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Textures of Transition: Understanding Memorial Spaces in Medellin, Colombia

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Title: Textures of Transition: Understanding Memorial Spaces in Medellin, Colombia

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The past decade has welcomed a surge in the creation of memory and human rights museums with existing scholarship linking concepts of transitional justice and the rush to memorialize. The role of symbolic reparation in transitional justice through memorials in Latin America, in particular, is increasingly prominent at both local and international scales, ranging from recommendations outlined by the Inter-American court system to the state-funded construction of memory sites in rural communities.

Colombia, home to the longest ongoing civil conflict in the Americas and currently in transition towards peace, presents unique approaches to symbolic reparation. Apart from land restitution and financial support issued to victims, changes to the visual landscape warrant more investigation. The research behind this work surveys commemoration in Medellin, Colombia, considering who generates memorials, such as murals, sculptures, and museums, which address civil conflict. Presenting research on four sites of commemoration within and surrounding Medellin, Colombia, the poster highlights field notes and semi-structured interviews. The four sites include: the Museo Casa de la Memoria (Memory House Museum) of Medellin, the San Javier cemetery La America, the Salon de Nunca Mas (Hall of Never Again) of nearby rural Granada and the sculpture entitled "N.N." in front of the Leon de Greiff Library-Park near downtown Medellin. Giving particular attention to spatial relationships through qualitative methods, the work draws primarily upon scholarship from museum studies and the geography of memory and memorialization. Placing the four sites in conversation allows not only for a comparison of degrees of community and institutionalization but also design aesthetics and the integration of the distinct painful histories behind the four sites before transforming into commemorative spaces.