Alick M. McLean

Remapping Collectivity for Opportunity

Urban collectivity, the emotional connection of individuals to place and to others, has been at once a strength and weakness of cities since the earliest urban settlements. The fact that nearly all cities have excluded some residents from full political or economic participation at some time in their histories introduces the possibility that collectivity can be forged as much to divide as to connect, to subordinate as to empower. Whether inclusive or exclusive, the sense of collectivity is a construct, as actively and purposefully designed as the public policies, buildings, spaces, and public rituals that serve to shape it. Two historical examples, from ancient Greece and medieval Italy, track innovative techniques for expanding the collective, limits to such expansion, and the impact of such limitations on the sustainability of the communities. One modern example in Colombia provides strategies for deliberately reversing historical limits to inclusivity. Colombia's model, together with positive attributes of the earlier collectives, can inform contemporary initiatives to expand urban collectives while maximizing and sustaining opportunities for historically excluded groups.

In 508 BCE, the city of Athens radically extended opportunity to some, though not all, residents. The legislation and resulting urban topography were explicitly both political and spatial. Crafted by Cleisthenes, it involved reworking the nexus of social and political identity in ancient Athens, the tribes (*phylai)*. Before Cleisthenes, the four tribes of Athens were based on extended family ties. By the late sixth century BCE, with the growth of Athens both commercially and militarily, unequal opportunities provided within tribes came under criticism. One of the aristocratic beneficiaries of this system, Cleisthenes, offered the citizens of Athens a deal: he would pass legislation to dismantle the historic tribal system in exchange for his election as archon, the city leader. The Athenian citizens agreed, and the new archon Cleisthenes delivered one of the most revolutionary political remappings in history.

The remapping of Athens under Cleisthenes consisted in replacing the four historical tribes with ten new tribes. Citizens no longer participated based on family, but according to a mix of demographic and geographical factors. Tribes were designed to be of equal size while maximizing the diversity of economic representation and minimizing the influence of powerful family leaders. The 139 neighborhoods and villages of Athens at the time were distributed into ten urban, ten inland, and ten coastal sets of communities, known as *trittyes*. Each of the ten tribes was made up of one trittye from each.[1]

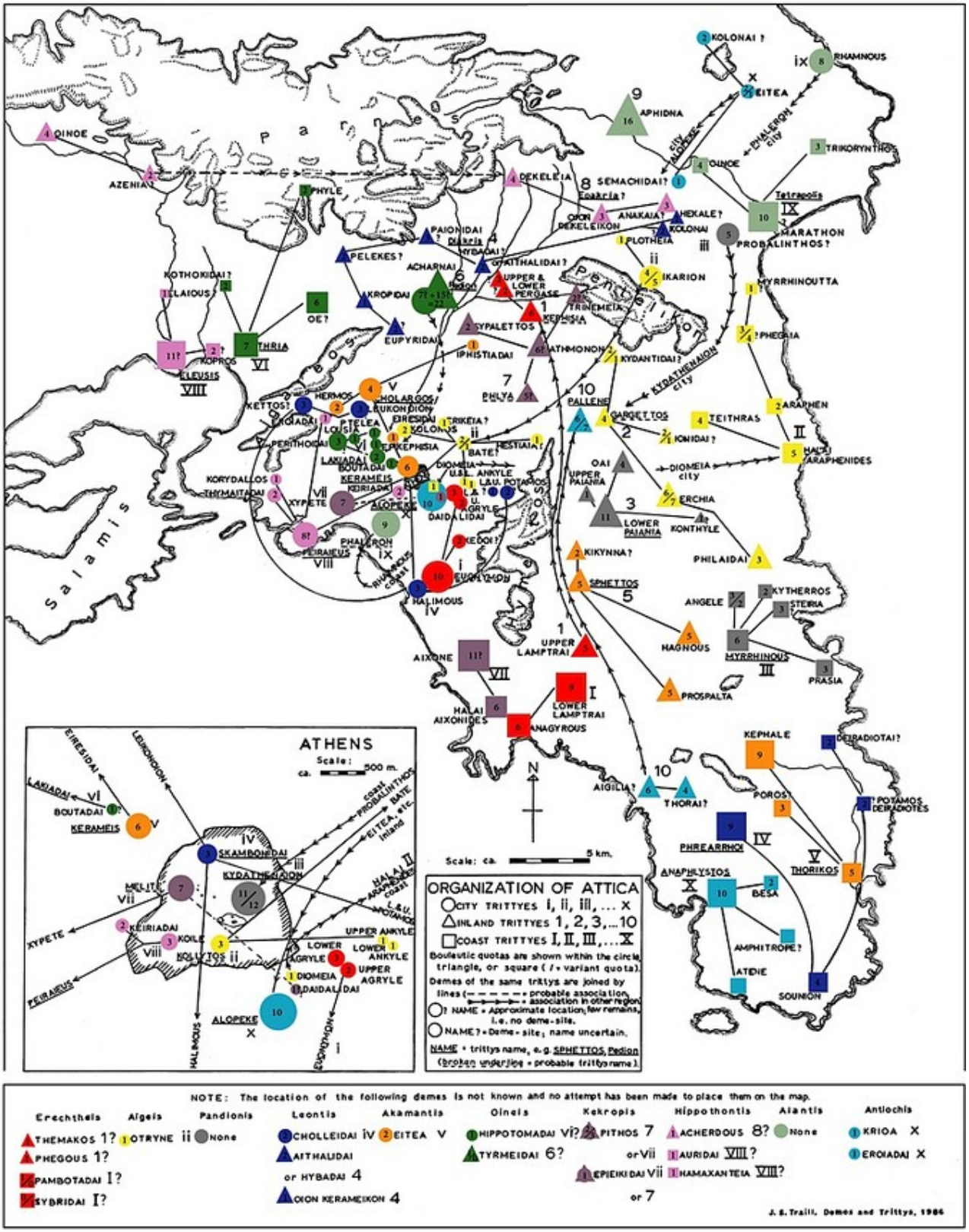
The disappearance of blood ties and the mandated geographic and economic diversity challenged Cleisthenes and later Athenian leaders to develop new ways to create tribe cohesion. One of these was required military service. Regiments were composed by the young men from a single tribe. Service provided shared experiences to bond members. Another way was through

Kyungsub Shin, Park, 2019.

theater, particularly musical theater, or dithyramb.[2] City officials would appoint the wealthiest citizen in each tribe as choregos, and he in turn would select fifty boys and fifty men for the respective youth and adult dithyramb chorus competitions, as well as hire a professional double-reed flute player.

The composition of the chorus paralleled the degree of representation in Athenian democracy in the fifth century BCE. Despite intense competition between tribes, they worked together to create a larger religious spectacle of public theater, just as the individual tribe regiments composed the entire Athenian army. The whole was greater than the sum of its parts. The mix of coastal seafarers, inland farmers, and urban merchants, manufacturers, administrators, and priests afforded all parties greater say within tribes and in the overall politics of Athens. Each individual's capacity to express himself was bolstered by a high literacy rate among citizens and supported by universal attendance at village and urban theaters. Skills developed in the critical analysis of dramas led to skills in self-advocacy for economic interests.[3] The Theater of Dionysus, Agora, Pynx, and Acropolis all provided spaces for such skills and vocalized interests further to be developed and exchanged, creating a public sphere that maximized opportunity for a far broader percentage of the Attic polity than the previous four blood tribes had afforded. It is no coincidence that during this period, the city entered its most dynamic period of economic growth and cultural achievements, the public development and debate of which only increased critical expression and self-advocacy within the citizenry, further bolstering the capacity of individuals and groups to express and achieve economic interests through public legislation.

The fact that this Golden Age of Athens unraveled towards the end of the fifth century through war suggests at once the strength and weaknesses of the Athenian collective. Foreigners were invited to participate in Athens' economy,



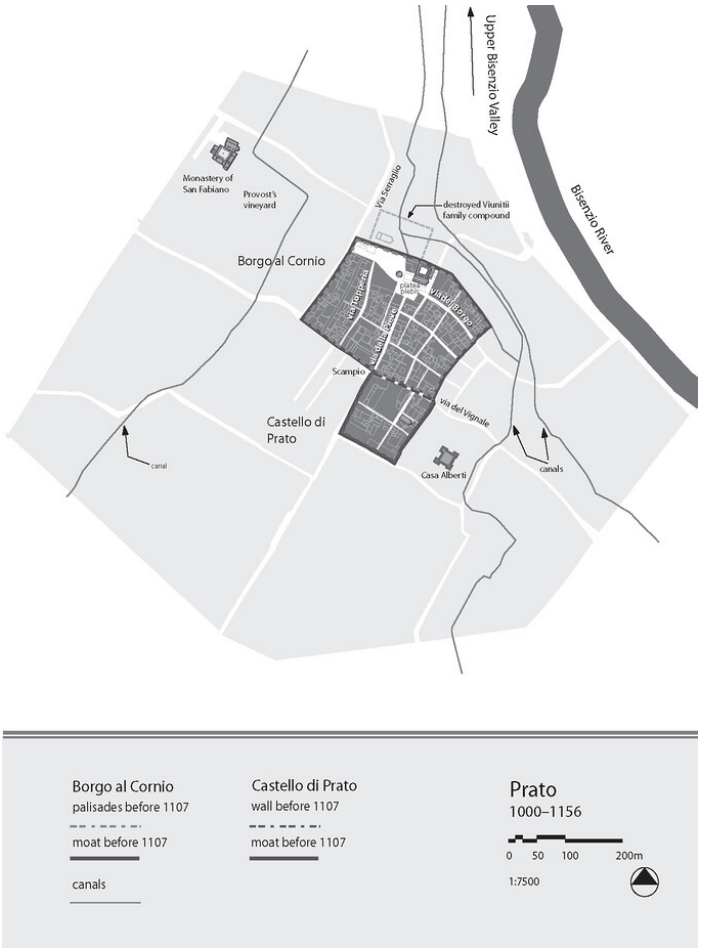
Each color stands for one of the 10 tribes, each mark for an individual deme. The lines link groups of demes that belong to the same tribe. The number within each mark records the number of representatives sent each year to the Council (Boule) from that deme. Source: J.S. Traill, "Demes and Tribes," 1986. Image: Agora.

but on Athenian terms, essentially an “Athens First” politics. Foreign traders and allies had limited rights, and other foreigners, those conquered in battle, lost all rights, becoming the slave population providing free labor to power, for instance, Athenian agro-industry,[4] and towards the end of the Peloponnesian War, to compose a large portion of oarsmen rowing the city’s naval triremes.[5]

The Athenian cult of the collective, nourished in tribal regiments and theatrical competition, had an element of exclusion and partisanship. Judges of dithyramb festivals were sometimes forced by the agitation of competing tribes to have army generals pronounce winners.[6] Athenians’ inability to self-regulate the dark side of their sense of collective became catastrophic in foreign affairs. An arrogant chauvinism doomed the Athenian fleet during its Sicily campaign, when generals, having already defeated the Syracusan navy, were blind to the potential of their adversaries to recover.[7] The Athenians fell, like the Spartans, Thebans, Macedonians, and eventually Romans after them, due to their inability to contain voices of militant partisanship. Athenians drained their economy and sacrificed their youth in continuous wars, despite the fact that as much as half the population questioned warfare, namely the future widows and grieving mothers. Enslaved foreigners were equally unenthusiastic.[8] Like the women of Athens, slaves had practically no political rights besides through their owners, the male citizenry of Athens, despite providing a large portion of the city’s labor force and wealth. Were Cleisthenes’s exemplary geographic and social remapping of the Athenian tribes to have emancipated and engaged the input of women and slaves, the scope of the public sphere might have sustained voices to balance military interests with concerns of gender, family, and labor.

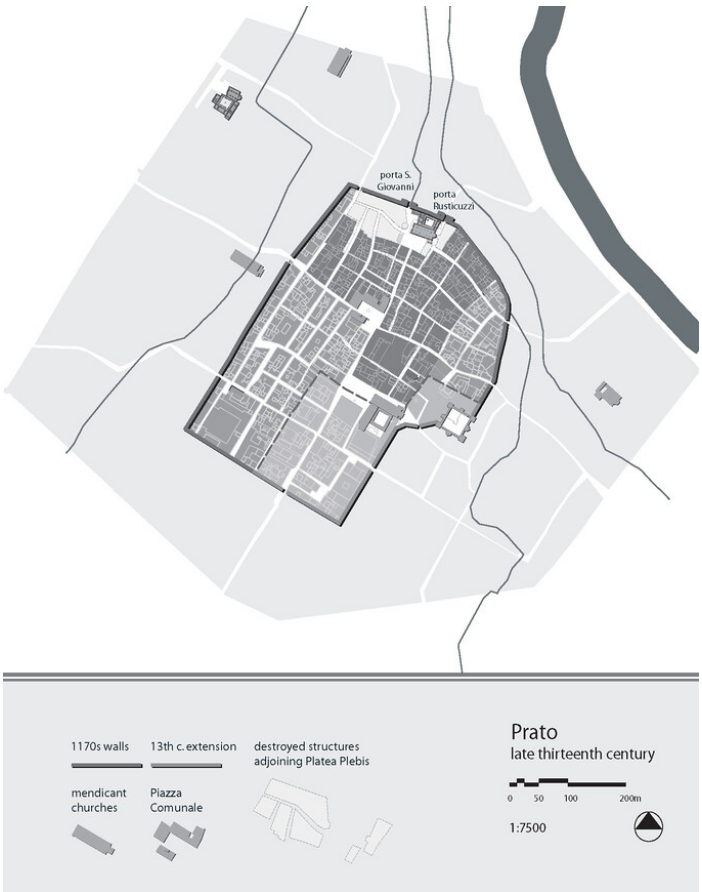
One thousand seven hundred years later, a similar remapping from noble to middle class occurred across nearly all of central and northern Italy, achieving a comparable mix of positive but tragically limited results through different methods. City states north of Rome shifted from primarily aristocratic enclaves dominated by feudal lords or high-ranking clergy to crucibles for economic growth led by constellations of merchant and manufacturing interests. For a limited time, Italy transformed itself from a rural to an urban economy, but flaws in the process of remapping opportunities from countryside to city, and within cities themselves, limited the sustainability of Italy’s city-states as autonomous political entities.

One characteristic medieval city-state was Prato in Tuscany. The city began as a pair of church and noble villages at the border between Pistoia and Florence. As with many Italian city-states, Prato developed through two remapping moments. The first occurred in Prato between the eleventh and twelfth centuries, and the second in the thirteenth century. Starting in the eleventh century, the parish church of Prato began to attract rural serfs and villagers, offering serfs freedom. New residents found work in the burgeoning cloth industry, in trade, and in banking.[9] As the town population and economy grew and diversified, so did parishioner investment in the scale and monumentality of the parish church, Santo Stefano. The success of the villages attracted noble families as well. Some nobles supported the church’s expansion in physical structures and authority, while others contested the church, supporting instead the German emperors, who had developed a castle stronghold in Prato. Prato’s first remapping varied according to class.

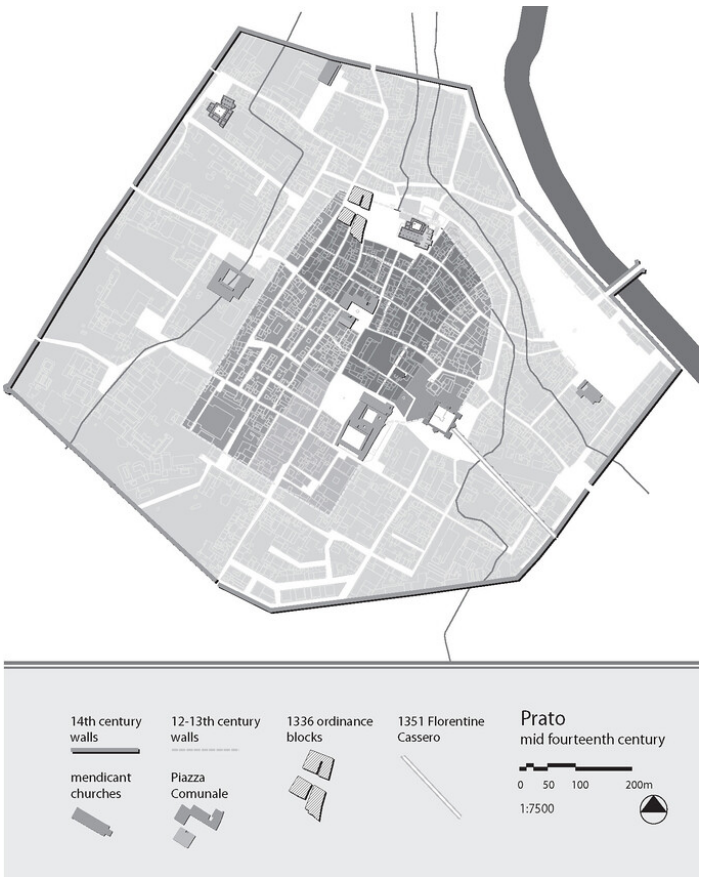


Borgo al Cornio and Castello di Prato, 1107–1157. Image: McLean, 2008.

Serfs and villagers were retooled to perform urban labor, whether in the wool mills or urban and international trade and banking. Nobles tended less to retooling, holding onto their traditional crafts of administration and warfare. Even when engaging in banking or trade, they persisted in the patriarchal leadership and highly competitive practices derived from their military backgrounds. Nobles in Prato, as elsewhere in medieval Italy, had multiple loyalties, to their families, to their family businesses, and to their clans, which as in the four Athenian tribes before Cleisthenes, consisted of extended families occupying entire neighborhoods. Their loyalties sometimes extended to



Prato, late thirteenth century. Image: McLean, 2008.



Plan of Prato, mid-fourteenth century. Image: McLean, 2008.

their cities, and also to one of two larger super-clan organizations, the pro-papal Guelphs, and the pro-German imperial Ghibellines.

By the mid-twelfth century, Prato developed its first quasi-democratic government composed of nobles and wealthy merchants. With arcades lining its walls and the adjoining town hall, the main plaza projected a lay cloister and, with it, a lay life in common. At the same time, the tower of the church, the tower of the town hall, and the many fortified, military towers of the consorteria families bristling on and behind the plaza walls suggested that this common life, or vita comunalis was fragile, contested, and more architectural fiction than social-political fact.[10]

The contestation of the Platea Plebis, the people's plaza, came to its full absurd head in 1260, when Ghibelline families allied militarily with exiled pro-imperial clans across Tuscany and their power center in the region, Siena. The alliance defeated Pratese, Florentine, and other Guelph city armies at the Battle of Montaperti. The victorious Ghibellines returned to the cities to banish their Guelph counterparts and destroyed many of their houses—a practice Guelphs had earlier used against them. In 1266, the tides turned again, with the Battle of Benevento returning victorious Guelphs to Prato and other Tuscan centers, and further reprisals of exile and tower-house destruction. At some point during this conflict, Prato's original town hall and most of the buildings around Santo Stefano were destroyed, leaving a now far larger, but unformed space until the 1330s, when laws were passed to rebuild the space. For over sixty years the church space remained desecrated and neglected.

The meltdown of competing noble collectives and the resulting destruction of the main church and civic plaza paradoxically initiated in Prato the community's second moment of urban remapping. Starting in the second decade of the thirteenth century, Prato's residents began turning away from the traditional parish center and toward other religious sites that had been developed in the city by mendicant orders, such as the Franciscans and Dominicans.[11]

Due to the dense construction of the town centers, and the cursed association with structures razed by clan warfare, the spaces where mendicant preachers drew crowds tended to be at marketplaces on the town's periphery, often outside city walls. These locations began with no church architecture—open plazas became the new sites of worship. The language of the friars was the vernacular, not Latin. The physical and linguistic barriers between sacred and profane, for a short time, vanished: ordinary places, language, and people became sacred.

The welcoming of all comers by mendicant preachers attracted many new migrants joining the city economy to participate in lay brotherhoods. These brotherhoods became crucibles for social opportunity, as noble or wealthy members shared with their brothers, regardless of class, experience in managing the charitable operations of the brotherhoods, and in the process offered jobs and helped to find housing nearby. Urban growth became parabolic, with population explosion paralleling growing economic opportunities.

The opportunities afforded by the mendicants constituted as significant a remapping of collective interactions, discourse, and jobs as Cleisthenes millennia before in Athens. Prato's openness to outsiders constituted a novelty. Immigrant workers who had started as lay brothers in mid-thirteenth century plaza celebrations became leaders of the new popular government, the Secondo Popolo, during the last decades of the century. They expanded suffrage to a majority of non-nobles, but still excluded women. The newly empowered governors continued to ignore Prato's destroyed central plaza, instead initiating a return to monumental architecture by providing land grants and other gifts to mendicant orders, which started to interpret flexibly mendicant building moratoria.

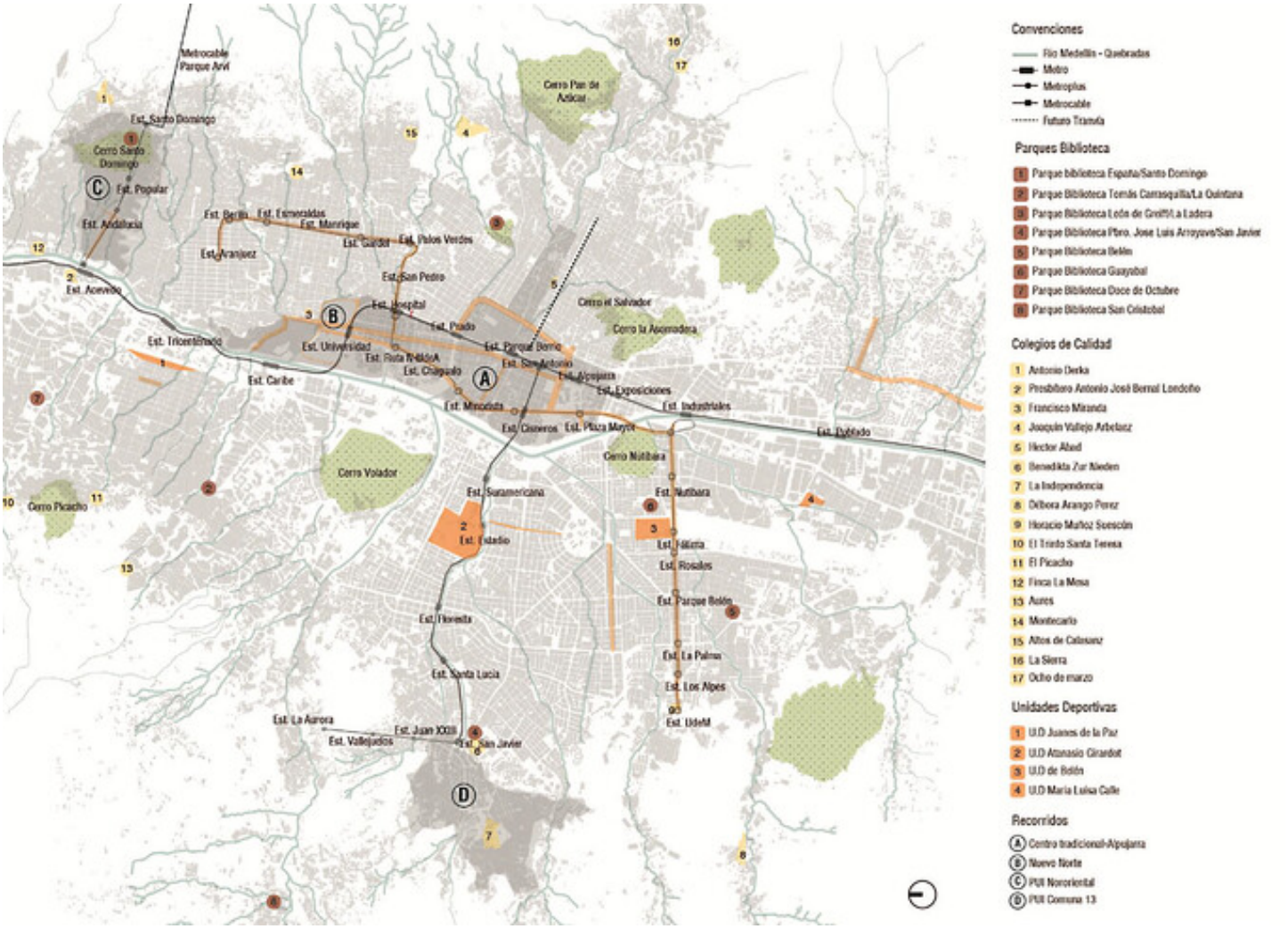
By the 1280s and 1290s, mendicant plazas had churches greater in scale and monumentality than the seemingly forgotten Santo Stefano. The canons and provost of Santo Stefano responded by developing their own confraternity around the newly rediscovered relic of the Sacred Belt of the Virgin. By 1317 they had received both private and communal funding to provide the relic a huge, monumental setting in a new transept. Shortly afterwards, they added a new pulpit to the exterior, and in 1336 they began reconstruction of the new, larger Piazza Santo Stefano through urban design ordinances providing for a regularized monumental space. The central church's gambit to mix select mendicant practices with a return to magic and monumentality successfully redirected some of the pious from the mendicant periphery to the church's grand sacred center. The walls between sacred and profane were re-established.

The return to a faith based on separation, monument, and magic in Prato also paralleled a return to clan behavior. After banishing defeated Ghibellines, the Secondo Popolo passed legislation to ban all nobility, even noble Guelphs, from public office. Other nearby cities passed similar laws, and before long the mentality of clan exclusiveness, through the process of banishing its perpetrators, infected the communes themselves and initiated a period of military and economic competition. Prato's governance became increasingly contested and unstable up to 1351, when the Florentines quietly negotiated buying the rights to the city from its Guelph Angevin patron. As with Athens, the Pratese had difficulty managing the violent partisanship engendered by a sometimes dormant, but persistent, clan mentality. The absence of representation of women in governance, and a reversal of openness to newcomers and laborers, eliminated from political discourse voices whose diverse interests may have helped manage unbridled clan and inter-city competition and aggression.

To find examples of more sustainable urban opportunity remapping, we can turn to the present in Medellín, Colombia. On January 1, 2004, his first day as mayor, Sergio Fajardo and his team of advisors redirected public support from the Miss Medellín Beauty pageant and other publicly funded beauty contests to a new event: the Women with Talent competition, dedicated to achievements in "science, technology, entrepreneurship, culture, and arts."[12] The mayor and his team proceeded to prepare a four-year Development Plan for Medellín. In order for the plan to succeed, his administration would have to get it passed quickly by the twenty-one-member city council, only two of which had supported him in the election that brought him into power. Fajardo declined to engage in traditional acts of coalition-building exercised by previous administrations, instead inviting councilors to debate his plan in public, while at the same time pushing them to offer alternatives where they had critiques. After just six months, councilors approved the plan unanimously. This success was achieved not by excluding or outflanking detractors, but rather by engaging their ideas in the decision-making process, even crediting them publicly. In refusing to support anyone's, including his own traditionally partisan collectives within the council, Fajardo constructed a larger and far more effective policy-based collective.

The Fajardo administration's process of engaging hitherto underrepresented groups and constructing nonpartisan coalitions became the Development Plan itself, which remapped opportunities throughout the city by emphasizing not just improvements such as better transportation, housing, access to jobs, resources, and political say, but also by emphasizing something Fajardo's administration insisted was fundamental for realizing such material and political goods: the equal right to dignity of all residents. The plan's means for sustaining such dignity had many creative components. The first was to map the sites in the city with the lowest opportunity, and to place public institutions, mostly libraries, with world-class architectural quality and services within them. Another was to improve transit connections between these new structures, their neighborhoods, and the entire city. The administration provided economic and social opportunities in these selected neighborhoods and along their connecting transit lines, in a process that became known as Integral Urban Projects (PUI).

In contrast to the latent tribalism and clanism of ancient Athens and medieval Prato, Fajardo's project extended Colombian President Alvaro Uribe's process of exchanging the weapons of paramilitary group members,

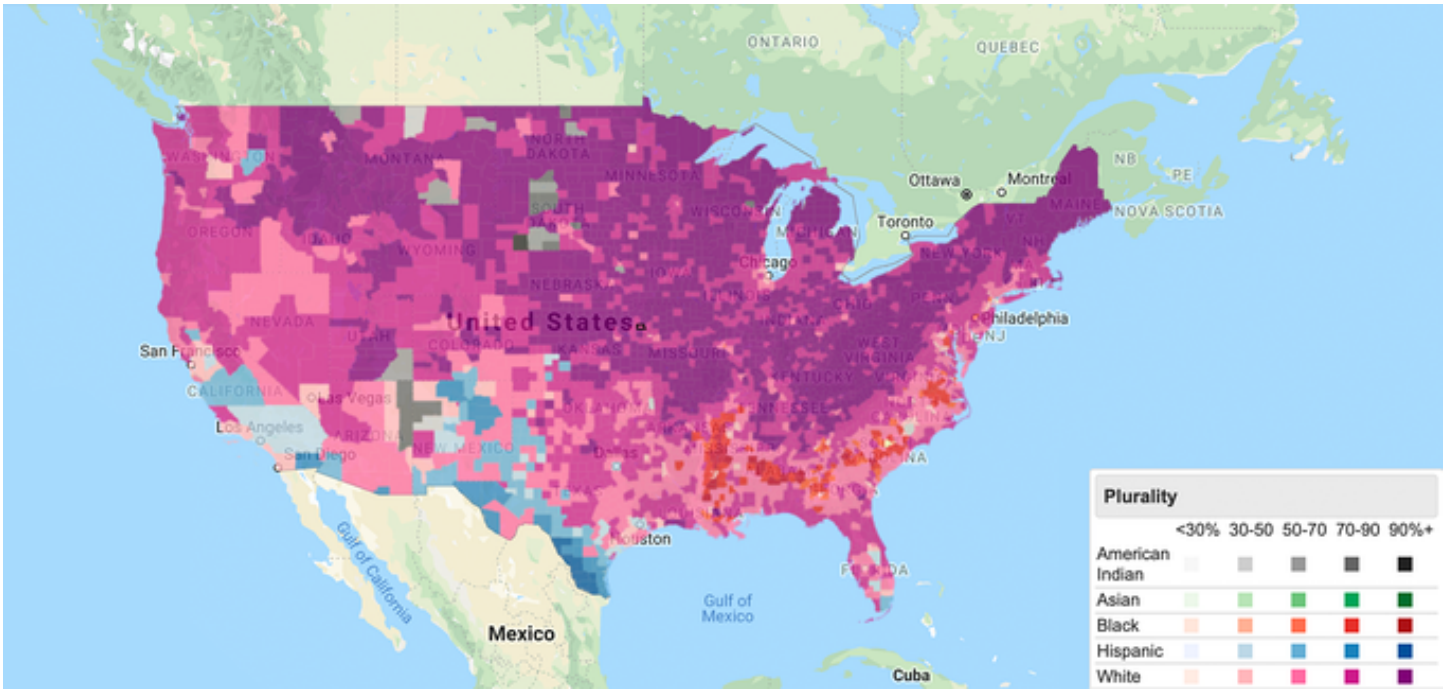


Guide of Medellín, general PUI social planning map, 2015. Image: Universidad EAFIT.

circa 4,500 by 2008, for clemency. The Fajardo administration added a reintegration program to Uribe's demobilization, providing one-to-one mental health support for former paramilitary members, "detecting their abilities and aspirations, and designing a new project of life."[13] This spirit of individual resident engagement, regardless of background, permeated his entire plan, the development and implementation of which was modeled on the grassroots campaign that originally got Fajardo elected. Not only did the administration solicit the input of city councilors, but it also engaged its residents, interviewing and continually involving them in the decision-making, implementation, and even budgeting processes. The results of this grassroots gestation of an urban plan was to transform targeted neighborhoods, and to drop Medellín's homicide rate, which was one of the highest in the world at the time, by over 80% in just four years.

In recent decades, a series of opportunity map initiatives in the United States have sought to promote similar diffusions of resources to underserved areas of cities. Opportunity map projects have been developed, for instance, at the HAAS Institute at UC Berkeley, the Dorn Institute at USC, the Kirwan Institute at The Ohio State University, the Institute on Metropolitan Opportunity at the University of Minnesota Law School, and the Justice Map project.[14] All harness national census data together with local demographic data and surveys to chart neighborhoods that are least served, and to propose legislation, particularly for housing, that addresses the material, spatial, and social disparities of jobs, housing, and segregation.

The success of these opportunity maps may be, however, limited by their implementation. United States opportunity maps are largely researched and developed at university research centers to affect policy using a top-down model. The religious space and rites of theater of the Athenians brought the reality of social-spatial remapping to the individual level, providing ritualized sites, behavior, and intense shared experiences to allow Athenian farmers, sailors, and urban elites alike to see beyond their differences and to create new spaces and senses of the



Screenshot from "Justice Map: Visualize Race and Income Data for Your Community," 2019.

collective. The simple vernacular sermons, processions, and brotherhoods of Prato's mendicants, displaced, for a short period, the culture of vindictive clanism and militarism, not just with opportunity, but also with an open sense of the collective. Medellín similarly spread nodes of dignity and revival across the city, mixing architectural and transit interventions by engaging women as well as men of all classes and professions, not only with the city structure and space, but also with a sense of collective based on dignity for all.

The challenge for contemporary opportunity mapping projects in the United States and elsewhere is to chart means for bringing its tools early and directly into the hands of those needing it most, relying not only on census reports and Big Data, but also on local input. Mapping is not only achieved through policy, but also through group experiences shared in urban theater, ritual, architecture, and public space. Sustainable opportunity may only be politically realizable by daring to engage that dangerous but essential component of urban life: a sense of the collective.

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Thanks to Francisco Sanin for his inspiration and comments, to Beth Hughes and Livia Qing Wang for their assistance, to Nick Axel and A K for copy editing, to APH colleagues Hannah Kimberly and Bryon Williams for proofreading, to Molly Martins and Jan Healy at APH for funding and support, to Andronike Makres for her work and discussions on dithyramb, to my Syracuse and APH students, my children Sophia, Gaia, Samson, and Sofie, and especially to my wife, Michele Errie-McLean, for discussions on opportunity and identity.

Collectivity is a collaboration between e-flux Architecture and the 2019 Seoul Biennale of Architecture and Urbanism within the context of the "Collective City" thematic exhibition.

Alick M. McLean is a professor emeritus at Syracuse University in Florence, Italy and teaches at The Academy at Penguin Hall.

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1
For a full discussion of the reorganization of the Athenian tribes, see John S. Traill, *The Political Organization of Attica: A Study of the Demes, Trittyes, and Phylai, and their representation in the Athenian Council* (Princeton: American School of Classical Studies at Athens, 1975).

2
See Andronike Makres, "Dionysiac Festivals in Athens and the Financing of Comic Performances," in *The Oxford Handbook of Greek and Roman Comedy* , ed. Michael Fontaine and Adele C. Scafuro (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 70–112.

3
See Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* , trans. Thomas Burger (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1989), 4–5 and 24–26.

4
See Sarah P. Morris and John K. Papadopoulos, "Greek Towers and Slaves: An Archaeology of Exploitation," *American Journal of Archaeology* 109, no. 2 (April 2005), 155–225.

5
See A. J. Graham, "Thucydides 7.13.2 and the Crews of Athenian Triremes," *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 122 (1992), 257–70.

6
Andronike Makres, in discussion with author, August 28, 2017.

7
See Thucydides, *The History of the Peloponnesian War* , trans. Rex Warner (New York: Penguin, 1974).

8
See Graham, "Thucydides 7.13.2 and the Crews of Athenian Triremes."

9
See Alick M. McLean, *Prato: Architecture, Piety, and Political Identity in a Tuscan City-State* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008).

10
The term "vita comunalis" is the origin of the modern Italian term "comune" and the English "commons," "commonwealth," and "community." See McLean, *Prato* .

11
The sites were anomalous: there were no monumental church structures; preachers dressed in simple clothes, often sack-cloths, and even presented themselves in bare feet; officiants did not always follow traditional liturgy, and regularly led urban processions; and when they preached, mendicant friars did so in a vernacular language. The sacred words, prayers, sermons, and songs voiced in the vulgar tongue marked the legitimization of vernacular into what was becoming the Italian language.

12
For this and the following see Alejandro Fajardo and Matt Andrews, "Does successful governance require heroes? The case of Sergio Fajardo and the city of Medellín: A reform case for instruction," *World Institute for Development Economics Research (WIDER) Working Paper* 2014/035 (February 2014).

13
Fajardo and Andrews, "Does successful governance require heroes?", 9.

14
For a partial listing of opportunity mapping resources, see "Southern California Equity Atlas," Program for Environmental and Regional Equity (PERE), University of South California Dornsife College of Letters, Arts and Sciences, accessed August 21, 2019, https://dornsife.usc.edu/pere/socal-equity-atlas/ .