THE LONDON SCHOOL
OF ECONOMICS AND
POLITICAL SCIENCE ■

LSE Research Online

Austin Zeiderman

Living dangerously: biopolitics and urban citizenship in Bogotá, Colombia

Article (Accepted version)
(Refereed)

http://eprints.lse.ac.uk

AUSTIN ZEIDERMAN

London School of Economics and Political Science

Living dangerously:

Biopolitics and urban citizenship in Bogotá, Colombia

[ab]What happens when the rights of urban citizens are reconfigured by the biopolitical imperative to protect life from threats? I examine such situations by focusing on how the emergence of risk as a technique of government shapes urban politics in Bogotá, Colombia. Investigating the frames of political engagement within which claims for recognition, inclusion, and entitlement are made, I argue that it is within the domain of biopolitical security that poor and vulnerable populations engage in relationships with the state. [*risk, rights, security, urban governance, biopolitics, cities, citizenship*]

[dc]Patterns of urbanization are currently undergoing major transformations on a global scale, with profound political consequences. In response, the "right to the city" is gaining importance, both as an analytical framework for examining how cities become the stage for citizenship struggles (Holston 1999a) and as a political ideal around which to organize demands for greater democratic control over urban space (Harvey 2008; Lefebvre 1996).[1] Where liberal democratic theory has proven inadequate to the task of comprehending the political reality faced by much of the world's population (Chatterjee 2011), the "right to the city" has helped to illuminate the emergence of new forms of political subjectivity and collectivity. This does not mean, however, that the "right to the city" has come to dominate urban politics everywhere, for changing definitions of rights and citizenship are continually recasting the terms within which claims for

recognition, inclusion, and entitlement can be made. In this article, I consider what happens when logics of biopolitical security reconfigure the terrain of political engagement between states and their subjects.[2]

Security, as Daniel Goldstein (2010) observes, is globally ascendant as a paradigm for organizing social and political life, and Latin America is a particularly good place to analyze its entanglement with democracy and neoliberalism (Arias and Goldstein 2010; Caldeira 2000; Jones and Rodgers 2009; O'Neill and Thomas 2011). This is especially true in Colombia, nominally Latin America's oldest democracy, where decades of violent conflict combined with (and fueled by) neoliberal reforms have subordinated citizenship to security (Ramírez 2010; Rojas 2009). While some conflicts between security and rights are "distinctly neoliberal" (Goldstein 2010:489; see also Comaroff and Comaroff 2006), Latin America has witnessed a number of recent challenges to neoliberalism's hegemony; even Colombia has seen minor shifts in this direction. Experiments with democracy abound in what has been tentatively called the "post-neoliberal" era (Leiva 2008; Postero 2010). Yet, among them, as Fernando Coronil shows, "there is a pervasive uncertainty with respect to the specific form of the ideal future" (2011:234). Debates continue across the political spectrum over how best to balance demands for security and rights.

I draw here on 20 months of ethnographic research on the emergence of risk as a technique of urban governance in Bogotá, Colombia. In particular, I focus on a resettlement program for families living in Bogotá's "zones of high risk," which, since 2003, has entitled populations deemed vulnerable to landslides, floods, and earthquakes to relocation subsidies from the municipal government. This program is situated within the broader biopolitical domain emerging from Colombia's protracted security predicament, whereby entitlements are often

2

predicated on conditions of vulnerability and victimhood, and it is within this domain that settlers of the urban periphery engage in political relationships with the state. As the liberal democratic institutions of rights and citizenship have been shaped by the imperative to secure life against threat—and not only with respect to housing but across many sectors of government— "life at risk" has become a form of "biosociality" (Rabinow 1996) through which the urban poor claim governmental assistance, protection, and care (Petryna 2002; Rose 2007). Attending to what Partha Chatterjee (2004) calls "the politics of the governed," I show how those with little recourse to state benefits negotiate the imperative to protect the lives of poor and vulnerable populations from future danger. To reveal how biopolitical rationalities shape urban politics, I examine situations in which the rights of urban citizens are reconfigured by logics of security.

The politics of security in Colombia reflects the increasing centrality of "life" to governmental intervention, capital accumulation, and social mobilization (Cooper 2008; Escobar 2008; Rose 2007). It also indexes the frequency with which political struggle, from Cairo to Wall Street, is now waged in and through the territory of the city (Harvey 2012; Mitchell 2003). Yet the connection between these emergent global phenomena has not been fully explored. Studies have shown how biopolitical rationalities reconfigure liberal democratic institutions in domains as diverse as ecology, technology, and health, yet we understand little about how the politics of life functions in urban contexts and how it affects the way cities are planned, built, governed, and lived. While biopolitics must not replace rights and citizenship in our analyses, it is time to examine how it comes to shape the political terrain of cities in specific, and perhaps unexpected, ways.

[h1]A life at risk

Liliana is a single mother of five who, from the age of 13, lived in a house built by relatives in the peripheral locality of Ciudad Bolívar. In May 2006, heavy rains sent an avalanche of mud crashing down onto a group of nearby houses. Four of Liliana's neighbors, two adults and two children, were buried by the landslide. At the time of the tragic event, the municipal government was already in the process of relocating households throughout the city, especially those in the poor, hillside settlements of Ciudad Bolívar, to protect them from just this sort of disaster. However, since Liliana's property lay outside the designated boundaries of the "zone of high risk," she had been excluded from the resettlement program. Unlike others in her neighborhood who had been declared "at risk," Liliana was ineligible for a government subsidy based on the constitutional right to *vivienda digna* (decent housing). Recognizing that her entitlement depended on her risk status, she sat down in October of that year to write a letter of appeal.

[ex]Dear Sirs:

The intention of this letter is to request a visit to the property I live in, where the floor is cracking. I cannot stay here or inhabit this property with complete tranquility, since I live with my 5 children who are minors; I am worried about the rainy season that we are presently in. God willing we are not going to fall down, that is, have a landslide, and God willing we won't experience what happened to our neighbors in Caracolí, which resulted in 4 deaths. I beg you to do me the favor of visiting me to determine whether I am at high risk, or if I am not to tell me what procedures currently exist, and to subject me to them, as much for relocation as for the legalization of my property, since I am worried that the inevitable will happen, and I am worried about the life of my children. With nothing more to say and in anticipation of an affirmative response, I close this letter.

Sincerely,

Liliana

In her petition, Liliana expressed concern that both she and her children were in danger. She appealed to God for protection from environmental disasters and feared their inevitability. However, Liliana's plea was ultimately addressed to the governmental agencies responsible for risk management: the Directorate for Emergency Prevention and Response (DPAE), which designates "zones of high risk," and the Fund for Popular Housing (Caja), which relocates families living within them. These agencies possess both the political–scientific authority to declare her "at risk" as well as the legal responsibility to protect her life. Government technicians responded to Liliana's letter and determined that the conditions of her property did, in fact, warrant its inclusion within the "zone of high risk." She then became a beneficiary of the Caja's resettlement program.

For Liliana and others like her, citizenship and the benefits it confers are mediated by and predicated on a governmental rationality that classifies subjects and manages populations according to the degree to which their lives are in danger. Her vulnerability determined whether she would be recognized as the bearer of certain rights. Liliana did not demand that the state recognize her within the political community of the city or the nation or that it fulfill her entitlements on the basis of such claims. Although she appealed to God and begged her superiors for protection—religion and patronage interpenetrate with liberalism and biopolitics in Colombia—Liliana's petition ultimately implored the municipal government to recognize her as belonging to the population living in "zones of high risk." It was in these terms that she could establish herself as a worthy beneficiary of the resettlement program. Although this case deals with struggles over housing and access to urban space, a similar dynamic of political engagement

has emerged in other governmental sectors: To become a citizen with rights, Liliana first had to be visible as a life at risk.

Having shown how cities become the stage for the reconfigurations of citizenship, anthropologists are attuned to situations in which residents make demands on state agencies according to their rights as members of an urban community. Situations like these are widespread throughout Latin America. My ethnographic material makes sense, however, only once we acknowledge other frames of social inclusion and political recognition. For, as Chatterjee argues, urban populations in most of the world "are only tenuously, and even then ambiguously and contextually, rights-bearing citizens in the sense imagined by the constitution" (2004:38).[3] They are not "outside the reach of the state or even excluded from the domain of politics," he clarifies, but as "populations within the territorial jurisdiction of the state, they have to be both looked after and controlled by various governmental agencies" (Chatterjee 2004:38). It is often their classification as targets of governmental intervention, Chatterjee shows, that brings the urban poor "into a certain *political* relationship with the state" (2004:38). Thus, he directs our attention to "political society," or the "site of negotiation and contestation opened up by the activities of governmental agencies aimed at population groups" (Chatterjee 2004:74). Although the dichotomy between "civil" and "political" society may be reductive (Holston 2011b), it nevertheless forces us to ask why citizens with rights appeal as population groups to governmental agencies for recognition, inclusion, and protection.

Following a liberal democratic paradigm, which is not the approach favored here, we could see Liliana's petition as prefiguring an expansion of rights to the urban poor and a progression toward equal citizenship. We might acknowledge that most settlers on the urban periphery are not rights-bearing citizens in the fullest, most substantive sense but then mistake

her case for an example of the process by which members of this population struggle to be recognized as such. Once we shift our gaze to the politics of the governed, however, and examine the terrain of engagement on which claims are made, we recognize that the politics of rights is subordinated to a politics of life. Indeed, the resettlement program does not set out to provide "decent housing" to everyone but, rather, to those living in "zones of high risk." And, while this constitutional right is shared formally by all citizens, it is dependent on the degree to which their lives are in danger. The right to housing is thus a privilege bestowed on members of a collectivity whose entitlements are grounded not only in shared membership within a political community but also in their common condition of vulnerability. It is within this biopolitical domain that the poor in Bogotá must define and execute their citizenship claims.

[h1]Genealogies of urban citizenship

The right to the city, as both analytical framework and political ideal, has its roots in the genealogy of citizenship in Europe and North America. Most cities in the global South, however, are the product of histories that have not shared the telos implicit in both liberal and Marxist urban theories. In the colonial period, Spanish American cities functioned as both tools of conquest and symbols of imperial power, and they were built to express and enforce ostensibly natural hierarchies. Cities of colony and metropole alike were socially stratified and spatially divided according to race, gender, class, profession, and other classifications. While universal ideals accompanied both North Atlantic political transformations of the late 18th century and Latin American national independence movements in the early 19th, liberal democracy had limited reach and success in the latter case. In Colombia, for example, the "will to civilization" rather than the pursuit of equality or freedom animated republican efforts to lead a divided society away from its colonial past (Rojas 2002). Ultimately, colonial divisions between cities

7

and their hinterlands, between whites and nonwhites, and between elites and the popular

classes—all shaped by the durable opposition between "civilization" and "barbarism" (Sarmiento

1961)—proved stronger than the ideal of a national citizenry endowed with universal rights.

State-led modernization efforts in the 20th century sought to remake Latin American

cities in the mold of their European counterparts. For urban elites and rural migrants, the city

symbolized hopes of modernity more than the promise of democracy. Political struggles

emerging from the urban periphery did challenge patterns of entrenched social exclusion, but

their central demand was development rather than enfranchisement (Castells 1983). The rapid

pace of urbanization, however, quickly outpaced states' capacity to extend the benefits of urban

life to squatter settlements springing up throughout the region. Cities were divided yet again

between the white and mestizo elite, who enjoyed the substantive benefits of citizenship, and the

poor and working classes, predominantly nonwhite, who belonged only nominally to the

collective identities of liberal democracy. Although these latter groups were occasionally

acknowledged to belong to "the citizenry" or "the public," they were more often addressed by

the developmental state as populations in need of interventions in domains such as health,

housing, and education.[4]

The association of the city with civilization and with related ideals of progress,

development, and modernity has figured centrally in Colombia, as elsewhere in Latin America.

However, in recent decades these ideals have been increasingly subordinated to the political

rationality of security, and it is in this context that risk emerges as a technique of urban

governance and "life at risk" becomes a salient form of biosociality. The displacement of

welfare-oriented policies of development by protection-based logics of security was the result of

neoliberal political and economic reforms and a half-century of violent conflict. Colombia has

the second highest number of internally displaced persons in the world, and the city is now figured as a refuge from the barbaric violence of the countryside. Those who escape to the self-built settlements of the urban periphery see the state more as protector than provider. This dynamic was given a liberal framing by former president Álvaro Uribe (2002–10), who sought to legitimate his regime by hitching the concepts of "rights" and "citizenship" to those of "security" and "protection" (Ramírez 2010; Rojas 2009; cf. Goldstein 2007). While it may appear that security was included among the package of rights to which citizens are entitled, it would be more accurate to say that liberal democratic institutions were subordinated to biopolitical rationalities of rule. As a result, those claiming their rights as citizens must first be recognizable as lives at risk.

[h1]Invasions

Since 1950, Bogotá has grown from about 700 thousand inhabitants to over seven million, and the city continues to grow. Some migrants come to look for work, join their families, or pursue opportunities not available elsewhere. Many others, however, are *desplazados,* or victims of the armed conflict who have been forced to leave their homes. As a result, since the mid-1980s, Bogotá has received close to a million internal refugees fleeing violence (Consultoría para los Derechos Humanos y el Desplazamiento [CODHES] 2007:42). According to the municipal government, an average of 52 displaced families arrive every day. Some rely on kinship ties for shelter, food, and employment. Those who have no one, or whose families cannot accommodate them, have to fend for themselves. Their first concern, inevitably, is where to spend the night.

Parts of the city are known to be receptive to the displaced—areas where one might set up camp for a few days without being hassled. Few and far between, however, are spaces in

which to settle permanently. While finding a foothold in the city has always been a struggle for poor migrants, those arriving a decade ago had a better chance of acquiring a plot of land and building a humble shack. The "zones of high risk" recently cleared by the municipal government are the few remaining areas in which squatting is still possible or where today's refugees can hope to settle for a small fee (CODHES 2007:51). The very same zones evacuated by the government to protect people from one kind of threat have become, for this population, spaces of potential safety from an altogether different danger.

Some desplazados occupy evacuated "zones of high risk" hoping to access the municipal government's resettlement program. After all, becoming visible to the state as "lives at risk" entitles them to rights, such as decent housing, and to benefits from other governmental programs. Liliana's plea was successful after she demonstrated her exposure to environmental hazards, but most attempts to access housing subsidies by moving into "zones of high risk" are not. By law, the program applies to those living in these areas before they were designated high risk, and a number of techniques (such as examination of census records and aerial photographs) are used to verify this. As I was told by one government official, "We are prepared to deal with people who try to take advantage of the state's goodwill by inserting themselves into the resettlement program." Those attempting to be recognized as lives at risk must be able to navigate this regulatory landscape. The following ethnographic account exemplifies this dynamic.

I am accompanying Tatiana and Miguel, two government technicians, on a trip to monitor an evacuated "zone of high risk." About four months ago, Tatiana explains, a group of over a hundred settlers arrived under cover of darkness with whatever building materials they could round up and by morning had constructed a cluster of makeshift shelters among the ruins

of the former settlement (Figure 1). When local authorities tried to remove the *invasión,*

representatives from the Personería de Bogotá—the municipal agency charged with defending

human rights—arrived to support the settlers, saying that they were desplazados and could not be

forced to relocate. Being officially recognized as belonging to this vulnerable population confers

certain forms of governmental protection.

Toward the end of our long, rough ride, we come upon Mauricio, the head of the local

vigías ambientales, or "environmental guards." These guards are municipal employees who

patrol the steep hillsides of the urban periphery once they have been cleared of settlers. They are

armed with pickaxes and shovels rather than badges and guns, but their mission is to secure these

zones and prevent their future occupation. The environmental guards monitor daily for

"invasions" and immediately alert the police if they find any.

Mauricio looks winded and concerned. There was another invasion last night, he says,

and the police have just arrived to tell the *invasores* (invaders) to leave. Catching his breath,

Mauricio then recounts his conversation with the new arrivals.

> [ex]It appears the desplazados who arrived a few months ago have turned this into a
>
> business. They are going around looking for other desplazados who have no place to live
>
> and offering to facilitate their settlement in this area in exchange for 40,000 pesos ($20).
>
> They are telling all sorts of lies in order to make a few bucks. They claim the police
>
> cannot evict anyone who says they are a desplazado. And they are promising the
>
> desplazados that if they move into this area, they will be eligible for relocation subsidies.
>
> There is even a guy who has given himself the title of Presidente de la Zona de
>
> Reubicación (President of the Relocation Zone)!

Saying goodbye to Mauricio, we carry on toward the new settlement and, within a few minutes, arrive at a cluster of rudimentary shacks. Two police officers standing next to their motorcycles (Figure 2) are immersed in a heated conversation with Catalina, a young woman in shorts and flip-flops—the typical attire of *tierra caliente,* or the hot lowlands, but not in Bogotá. Obviously new to the city, she looks frustrated and distraught. Tatiana gets out of the truck and begins to explain to Catalina that what the officers are saying is true: If she and the other "invaders" do not leave on their own accord, they will soon be evicted.

Catalina says she understands but that she has nowhere else to go. "Tengo la carta de desplazado" [I have documentation showing that I'm one of the displaced], she pleads while gesturing to a paper she grips as if it is her most important possession. Tatiana examines the document, which is official proof that Catalina is a victim of the armed conflict, and writes down her name and place of origin as she inquires further: "When did you arrive?" Catalina responds, "I've been in Bogotá for two weeks. I don't have anywhere else to go!"

"How many are there in your family?" "I have two children, so we're three … or four," Catalina says tentatively, not sure whether to count her husband. The urgency in her voice begins to build:

[ex]What else can we do? The government hasn't given us anything! We were forced from our home. It was a *zona roja* [an area in which active combat is taking place]. They threatened us and said they were going to kill us if we didn't leave, and that's how we ended up here. We want to go back, but we can't. The government says that we have to wait … that we should wait for assistance. But when? And what are we supposed to do in the meantime? We need a place to live! They are supposed to give us a new home

because this is a relocation zone. It's a *zona de alto riesgo*. There's water coming out of a broken water pipe and the ground is unstable. This area is not safe to live in.

Tatiana interrupts,

[ex]Look, this was declared a "zone of high risk" in 2004, after which point no one is allowed to live here. If you do, you are in violation of the law and ineligible for resettlement. Since this occupation occurred in the last 72 hours, we have the authority to evict you. It's our responsibility to evacuate this zone. It's as simple as that. That's why I am telling you to look for another place to live, because here … sooner or later they are going to kick you out. And if that happens, they're not going to come with two or three policemen, but many. *Los van a sacar a las malas* [They'll kick you out, and it won't be pretty].

Sensing that her bid to access the resettlement program has failed, Catalina reiterates that her status as one of the desplazados entitles her to benefits: "I have this document, and it means I have rights." Tatiana responds,

[ex]Look, you know that unfortunately the internal conflict in this country is very complicated and that we have many desplazados. I am just informing you what's going to happen. I am making a suggestion. Go to another part of the city—I don't know, maybe in Soacha, or I don't know where. There are so many [displaced] people and the state doesn't have the resources to deal with them all. But at any moment, we are going to come with the backing of the police and they're going to kick you out and destroy everything you've got.

As far as I know, the police never did evict these desplazados. I returned two months later, and, although unable to locate Catalina, I found the settlement looking as it had before. The

settlers told me that, like the group that arrived four months earlier, they had been able to hold back the threat of eviction because of their officially documented status as members of the internally displaced population. This, however, does not mean that they successfully fought for their right to the city. For people like Catalina, membership within the political community of the city depends on the need for governmental protection. To be recognized as citizens with rights, they have to engage the state as lives at risk, for citizenship claims are predicated on vulnerability and mediated by exposure to danger. Although Catalina and her fellow settlers were successful at being recognized as desplazados, and therefore were spared eviction, they were unable to persuade the authorities that they were vulnerable to landslides and, thus, eligible for housing subsidies. Whereas the resettlement program targets those exposed to nonhuman dangers, vulnerability to a convergence of threats makes one eligible for and subject to an even broader extension of the state's protective care, as I describe below.

[h1]Landslides and death threats

Jairo and I sat on two wooden benches in the front room of the newly built house he had received recently from the Caja. He had come to Bogotá with his family from Valle de Cauca in the 1980s and settled in Altos de Cazucá, a neighborhood on the periphery of Bogotá. He was incredulous, he admitted, when DPAE informed him that he was living in a "zone of high risk." "Supposedly," he told me, "the house we had been living in for over a decade was in danger of falling down." Having never experienced landslides or floods, and believing that the engineers who made this designation were wrong, Jairo's family faced a complicated choice. They could enroll in the resettlement program and receive a subsidy for a new home or remain in place knowing that the local authorities could evacuate the area at any moment. Jairo's skepticism about the government's risk designation was familiar, as I had often heard similar doubts from

those refusing to leave their homes. But Jairo had relocated, and so I asked him, "Why, if you were not in agreement with the risk assessment, did you decide to participate in the resettlement program?"

Jairo then leaned in close, his voice softening almost to a whisper: "I accepted it because I was displaced from there. There was *raterismo y delincuencia* (thievery and crime) at all hours of the day and night. Leaving the house was dangerous, and if you can't leave the house to go to work," he said, "what can you do?" Paramilitaries took advantage of the insecurity in the area by charging a *vacuna,* or "vaccination," which most people grudgingly paid in exchange for protection. "However," Jairo told me, "I was never in agreement with what the *paracos* (paramilitaries) were doing." And, as a well-liked and respected leader within the Afro-Colombian community in Altos de Cazucá, his opposition was particularly unwelcome to the paramilitaries. When they tried to get him not just to pay for protection but also to collaborate with them and he refused, they told him to leave or he would be killed.

Jairo then focused on finding a strategy for self-protection—"The first priority was to preserve my life," he told me—and so he went for help. His first stop was the Caja's field office, where he was encouraged to go directly to the police. The police then sent him to the Procuraduría—a government agency where citizens can report threats to their life through an official process known as *denuncia,* or "denunciation." After receiving Jairo's denunciation, the Procuraduría declared him a desplazado. Unlike Catalina, whose desplazado status did not qualify her for a housing subsidy because she had "invaded" a high-risk zone, Jairo was already recognized as a legitimate beneficiary of the Caja's resettlement program. Once officially classified as a member of the internally displaced population, he was expedited through the process of selecting and receiving a new home.

In Jairo's version of the story, the Caja enabled him to leave Altos de Cazucá before the paramilitaries followed through on their threats. But according to Carlos, a Caja social worker, Jairo had used and deceived the government ("nos engañó, nos utilizó") for his own advantage. To ensure and hasten access to a resettlement property, Carlos told me, Jairo invented the story about his life being threatened. The Caja social worker referred to Jairo using a term I discuss further below: "Este tipo es un vivo!" [This guy is a vivo!] Carlos had no doubt that paramilitaries were active throughout the area and that those who resisted or opposed their territorial control were regularly threatened if not disappeared or murdered. Nevertheless, he was suspicious of Jairo's story.

If Carlos's suspicion was warranted, this scenario would be telling. It would show that threats to one's life can be manipulated to strengthen claims made on the state and that accentuating one's exposure to danger can ensure the distribution of entitled benefits. It would highlight that, among certain populations, the rights conferred by citizenship are mediated by and predicated on the governmental imperative to protect lives at risk. However, it is likely that Jairo was, indeed, threatened by paramilitaries and saw the resettlement program's mission to protect his life from one kind of threat as an escape from one of an altogether different sort. Landslides and death threats are two forms of officially recognized vulnerability, and in combination they enabled Jairo to be recognized as "at risk" and entitled to governmental assistance. In the end, it was DPAE's calculation of the probability of environmental hazard that offered him a more expeditious route to safety.

Carlos's doubt also raises the question of what constitutes credibility within techniques of biopolitical government. The imperative to protect life often calls on systems of verification to separate authentic from inauthentic claims and to adjudicate between deserving and undeserving

16

claimants. In such cases, recognition depends less on prior categories of cultural or political membership, such as belonging to a racial or ethnic group, religious community, national citizenry, or political party (Naranjo Giraldo 2001). While these distinctions sometimes reemerge—Jairo's credibility to municipal government workers may have been influenced by the fact that he is an Afro-Colombian man, for example—the salient categories of individual and collective identification are based primarily on calculations of vulnerability and victimhood. To be recognized as an internally displaced person, one must go through a bureaucratic process that begins with a declaration of the facts of one's case, which must then be corroborated through an investigation.[5] Once the declaration is verified, the individual joins the official registry of victims of the armed conflict eligible for government benefits. A similar process of verification applies to those who seek to be recognized as vulnerable to landslides, floods, or other hazards.

Certain practices and performances, then, are required for recognition as a deserving subject of the state's protective care. Jairo's initial dismissal of his former neighborhood's high-risk designation made him suspect as a beneficiary of the resettlement program. Jairo may not have believed that his house was in danger, but he saw relocation as a desirable option. Of course, if his house had been in danger of collapsing, it would have fallen down regardless of his opinion of the official prognosis. However, suspicion surrounds those who understand that being officially recognizable as "life at risk" ensures access to benefits and entitlements and who then take initiative to make themselves visible as such.

The doubts surrounding claims of vulnerability, and the practices and performances required of subjects "at risk," resemble the politics of recognition accompanying state-led multicultural reforms (Povinelli 1998; Taylor 1994). In Latin America, as elsewhere, new frames of inclusion and exclusion determine how subjects must position themselves to be visible to legal

institutions and governmental apparatuses (Hale 1997; Postero 2007). In Colombia, legal and

political rights granted to Afro-Colombians and indigenous populations have generated conflicts

over who is eligible for and deserving of such rights (Jackson 2007; Paschel 2010; Restrepo

2004). The politics of recognition takes on a different character, however, when security

structures the relationship between the state and its subjects. In Colombia, we find collective

categories of governmental intervention and political subjectivity based on ethnicity, language,

race, territory, and religion but also on biopolitical criteria, such as vulnerability and victimhood.

On some occasions, belonging to categories such as *indígena* (indigenous) or *afrodescendente*

(of African descent) may be of less use to those struggling for survival on the urban periphery

than being recognized as "at risk." These frames of inclusion emerge when the politics of

recognition is predicated on the politics of life.

  An even more apt parallel can be found in humanitarian situations in which both states

and nonstate actors work to deliver aid and assistance to victims of armed conflicts, natural

disasters, disease outbreaks, and other emergencies (Fassin and Pandolfi 2010; Feldman and

Ticktin 2010). Victimhood becomes the target of governmental intervention as well as the

position from which people make claims on powerful institutions (Malkki 1996:377). In

targeting lives to be saved, as Didier Fassin and Richard Rechtman (2009) demonstrate,

humanitarianism demands veritable performances from those seeking protective care. When the

state is involved, citizenship returns to center stage. As in the case Adriana Petryna (2002)

describes, in which victims of the Chernobyl disaster were entitled to compensation only once

recognized as irradiated bodies, political status has a biological predicate. In such cases, as

Nikolas Rose puts it, "citizenship has been shaped by conceptions of the specific vital

characteristics of human beings" (2007:24–25).[6]

Yet these analogies must not obscure what is unique about the politics of life in Bogotá. In both multicultural reforms and humanitarian emergencies, logics of governmental intervention and forms of political subjectivity are oriented temporally toward the past, and the problem of recognition is, consequently, historical. Indigeneity is judged according to family genealogy, cultural traditions, or place of origin; victimhood is determined by evidence of a previous encounter with violence; suffering is verified by a test demonstrating infection. In each case, the condition or event is prior to the act of identification. In contrast, to be recognized as a "life at risk," one must demonstrate vulnerability to a potential event that may or may not ever occur. As with refugees seeking asylum outside their home countries (Good 2004), recognition is oriented toward the future and depends on the authentication of one's vulnerability to projected threats. As the next section highlights, opportunities to access much-needed state support are further constrained by another distinction between legitimate and illegitimate subjects of biopolitical protection.

[h1]Vitality and vulnerability

On the morning of July 31, 2008, 200 desplazados occupied Bogotá's 93rd Street Park.[7] In a nonviolent action, they protested the government's failure to provide humanitarian assistance guaranteed by law to the displaced population. Their demonstration followed on the heels of the Assistance to Displaced Persons Day, which brought together 24 government agencies in a 5,000-seat sports arena to attend to the needs of victims of the armed conflict. While the event provided aid to over 7,500 people, thousands more were turned away. One of the leaders of the protest, Ricardo Jiménez, announced that the agency responsible for providing assistance to desplazados, Acción Social de la Presidencia, "has failed to distribute subsidies for food, housing, humanitarian aid, and even education for our children" and "they do not respond

to our rightful petitions" (*El Tiempo* 2008b). Another demonstrator, José Antonio Iserra, affirmed, "We don't want more lies from Acción Social. We will stay here until Mayor Samuel Moreno gets here" (Rodríguez 2008). Later that night, after Moreno had arrived on the scene and promised to intercede on their behalf, the protestors agreed to evacuate the park.

The park they occupied is one of Bogotá's premier symbols of wealth, exclusivity, and privilege. It is flanked by foreign embassies, corporate headquarters, and luxury condominiums, and the surrounding area boasts some of the city's highest-priced real estate. It is public, so anyone can enter, but it is primarily frequented by the *gente de bien* (lit. the good people, but referring to the well-to-do). Héctor Giraldo, one of the demonstrators, emphasized the obvious class implications of their action: "Since the wealthy of this country have not paid us any mind, we decided to get their attention by visiting them and making them take notice of the reality of our situation" (*El Tiempo* 2008b). Blanca Durán, the mayor of the locality governing the park, summed up the opinion of the local residents and business owners who saw the desplazados as a threat and wanted them removed: "Any occupation of this sort generates security problems. It creates inconveniences for the citizenry of the surrounding area and for organizations such as embassies and multinationals" (*El Tiempo* 2008a).

Opposition to the cause of the protestors also came from other quarters and circulated in the media and among public officials. As news of the protest was just getting out, Bogotá's secretary of government, Clara López, told the Bogotá-based newspaper *El Tiempo* that the demonstration taking place was the work of "the same person who orchestrated the 1999 occupation [by desplazados] of the Red Cross office in the Zona Rosa" (*El Tiempo* 2008b). Secretary López denounced City Councilman Antonio Navia for having been the motivating force behind both rebellious actions—an accusation meant to render the protestors' demands

insincere and inauthentic. (She corrected herself in writing two weeks later, admitting that Councilman Navia was neither present at nor involved in the demonstration; see *El Tiempo* 2008d.) Other voices were equally certain that a predatory, deceitful figure was using the demonstrators for personal gain. A government official I spoke with decried attempts by some to take advantage of the plight of the desplazados and hoped that the authorities would refuse their demands. He said, "There is a leader who is personally benefiting from the situation by manipulating other desplazados and even young children." Echoing the charge against Jairo, who supposedly took advantage of the resettlement program, he said about this anonymous character: "Es un vivo!"

In Colombia, *vivo* is colloquial term derived from the verb *vivir* (to live). As an adjective, it means "alive" or "living" and can designate someone who is full of vigor, and it need not carry a pejorative sense (*una persona viva* is sharp-witted, clever, and astute). As a noun, however, it denotes a category of persons who are opportunistic, manipulative, and selfish; to call someone "un vivo" is to call into question his motives (and it usually does refer to men). *Vivo* often accompanies the verb *aprovecharse,* which means "to take advantage of" an opportunity or another person. Someone who falls into this category is a hustler and is presumed to have the power to make things happen and to get other people to act, often against their will, through his possession of what Thomas Blom Hansen and Oskar Verkaaik (2009:9) call "urban charisma." The category applies usually to men with guile, gumption, and cunning but who are inherently shady, scam artists, or deceitful tricksters. And it invariably sets up a gendered dichotomy between the predator and the victim—if *el vivo* is taking advantage of a situation and benefiting personally, there must be someone powerless, gullible, or vulnerable (mostly women and children) on the losing end. The imagined relationship between el vivo and *los vulnerables,*

between masculine vitality and feminine vulnerability, places urban politics within a biopolitical frame, and the response to the occupation of this city park is a prime example of its influence.[8]

The official who argued that the protestors were being manipulated and that their demands should not be met had undoubtedly seen images on television and in newspapers depicting children, some only a few weeks old, among those occupying the park. The media had pounced on this right away, and the alleged presence of an exploitative mastermind, as well as accusations that protestors were abusing an especially vulnerable population (their children), served to delegitimize their demands (*El Tiempo* 2008c). *El Espectador* ran an article that led with a quote from an 11-year-old girl: "They used us as shields so [the authorities] wouldn't spray us with water and beat us with their batons" (Rodríguez 2008). That these children were themselves members of the displaced population—they had no school to go to, no home to be left in, and no maid to take care of them—was noticeably absent from media critiques. It was a cruel irony that the protestors were asking for the very help that the media and public officials used to delegitimize their cause.

Pursuant to a 1997 law, internally displaced persons in Colombia are entitled to food support, a basic subsistence kit, medical and psychological attention, living accommodations, and transportation. Since a 2007 ruling by the Constitutional Court, the government is obligated to provide aid until the displaced person or family is economically self-sufficient. However, an investigation by the news magazine *Semana* concluded that this policy has had unexpected results: "If the Court was in fact seeking to benefit the victims, it served to create a lucrative business for many others" (2008). This investigation discovered reports throughout the country of people filing fraudulent petitions on behalf of desplazados, charging them fees to process their claims, taking commissions from their entitlements, and organizing demonstrations to profit

from the settlement (Rodríguez 2008). Biopolitical economies had apparently sprung up around the desplazados. However, *Semana*'s report did not question the motives behind every instance of collective mobilization among this population: "There is nothing bad about a demonstration when it has good reasons … But there is a big difference between that and taking advantage of the very little assistance that [the desplazados] receive" (2008). When the subtlety of this distinction is lost, all forms of collective action among desplazados appear as further instances of the abuse of the vulnerable by the vital.

Protestors occupied the park for a second time on September 8, denouncing the government for not having complied with promises made by Mayor Moreno after the initial demonstration. On this occasion, however, a 40-member riot-police squadron quickly surrounded the park and removed the demonstrators by force. Police chief General Rodolfo Palomino spoke to news cameras amidst the ruckus:

[ex]Unfortunately, it was necessary to go ahead with the eviction. The attitude of the demonstrators became hostile … There are certain people who were electing themselves as leaders, but more than leaders they were acting as agitators who wanted to be subversive and to take advantage of the unwary *(aprovecharse de las personas incautas),* and they forced those people to bring along their children and use them as screens.

[SemanaTV 2008]

The protestors' spokesman, Ricardo Jiménez, was detained by the police along with six others. General Palomino said that Jiménez would be "prosecuted for taking advantage of both the situation and the displaced population in order to extract economic benefits" (*El Tiempo* 2008e). Fifteen officers of the Policía de Menores (Police for Minors) took charge of the children, nine of whom were taken into custody by the Colombian Institute of Family Welfare

23

(ICBF). It was illegal, they told the press, for minors to participate in protests; to be reunited with their children, mothers would have to convince the welfare agency that they were no longer involved in such activities (*El Espectador* 2008). The interpretive frame activated during the first demonstration facilitated the immediate intervention that brought a swift end to the second one.

[h1]Becoming biomedical

Seven months later, a group of desplazados occupied another of Bogotá's prominent public parks. In contrast to the earlier demonstrations, this one took place in the historical center just blocks from City Hall and the Presidential Palace. The site of the occupation was the Parque Tercer Milenio (Third Millennium Park), which was created in 2002 by an urban renewal project. The park was a relatively underused expanse of open space and recreational facilities until April 2009, when close to 500 desplazados descended on it. They pitched tents and constructed makeshift shelters out of scavenged materials, and, overnight, the park was turned into a veritable refugee camp. While the two previous actions had lasted only a day each, these demonstrators were there to stay.

By early May, the number of desplazados had risen to 1,200, and their spokesmen were entering into negotiations with representatives from both the national and municipal governments. The demonstrators, it seemed, had succeeded at investing a governmental category, the displaced population, with a physical presence in the city, a common rhetoric for making claims, and a collective identity with which to engage the state. "Although our situations are different, our needs and demands are the same," said one of the occupants of the park (Caro 2009). They demanded their rights to protection, housing, food, and employment, but first they had to be recognized as belonging to the population guaranteed entitlements on account of their vulnerability. This is the politics of the governed in biopolitical form, and urban space is

24

simultaneously its terrain, target, and technique. The desplazados occupied the park to make their voices heard in ways reminiscent of other urban political movements. And yet their demands emphasized security over citizenship, the right to life more than to the city.

The national government was reticent to acquiesce. The Justice Department announced it would pursue legal action against individuals promoting demonstrations by desplazados, and Acción Social warned it would not privilege groups engaging in unlawful occupations of public space (*El Tiempo* 2009d). The municipal government of Bogotá was more attentive to the situation, and by the end of May an agreement between City Hall and the desplazados was on the horizon. The mayor's office was promising to make 800 jobs available to members of the group and was offering them temporary shelter while funds for additional support were sought (*El Tiempo* 2009f). On the basis of these terms, 300 of the demonstrators agreed to relocate, and the municipal government was confident that the rest would soon follow (*El Tiempo* 2009d).

With this success, public officials and the media kicked off a brief campaign to convince the remaining squatters to accept the same terms. It began by publicizing the positive aspects of relocation. For example, *El Tiempo* ran an upbeat story about the first night spent away from Third Millennium Park by those who had taken the government's deal. A young girl, the newspaper reported, "was jumping for joy at having arrived at the temporary shelter" (2009b). It described the miseries of desplazados as a thing of the past: "To be exposed to the inclement weather, the powerful rays of the sun, the frosty daybreak hours; without water, without bathrooms, and without a roof to sleep under; these are no longer problems for this group of desplazados" (*El Tiempo* 2009b). And the article emphasized that it was they who, "on their own initiative, decided to take advantage of the agreement" (*El Tiempo* 2009b). The incentives quickly expired, however, as the pressure to bring an end to the occupation mounted.

As deliberations continued, the media spread allegations of a manipulative force behind the protest and reports of demonstrators being held against their will. *El Tiempo* published an account of a woman who "dared to denounce the leaders of the occupation … for forcing [the protestors] to remain in place" (2009h). The newspaper quoted her under the pseudonym "Nancy" to protect her identity: "I am afraid. There could be a massacre here. They could come into my hut at any time and kill me for saying that the leaders of the displaced are obligating us to stay here. I want to get out of here right away" (*El Tiempo* 2009h). The article told the story of her displacement from the department of Tolima, where she was living until guerrillas forced her to flee. But it emphasized the insecurity she now felt during the occupation of Third Millennium Park on account of the "authoritarianism of her supposed leaders" (*El Tiempo* 2009h). The predatory dynamic allegedly present among the demonstrators extended to the relation between parents and children: "The children are already victims of displacement because of violence and now they are being used as a tool for making demands," warned Olga Lucía Velásquez, the state's attorney for matters concerning youth (*El Tiempo* 2009n). As in the occupation of 93rd Street Park, the distinction between el vivo and los vulnerables began to frame this crisis, and it seemed only a matter of time before the remaining occupants of the park would be removed by force.

Then a crisis of global proportion hit Bogotá and changed the fate of the desplazados still struggling to make their demands heard. On July 13, Colombia's National Institute of Health announced the appearance of *gripa porcina* (swine flu), otherwise known as the H1N1 virus. A few days later, health officials reported that 59 of the 185 cases throughout the country were in Bogotá, and that five of the seven deaths attributed to the flu had occurred in the capital city (*El Tiempo* 2009c). The media then relayed a message from Bogotá's secretary of health, Héctor

Zambrano, in which he "asked the citizenry to increase preventive measures: wash hands with soap and water, use masks if you have flu symptoms, avoid shaking hands and kissing if you have the virus, and go to the hospital if you have a persistent fever over thirty-eight degrees, a cough, and difficulty breathing" (*El Tiempo* 2009c). Zambrano expressed concern about the concentration of desplazados in Third Millennium Park, which, he feared, could become a "niche for the H1N1 epidemic" (*El Tiempo* 2009c). Although not a single case of swine flu had been detected among the displaced population, Zambrano said they "are highly vulnerable, both emotionally and physically, and their conditions of health and nutrition are not good. We are all aware that many efforts have been made, but these cases demand more forceful responses" (*El Tiempo* 2009q). Whereas preventative measures for controlling the spread of the virus were directed at the general citizenry, disciplinary techniques were required for this population.

Two days after the H1N1 scare began, 300 uniformed policemen installed a cordon sanitaire around the encampment (Figure 3). The "epidemiological barrier" *(cordón epidemiológico),* as it was called, consisted of an inner ring of metallic fencing covered by an outer ring of heavy-duty plastic. The secretary of government, Clara López, justified the quarantine: "The H1N1 virus is a danger, it's a time bomb, and the mayor has done the responsible thing in ordering the sanitary ring" (*Noticias RCN* 2009). Face masks were handed out, clean water was brought in, and a medical team of close to 200 began to administer daily checkups (*Caracol Radio* 2009c). At two o'clock in the morning, just a few hours after the cordon sanitaire was installed, the team conducted a thorough census to register each person in the encampment and to identify the most vulnerable among them.

At the single entrance to the encampment, police set up a security checkpoint (Figure 4). Protected by a tent, four government officials operated two computers on which they recorded

the identity of each protestor and monitored his or her comings and goings. Those passing through were required to show identification cards; those not registered as participants in the occupation were barred from entering. The cordon sanitaire thus blocked additional people from joining the demonstration and ensured that outsiders could not make contact with the desplazados. In addition, those on the inside worried they would not be allowed to return if they left to search for food for their children or supplies for their camp. A woman called out from inside to members of the press: "How do you think we feel?" Seconds later, she answered her own question: "Like prisoners!" (Acosta 2009). The governmental logic being applied to the displaced population was now clear to those on the inside: "We are running a terrible risk and, when we leave to rummage for money or food, we obviously put the rest of the city at risk, too" (Acosta 2009).

With the containment strategy in place and the census conducted, Mayor Moreno held a press conference to discuss the way forward. He informed the media that the health department had examined the desplazados in the park and had found approximately one hundred thirty people with acute respiratory symptoms. As Health Secretary Zambrano put it, there was "a high risk of contagion of serious illness" because of the potential for these cases to become a focal point for the spread of the H1N1 virus (*El Tiempo* 2009e, 2009p). Zambrano said that 80 of the 130 cases were children and recommended their immediate removal (*Caracol Radio* 2009a). The mayor also warned that those in the encampment risked fire and electrocution because of the burning of wood outside the huts and the electrical connections being used inside them (*El Tiempo* 2009k). The convergence of multiple risks, Moreno informed the public, led the District Emergency Committee to declare a health alert in Third Millennium Park. This declaration, he

concluded, "permits us to intervene and to take all necessary preventative measures in order to reduce risks to public health" (*El Tiempo* 2009e).

The mayor then ordered the unwell, as well as all minors, to leave the park (Guevara and Torres 2009). Moreno assured them they would be taken to hospitals, receive medical attention, and undergo constant monitoring. This decision, he reiterated, was a guarantee that the rights of these highly vulnerable persons would be defended, especially those rights pertaining to health and living conditions (*El Tiempo* 2009e). Secretary López explained the situation in the same way: "We are implementing the instructions of the Mayor and we are going to evacuate everyone with any kind of flu symptoms or sickness and direct them to the city's network of hospitals, because it is our constitutional obligation to protect the lives and the integrity of these persons" (*Caracol Radio* 2009b). The mayor then appealed to the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) for mediation and hoped it could lead the national and municipal governments to a solution. UN representatives met with each agency involved and began to pursue an agreement that would put an end to the occupation.

When only 27 protestors responded to his plea, Moreno began to express concern that the demonstration would continue to grow and that the municipal government was powerless to stop it. In an article entitled "Time Bomb," *Semana* reported that between 40 and 50 displaced families arrive each day in Bogotá and that the "instruction among them now is to join the occupation" (2009a). In response to these concerns, the mayor conceded that the "situation is getting out of hand" and lamented that "we cannot close off the borders of the city" (*El Tiempo* 2009j; Guevara and Torres 2009). As the pressure built, the figures of the vital and the vulnerable came back into view. *El Tiempo* cited reports from visitors to the occupation who said that few sick people had responded to the government's call to seek medical attention because

"the leaders of the occupation threatened to kill those desplazados who wanted to leave Third Millennium Park" (2009j). Another article quoted a city councilwoman, Gilma Jiménez, who claimed to have discovered manipulative forces among the encamped: "There are professional opportunists here whose economic motivations have led them to become leaders to the detriment of the desplazados themselves" (*Semana* 2009b). Councilwoman Jiménez told the newspaper that one of the demonstrators had told her, "Our children are our shields. If the authorities remove them, the ESMAD [riot police] can enter" (*Semana* 2009b). Although the police department stated its intention to avoid using force, this framing foreshadowed another act of removal (*El Tiempo* 2009l).

The UNHCR continued to mediate between leaders of the occupation and delegates from the national and municipal governments. By late July, negotiations were progressing. An agreement was being considered that would cover the estimated two thousand desplazados gathered in the park at this moment and provide them long-term housing solutions, temporary shelter, employment assistance, food support, transportation subsidies, and security assurances (*El Espectador* 2009; *El Tiempo* 2009l). Just before midnight on July 29, the UNHCR announced that an agreement had been signed that would provide broad humanitarian assistance to the desplazados following their voluntary withdrawal from the park (*El Tiempo* 2009m). On the morning of Sunday, August 2, four months after the occupation began, the desplazados called an end to their protest and started to break down their camp. They lined up at City Hall to receive subsidies, and by early afternoon many had cash in hand. Some moved to temporary shelters, and others boarded chartered buses and trucks bound for their places of origin. As the remaining few packed up and went to collect their benefits, their leaders promised to occupy the park again if the agreement was not fulfilled within three months (*El Tiempo* 2009g).

In the days that followed, government officials reflected on the crisis that had just been resolved. Secretary López clarified that the agreement reached with the desplazados was not the result of their prolonged occupation of Third Millennium Park, which was illegal, but, rather, the necessary response to a public health crisis. "This agreement," she told the press, "is not a resolution that comes by way of an abuse of discretion *(vías de hecho),*[9] but a health emergency that required the evacuation of the park in order to prevent unhealthy conditions and the extremely high risk *(altísimo riesgo)* of … an H1N1 pandemic" (*El Tiempo* 2009a). On the one hand, Secretary López's comments responded to concerns that the settlement would "open the door to new occupations," as one newspaper put it, by creating incentives for others to pursue extralegal means of making their demands heard (*El Tiempo* 2009i). She assured the public that the government would "take measures so that this does not happen again" (*El Tiempo* 2009o). On the other hand, in insisting that the situation was a health crisis, and that it was "in that context that we signed the agreement," López revealed something else (*El Tiempo* 2009i). It was by becoming recognizable not simply as victims of violence but as lives at risk that the protestors could succeed at having their demands met. They were like Jairo, who was threatened by both paramilitaries and landslides but whose exposure to nonhuman dangers allowed him to receive governmental protection and care. Once the desplazados occupying Third Millennium Park were identified as vulnerable in a biomedical sense, they could finally be recognized as citizens with rights to the state's beneficence.

[h1]Conclusion

This article has focused on rationalities of biopolitical security and the domain of political engagement organized around them. As I have shown, it is often within this domain that the urban poor struggle for recognition, inclusion, and entitlement. To become rights-bearing

citizens belonging to the city, they must first be identifiable as vulnerable lives at risk and in need of protection. Yet when this population too actively engages the state on these grounds, another kind of agency is seen to be at work. The manipulative, opportunistic figure of el vivo, the vital, is perceived to be taking advantage of the state's goodwill, gaming the system, and acting deviously or even unlawfully. In such cases, desplazados occupying a city park and demanding their rights, for example, are viewed as helpless, gullible victims in need of protection from the predatory ploys of los vivos. Since the vulnerable (presumably women and children) are expected to be passive, their activity must be attributed to a hypothetical (usually masculine) vital force. The distinction between vitality and vulnerability upholds an interpretive frame central to the politics of life in Colombia.

To understand why vulnerability is valorized and vitality suspect, we must distinguish between biopolitical security, which seeks to protect the life of the population from regularly occurring events, and sovereign state security, which aims to defend the national territory against internal and external enemies (Collier and Lakoff 2008). Occasionally, Michel Foucault seems to suggest their necessary interrelation: that the "formidable power of death" on which sovereignty is based is the "counterpart of a power that exerts a positive influence on life," or biopower (1990:137, 2003). Following Giorgio Agamben (1998), many have understood this to mean that the sovereign power to take life is the "hidden foundation" lurking within all biopolitical formations. "Make live" and "make die," however, are not the transhistorical mutual constituents of power. As Paul Rabinow and Nikolas Rose insist, the power to command under threat of death is by no means "the guarantee or underpinning principle of all forms of biopower in contemporary liberal societies" (2006:201). Colombia is a case in point: It is within a historically specific relationship between liberalism and biopolitics, between democracy and security, that

lives problematized by one political rationality as needing protective care have been separated from those identified by another as imminent threats.

Citing widespread violence against activists, union leaders, and political dissidents in Colombia, Cristina Rojas argues that "the life of those participating in democratic politics continues to be at risk, and thus the space for democratic politics is shrinking" (2009:241). Her analysis might be reframed: It is not just that those who participate in democratic politics in Colombia are in danger but that political existence itself depends, for many, on their recognition as "lives at risk." When liberal democratic ideals are subordinated to biopolitical rationalities of security, categories like vitality, vulnerability, and victimhood structure how people engage in political relationships with the state. Confounding clear-cut distinctions between the political life *(bios)* of democratic citizenship and the bare life *(zoe)* of humanitarian care, they participate both in the politics of rights and the politics of life. This has implications for urban citizenship, as I have already discussed, but it also demands that we reflect critically on efforts to mobilize vitalist philosophies as a source of radical opposition to power, capital, and empire (Jones 2010).

In recent years, "life" has gained prominence as the ground for political struggle because of its assumed irreducible, insubordinate, and uncontrollable nature—as Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri argue, global capitalism "can never capture all of life" (2004:146). Foucault's work on biopower is often attached to the vitalist claim that, in Gilles Deleuze's rendition, life "becomes resistance to power when power takes life as its object" (2006:77).[10] Enrique Dussel (2008:83–87) has influentially adopted this proposition for Latin America, and Arturo Escobar (2008) has done so in Colombia specifically. In their search for a liberatory, "decolonial" politics, these scholars attempt to look beyond the reach of the state–capital nexus and to the experience of the indigenous, the minority, and the oppressed.[11] Their arguments hinge on

Dussel's concept of "exteriority," which they claim does not imply a subject position external to the "modern/colonial" world order but, rather, one constituted by hegemonic discourses as Other. However, their "otherwise" politics of life—in its devotion to the vulnerable, the dispossessed, and the victim—bears an uncanny resemblance to the governmental rationalities analyzed above.

This correspondence raises doubt about the radical otherness of the politics of life to existing political formations: Does this dualism obscure important issues of political praxis? Biopolitics is a domain of political engagement, strategy, and struggle that is neither exterior to nor isomorphic with state power; neither in functional equilibrium with the politics of death nor an irrepressible force of resistance against it; neither necessarily complicit in acts of dispossession nor a perpetual source of radical opposition (cf. Li 2010). In Colombia, governmental rationalities of biopolitical security shape the terrain of urban politics, but they do not fully determine how that terrain is traversed. Thus, we might engage critically with existing biopolitical formations and explore the opportunities and dangers created by them; indeed, this is precisely what the urban poor in Bogotá are doing. Without foreclosing the possibility of a radical politics of life, this article has highlighted the many contradictions and constraints that such a politics would have to contend with in seeking to transform regimes of living dangerously into regimes of living well.

[h1]Notes

1. The "right to the city" is a hallmark of critiques of capitalist urbanization and of the processes of dispossession and displacement occurring throughout the world. David Harvey (2008) argues that the global nature of these processes demands a response that mirrors the scale of their ambition and reach and advises us to adopt Henri Lefebvre's "right to the city" concept "as both working slogan and political ideal." To differentiate the right to the city from the formal rights of liberal democracy, Harvey clarifies that the former is "a common rather than an individual right since [it] inevitably depends upon the exercise of a collective power to reshape the processes of urbanization" (2008:23). In a related argument, James Holston urges attention to "urban citizenship," which "refers to the city as its primary political community and concerns an agenda of right-claims that address city living as their substance" (2011a:336). Although I cannot develop this idea further here, I would like to thank the anonymous *AE* reviewer who suggested that

Lefebvre's concept could encompass political engagements of a vitalist or biopolitical nature.

2. My analysis understands biopolitics broadly as a political rationality that takes the life of the population as its object. Drawing on Michel Foucault's (2007, 2008) lectures at the Collège de France, I treat biopolitics not as the paradigmatic logic of power defining the modern era but, rather, as a problem space within which heterogeneous techniques of government are combined and configured (Collier 2009). This approach requires both empirical rigor and historical specificity when examining the diverse forms that biopolitics can take. Thus, it allows me to highlight how life becomes the object of political thought and action in Colombia and how biopolitical rationalities of government come to shape the terrain of political engagement for the urban poor in Bogotá. In this context, logics of security problematize life as a precarious possession permanently in danger of being harmed and aim to protect certain populations from threat.

3. Holston (1999b:168) cautions that discriminations and inequalities often arise, not because some groups are excluded from the category of "citizen" but because it is a differentiated category to begin with (e.g., formal vs. substantive citizenship).

4. I draw a distinction between liberalism and development despite their overlap in Europe and the Americas. "Social rights" established in 20th-century Europe entitled citizens to developmental goods, such as housing, health care, and education. Moreover, there were civilizational imperatives attached to liberal citizenship in Europe (Marshall 1973).

5. Until 2011, the Presidential Agency for Social Action and International Cooperation, Subdirectorate for Attention to the Displaced Population, determined the process one

must follow to become legally recognized by the Colombian government as a *desplazado*. The Law of Victims and Land Restitution passed in that year transformed the way the Colombian state governs the problem of displacement. The public agency now responsible for the internally displaced population is the Administrative Department for Social Prosperity, Attention to Victims Unit.

6. This resonates with what Fassin calls "biolegitimacy," which, he argues, "has become a generalized mode of governing" (2009:50–51).

7. This section and the one that follows are based on both ethnographic research and media archives. My intent is to show how certain framings are produced in public and political discourse and then to examine how these framings inform governmental strategies and interventions. Secondary sources consulted were the Bogotá daily newspapers *El Tiempo* and *El Espectador,* the weekly news magazine *Semana,* and the news broadcasters *Caracol* and *Noticias RCN,* all monitored from July 2008 to September 2009. Because of the difficulty of accessing the participants of the demonstrations and the authorities involved, I take many direct quotations from these sources.

8. This analysis would not have been possible without the ethnographic intuition and intellectual engagement of Paula Durán. This argument also draws inspiration from Thomas Osborne's (1996) injunction to analyze biopolitics as a relation between the vital and the political spheres.

9. The original phrase was *un proceso de vías de hecho,* which, in the Colombian legal system, refers to a judicial decision that contradicts the constitution or the law. "Abuse of discretion," or a judge's ruling that fails to consider established precedent or evidence,

may be the closest translation available in English. In Colombia, however, the limit on discretion applies to all public servants and obligates them not to interpret legal statues in a way that challenges the rule of law. Secretary López was responding to criticisms that, by neglecting the responsibility to deal with the demonstration as an illegal occupation of public space, the government had normalized illegality. Instead, she invoked the public health emergency to justify a suspension of the rule of law. I am grateful here for the comparative legal expertise of Meghan Morris.

10. Deleuze extends Foucault's comments as follows: "When power becomes bio-power, resistance becomes the power of life, a vital power that cannot be confined within species, environment or the paths of a particular diagram. Is not the force that comes from outside a certain idea of Life, a certain vitalism, in which Foucault's thought culminates? Is not life this capacity to resist force?" (2006:77).

11. For a summary of the modernity/coloniality/decoloniality (MCD) paradigm of Latin American critical theory, see Escobar 2007.

[h1]References cited

Acosta, David

2009 Cordón sanitario en parque Tercer Milenio hace sentir prisioneros a los desplazados que viven alli. El Tiempo, July 19. http://www.eltiempo.com/archivo/documento/CMS-5648127, accessed October 11, 2012.

Agamben, Giorgio

1998 Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Arias, Enrique Desmond, and Daniel M. Goldstein

2010 Violent Democracies in Latin America. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Caldeira, Teresa

2000 City of Walls: Crime, Segregation, and Citizenship in São Paulo. Berkeley:

University of California Press.

Caracol Radio

2009a Cerca de 130 casos sospechosos de influenza tipo A en el parque del Tercer

Milenio. Bogotá: Caracol Radio.

[http://www.caracol.com.co/noticias/bogota/cerca-de-130-casos-

sospechosos-de-influenza-tipo-a-en-el-parque-del-tercer-

milenio/20090723/nota/849867.aspx]

2009b Evacuarán del parque Tercer Milenio a desplazados con gripa. Bogotá: Caracol

Radio. [http://www.caracol.com.co/noticias/bogota/evacuaran-del-parque-

tercer-milenio-a-desplazados-con-gripa/20090723/nota/849956.aspx]

2009c Secretaría de Salud inicia intervención del Parque Tercer Milenio. Bogotá:

Caracol Radio. [http://www.caracol.com.co/noticias/bogota/secretaria-de-

salud-inicia-intervencion-del-parque-tercer-

milenio/20090723/nota/849778.aspx]

Caro, Felipe

2009 Su propio viacrucis viven 850 desplazados en la Plaza de Bolívar y el Parque

Tercer Milenio. El Tiempo, April 10.

http://www.eltiempo.com/archivo/documento/CMS-4958566, accessed

October 11, 2012.

Castells, Manuel

    1983 The City and the Grassroots: A Cross-Cultural Theory of Urban Social

        Movements. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Chatterjee, Partha

    2004 The Politics of the Governed: Popular Politics in Most of the World. New York:

        Columbia University Press.

    2011 Lineages of Political Society: Studies in Postcolonial Democracy. New York:

        Columbia University Press.

Collier, Stephen J.

    2009 Topologies of Power: Foucault's Analysis of Political Government beyond

        "Governmentality." Theory, Culture and Society 26(6):78–108.

Collier, Stephen J., and Andrew Lakoff

    2008 Distributed Preparedness: The Spatial Logic of Domestic Security in the United

        States. Environment and Planning D: Society and Space 26(1):7–28.

Comaroff, Jean, and John L. Comaroff

    2006 Law and Disorder in the Postcolony. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Consultoría para los Derechos Humanos y el Desplazamiento (CODHES)

    2007 Gota a gota: Desplazamiento forzado en Bogotá y Soacha. Bogotá: CODHES.

Cooper, Melinda

    2008 Life as Surplus: Biotechnology and Capitalism in the Neoliberal Era. Seattle:

        University of Washington Press.

Coronil, Fernando

    2011 The Future in Question: History and Utopia in Latin America (1989–2010). *In*

Business as Usual: The Roots of the Global Financial Meltdown. Craig

Calhoun and Georgi Derluguian, eds. Pp. 231–292. New York: New York

University Press.

Deleuze, Gilles

2006 Foucault. New York: Continuum.

Dussel, Enrique

2008 Twenty Theses on Politics. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

El Espectador

2008 Los desplazados del parque, toma II. September 8.

http://www.elespectador.com/impreso/bogota/articuloimpreso-los-

desplazados-del-parque-toma-ii, accessed October 11, 2012.

2009 Lo que exigen los desplazados del Parque Tercer Milenio. July 29.

http://www.elespectador.com/impreso/articuloimpreso152983-exigen-los-

desplazados-del-parque-tercer-milenio, accessed October 11, 2012.

El Tiempo

2008a Desplazados bloquearon la Carrera 11 con Calle 93 en el norte de Bogotá. July

31. http://www.eltiempo.com/archivo/documento/CMS-4419913, accessed

October 11, 2012.

2008b Desplazados desistieron de bloquear Parque de la 93 tras promesa de Samuel

Moreno. July 31. http://www.eltiempo.com/archivo/documento/CMS-

4421470, accessed October 11, 2012.

2008c Drama de desplazados en Parque de la 93. August 1.

http://www.eltiempo.com/archivo/documento/MAM-3037503, accessed

October 11, 2012.

2008d Edil Antonio Navia no agitó el bloqueo de desplazados. September 3.

http://www.eltiempo.com/archivo/documento/MAM-3078057, accessed

October 11, 2012.

2008e Siete personas fueron detenidas en toma de desplazados al parque de la 93, en

el norte de Bogotá. September 8.

http://www.eltiempo.com/archivo/documento/CMS-4506871, accessed

October 11, 2012.

2009a Alcaldes pagan tiquete a desplazados para que viajen a Bogotá, denuncia

Secretaria de Gobierno. July 30.

http://www.eltiempo.com/archivo/documento/CMS-5748508, accessed

October 11, 2012.

2009b Así vivió un grupo de desplazados el primer día en los "alojamientos" luego de

dejar Tercer Milenio. May 27.

http://www.eltiempo.com/archivo/documento/CMS-5290047, accessed

October 11, 2012.

2009c Bogotá lidera contagios por nueva gripa. July 16.

http://www.eltiempo.com/archivo/documento/MAM-3528396, accessed

October 11, 2012.

2009d Comenzó traslado de 300 desplazados de 1200 que aún viven en el Parque

Tercer Milenio. May 26.

http://www.eltiempo.com/archivo/documento/CMS-5279867, accessed

October 11, 2012.

2009e Declaran alerta sanitaria en Parque Tercer Milenio y anuncian retiro de los

menores de edad. July 22.

http://www.eltiempo.com/archivo/documento/CMS-5672629, accessed

October 11, 2012.

2009f Desplazados abandonarán mañana parque Tercer Milenio de Bogotá tras llegar

a acuerdo con Alcaldía. May 29.

http://www.eltiempo.com/archivo/documento/CMS-5268707, accessed

October 11, 2012.

2009g Desplazados abandonaron Tercer Milenio pero prometieron regresar si

Gobierno no les cumple. August 3.

http://www.eltiempo.com/archivo/documento/CMS-5768548, accessed

October 11, 2012.

2009h Desplazados que siguen en el parque del Tercer Milenio denuncian que los

amenazan para seguir alli. July 9.

http://www.eltiempo.com/archivo/documento/CMS-5608267, accessed

October 11, 2012.

2009i Distrito pide responsabilidad de alcaldes: No permitirán más tomas de

desplazados. August 1.

http://www.eltiempo.com/archivo/documento/MAM-3551094, accessed

October 11, 2012.

2009j Emergencia sanitaria en el Parque Tercer Milenio decretó la Alcaldía de

Bogotá. July 23. http://www.eltiempo.com/archivo/documento/CMS-

5686331, accessed October 11, 2012.

2009k Emergencia sanitaria en el Tercer Milenio. July 24.

http://www.eltiempo.com/archivo/documento/MAM-3538957, accessed

October 11, 2012.

2009l Este miércoles se buscará concretar salida voluntaria de desplazados del Tercer

Milenio. July 28. http://www.eltiempo.com/archivo/documento/CMS-

5721749, accessed October 11, 2012.

2009m Fin al drama del Tercer Milenio: Los desplazados saldrán este domingo. July

31. http://www.eltiempo.com/archivo/documento/MAM-3549762,

accessed October 11, 2012.

2009n Gobierno pide a los desplazados del Parque Tercer Milenio no usar los niños

para protestar. July 14.

http://www.eltiempo.com/archivo/documento/CMS-5633487, accessed

October 11, 2012.

2009o No habrá más tomas de desplazados. August 1.

http://www.eltiempo.com/archivo/documento/MAM-3551086, accessed

October 11, 2012.

2009p Parque Tercer Milenio, en emergencia. July 24.

http://www.eltiempo.com/archivo/documento/MAM-3539182, accessed

October 11, 2012.

2009q Secretaría de Salud de Bogotá pide al ICBF proteger a niños desplazados del

parque Tercer Milenio. July 13.

http://www.eltiempo.com/archivo/documento/CMS-5627407, accessed

October 11, 2012.

Escobar, Arturo

    2007 Worlds and Knowledges Otherwise: The Latin American Modernity/Coloniality

        Research Program. Cultural Studies 21(2–3):179–210.

    2008 Territories of Difference: Place, Movements, Life, Redes. Durham, NC: Duke

        University Press.

Fassin, Didier

    2009 Another Politics of Life Is Possible. Theory, Culture and Society 26(5):44–60.

Fassin, Didier, and Mariella Pandolfi

    2010 Contemporary States of Emergency: The Politics of Military and Humanitarian

        Interventions. New York: Zone Books.

Fassin, Didier, and Richard Rechtman

    2009 The Empire of Trauma: An Inquiry into the Condition of Victimhood.

        Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Feldman, Ilana, and Miriam Ticktin

    2010 In the Name of Humanity: The Government of Threat and Care. Durham, NC:

        Duke University Press.

Foucault, Michel

    1990 The History of Sexuality, vol. 1: An Introduction. Robert Hurley, trans. New

        York: Vintage Books.

    2003 "Society Must Be Defended": Lectures at the Collège de France, 1975–1976.

        David Macey, trans. New York: Picador.

    2007 Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1977–78.

        Graham Burchell, trans. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

2008 The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1978–79. Graham

    Burchell, trans. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Goldstein, Daniel M.

2007 Human Rights as Culprit, Human Rights as Victim: Rights and Security in the

    State of Exception. *In* The Practice of Human Rights: Tracking Law

    between the Global and the Local. Mark Goodale and Sally Engle Merry,

    eds. Pp. 49–77. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

2010 Toward a Critical Anthropology of Security. Current Anthropology 51(4):487–

    517.

Good, Anthony

2004 "Undoubtedly an Expert"? Anthropologists in British Asylum Courts. Journal of

    the Royal Anthropological Institute 10(1):113–133.

Guevara, Carlos, and John Marcos Torres

2009 Cinco días tendrán los desplazados para desalojar el parque Tercer Milenio,

    ordena el Distrito. El Tiempo, July 22.

    http://www.eltiempo.com/archivo/documento/CMS-5677988, accessed

    October 11, 2012.

Hale, Charles R.

1997 Cultural Politics of Identity in Latin America. Annual Review of Anthropology

    26:567–590.

Hansen, Thomas Blom, and Oskar Verkaaik

2009 Urban Charisma: On Everyday Mythologies in the City. Critique of

    Anthropology 29(1):5–26.

Hardt, Michael, and Antonio Negri

    2004 Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire. New York: Penguin

        Press.

Harvey, David

    2008 The Right to the City. New Left Review 53:23–40.

    2012 Rebel Cities: From the Right to the City to the Urban Revolution. New York:

        Verso.

Holston, James

    1999a Cities and Citizenship. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

    1999b Spaces of Insurgent Citizenship. *In* Cities and Citizenship. James Holston, ed.

        Pp. 155–176. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

    2011a Contesting Privilege with Right: The Transformation of Differentiated

        Citizenship in Brazil. Citizenship Studies 15(3–4):335–352.

    2011b Foreword. *In* Urbanizing Citizenship: Contested Spaces in Indian Cities. Renu

        Desai and Romola Sanyal, eds. Pp. ix–xii. New Delhi: Sage Publications

        India.

Jackson, Jean E.

    2007 Rights to Indigenous Culture in Colombia. *In* The Practice of Human Rights:

        Tracking Law between the Global and the Local. Mark Goodale and Sally

        Engle Merry, eds. Pp. 204–241. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Jones, Donna V.

    2010 The Racial Discourses of Life Philosophy: Negritude, Vitalism, and Modernity.

        New York: Columbia University Press.

Jones, Gareth A., and Dennis Rodgers

    2009 Youth Violence in Latin America: Gangs and Juvenile Justice in Perspective.

        New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Lefebvre, Henri

    1996 The Right to the City. *In* Writings on Cities. Eleanore Kofman and Elizabeth

        Lebas, trans. and eds. Pp. 147–159. Cambridge: Blackwell.

Leiva, Fernando Ignacio

    2008 Latin American Neostructuralism: The Contradictions of Post-Neoliberal

        Development. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Li, Tania Murray

    2010 To Make Live or Let Die? Rural Dispossession and the Protection of Surplus

        Populations. Antipode 41(S1):66–93.

Malkki, Liisa H.

    1996 Speechless Emissaries: Refugees, Humanitarianism, and Dehistoricization.

        Cultural Anthropology 11(3):377–404.

Marshall, T. H.

    1973 Class, Citizenship, and Social Development. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.

Mitchell, Don

    2003 The Right to the City: Social Justice and the Fight for Public Space. New York:

        Guilford Press.

Naranjo Giraldo, Gloria

    2001 El desplazamiento forzado en Colombia: Reinvención de la identidad e

        implicaciones en las culturas locales y nacionales. Scripta Nova, Revista

Electrónica de Geografía y Ciencias Sociales 94(1).

http://www.ub.edu/geocrit/sn-94-37.htm, accessed October 11, 2012.

Noticias RCN

2009 En cuarentena parque Tercer Milenio. Bogotá: Noticias RCN.

O'Neill, Kevin Lewis, and Kedron Thomas

2011 Securing the City: Neoliberalism, Space, and Insecurity in Postwar Guatemala.

Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Osborne, Thomas

1996 Security and Vitality: Drains, Liberalism and Power in the Nineteenth Century.

In Foucault and Political Reason: Liberalism, Neo-Liberalism, and

Rationalities of Government. Andrew Barry, Thomas Osborne, and

Nikolas Rose, eds. Pp. 99-121. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Paschel, Tianna S.

2010 The Right to Difference: Explaining Colombia's Shift from Color-Blindness to

the Law of Black Communities. American Journal of Sociology

116(3):729–769.

Petryna, Adriana

2002 Life Exposed: Biological Citizens after Chernobyl. Princeton: Princeton

University Press.

Postero, Nancy Grey

2007 Now We Are Citizens: Indigenous Politics in Postmulticultural Bolivia.

Stanford: Stanford University Press.

2010 The Struggle to Create a Radical Democracy in Bolivia. Latin American

Research Review 45:59–78.

Povinelli, Elizabeth A.

1998 The State of Shame: Australian Multiculturalism and the Crisis of Indigenous

Citizenship. Critical Inquiry 24(2):575–610.

Rabinow, Paul

1996 Essays on the Anthropology of Reason. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Rabinow, Paul, and Nikolas Rose

2006 Biopower Today. BioSocieties 1(2):195–217.

Ramírez, María Clemencia

2010 Maintaining Democracy in Colombia through Political Exclusion, States of

Exception, Counterinsurgency, and Dirty War. *In* Violent Democracies in

Latin America. Enrique Desmond Arias and Daniel M. Goldstein, eds. Pp.

129–165. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Restrepo, Eduardo

2004 Ethnicization of Blackness in Colombia: Toward De-Racializing Theoretical

and Political Imagination. Cultural Studies 18(5):698–715.

Rodríguez, Alejandra

2008 Desplazados duermen en el Parque de la 93 hasta que les ayuden. El Espectador,

July 31. http://www2.cromos.com.co/noticias/bogota/articulo-

desplazados-duermen-el-parque-de-93-hasta-les-ayuden, accessed October

11, 2012.

Rojas, Cristina

2002 Civilization and Violence: Regimes of Representation in Nineteenth-Century

Colombia. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

2009 Securing the State and Developing Social Insecurities: The Securitisation of

Citizenship in Contemporary Colombia. Third World Quarterly

30(1):227–245.

Rose, Nikolas

2007 The Politics of Life Itself: Biomedicine, Power, and Subjectivity in the Twenty-

First Century. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Sarmiento, Domingo Faustino

1961 Life in the Argentine Republic in the Days of the Tyrants; or, Civilization and

Barbarism. New York: Collier Books.

Semana

2008 "Aviones" ofrecen ayudar a desplazados. Semana, November 9.

http://www.semana.com/problemas-sociales/aviones-ofrecen-ayudar-

desplazados/117445-3.aspx, accessed October 11, 2012.

2009a Bomba de tiempo. Semana, July 25. http://www.semana.com/nacion/bomba-

tiempo/126664-3.aspx, accessed October 11, 2012.

2009b Parque Tercer Milenio necesita medidas urgentes. Semana, July 23.

http://www.semana.com/desarrollo-urbano/parque-tercer-milenio-

necesita-medidas-urgentes/126550-3.aspx, accessed October 11, 2012.

SemanaTV

2008 Policía y desplazados se enfrentan en el Parque de la 93. Semana.com.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aWIQSUaoj-U&feature=related,

accessed October 11, 2012.

Taylor, Charles

1994 Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition. Princeton: Princeton

University Press.

Austin Zeiderman

LSE Cities

London School of Economics and Political Science

Houghton Street

London WC2A 2AE

United Kingdom

a.zeiderman@lse.ac.uk

Figure captions

Figure 1. The green plastic tarps are new constructions, or "invasions." Photo by Austin Zeiderman, Bogotá, 2009.

Figure 2. A technician working for the municipal government's risk management agency consults a policeman about the status of recently arrived desplazados. Photo by Austin Zeiderman, Bogotá, 2009.

Figure 3. Cordon sanitaire surrounding the encampment in Third Millennium Park. Photo by Austin Zeiderman, Bogotá, 2009.

Figure 4. Security checkpoint in Third Millennium Park. Photo by Austin Zeiderman, Bogotá, 2009.