CIRCASIA: Engaging the creeks

The design proposal focuses on how to redefine the relation of the settlements with one of the urban creeks in Circasia, allowing residents and visitors to enjoy this green corridor, creating a network of compelling public spaces and addressing environmental issues.
Location

Circasia is a small coffee growing town embedded in an exuberant natural context, located in the Colombian Andes. It is part of a much larger territory designated by UNESCO a World Heritage Site, as a “Coffee Cultural Landscape”
Historic growth

Creeks and ravines in the Latin American Landscape were not considered by the Spanish Laws of the Indies. 500 years later, urban growth still turn its back to these ravines using them to dispose of trash and wastewater.
Circasia’s Masterplan

A master plan was designed in order to determine potential areas of intervention for Circasia’s future. The proposed interventions range from small housing developments to rural gateways and coffee institution.
City / Countryside interface

Deteriorated, open, natural spaces traverse the city in the form of creeks. The extreme topography has contributed to maintain the land vacant offering intervention opportunities. The edges are a key element in the future plans for Circasia.
**Plan**

The intervention strengthen the relation between the surrounding natural assets and Circasia. New connections are created between the principal urban amenities such as the Cemetery, the museum, the sports center and the main plaza.
Plan

The creeks become areas of social interaction, establishing compelling connections with the natural systems. The ravines can be used as open spaces for recreation, incorporating low impact mobility (for pedestrians and bikers), fostering habitat protection and water conservation.
**Bird’s eye view**

Proposed open spaces provide opportunities for leisure and interaction with nature. The intensity of human use fades away and it is replaced by the natural processes of biodiversity. The creek becomes an interface where the urban and the natural coexist.
Parque de la vida
This park, which is today a vacant lot used to dispose of construction debris facilitates local festivities such as the “Carnaval de la Libertad” and the “Cabalgatas”. It also provides access to a new theater, programmed by the local government.
Circasia turns its back to the ravines disposing of trash and wastewater.

Poorer communities informally occupy the creeks, under risky conditions, as the settlements are prone to flooding and landslides.

*Existing conditions: the back*

Inaccessibility to the creeks and the lack of “defendable eyes on these green corridors” make them crime-prone areas. In many cases the steep topography and the risk of flooding have contributed to maintain the land vacant and thus it is today available for creative interventions,
Proposal: the edge

Redefine the seam between the city and the creeks, turn the urban fabric onto the green corridors, improve visibility and connections across the creeks. It is the access to self-constructed mixed-use areas and recreational open spaces.
Incremental housing

Circasia’s housing is mainly informal, low rise and self-constructed. Incremental housing is an economic way for low income families to become owners. In time, houses grow and produce an income. Structural engineering advisory is needed to help unexperienced builders.
Typological section through the creek

The specific design proposal focuses on how to redefine the relation of the settlements with one of the urban creeks in Circasia, allowing residents and visitors to enjoy this green corridor, creating a network of compelling public spaces and addressing environmental issues.
Media center section

By using the topographic conditions, communal facilities, civic amenities and institutions serve as stewards and activators of the enabled public spaces.
### Circasia: engaging the creeks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Plant Name</th>
<th>Common Name</th>
<th>Height</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cecropia</td>
<td>Yarumo / Guarumo</td>
<td>10 to 20 m</td>
<td>grows spontaneously in local riparian environments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Erythrina Poeppigiana</td>
<td>Pisamo / Cambulo</td>
<td>higher than 20 m</td>
<td>grows spontaneously in local riparian environments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jacaranda Caucana</td>
<td>Gualanday</td>
<td>higher than 18 m</td>
<td>recommended for creating shaded environments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Juglans Neotropica</td>
<td>Cedro Negro / Nogal</td>
<td>higher than 20 m</td>
<td>native to the coffee cultural landscape area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Terminalia Catappa</td>
<td>Almendro</td>
<td>10 to 20 m</td>
<td>recommended as a street tree. It also grows in silty soils</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tabebuia Rosea</td>
<td>Guayacan rosado</td>
<td>20 to 30 m</td>
<td>not native. Used for soil regeneration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tabebuia Chrysanthia</td>
<td>Guayacan amarillo</td>
<td>up to 35 m</td>
<td>prefers well drained, silty soils</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cassia Grandis</td>
<td>Canafistulo</td>
<td>5 to 10 m</td>
<td>used for shading coffee crops</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guadua Angustifolia</td>
<td>Guadua</td>
<td>higher than 18 m</td>
<td>grows spontaneously in riparian environments. Grown as construction material.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syagrus Sanconia</td>
<td>Palma Real</td>
<td>higher than 20 m</td>
<td>Ornamental</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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