

BUILT NATURE IN “ENTRENUBES” PARK:
CONSERVATION AND SOCIAL MOVEMENTS IN THE SOUTH EAST OF BOGOTA
Germán Andrés Quimbayo Ruiz

In 2003 the Mayorality of Bogota established the ecological park *Entrenubes* (an urban protected area) in the South East of Bogota, the capital of Colombia. It is formed by the following three hills: Guacamayas, Juan Rey and Cuchilla del Gavilán. The park is 626.4 hectares, which is equivalent to twice the area of Central Park in New York (see map below). A small sample of the high Andean forest ecosystem still exists there today, something that has almost completely disappeared from the city and its surroundings.

This new type of ecological park was promoted for conservation purposes in response to the deterioration of the Bogota’s eco-system, which started due to the city’s rapid growth over the last 50 years. Thus, the purpose of the park is to preserve and restore a “native-like” landscape. Linked to this is the idea of “natural space” given by *Entrenubes* for the promotion of environmental education and the provision of ecological services to the city.

The Mayorality has regulated the activities that can be carried out inside the park. This makes it different from other urban parks, where the primary purpose is recreational. Due to the creation of the park, surrounding informal neighborhoods were dispossessed and restrictions on farming and small-scale mining for the extraction of construction material were created. All of these activities were done within the entire park’s area of influence. Paradoxically, these conflicts have restricted the original purpose of conservation on the Juan Rey hill, while the rest of the area considered an ecological park is still considered private land or has been urbanized (see map below).

The idea for creating the park came about in the 80’s, when the residents of the neighboring communities started to get organized in order to create an open public area for recreational purposes. However, they had a different view from the one that is currently held by the Mayorality. Although the Mayorality clearly recognized the local movements, their reaction

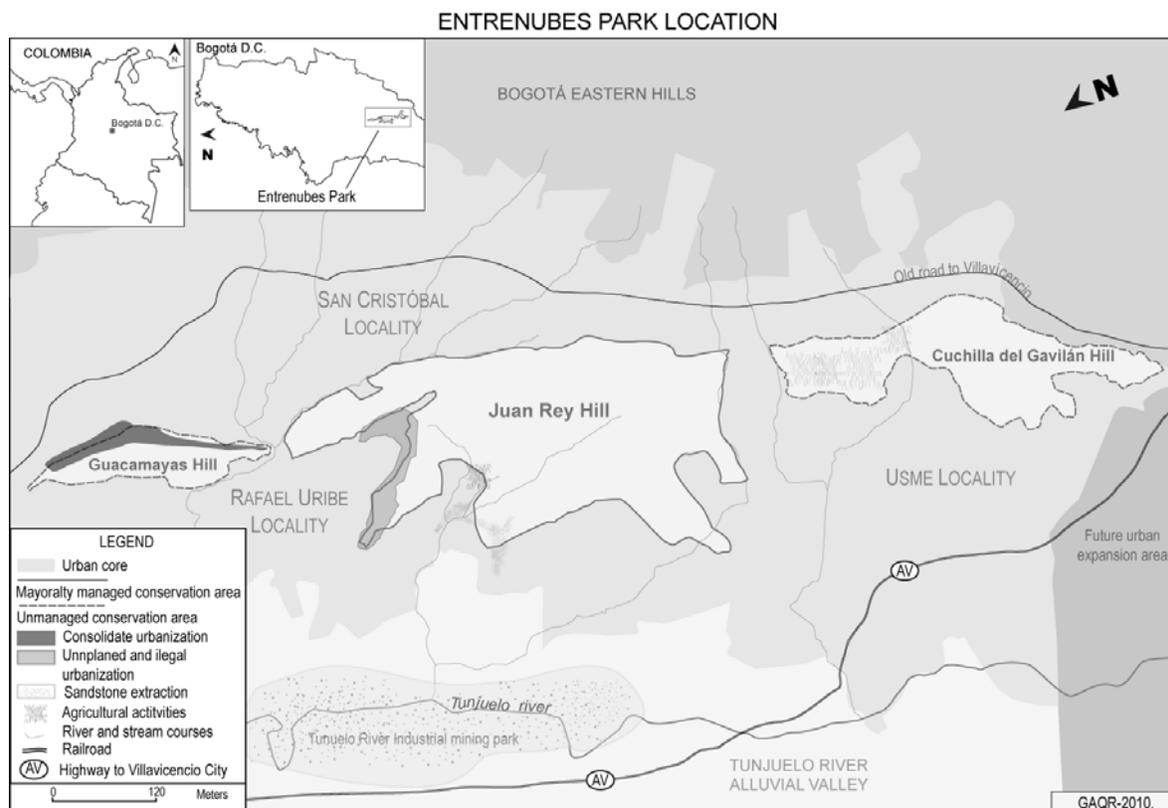
was more linked to an interest in the preservation of the remaining native ecosystem. Thus, the residents got their park, but with a different purpose from what they had originally wanted. This difference has created a conflict between the Mayoralty and an important group of community leaders.

It must be noted that the area chosen for the conservation purposes was somewhat odd. The area had already experienced many changes due to agriculture, livestock and mines. Thus, it does not precisely correspond to an “original” Andean forest. Therefore, the purpose of this presentation is to present some findings about a current study that seeks to analyze the impact the protection of this area has had on the biophysical and social transformation in South East Bogota.

Throughout the years *Entrenubes* has achieved two things. Firstly, the style of the ecological park has managed to consolidate the preservation of nature, a process perceived as being positive in terms of ethical management and the protection of the local ecosystem. That is, the remnants of what little was left of the original ecosystem was enough to re-create a “native” natural landscape within the city. Secondly, the community has accepted the park the way it is today. However, a conflict of a different nature exists today.

Other urban protected areas have been created in Bogota due to social and political mobilization over the last 20 years. *Entrenubes* has become an icon of this urban success. However, the analysis of *Entrenubes*'s creation is still seen in terms of legal norms, policy of land use and technical concepts that blur some elements of the environmental history of the territories. The creation of urban protected areas is conditioned by a process of destruction and construction of urban nature at different social, political and ecological levels. In this regard, it is important for biodiversity conservation strategies to be incorporated into the geographical approach in order to analyze political processes, practices, ideologies and daily action of communities and ecosystems present in the environment of the city. Today no concrete research exists about these issues in Bogota.

Beyond figuring out what kind of park it should be, local social leaders are looking for its direct management. Facing the eminent threat of ever existing urban expansion, there may be a possibility that these leaders are still seeking better protection of the park. However, it seems that there mainly is a strong desire for greater control and influence in the neighboring communities. Therefore, one of the most important effects of *Entrenubes* has been the way it has generated increased political activism in local communities. Discussions about the park and the effort to re-create space both symbolically and physically are an ideal breeding ground for the consolidation of political activism in the neighborhood. In this sense, *Entrenubes* is an important story that must be told.



Source:
DAMA-Suna Hisca (2003); SDA (2007; 2009).