Preface

As a design and planning scholar, I am deeply interested in urban histories and what the cities of the Global South have to teach us about urban development. As I began the research for this book, I sought a case study of sustainable urban development (SUD)—development that prioritizes careful resource use in urban areas based on the belief that dense, compact growth of human settlements is the best option for living within resource limits—somewhere in the Global South. While there were plenty of SUD case studies published on European and American examples, I wanted to develop a case in an area of the world experiencing rapid development and, I hoped, creating new strategies. The Global South, where the majority of population growth, city formation, and urban expansion will occur during the twenty-first century, is just such a crucial geography to examine and learn from. As I narrowed my focus, Bogotá, Colombia, emerged as a unique choice. Because the city had recently undergone profound changes, I decided to go to Bogotá to investigate the transformation, examine its significance, and understand how and why it happened.

In 2005, I arrived in Bogotá for the first time, looking for an SUD case study, but I found something more. While the city had many environmental policies "on the books,"

much of the actual innovation and recent improvements centered on decisions on urban design and planning related to social life and political reformation—these were the innovations I decided to study. Via a series of borrowed urbanisms—urbanism models from other cities, combined with the will and vision of charismatic leaders and the local context and circumstances—the city had transformed. Over the years, I have built an understanding of the ethos underlying the city's changes. Because of the inductive process of my examination, it is possible to think that this study is restricted to Bogotá, yet, as I will demonstrate, Bogotá's story has much to say about urban-development narratives and cities in general in the twenty-first century—from public spaces as sites of educational encounter and cities as teaching examples, to the importance of legibility and comprehensibility in urban environments.

In doing the research for this book, I specifically sought to understand the transformation of Bogotá throughout the 1990s and the first decade of the 2000s via the reinvention of the physical fabric of the city and the parallel social developments that occurred. In investigating these changes, I established a timeline and a sense of scale around key twentieth-century events for the city and the country. First and foremost, the city and country continue to be shaped by forces that emerged in colonial times. These structuring elements, which I present in the book, profoundly affected the possibilities for growth and development in the twentieth century in Colombia; many remain as challenges for city governance today in the main cities, especially in Bogotá, the capital.

Also, the first and second halves of the twentieth century in Bogotá were very different from one another; 1948 represents a key rupture in the imaginary and reality of Bogotá, the point when the country's longstanding civil war was ignited by an assassination. Turning to the second half of the twentieth century, as the decades progressed a lack of governance and of planning slowly grew, and there was no effective action taken to counter the rapid growth and informal expansion of the city. While some planning did occur, it clearly did not feel significant because residents I interviewed talked about a "black hole" and the "lost" decades of the 1970s through the 1990s. With the advent of mayoral elections in 1988, however, the city's fortunes began to change. The political decentralization movement that swept much of Latin America in the 1980s and 1990s created a profound shift within Bogotá, setting in motion the transformation of the city that I examine here. In particular, I focus on the catalytic mayoral administrations of Antanas Mockus Šivickas (1995–1997, 2001–2003) and Enrique Peñalosa Londoño (1998–2000), whom I term the "public space mayors."

The nuances of this story were elucidated through extensive fieldwork and a deep understanding built over time. In my research I used a mixed methodological approach, employing a combination of public space—user surveys, formal and informal interviews, content analysis, and participant observation. One of the most important components of this approach was a survey of 465 users, half visitors and half vendors, in the city's public spaces—formal and informal—that I conducted in 2006 with the help of four

Bogotano graduate students. I designed the methodology to provide an analysis and interpretation of public space use, citizen reaction to and engagement with the city, and perceptions of leadership by the mayors and their support staff.

My intention with this book is to evaluate this significant instance of urban development in the Global South, an example in which two mayors transformed Bogotá socially, culturally, and physically through the regeneration of the city's public urban environment in the space of a few years. What is especially notable about Mockus and Peñalosa, the two main protagonists in this story, is that they were not lifelong politicians. They did not come from political dynasties nor entrenched interests. They were critical intellectuals who stepped in at a strategic moment for the city, and for the country. Their administrations provided a fateful, positive pivot in the city's history. While the city transformed through their leadership, in their absence the legacy has begun to unravel. While they made significant changes in the public landscape of the city, these changes alone could not rectify its long-standing inequalities and gradually developed patterns of social life.

Bogotá has garnered particular interest in recent years in English- and Spanish-language presses. The city's story is complicated and, because of this, there are many contradictions, not all of which are easy to resolve or even to report on. There are a handful of examinations of Bogotá that have been published during and following my investigation that I wish to highlight here. While the city has been discussed and visited often, comprehensive analyses of it have been slow to appear. One exception is Gerard Martin and Miguel Ceballos's *Bogotá: Anatomía de una transformación, políticas de seguridad ciudadana 1995–2003* (2004), published by Javeriana University and the City of Bogotá, an instructive examination that frames and analyzes the Mockus and Peñalosa administrations through the lens of citizen security and public safety, analyzing policy outcomes from the mayoral administrations. A second Spanishlanguage book, *La transformación de Bogotá 1995–2000, entre redefinición ciudadana y especial*, by Ricardo Montezuma (2003), published by Bogotá's Fundación Ciudad Humana, is a short work that analyzes and presents mayoral policy for the first two of the public space mayors' three administrations. It is largely celebratory.

More recently, two books present journalistic accounts of cities' transformation in a contemporary context. In both cases, the authors dedicate a chapter to Bogotá. They are *Happy City: Transforming Our Lives through Urban Design*, by Charles Montgomery (Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2013), and *Radical Cities: Across Latin America in Search of a New Architecture*, by Justin McGuirk (Verso, 2014). Montgomery proposes Bogotá as one example of a "happy city"—a multi-use, transit-rich city—with Peñalosa positioned as a heroic character. McGuirk's book opens with a useful examination of the changing role of architects and the history of social housing in Latin America. In his chapter on Bogotá, McGuirk focuses primarily on Mockus's time in office. He does, however, acknowledge that Mockus and Peñalosa together had a synergistic effect on the city, a point that Martin and Ceballos, as well as I, also argue.

This book, then, presents a comprehensive history and assessment of the city's recent urban development, offering a unique interpretation of the city's transformation through the lens of new types of public space and visible innovations in policy and governance. It expands on the limited number of comprehensive studies of Latin American cities in English, positioning the case of Bogotá within a global context and engaging the intersection between design, public policy, and urban studies through multiple angles of analysis. The story begins by framing twentieth-century Colombian and Bogotano history and the structural issues that led to dystopian conditions in Bogotá—conditions that the public space mayors faced head on. It then transitions from the rise of independent mayors to a history of the city's public space and the story of the "city as project." Then, using specific projects initiated by the mayors to illustrate key points, the book interprets the significance of Bogotá's transformation, including lessons for cities in general. Via the epilogue, the book presents one future for Bogotá as city government currently imagines it, as well as possible next steps as the mayoral office turns over again.