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#77 Urbanism

Editorial #77: Urbanism

By: Caroline Risacher

In previous issues of Bolivian Express we have talked about La Paz and its transport system, its rivers and its people. We've also written about El Alto, about its exuberant cholets and unbridled expansion. For this October issue we are commemorating La Paz by looking at its newest transportation infrastructure and architecture.

Back in its infancy, La Paz was an assemblage of chozas spread along the Choqueyapu River. Brick by brick, the city grew, and bigger houses made of adobe were built by the original (and enslaved) inhabitants of the area. And here, on 16 July 1809, the first independence of Latin America was declared by Pedro Domingo Murillo. (It would last only six months.)

The city's first larger structures were in the colonial style, but few of these buildings are still standing in La Paz. Charles Bladon explains why (p.11). Nowadays, you will most likely stumble upon Republican Architecture – such as the Palacio Quemado on Plaza Murillo – and Art Deco buildings, a part of the larger Modernist movement, which Josephine Zavaglia delves into (p.27). These two very different styles, which exist side by side today, date from the 19th and 20th centuries, from when the city experienced its most intense growth.

In the early 1900s, about 50,000 people lived in La Paz; 50 years later the population reached 300,000. The city had to adapt to the incoming flow of migrants and needed a new cityscape. Visionaries such as architect Emilio Villanueva made this possible. Villanueva was the first to bring the notion of urbanism to Bolivia and reinvented the city between 1910 and 1925 by designing whole neighbourhoods and avenues.

Today, the paceño is impressed by el teleférico and its modernity – as Matthew Grace uncovers (p.14) – but back then, it was all about the tramway. In 1909, the first line opened. It served the areas of Obrajes, Miraflores, the General Cemetery and Plaza España amongst others; there was a first and a second class for passengers, and in 1936 the network extended throughout 20 lines. The tramway was el teleférico of yesteryear. It closed quietly in 1950 for financial and safety reasons. Then the automobile began to invade the city's arteries, causing more and more accidents. Now the only way to avoid the traffic is above the skyline, riding the cable cars.

The city kept on growing, with another wave of rural migration from the 1970s to the 1990s that brought the population to current levels – about 800,000 people. Neighbourhoods spread towards the south and onto the slopes of La Paz's surrounding canyon, but since the 1990s, La Paz is, in terms of population, the city we know today. However, the city's stunted growth is something that could be remedied. I interviewed Xavier Iturralde, an entrepreneur and urban visionary, who is working on reconceptualising the city (p.32).

If you take a walk in the city centre, chances are you will walk past Plaza Murillo, named after the aforementioned revolutionary. As Bolivian writer Jaime Saenz described it, 'La Plaza Murillo resume la historia de Bolivia en su totalidad.' ('Plaza Murillo sums up Bolivian history in its totality.') There couldn't be a more apt description. The square is encircled by buildings that have seen Bolivia's history unfold, by walls against which ex-presidents have been executed and by cobblestones where many have fallen dead fighting for democracy. And the buildings themselves tell a story. On one corner is a decaying house meant to be demolished soon, next to it is the Legislative Assembly with its clock running backwards and across the square is the Palacio Quemado. Behind the cathedral the towering Casa del Pueblo is growing, intended to house the current government and to represent modernity and the future of Bolivia.

Matthew Grace asked the people of La Paz what they thought about this 'house of the people' (p.20). From passers-by's reactions, paceños don't seem convinced by this giant concrete-and-brick monolith. But paceños are the sort that look ahead and embrace modernity. Looking at the city when perched up in a cable car, one sees an improbable combination of bricks and glass, old and new, historical and modern. The city and its architecture are a fitting representation for the diverse people who inhabit it.

N.B. Several Spanish and Aymara words are marked in **bold** throughout this issue. Their meanings can be found in our glossary.

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THE GROWING PAINS OF A MODERNISING CITY

PRESERVING THE BUILDINGS OF AN AGING LA PAZ

TEXT: CHARLES BLADON PHOTOS: ADRIANA MURILLO, CHARLES BLADON

Tucked away around the corner of Plaza Murillo, a mere stone's throw away from the Legislative Assembly, a structure that bears familiar marks of colonial inspiration lays in decay. Decrepit and facing the prospect of lying in ruins, it is still recognised for its intricate design. Its origins are unknown, but it can be seen in photos dating to the 1870s. Its age shows. One portion of the building's corrugated iron roof collapsed in January of this year due to heavy rain. An elderly couple walks by, gazes fixed, perhaps dreaming of what the structure once was, but shaking their heads for what it now is. In a plaza that draws in visitors from the farthest reaches of the world, it is a wonder how this could simply be allowed to happen.

According to Gastón Gallardo Dávila, dean of the department of architecture at the Universidad Mayor de San Andrés, it is also a wonder that most of us label these buildings as 'colonial'. Apparently there are only a few buildings in La Paz that are actually from the colonial era. 'There are some churches,' Gallardo explains, 'maybe two or three houses left, but nothing more. Nothing else is colonial architecture, it's **Arquitectura Republicana**.' In contrast to the cities of Potosí and Sucre, which are brimming with colonial edifices from the 16th and 17th centuries, La Paz is instead filled with intricate and charming buildings that pry inspiration from Architectural Rationalism and the Art Deco movements of the 20th century, both of which traceable to the Classical and Neoclassical schools so easily mistaken for colonial architecture. Regardless of their mistaken roots, these buildings are historic. They are pieces of history listed and protected by the government, and yet some of them stand neglected.

Gabor Prudencio, a demolition engineer who works in the city, hints at La Paz's reluctance to look after these buildings saying, 'It's too late to become Cusco.' Gabor has worked in La Paz over the past year in a business that is growing due to Bolivia's burgeoning economy and the constant demand to rip down town houses to replace them with larger, more practical and profitable office blocks. Prudencio says that cases similar to that of the house in Plaza Murillo are quite common. 'Unfortunately,' he adds, 'it's just left like that until more sections of the house start coming off. The authorities only do something if it's an emergency.'

Marcelo Arroyo, La Paz's municipal secretary of planning and development, says that there is a system in place. 'We have a project for a law regarding heritage buildings, and we are working with the Ministry of Culture,' he says. 'In the law there are different categories for buildings that define the type of interventions one can do on each of them.' Despite a system being in place, a lot more can be done to ensure the preservation of these structures. Intervention from the authorities is often in question.

'According to the law,' Gallardo says, 'landowners are responsible for the maintenance of their house. But often, when they have old properties, they justify the neglect by saying it's too expensive to maintain them. If the state wanted to, it could take care of it, but often it just lets buildings fall down and sees what it can do with the ruins. Then it invests money to build something new and washes its hands, justifying the process.'

In this Bolivian rendition of the classic debate between aesthetics and utility, Gallardo takes a side, favouring aesthetics. He questions the idea of replacing old buildings with new ones. 'The Hospital de Clínicas in La Paz was built in 1914 by Emilio Villanueva, a prominent and visionary Bolivian architect,' Gallardo explains. 'The plan is to destroy it and build a new one. People who defend the city's heritage ask why they need to build on top of the old one. Why can't they preserve the old structure and pick a new site for the future building?' Pointing to another case study, he mentions the old football stadium in Miraflores that was knocked down in 1975, its Tiwanaku influences destroyed with it. Although the stadium couldn't accommodate the desired amount of people, what Gallardo questions is the act of demolishing architectural heritage. He sustains that, after all, these features could have been preserved in the remodelling.

Despite these trends that favor demolition, there is a structure behind Plaza San Francisco, on Calle Murillo, that could guide others by setting an example. Built in the 1950s and inspired by colonial architecture, this building is stubbornly fighting decay and age. Its inner courtyard and beautified patio, encompassed in old brick and wooden railed verandas, draw on the colonial or Republican style that once dominated the city. Owner Daisy Vega de Arce refuses to let her property decay. With the help of her head administrator, Oscar Espejo, she has been busy developing the building. 'Our project is to turn the house into a hostel, respecting all the architectural details that define its style,' Espejo says. The patio is already playing host to restaurants, cafés and a distillery, whilst preserving the original structure.

BUILT IN THE 1950S AND INSPIRED BY COLONIAL ARCHITECTURE, THIS BUILDING IS STUBBORNLY FIGHTING DECAY AND AGE.

Espejo shows what once was a chapel and is now being converted into a restaurant and points out the rotten wooden railings he has been meaning to replace. What I'm seeing isn't a destruction of heritage but a renewal: archaic surroundings renovated and reinforced, decaying interiors infused with new life and purpose. Overall, this is deeply compliant with the drive to modernise La Paz and the need to make use of the structures. The house on Calle Murillo provides a middle ground. It seeks rejuvenation, not abolition – relevancy instead of disuse.

Gallardo believes that **paceños** don't value preservation. 'There is the **orgullo paceño**,' he concedes. 'The *paceño* is proud to have a city that is 450 years old. However, in daily life, it seems better to destroy something old. Only when it's lost do people realise it's too late.' This is clearly the case with Mercado Lanza. It was once a traditional market and is now a white concrete structure next to the San Francisco Church, its potential only realised too late. But Gallardo understands that 'each historic period wants to have its own expression and style. With La Paz reaching modernity, it is no surprise that this is the case,' he says. It is practical, inevitable and logical that the old makes way for the new.

Espejo shows sentiment towards these crumbling structures that he thinks people of La Paz generally undervalue. 'It seems that architectural heritage has been left behind,' he says. 'If we are not going to value our history, I do not know what we are going to value.'

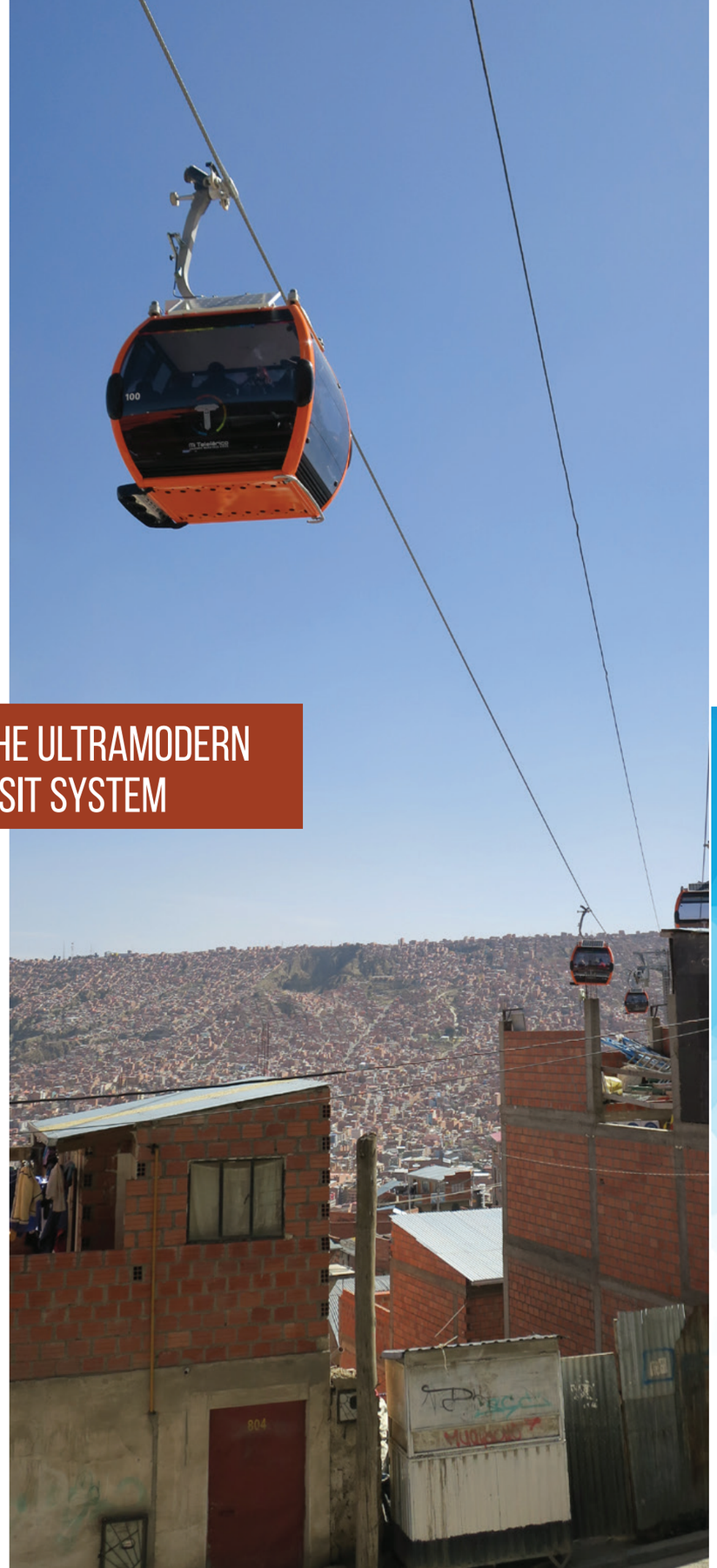
SOARING ABOVE THE CITY

ORGULLO PACEÑO FOR THE ULTRAMODERN CABLE-CAR MASS-TRANSIT SYSTEM

TEXT: MATTHEW GRACE PHOTOS: MATTHEW GRACE, IVAN RODRIGUEZ

On September 29, the newest line of La Paz's state-of-the-art cable-car system – **el teleférico** – was inaugurated in a raucous celebration in Plaza Villarroel in the Miraflores neighbourhood, just north of the center of the city. Thousands of **paceños** thronged the public square. The new *teleférico* station shone in the strong spring sunlight; vendors taking advantage of the festive crowd hawked **choripan**, sodas and trinkets; and children waved Bolivian flags while musicians entertained the celebrants from a large stage set up under the gossamer cables upon which the new orange cable cars dangled.

The **Línea Naranja** is the newest addition to el *teleférico system*, which now comprises five lines – the **Amarilla**, which connects working-class southern El Alto with the upscale neighbourhood of Sopocachi; the **Verde**, linking Sopocachi with the even more upscale **Zona Sur** district; the **Azul**, which connects the dusty northern **El Alto** neighbourhood of **Río Seco** with **La Ceja**, on the edge of the canyon in which the city of La Paz rests; the **Roja**, linking the *Azul* line to central La Paz; and now the **Naranja**, which joins the *Azul* and the *Roja* lines from Miraflores.



Mi Teleférico, the governmental transit agency, runs the largest urban cable-car system in the world – and it's not even half-built yet, with six more lines due to open by 2019, when *el teleférico* will officially be at full capacity. It's being constructed by the Austrian cable-car firm Doppelmayr, which arrived in Bolivia five years ago with only three employees. Today, there are 100 Doppelmayr architects and civil and industrial engineers involved in the design and planning of the cable-car system, along with an additional 800 to 900 other employees engaged in construction, maintenance and training – but not for long. According to Torsten Bäuerlen, the coordinating manager at Doppelmayr in Bolivia, the company's contract includes all construction and on-site operational management for a year after each line is completed. After that, Mi Teleférico takes over fully. In fact, that's already happened with the system's oldest lines – the *Línea Amarilla*, for example, having opened in May 2014, is now already a strictly Bolivian-run enterprise. And, according to Bäuerlen, it's running better than expected.

'IT'S 21ST-CENTURY PROGRESS. IT ALLOWS US TO TRAVEL AS RAPIDLY AS POSSIBLE. IT'S AN EXAMPLE AT THE INTERNATIONAL LEVEL.'
—EDGAR SÁNCHEZ, CELEBRATING THE OPENING OF THE LÍNEA NARANJA

At first, Bäuerlen says, 'We were a little worried' about constructing such a high-tech system and handing it over to the Bolivian agency. While Austria has employed cable-car systems successfully for decades – think of all those ski resorts in the Alps – in Bolivia, which has a stunted infrastructure and little technological capacity, such a transit system was a quantum leap into the future. But, says Bäuerlen, the Mi Teleférico agency 'does a really good job; they're really good operators and maintenance technicians.'

Bäuerlen conveys a sense of pride about his role in establishing *el teleférico* in La Paz and sharing a bit of his country's technological patrimony with another country that, while similar in topography to his own, is so culturally distinct. *Paceños*, too, express pride when speaking about *el teléferico*. Edgar Sánchez, a celebrant at the *Línea Naranja's* inauguration ceremony, said, 'It's 21st-century progress. It allows us to travel as rapidly as possible. It's an example at the international level.'

Although the topography of La Paz adds to the city's beauty, it also contributes to its pollution and traffic congestion. Extremely rugged hills and impenetrable rocky peaks create magnificent vistas, yet they also form bottlenecks for ground travel – not to mention trapping in car exhaust. Few roads connect the city of El Alto, which is on the **altiplano** and has a population of nearly a million, with La Paz, a city equal in size but more rugged in terrain. Light rail, subways, even articulated buses are unable to tackle the extremes of elevation here, leaving transit, until now, a mishmash of minivans and the occasional larger Pumakatari bus – a relatively new transit solution.

Now, however, it's possible to travel quickly without suffering traffic snarl-ups, far above the choking pollution that frequently fills the canyon in which La Paz sits. In only three years, La Paz and sister city El Alto have seen a modern transit system grow from an incipient idea to a nearly fully realised functioning network. But not without a price.

Because Mi Teleférico is a federal agency, with the backing of the central government, communication with municipal authorities can be fraught. 'It was difficult to work at first with Mi Teleférico on the first three lines,' says Marcelo Arroyo, the city's secretary of planning for development. 'The company was allowed to intervene directly and expropriate as a national priority without taking into account [the municipality's] planning model. That's why many of the stations of the first three lines weren't conceived with such an integral vision. They weren't linked with the Pumakatari [bus] stops, for instance,' he adds. Arroyo does, however, acknowledge that communication between the two parties has improved. They've now created a joint commission so new lines can be planned in a more coherent way with other urban development projects.

Still, *el teleférico* has its critics, even if the objections are less than full-throated. Gastón Gallardo Dávila, dean of the department of architecture at the Universidad Mayor de San Andrés, says, '*El teleférico* is modernity. This city has always been one of the less known in South America. Now it has a *teleférico* and it's a very modern city in America.' That said, Gallardo believes that *el teleférico* is essentially 'not a good mass-transit system. It transports very few people,' he says. He argues that Mi Teleférico inflates the numbers of people that use the system, and that the figure is much less than what's publicised. 'But,' he adds, '*paceños* are proud to have a *teleférico* because it's modern.'

IT'S POSSIBLE TO TRAVEL QUICKLY WITHOUT SUFFERING TRAFFIC SNARL-UPS, FAR ABOVE THE CHOKING POLLUTION THAT FREQUENTLY FILLS THE CANYON IN WHICH LA PAZ SITS.

And not just because it's modern. Some paceños love its convenience. Gonzalo Rivero, who was attending the *Línea Naranja* opening ceremony on 29 September, said, 'Here in La Paz there is a lot of traffic, blockades, strikes – things that create problems. *El teleférico* is safer, quicker, more reliable.' And safety is exactly what Doppelmayr's Bäuerlen likes to emphasise. He says that el teleférico system was designed to be redundant in its safety mechanisms. According to Bäuerlen, it is designed and built to provide hospital-grade protections in case of a natural disaster – for example, in the unlikely event of an earthquake. 'We have calculated all foundations with maximum earthquake acceleration in mind,' says Bäuerlen. 'In fact, it's statistically safer than plane travel. You are more likely to die from getting stung by a bee,' he says, adding that *el teleférico* was built to conform to maximum industry safety standards.

With two years until *el teleférico* is fully completed, it seems to have won out already with the people who live near it and use it frequently. The final verdict, however, will come once its disparate lines are connected into a coherent whole. At the moment, vast swaths of the cities of La Paz and El Alto are unaffected by the new cable-car system – the routes simply do not go where **lugareños** want to go. But work is starting on a new line in El Alto to link the north and the south of that city together, and the *Línea* **Blanca**, which will connect north-central La Paz to Sopocachi is largely completed. An inflection point, at which travel convenience pushes a critical mass of people to use the system, could be just over the horizon. As Cristina, who lives on the periphery of El Alto in the remote neighbourhood of Río Seco and works in La Ceja, on the edge of La Paz, says, 'It's a very good service, it helps us travel very rapidly.'

CALLE COMERCIO
LA PAZ, **BOLIVIA**

TEXT & PHOTO: IVAN RODRIGUEZ

Are we just walking around, step after step?
Or are we designers of our present, designers of something bigger?
Can we avoid the victim we hold inside?
Take another step, and find comfort in every blink we present.
Or is our ignorance not letting us see beyond the obvious?
Amongst shadows, Design.
Will we get it right?
In shadows, Create.

A HOUSE OF THE PEOPLE?

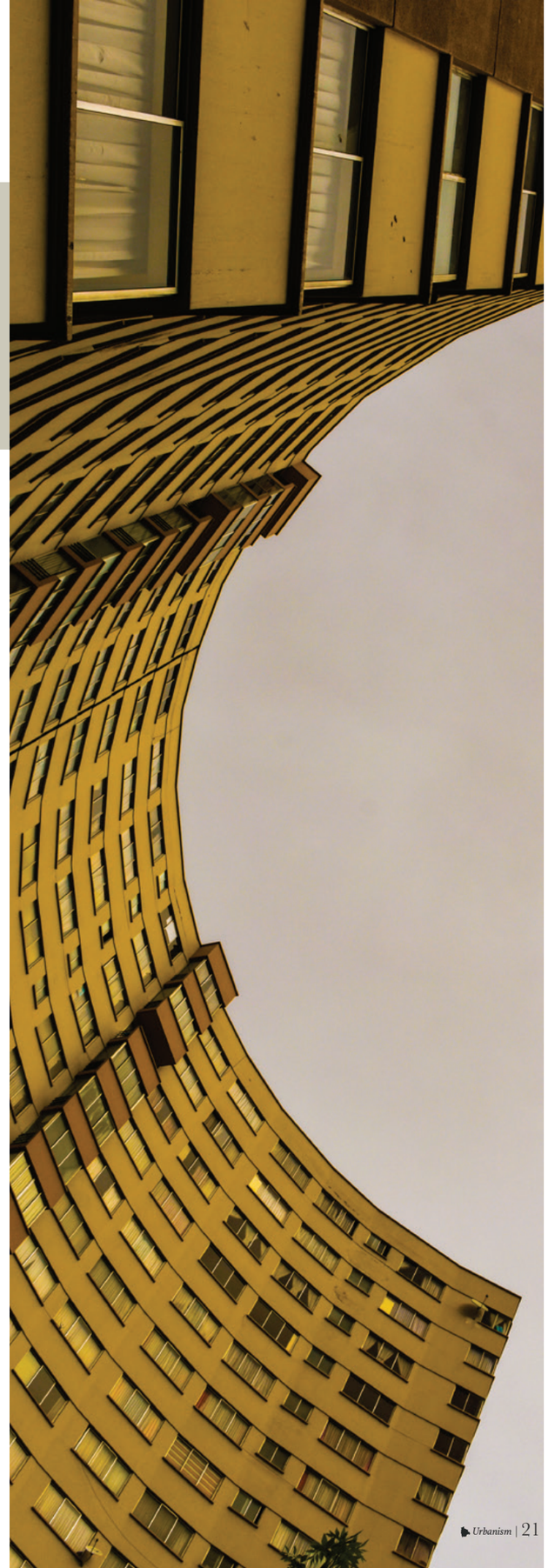
AUTHOR: MATTHEW GRACE PHOTOS: MATTHEW GRACE, IVAN RODRIGUEZ

A BLIGHT TO SOME, AN INCLUSIVE BUILDING PROJECT TO OTHERS

Can a casa del pueblo be a 'house of the people' if the people revile it? That's the question facing La Paz and the administration of Bolivian President Evo Morales as construction continues on a monolithic tower behind the Palacio Quemado near Plaza Murillo.

The building is easy to spot: Stand in the middle of historic Plaza Murillo, turn southwest and face the Cathedral Basilica of Our Lady of Peace and the Palacio Quemado, and look up. You'll see the half-finished façade of the 28-story-tall modern rectangular building jutting up behind the colonial curves and muted colours of the governmental palace and the baroque dome of the basilica. It's a jarring juxtaposition of architectural styles that has many paceños up in arms.

The Casa del Pueblo and a smaller but no less controversial new building will house the executive and legislative branches, respectively. They were conceived in a piece of national legislation that declared their construction a 'national priority.' The legislation was a political maneuver, according to Universidad Mayor de San Andrés Architecture Dean Gastón Gallardo Dávila, intended to sidestep city regulations and preservation efforts. 'These are exceptional laws that allow the construction of these buildings,' he says. 'They go above all the municipal regulations.' Indeed, Marcelo Arroyo, the city's secretary of planning for development, says, 'The [federal government] never asked us or started a dialogue to plan these massive constructions without breaking the [municipal] regulations.'



THE BUILDING IS A MONUMENT TO THE EGO.... IT'S A PHALLIC BUILDING.'
—UMSA ARCHITECTURE DEAN GASTÓN GALLARDO DÁVILA

But it's not only the political expedience that has earned the Casa del Pueblo its share of criticism – it's also the building's aesthetics. Former Bolivian president Carlos Mesa has called the edificio an 'unprecedented aggression' that 'destroys' the historic centre of La Paz. Javier Espejo Brañez, the president of the College of Architects of La Paz, said the Casa del Pueblo 'breaks the central urban center and the architectural heritage of the city.'

In response, Vice President Álvaro García Linera accused Mesa of harboring a 'racist, classist, and exclusive' aesthetic. According to the Bolivian Ministry of Planning and Development, the Casa del Pueblo is an homage to ancient Tiwanaku architecture, highlighting the 'solidity, simplicity, monumentality and symmetry' demonstrated in the ruins of the ancient civilisation that existed millennia ago on the shores of Lake Titicaca – and of which Bolivians are rightfully so proud.

Gallardo disagrees. 'No, I don't think they were thinking about Tiwanaku when they designed this building,' he says. 'The building is a monument to the ego...People say it in the street. It's a phallic building. You can see it from all sides. You can see it from all around the city. It's an iconic object, badly done.' He also defends former president Mesa from Vice President Linera's accusations of racist aesthetics: 'Carlos Mesa has a Eurocentric view,' he says. 'But that doesn't mean that he is racist...Carlos Mesa doesn't think that way.'

Aesthetics aside, there are many that question the economic feasibility of a building that's budgeted in at US$36 million – and its necessity. Scheduled to open in January next year, the Casa del Pueblo will reportedly come equipped with medium-grade armour and a helipad.

Susana, an unemployed woman walking by the building's construction site, looked at its rising façade and said, 'The money is being wasted. A lot of people don't have money. We don't have money to buy bread for our children.' Another Bolivian, who declined to be named, agreed: 'Honestly, it's a waste of money, it could have been used for the poor instead of building this monstrosity.'

Not everyone is opposed to the edificio nuevo, though. Miriam, a secretary who works nearby, said, 'Yes, it's good...The doors [of the building will be] open for us to talk, to value our culture... It's the house of the people; it's our house – for all.'

But most people's opinions of the new Casa del Pueblo were concerned with how it looks. And the reviews from el pueblo – those the building is presumably being built for – are decidedly negative. Eriberto, an accountant who works near the new building, said, 'They say it will be the house of the people [laughs]. I don't like it very much. It doesn't match the architecture. It clashes.'

Curiously, according to Gallardo, the names of the architects who designed the building are being kept from the public. Perhaps for good reason: 'No architect wants to claim that work,' Gallardo says.

Most agree that the building clashes horribly with the surrounding architecture. In a city like La Paz, in which older buildings are frequently demolished to make way for newer constructions, what feeble architectural heritage remains is centered around Plaza Murillo. And, people say, the Casa del Pueblo undermines it. According to Suárez, a man who was sunning himself on the steps to the basilica on Plaza Murillo last month, 'This place used to be our national heritage, and the government has usurped it for its personal ambitions. This goes against our city.'

Suárez squinted and looked up at the half-finished high-rise that loomed over the 16th-century plaza in which La Paz's ofttimes turbulent history has played out. Children were running nearby, women were selling drinks and pigeons were flocking in the sky. An early-evening after-work crowd was starting to fill the sidewalks as the presidential guard, dressed in their ceremonial red uniforms, stood at attention at the entrance of the Palacio Quemado. 'The issue of the architectural beauty of La Paz has been ruined by these ghosts, because these are not buildings,' Suárez said of the Casa del Pueblo and the new legislative building. 'They have no use at all. This is a city that can't be called a city, because these ghosts are offices for people who don't do anything.'

A STREET IN LA PAZ

TEXT: CAROLINE RISACHER ILLUSTRATION: OSCAR ZALLES

Watch out for the slippery streets. Watch out also for the meandering dogs who might bite you and the daydreaming tourists who will get in your way. The cobbled web of electrical cables has now been surpassed by the cable-car web hovering over our heads. This doesn't mean that traffic is getting better – the minibuses are still ever-present. Watch your feet. On your walk, make sure to avoid the dog's doings and don't stumble into the street vendor kiosks placed strategically throughout the city. Also avoid the many construction sites and you might just make it to your destination.

CASA DE HACIENDA CHIJCHIPA

TEXT: CHARLES BLADON PHOTOS: ADRIANA MURILLO

A CONVERTED HACIENDA-LODGE WITH A HISTORY OF REPOSSESSION

A warm, lush tropical forest hugs the walls of the converted hacienda. After removing the layers of clothes necessary to survive the bitter cold of the altiplano, you'd be forgiven for forgetting that La Paz is an easy car journey away. Snow-capped mountains, visible from the estate in Chijchipa, are perhaps the only reminder of La Paz's proximity. I observe this hacienda, which is placed amongst small local lodgings and perched on top of a foothill from which one can see even more forest. It's is now owned by the Afro-Bolivian community of Chijchipa and has been converted to a tourist lodge.

Nicolás Gutiérrez, secretary general of the community of Chijchipa, manages the lodge on behalf of the entire Afro-Bolivian community in the area. Community members run the enterprise communally. 'We have assemblies, meetings and emergency meetings,' Gutiérrez says. 'All our decisions must be agreed upon by all.'

This collective ownership of the hacienda stretches back to 2004, when its then owner, Bolivian president Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada, fled the country due to large-scale protests and demands for his resignation during the infamous Gas Wars. Marcelino Barra, Gutiérrez's deputy, recounts the hard process of repossession: 'People from different towns found out that this belonged to Sánchez de Lozada and came to invade the house, saying, "This is ours now." But this is our land. Sánchez de Lozada may have bought it, but this is our land. We kicked out the invaders. Then came the idea to legalise our ownership of the land. In 2009, Evo Morales came and gave us our titles. This is now legally our land.'

The conversion of the hacienda has almost acted as therapy for this community, given its harsh relationship with Sánchez de Lozada. Barra, whose parents worked for the ex-president, says that his family lived in poverty. 'Their houses were about one metre wide. [The people] were like slaves,' he says. 'What the bosses gave them wasn't enough. They had nowhere else to go.' Now locals hope to build a prosperous future for their children where their parents and grandparents suffered. 'We recovered from the pain,' Barra exclaims. 'We took back our culture, starting with this hacienda. We are happy!'

Despite the hacienda's ideal location, it's having trouble attracting visitors. 'We are not promoting much yet,' Barra explains. 'I want to be honest, we are busy with working the land. What we need is counselling for this to work.' To make Chijchipa a warm and tranquil respite from the cold and hectic life of La Paz, the community needs guidance on how to run and promote the project. As Gutiérrez points out, the area is full of beautiful wildlife, with lively birds chirping from the surrounding trees. The hacienda is surrounded by sublime landscapes and lovely walking trails that reveal waterfalls and stunning views of the rolling hills of Chijchipa. The community plans to renovate the old pool, expand the car park and build more cabins for the lodge. With its unique charm, friendly locals and warm weather, Gutiérrez hopes to help Chijchipa thrive further.

ART DECO IN AN ANCIENT CITY

TEXT: JOSEPHINE ZAVAGLIA PHOTO: CHARLES BLADEN

In a corner of the world where colonial architecture is more than common, La Paz's funky fusion of Art Deco architecture and Tiwanaku design make it a destination like no other.

Geometric shapes, symmetry and the intricate use of lines are fundamentals of both Art Deco architecture and Tiwanaku design. The intriguing convergence of these two disparate styles gives La Paz its own distinct feel, particularly in the downtown neighbourhoods of Sopocachi, San Pedro and Miraflores.

The advent of Art Deco in La Paz is a result of 'the French expression of power' during the beginning of the 20th century, according to Gastón Gallardo Dávila, dean of the department of architecture at the Universidad Mayor de San Andrés. He says, 'You have Art Deco [architecture] in South Miami Beach, in Cairo, in La Paz, in New Zealand...' But, he boldly claims, 'in France and the rest of Europe, you can't find Art Deco.'

Bolivian architect, engineer and urban planner Emilio Villanueva was the first to combine the design conventions of the two styles to create a cityscape in La Paz that distinguishes it from the rest of the country, and even the rest of the continent.

Villanueva took much inspiration from the pre-Hispanic empire of Tiwanaku – the ruins of which are located two hours by minibus from the centre of La Paz – when he was designing much of the city in the early 1900s.

A revolutionary for his time, Villanueva studied in Santiago, Chile, in 1907 and later in Paris, and he played a large role in the modernisation of La Paz. Although he spent many years abroad, Villanueva always returned to Bolivia, and it is here that the fruits of his career are on display.

Early in his career, Villanueva designed La Paz's City Hall and the Central Bank of Bolivia building using principles of Eclecticism – using unique combinations of different historical styles – in much the same way it was being used in Europe during that era. It was when Villanueva returned from studying urban planning in Paris in the late 1920s that he discovered his unique style and his work developed a distinctive paceño flair.

The Monoblock building at the Universidad Mayor de San Andrés in La Paz, designed by Villanueva in 1947, represents both the pinnacle and finale of his career as an architect. This behemoth structure is often considered to be typically 'Bolivian architecture', but as Gallardo says, it is in fact, 'pure Art Deco.' Its unique golden embellishments, Tiwanaku depictions and distinct line work, though, give it a Bolivian élan distinguishing it from other Art Deco creations.

As the head municipal engineer of La Paz's local government in the early 1900s, Villanueva was as integral to the infrastructural planning of the city as he was to its visual appearance. During his tenure, Villanueva advocated for the opening of Avenida Camacho, an arterial connection between the city centre and Miraflores, which is still very much in use today, and where you can spot many Art Deco buildings.

Villanueva not only created a distinctive architectural vision in La Paz that sets it apart from its colonial counterparts such as Sucre and Potosí, but he also preserved an ancient culture through its incorporation into modern design. The geometric order of the city's Art Deco buildings stands in stark contrast to the chaos, crowds and colourful cholitas of La Paz.

Villanueva made La Paz a modern capital and began his design career in a country where architecture theory was essentially unheard of. Villanueva, meaning 'new village' in Spanish, is a fitting name for the man who forever changed the form and function of La Paz.

XAVIER ITURRALDE
MAN OF CHANGE

TEXT: CAROLINE RISACHER
PHOTO: IVAN RODRIGUEZ PETKOVIC

I am meeting with Xavier Iturralde, founder of the Spazio Wellness and Lounge gymnasiums. The first thing he tells me is: 'I am paceño. I love my city.' His love and commitment to La Paz has been passed down to him generation after generation by a long line of dedicated paceños. More than a successful entrepreneur, he is a man with a vision and a mission for his city and country. Now Iturralde is working on a new urban landscape for La Paz, no less.

Back in 2002, Iturralde started as a fitness instructor. Twelve years later he opened his first Spazio Wellness and Lounge gymnasium in Calacoto. Two more followed, one in Sopocachi and another in El Alto. A fourth one will open soon in Cochabamba. But this is just a starting point for Iturralde's ambitions. The dedication and passion that took him to where he is now led him to start Fundación Kalasasaya. The foundation's mission is to revitalise the city of La Paz, to reconceptualise the city and create spaces and axes that will allow it to grow organically and rapidly.

As a boy, Iturralde dreamt of infrastructures, of a city that keeps growing, that reflects its inhabitants' spirits – a dream that is now becoming reality. 'Since 1910–25, La Paz has been using the same urban area,' Iturralde tells me. 'The city hasn't been taken care of.' And there is space for La Paz to grow. Iturralde sees a potential for La Paz to expand in a way that is hard to imagine when you experience the trancaderas and everyday congestions. But it's with confidence that he tells me that 'in 20 years there could be eight million inhabitants in La Paz.' With now under two million inhabitants in La Paz and El Alto combined, that's a bold statement, but after Iturralde explains more details about his project and the idea behind it, it makes sense.

This October, Fundación Kalasasaya will unveil its new metropolitan centre project. This means a new city centre, a new area that will dynamise neighbourhoods and allow the city's growth. There is also a project for a metropolitan avenue with six lanes that will extend through the city and into a new industrial park. Iturralde emphasises the use of the word 'metropolitan' because this project is about the city itself. Part of the impetus for this mega-project is his belief that important aspects of the city's development have been abandoned since the 1960s. 'The focus of the development [in the past] has been social, but there needs to be a balance between the social and the economic [elements],' Iturralde explains.

And Iturralde has even more projects on the horizon that also aim to reconfigure the urban landscape. One project strives to turn the city greener by planting small plants along the city's many riverbanks. Another is to work with the famed Bolivian artist Roberto Mamani Mamani to create a urban gallery by painting hundreds of building façades. The city's roads can also be reengineered with bicycle lanes placed in specific places to coordinate with other transport systems while integrating green axes. Iturralde is also working on setting up recycling plants to create a market of products to export to Chile and Peru.

Because the foundation is working with the support of the federal and municipal government and foreign concerns, Iturralde's vision might come to fruition in the next few years – at least partially. The ideas and motivations behind these projects are certainly ambitious, but they are in response to an even larger need. Talking with Iturralde, the picture he paints is an integral one. 'La Paz is supporting the whole economy of the altiplano, and investing in La Paz is investing in the whole region,' he tells me. Politically, he believes, it's also an asset. The more developed La Paz and the surrounding region are, the more pressure and weight there are to claim access to the sea, for instance. 'The other countries in South America centralise all their power in one city, but Bolivia has the possibility to have two major poles of development. That's a very powerful prospect.'

For Bolivia, having La Paz and Santa Cruz pull the country forward could forge an economic and political balance. But for all of this to happen, La Paz needs to grow. 'The city needs new spaces, a new airport, new people,' Iturralde says. As a paceño, he feels that the people have forgotten who they were, who they are. 'Paceños are warriors. They built and made the city thrive,' Iturralde tells me. 'La Paz is a lion that has fallen asleep.' For the city to awake, Iturralde asserts, it needs new leadership, which is only possible by making the area more attractive so that La Paz can attract new people. A visionary and a leader himself, Iturralde is propelling the changes he wants to see happen and setting the stage for the La Paz he has been dreaming about.

GLOSSARY

BolivianExpress Magazine

ALTIPLANO	The high-altitude plateau found partially in western Bolivia
AMARILLO	Yellow
ARQUITECTURA REPUBLICANA	Republican Architecture
AZUL	Blue
BLANCA	White
CASA DEL PUEBLO	House of the people
CHOLET	Colourful mansions of El Alto
CHOLITA	A traditionally dressed indigenous woman of Aymara or Quechua descent
CHORIPAN	Sausage sandwich
CHOZA	Hut
EDIFICIO	Building
EL TELEFÉRICO	The cable-car system in La Paz and El Alto
LA CEJA	'The Eyebrow,' a neighbourhood in El Alto
LÍNEA	Line
LUGAREÑO	Local
NARANJA	Orange
NUEVO	New
ORGULLO PACEÑO	Paceñan pride
PACEÑO(A)	From La Paz
PALACIO QUEMADO	'Burnt Palace,' the governmental palace in Bolivia
RÍO SECO	'Dry River,' a river and neighbourhood in El Alto
ROJA	Red
TIWANAKU	Pre-Columbian archaeological site near Lake Titicaca
TRANCADERA	Traffic jam
VERDE	Green
ZONA SUR	'Southern Zone,' an upscale area in the south of La Paz

Presentamos la marca de las marcas que nos diferencia del resto del mundo y nos genera más oportunidades

BOLIVIA

corazón del sur

El corazón que representa la

fuerza y empuje

de los sectores de producción y exportación

la riqueza mineral

del país que es la fuente de inversión económica

la biodiversidad

cultura y turismo

la transparencia de nuestras relaciones internacionales

Es **nuestra marca** que hace

latir el corazón

de bolivianas y bolivianos dentro y fuera del país

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