an interview that 'the POT has been developed in complete disarticulation with Afro-Colombian communities. Ethnic groups are not taken into account at the time of the formulation of the POT['s urban agenda] despite having been part of the urban territory, in some cases for a long time. [In the Municipality,] Afro-Colombians are called "land invaders," and we are told that we have "to get the blacks out" [of a territory] because otherwise we cannot develop the big urban projects.'

In other words, ethnic communities are seen as liabilities for the state and the market's agendas of turning land into a monetizable commodity. Nevertheless, this approach is only one among those embraced by the neoliberal planning regime in Bogotá. In some cases, the outright expropriation and physical expulsion of undesirable dwellers became increasingly more unfitting to preserve the image of Bogotá as a progressive and cosmopolitan city, as well as 'the symbol of Colombia's modernity, stability, and global status, play[ing] a significant role in countering [the] image [of Colombia] as a violent country run by narco-traffickers, mafiosos, and armed groups' (Williams Castro 2013, 106).

Here is where the ambivalence of multiculturalism comes into play: by shifting both the assimilationist approach of *mestizaje* and the discriminatory approach of expulsions to the more functional approach of multiculturality. Hale (2005) aptly denominates this approach 'neoliberal multiculturalism', by

stating: 'Encouraged and supported by multilateral institutions, Latin American elites have moved from being vehement opponents to reluctant arbiters of rights grounded in cultural difference' (*Ibidem*: 13). Far from constituting a paradox to the aggressive primacy of capital and individualism that is typical of the neoliberal economic way of life, neoliberal multiculturalism thus intercepts and capitalises upon cultural diversity.

What is crucial in this approach is *regulation*, as the ability to redirect the social energies (of social movements as well as individuals) that emerge from political contention towards a focus on 'cultural rights' and 'cultural diversity', rather than towards structural racism and social justice.

To ground this concept into an empirical example, let us turn our gaze once more to the POT. Amidst increasing pressure from Afro-Colombian social organisations and human rights activists, legal frameworks derived from TA 55/1991 and Law 70/1993 and a global turn towards postmodern multiculturalism, Bogotá *had* to become officially multicultural, as we already saw through the words of the former EAD Director. However, the modalities of this turn ensured that only an accurately *regulated* degree of ethnic participation entered the making of the POT.

For example, while the POT serves to orientate the next fifteen years of urban growth in a city of over eight million inhabitants, with an exponential shortage of social housing and considerable socio-spatial inequality between ethnic and non-ethnic populations, only six Afro-Colombian urbanites were interrogated in the study, during only one workshop of about one hour.[8]

The overall study also involved other 'special groups' and took place over a timeframe of five months, featuring an average of three focal groups per week. The timeline of the study was described by the architect (i.e. the external contractor in charge of the workshops) as 'very short, almost a marathon'. All workshops, regardless of the different special group they were targeting, shared the same blueprint (i.e. questions, methodology, approach), thus further corroborating the Municipality's omni-directional approach to 'diversity.'

Another relevant consideration deals with the body of knowledge on which the Ethnic Focus hinged or, rather, did not. On the one hand, the multiple academic studies and reports that have been published over the past three decades on racial injustice in the city were, with one exception (i.e. Urrea and Viáfara 2016), knowingly ignored by the municipal officers. Similarly, Afro-Colombian long-standing community initiatives, social organisations, multiple instances of social mobilisation, and their requests to consider alternative *planes de vidas* (collective 'life projects') were neither interrogated nor invited to contribute to the workshops.

On the other hand, nobody among the six Afro-Colombian participants lived in a district of the city with a high Afro-descendant concentration:[9] neither in terms of historically black districts (e.g. Casablanca, in the borough of Kennedy) nor of 'new' black districts that feature recurring waves of internally displaced Afro-Colombians (e.g. Altos de Cazuca).

Consequently, the many intersectional experiences of racism (as this convergences with gender, class, regionalism, colourism, age, internal displacement, etc.) in Bogotá's urban space were only marginally accounted for. When I asked about this methodological problem, the architect simply replied: 'We did not have time to select participants in areas of high Afro-descendant concentration. We did not have a very clear control of the sample'.

The missed opportunity to involve both diverse Afro-Colombian communities and actual experts on racial dynamics in the city had a considerable impact on the reliability and diversity of the data collected in the study. Perhaps most importantly, it also negatively impacted the possibility to analyse and convert such data into a meaningful political agenda that locates anti-racism and a race-informed understanding of spatial justice at the centre of urban planning and development. Vice versa, this umpteenth instance of missed civic participation is likely to contribute to the already feeble trust of ethnic communities in the urban government.

Starting from the collection of data from the six Afro-descendant residents involved in the workshop, the Municipality and the architect formulated a matrix of the major challenges affecting black residents in Bogotá: (a) precarious living conditions and difficulty in accessing housing; (b) the lack of community space and shared facilities; (c) precarious working conditions and limited job offers; (d) racial discrimination and segregation.[10] From the perspective of urban governance and planning, points (a), (b) and (d) stand out.

Notably, the racial dimension of urban segregation, that did emerge from the Afro-descendant focus group as one of their four main concerns, was not further discussed in the POT. In fact, the EPPD-DCP and the architect told me that 'racial discrimination and segregation in the city are a *cultural* theme, which transcends the scope of the POT' (emphasis added). The risk of a de-racialised adoption of the Ethnic Focus in Bogotá's urban planning and development is further testified by the architect's suggestion of providing '*designed* intercultural spaces [that can] humanise the "unknown"' (emphasis added), where architectural heritage can represent all cultures and thus constitute a 'humane environment for happy cities'.

In other words, the Municipality transfigured racial discrimination and segregation into merely cultural matters. By the same token, these were deemed by the architect to be promptly solvable through the design of physical infrastructures. Indeed, the architect defined the workshops that underpinned the POT's Ethnic Focus as 'methodologically innovative, [as

they] *translate human problems into square metres*' (emphasis added). Such a deterministic approach to social problems reverberates in many more cases of contemporary urbanism around the world, where metropolitan cities 'have become strategically crucial geographical areas [for the articulation of] a variety of neoliberal initiatives' (Brenner and Theodore (2002): 349).

A similar approach also calls for a relevant parallel with formulae of physical determinism elsewhere in Latin America, such as the 'social urbanism' phenomenon of Medellín's 'miracle' (The Economist 2014). In both cities, in fact, (public and private) market-driven urban developments and regeneration projects that focus on 'square metres' were dissimulated behind the surface claim of 'solving urgent social problems'. Such a materialistic attitude towards the understanding of complex historical and socioeconomic conjunctures resonates in the de-racialised multiculturalism in Bogotá. There, attention is carefully diverted away from a political and socio-economic understanding of 'race'. Instead, it is confined to the realm of culture.

Furthermore, the racialisation of black bodies and Afro-Colombian districts is deemed to be a matter of 'psycho-social stress' alone, as the architect told me:

' . . . a network of fears, hatred, racism, classism. And the result is that "the stranger" is perceived as an unreliable person. There is a kind of fear of the "other" . . . Therefore, any person who is a bit different – afros, indigenous, the LGBTI community, etc. – feels a bit of hostility and denial. From a psychological perspective, when a person has an aversion toward a stranger, for example, because he is black, in some way it is because that person does not know him. Therefore we must expose the human side of the "other". This can be attained through the design of public parks, where *afro* culture can be expressed, [such as] through dance . . . where *afro* culture can come out and show up.'

From here, a series of initial considerations can be sketched. First of all, it is pertinent to reflect on the lack of data to sustain something as substantial as the first Ethnic Focus in the main urban framework for the territorial development of a capital city like Bogotá. For example, the study involved randomly selecting Afro-Colombian informants, limiting their participation to six people in a workshop of only about one hour, and structuring the workshop with essentialising inquiries (e.g. 'does your ethnicity have a particular way of inhabiting space?') or uninformed questions that neglect the systematic displacements undergone by Afro-Colombians in the country and within the city (e.g. 'what was your relationship with your current neighbourhoods two decades ago?').

Second, the systemic blindness to the structural racism that underpins the dominant spatial epistemology in Bogotá clearly emerged in the assertion that 'race' is solely a cultural matter. This attitude brings to mind Hale's (2018, 507) cautionary tale against the widespread tendency in Latin American post-

racialism to 'take [culture] as innocent and transparent'. This culturalist approach to racism gets ultimately explained by the white-mestizo urban dwellers' 'fear of the unknown,' as the architect put it. Such a fear, according to the architect, can be overcome through the designed performance of '*afro* dances' [*sic*], among other non-antagonistic performances in the public realm of the city. Emblematically, the same public space that was described by the workshop participants to daily marginalise them and violate their human rights. A similar mindset also mirrors what Chantal Mouffe (2000: 20) defines as the 'liberal evasion of the political,' that is 'the typical liberal illusion of a pluralism without antagonism' (*Ibidem*: 21) which denies historical relations of power and racial subordination.

Third, ethnic concentrations and everyday racism across the city are conceived here as a matter of autonomous congregation and social misunderstanding, respectively, rather than the outcome of a long-standing social, physical and symbolic system of racialised inequality and spatialised power dynamics.

Finally, it is timely to highlight that the working definition of spatial or urban segregation used in the current POT was not clarified by the Municipality.[11] The interviews that I conducted between 2017 and 2018, however, adumbrate the likelihood that a merely class-based understanding (i.e. one that denies the racial factors underlying spatial segregation) obdurately persists.

3. The urban governmentality of multiculturalism

Colombian decolonial philosopher Santiago Castro-Gómez and anthropologist Eduardo Restrepo (Castro-Gómez and Restrepo 2008) jointly looked at the genealogy of 'Colombianness' (*Colombianidad*) from the perspective of the ambivalence inherent to the postcolonial project of nation-building. With the term *Colombianidad*, they refer to the creation of the post-independence Colombian nation on the basis of a process of 'internal colonialism' and of 'biopolitical appropriation and ordering of the population in the territory' (*Ibidem*: 40).

As we started to see in Section 1, both processes were underpinned by the idea of 'race,' to the extent that post-independence democracy was actually a form of elitist white hegemony that worked in two ways. First, as 'a discursive practice of distinction and differentiation of the national creole elite' from the rest of the population (*Ibidem*). Second, as the articulation of ideologies of racial mixture that simultaneously unified and differentiated the national population (*Ibidem*). In other words, in the biopolitical project of the modern, postcolonial Colombian nation 'race' acted as an internal mechanism of social regulation, to simultaneously differentiate (hierarchise) and homogenise (civilise).

In order to analyse the evidence presented in Section 2 and further explore how the Colombian capital city has recently appropriated the national pluri-ethnic turn through its planning frameworks, I draw on Castro-Gómez and Restrepo (2008) reading of Foucault's governmentality in the biopolitical project of nationhood. In doing so, I seek to start conceptualising the notion of *urban governmentality of multiculturalism* as the system of institutional imaginaries and regulatory practices through which cosmopolitan multiculturalism, in Bogotá, has become a mode of biopolitical governance aimed at controlling ethno-racial diversity through urban policy and development frameworks while, at the same time, diverting attention from structural racism in the space of the city.

I understand the urban governmentality of multiculturalism as an apparatus postulated on the financialization of culture, people and land through which neoliberal urban planning regulates 'diversity' in space. It is a mode of governance aimed at controlling diversity rather than enhancing it, while not granting equality to all ethnic groups. What emerges, in fact, is that the recent embracing of cultural difference – through multicultural narratives that capitalise upon the growing presence of Afro-Colombians in Bogotá – has overshadowed the systemic, socioeconomic disadvantage of ethnic populations and their political demands for visibility, reparatory justice and recognition.

On the one hand, Afro-descendant denizens have had a crucial role in the urban project of the governmentality of multiculturalism in Bogotá. As Mosquera (2010) points out, the capital city is seen as 'the regional metropolis par excellence . . . that presents itself as progressive and inclusive from the perspective of social public policies for diversity . . . In this sense, black presence is an added value for the local institutions, as it "puts colour" on the programmes they offer' (*Ibidem*: 616).

On the other hand, we have seen through the words of a senior officer at EAD that ethnic communities are seen as liabilities in Bogotá, because they hinder urban development strategies that could otherwise turn land into a monetizable commodity. To this end, the urban governmentality of multiculturalism becomes a powerful tool for the Municipality to simultaneously obey by constitutional law (e.g., the requirement to include Ethnic Focus plans in urban development strategies) and ensure that 'diversity' is constrained and managed, while multiculturalism is intercepted and capitalised upon by the urban elite. In this way, cultural and economic capital is extracted from Afro-Colombian presence in the city while removing political anti-racism from the agenda of multiculturality.

Finally, the regime of neoliberal cosmopolitanism that underlies this mode of governance has initiated a culture of manipulation and reification of ethnic identities in the city. These are often absorbed by the neoliberal economic culture and translated into marketable goods for the cultural industry of the city: from cosmopolitan slogans on Bogotá being 'the melting pot of

Colombia,' to the proliferation of white-mestizo shops that sell *artesanías étnicas* (ethnic handicrafts). As Achille Mbembe notes in his reading of Comaroff and Comaroff's 'Ethnicity Inc.' (2009), 'spaces of culture are no longer just aesthetic spaces; they are also commercial spaces . . . culture is more and more understood as "heritage", "custom", "the ancestral", . . . marks of otherness (now called culture, identity, and authenticity) and even meaning itself are more and more exchanged, valued, and allocated as a function of the market' (Mbembe 2021, 25).

4. Towards new urban multiculturalisms?

Through the case of the POT's first Ethnic Focus, I have explicitly sought to highlight how Bogotá exemplifies the unfinished project of multiculturalism in many pluri-ethnic Latin American cities, where metropolitan narratives on the convivial co-existence of difference find themselves at odds with the social reality of racial discrimination and the everyday experiences of its most marginalised inhabitants. In particular, I have showed how cosmopolitan multiculturalism has so far failed to recognise and account for the racism that underpins the systemic inequality of Bogotá's urban society.

In calling for a truly pluri-ethnic deployment of citizenship, it is indispensable to caution against any essentialist and anti-historical idea of multiculturalism that portrays itself as the mere site for the physical proximity of difference, where 'culture', 'race' and 'ethnicity' non-contentiously juxtapose within a given designed space.

While this is not the place to assess what a better multiculturalism could look like for Latin American cities, it is opportune to reflect on the idea of interculturalism proposed by the UNESCO as a way of accounting for a contemporary 'world of movements, contacts, exchanges and negotiations that give rise to dynamic and flexible identities and cultures, neither static not rigid' (in Aristizábal Giraldo 2000). While such fluidity has undoubtedly opened spaces for anti-racist political organisation and the resignification of collective identities, it has often failed to account for the surviving legacy of racial oppression, dispossession and social hierarchisation.

Les Back (2019) suggests that the 'metropolitan paradox' of urban multiculturalism has 'no positive resolution' and that the 'tension between racism and multiculture' that shapes such paradox requires to embrace ambivalence (*Ibidem*: 193). Indeed, postcolonial and decolonial theorists have amply shown that contemporary spaces of coloniality are ambivalent spaces of encounter and conflict, of simultaneous celebration and suppression of different histories, identities and modes of inhabiting space, of desire and violence, of life and terror.

While I concur that unlocking the modalities of visibility of these spaces – and of the bodies and epistemes that inhabit and produce them – can arguably contribute to overcome Back's (2019) 'metropolitan paradox,' it seems necessary to simultaneously expose, invalidate and transcend those narratives and modes of governance that, through the urban governmentality of multiculturalism, often represent new regimes of coloniality in disguise.

However, I want to conclude by rescuing a hopeful sense that Latin America's pluri-ethnic and multicultural turn can actually help us to overcome the current neoliberal urban trend, rather than being merely exploited by it. As Arturo Escobar indicates, in principle Latin American 'policies of interculturality, pluri-nationality, decoloniality and *buen vivir* (good living for all)' have been conceived on the basis of 'a relationalontology that decentres the neoliberal obsessions with individuality, nature-culture dichotomies, capitalised abstractions of space and the primacy of the market' (in Edensor and Jayne 2012, 15).

While, in this paper, I have instrumentally analysed such policies, ontologies and epistemes from a state perspective, it is crucial to highlight one fundamental aspect of multiculturalism: in Colombia, as elsewhere, this was not merely attained thanks to the state (Escobar 2008, 212–13) but through the collective efforts of an intertwined and heterogenous civil-social infrastructure that, to a great extent, has been centred upon the work of black and indigenous social movements (Grueso, Escobar, and Rosero 1998). Furthermore, the collective and individual ethnic identities emerged since the 1990s have, since then, evolved in fluid ways that the state itself 'was unable to control' (Escobar 2008, 213).

It is perhaps through this assemblage of multiple civil-social, governmental and non- governmental alliances that more socially just and plural urban multiculturalism*s* can be unlocked, as new spaces of anti-racist imagination to radically rethink urban agendas and the spatial politics of 'difference' in the twenty-first-century Latin American city.

Conclusion

Starting from the acknowledgement that the urban space has consistently remained in the background of critical investigations on race and ethnicity in Latin America, this article has sought to shed light on the necessity to look at national pluri-ethnicity from the urban. In particular, it asked what the Colombian multicultural shift has entailed for urban planning frameworks in the predominant white-mestizo capital city of Bogotá.

With a situated urban approach, the article exposed the ambivalence of multicultural political ideologies and post-racial discourses in Colombia and Latin America, as these suggest the dismantling of racial hierarchies and discrimination while simultaneously reproducing the 'modernist homogenisation' of *mestizaje* (Wade 2010[1997]: 483). It identified such an ambivalence at the urban scale, revealing the ambiguities through which Colombia's pluri-ethnic turn was appropriated in Bogotá by means of municipal campaigns, urban narratives and development frameworks.

This article thus contributes to a more thorough and critical understanding of urban development agendas under cosmopolitan multiculturalism. It suggests that the latter obscures material and political ethnic struggles through an approach that reduces racism to cultural difference. In addition, it shows that, while Bogotá's neoliberal urbanism and elites intercept ethnic, cultural and social capital to monetise multiculturalism, they also accurately regulate and control 'diversity,', thus making it accessory rather than structural. It then conceptualises these dynamics as the *urban governmentality of multiculturalism*. Finally, it sketches out the possibility for new urban multiculturalism*s* to emerge from Latin America's pluri-ethnic ontological turn – which, in the city, has yet to be fully incorporated and explored.

We can conclude that the spatialisation of racial injustice in Bogotá can hardly be solved as a mere matter of partial inclusivity and regulated cultural diversity, as the Municipality's cosmopolitan multiculturalism has envisioned so far. First and foremost, it necessitates the recognition of difference as equity and of the long-standing presence of racial-colonial patterns in urban space and planning.

Notes

1 Numerically (79.2% of Bogotá's population self-identified as white-mestizo, in the 2005 Census) but also in terms of the cultural, political, social, and economic hegemony of the city.
2 At the moment of writing this paper, the last approved POT is that of 2004 and the new POT (to which this article refers) is still waiting approval.
3 Sub-Director de Asuntos Étnicos, Secretaría de Gobierno.
4 In truth, this campaign was preceded by a similar attempt under the previous administration of Mayor Gustavo Petro and by national campaigns such as the *Campaña Nacional Contra el Racismo* (2009), the *Hora Contra el Racismo* and the *Ponga la Cara al Racismo* (2016), that were part of the United Nations' *International Decade of Afrodescendants* (2015–2024).
5 Dirección de Equidad y Políticas Poblacionales.
6 Secretaría de Planeación Distrital.

7 In Article 13 of the 1991 Constitution, Affirmation Action is conceived as a set of temporary measures, in favour of marginalised or discriminated groups, that the State must adopt to promote the necessary conditions for real equality. In Bogotá, AA plans are now a mandatory procedure for all urban planning frameworks.
8 Source: interviews (September 2017 and July 2018) with officers of the DCP and with the external contractor (architect) in charge of the POT's Ethnic Focus.
9 Data provided by the DCP officers.
10 Source: interviews and technical reports provided by the DCP and the architect, July 2018.
11 Communications with the EPPD-DCP urban officers failed to provide any working definition.

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