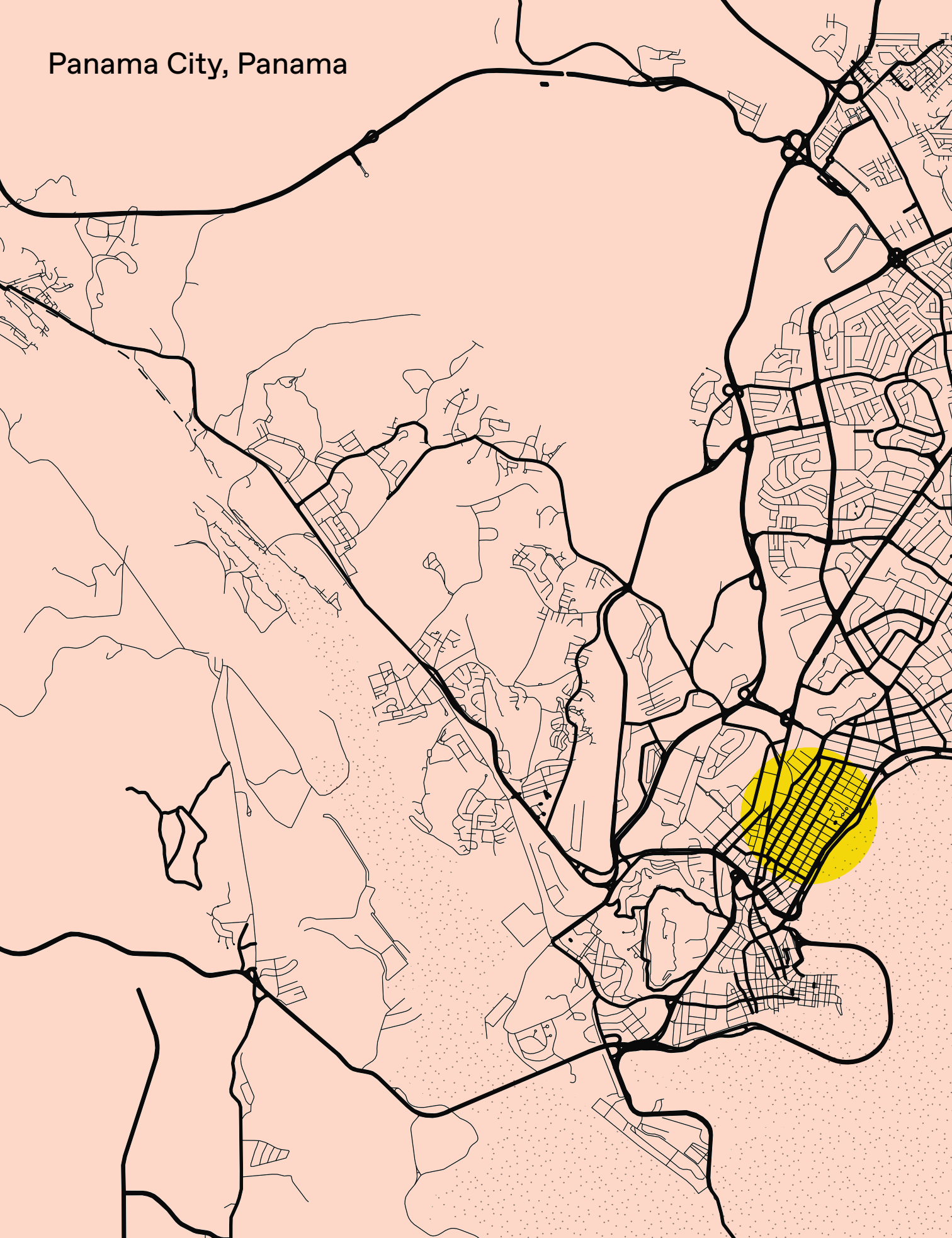
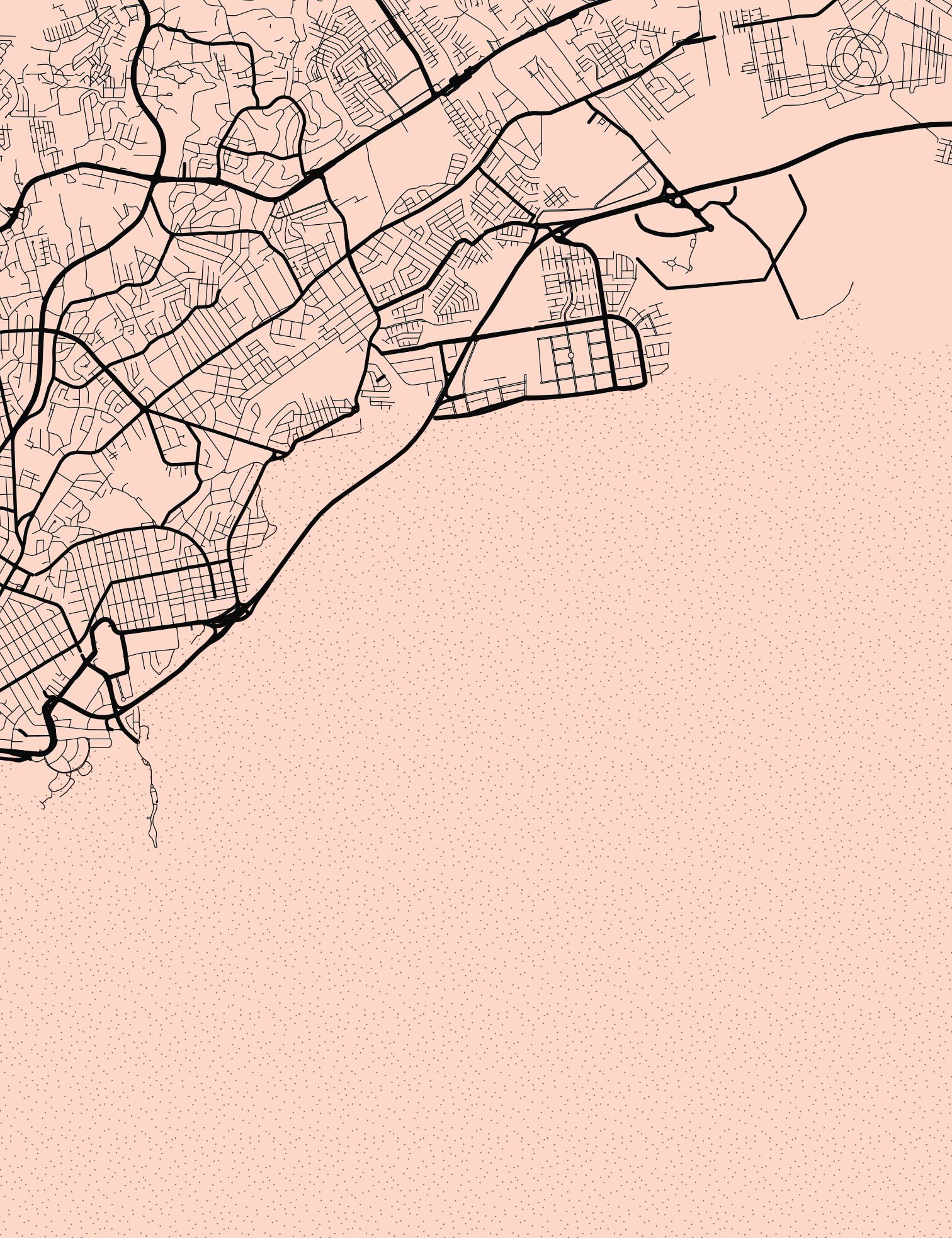


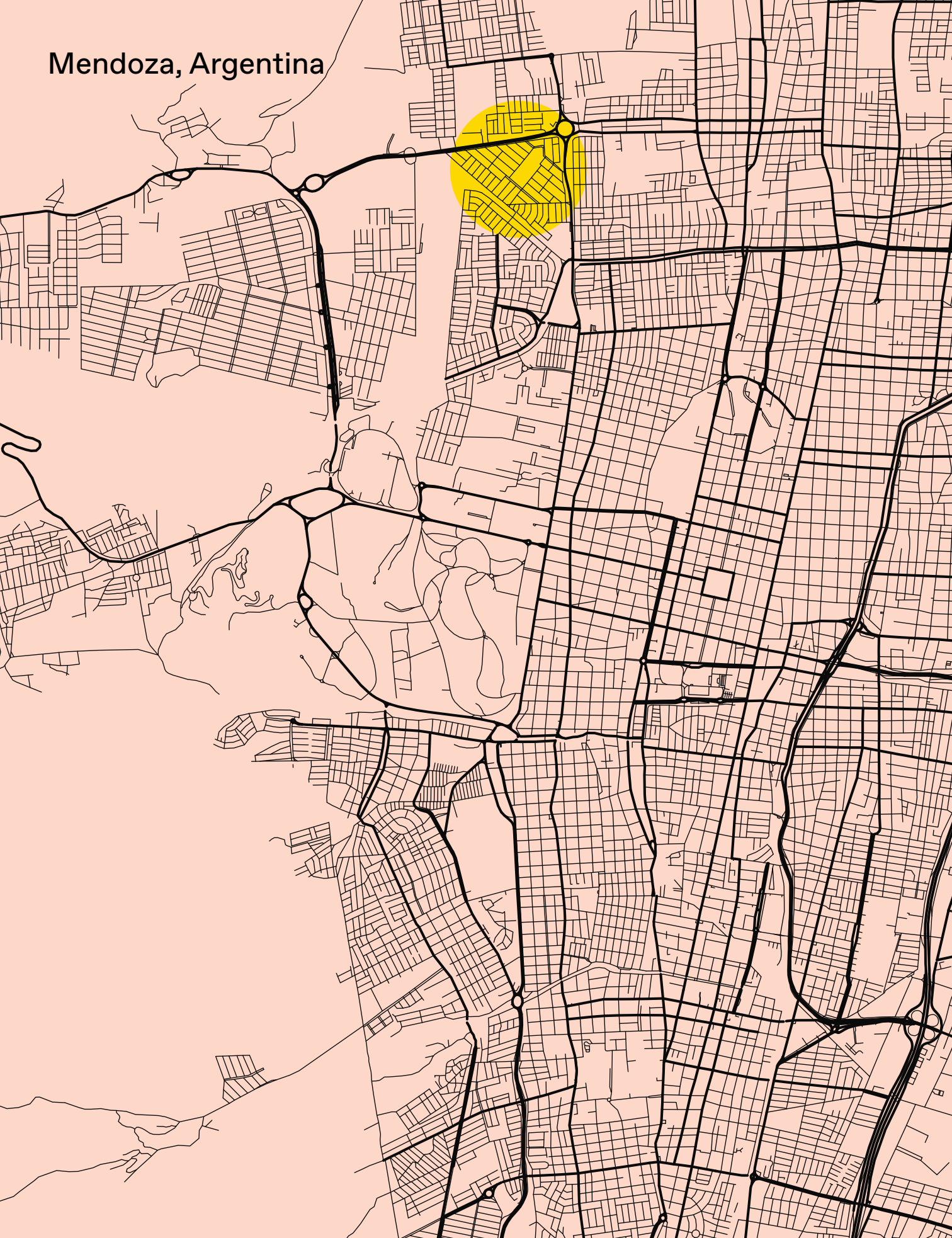
Urban Design Lab Handbook

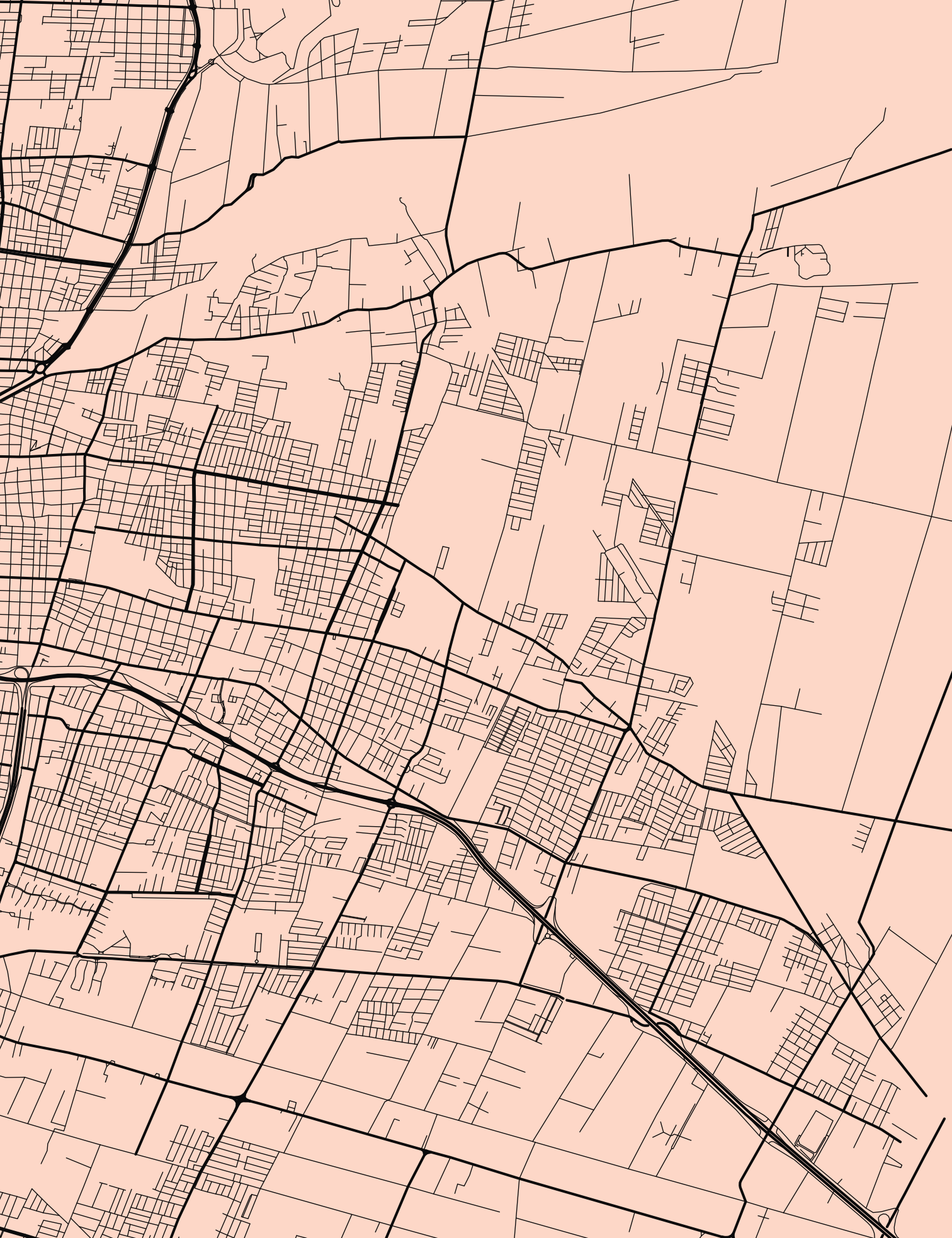
Panama City, Panama



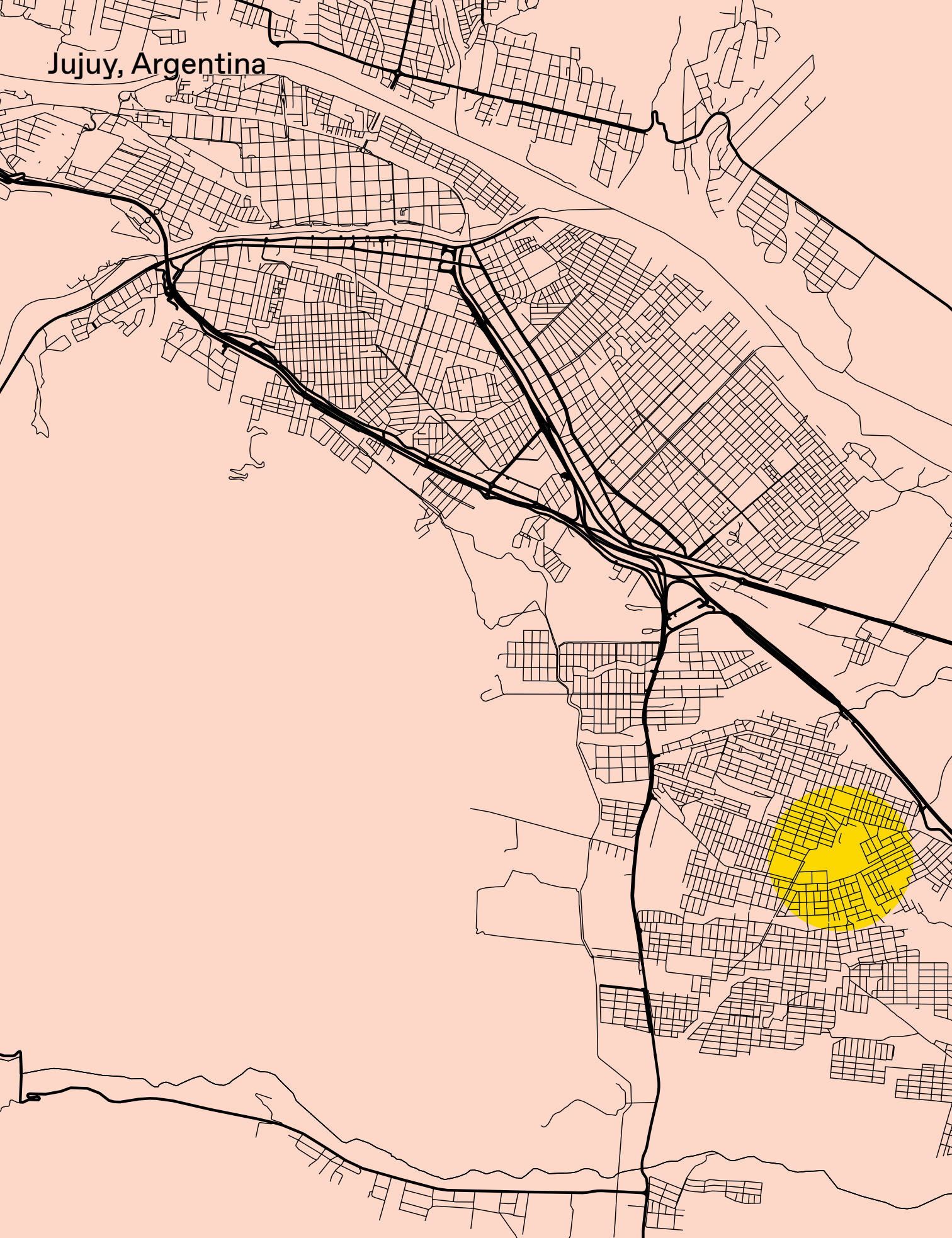


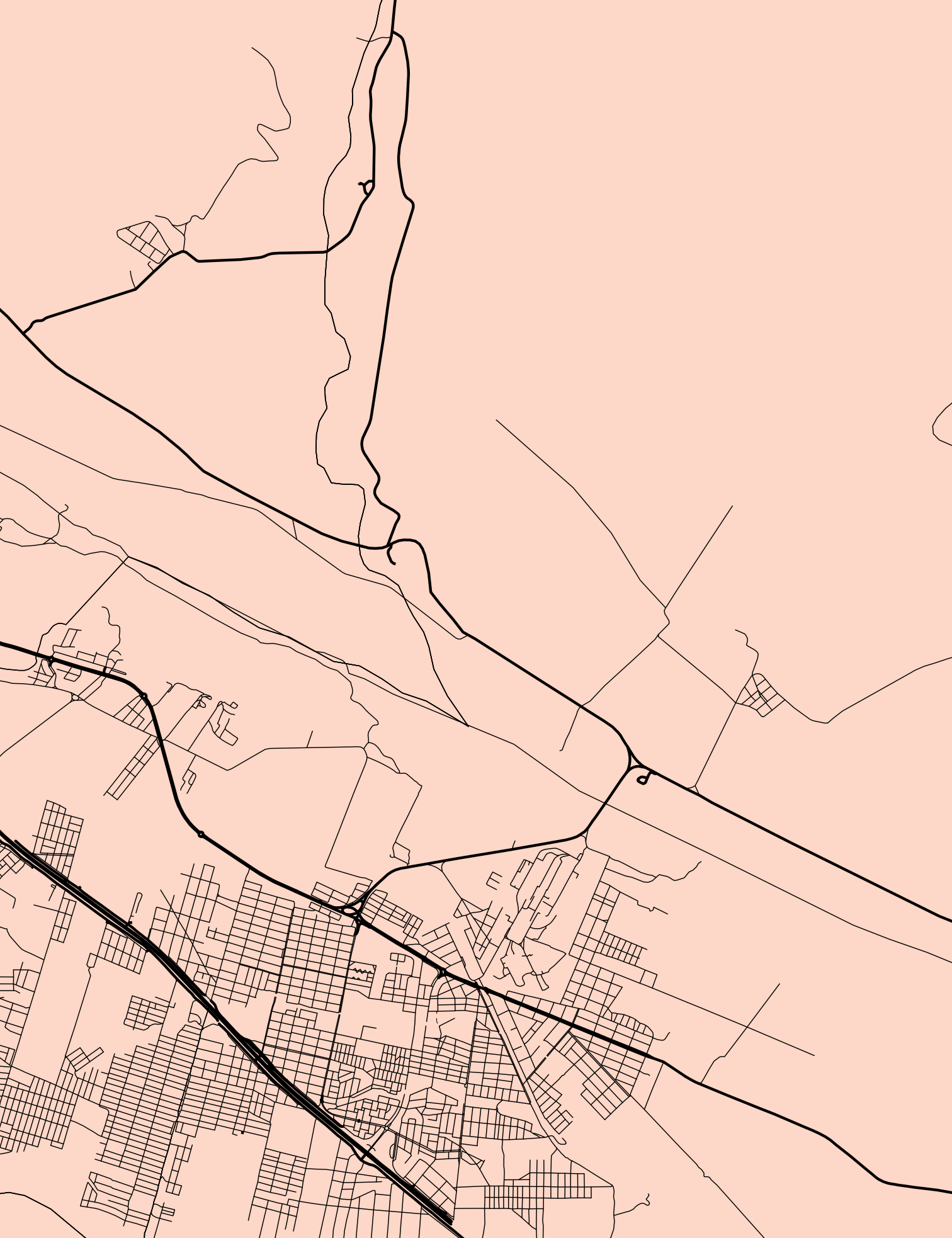
Mendoza, Argentina



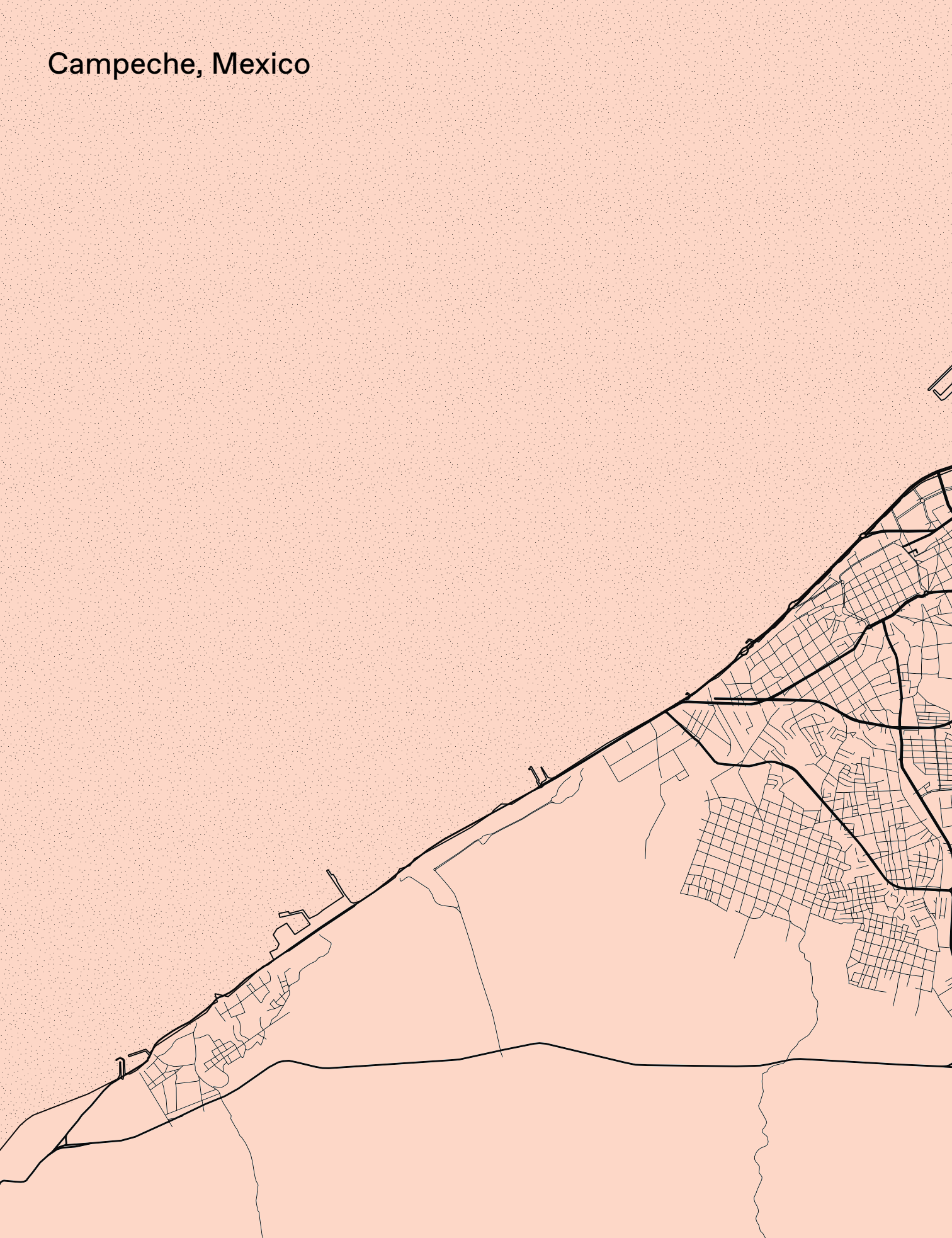


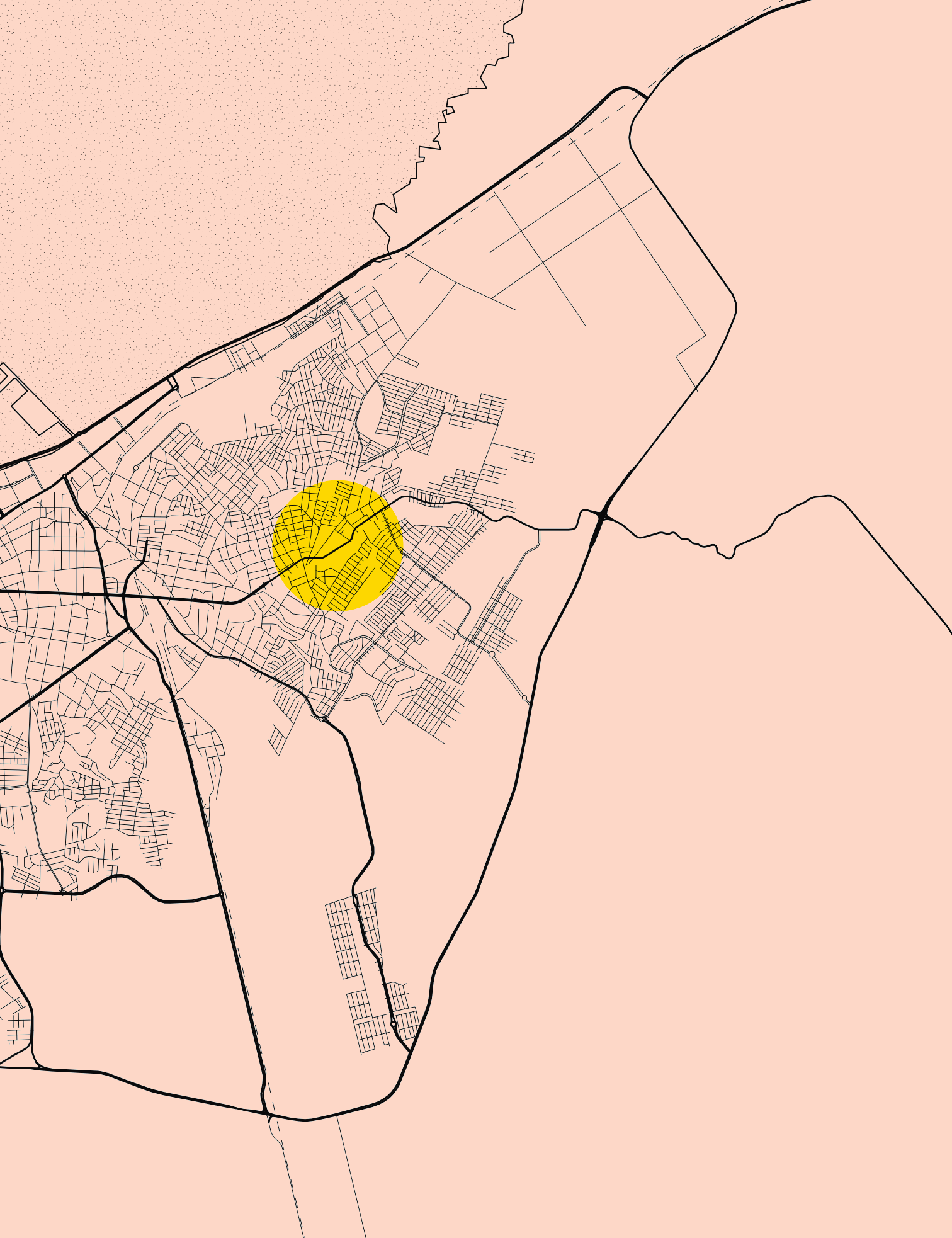
Jujuy, Argentina



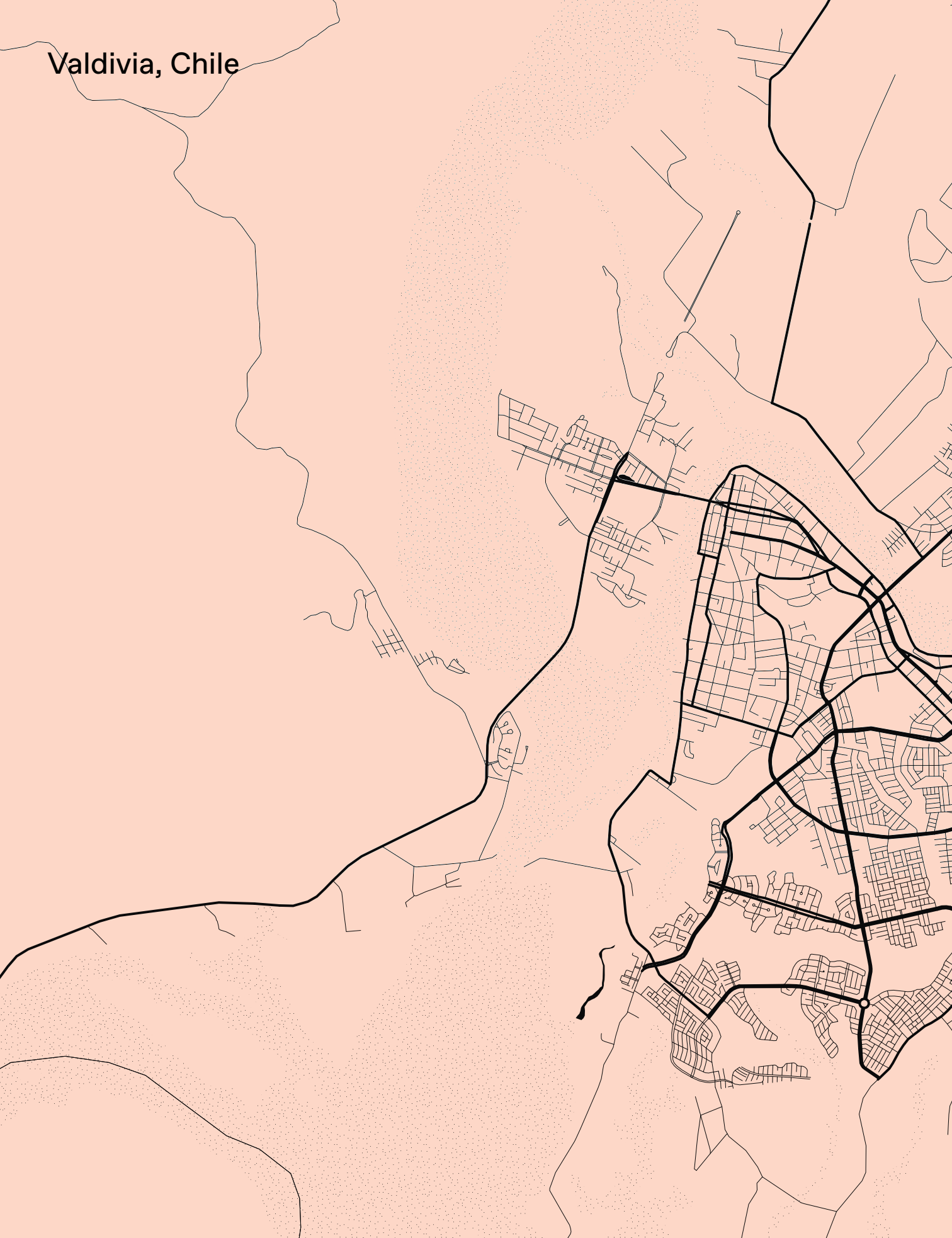


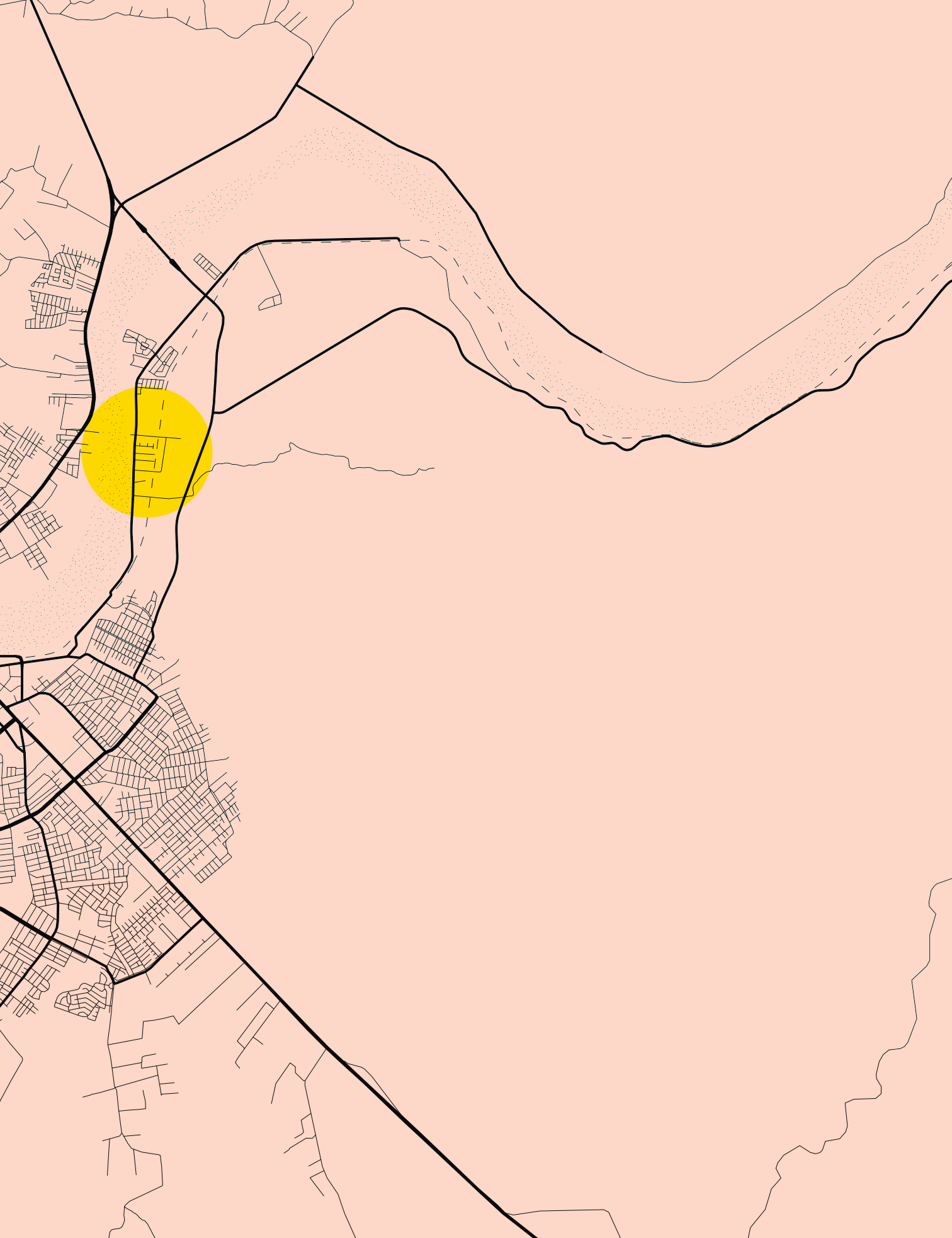
Campeche, Mexico



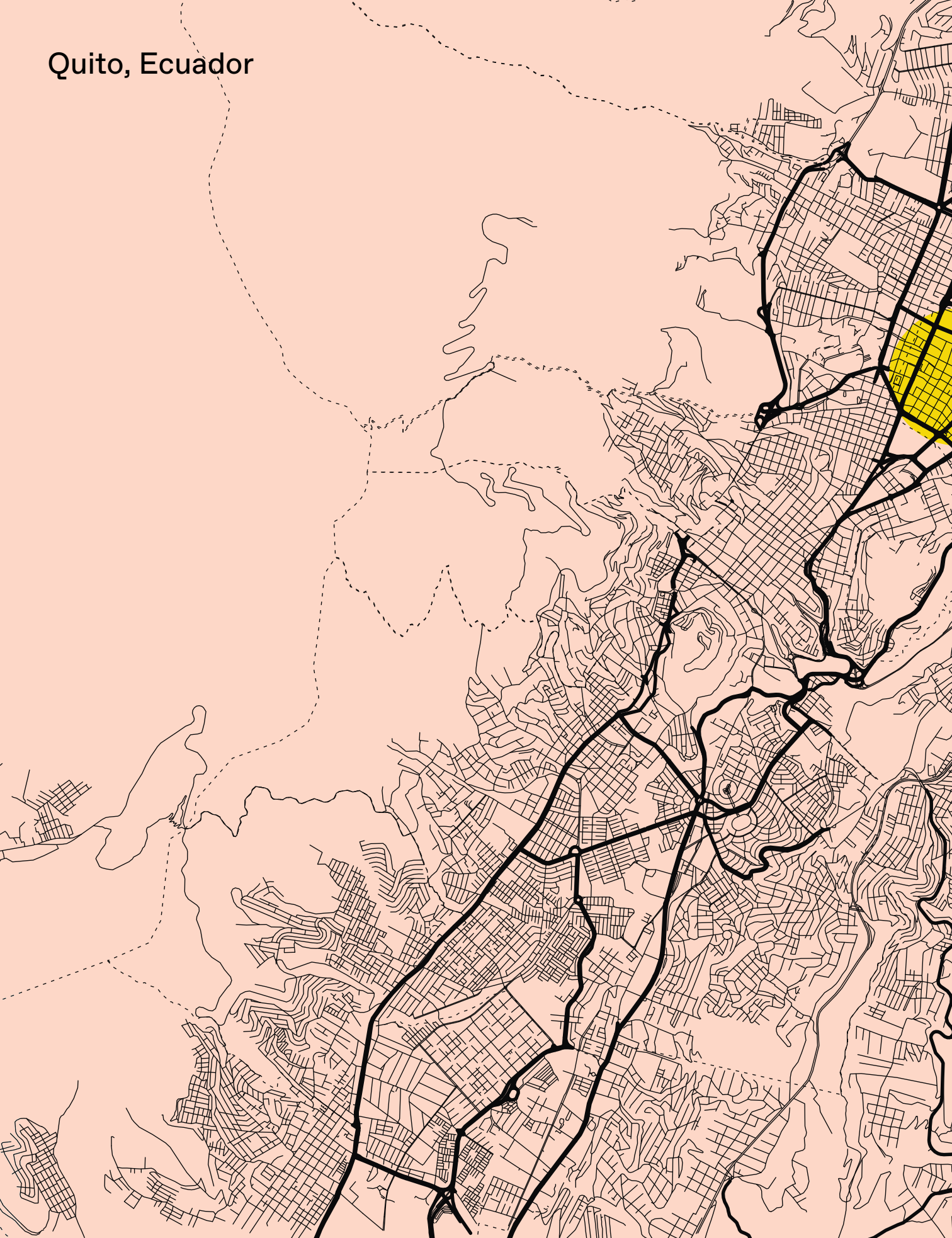


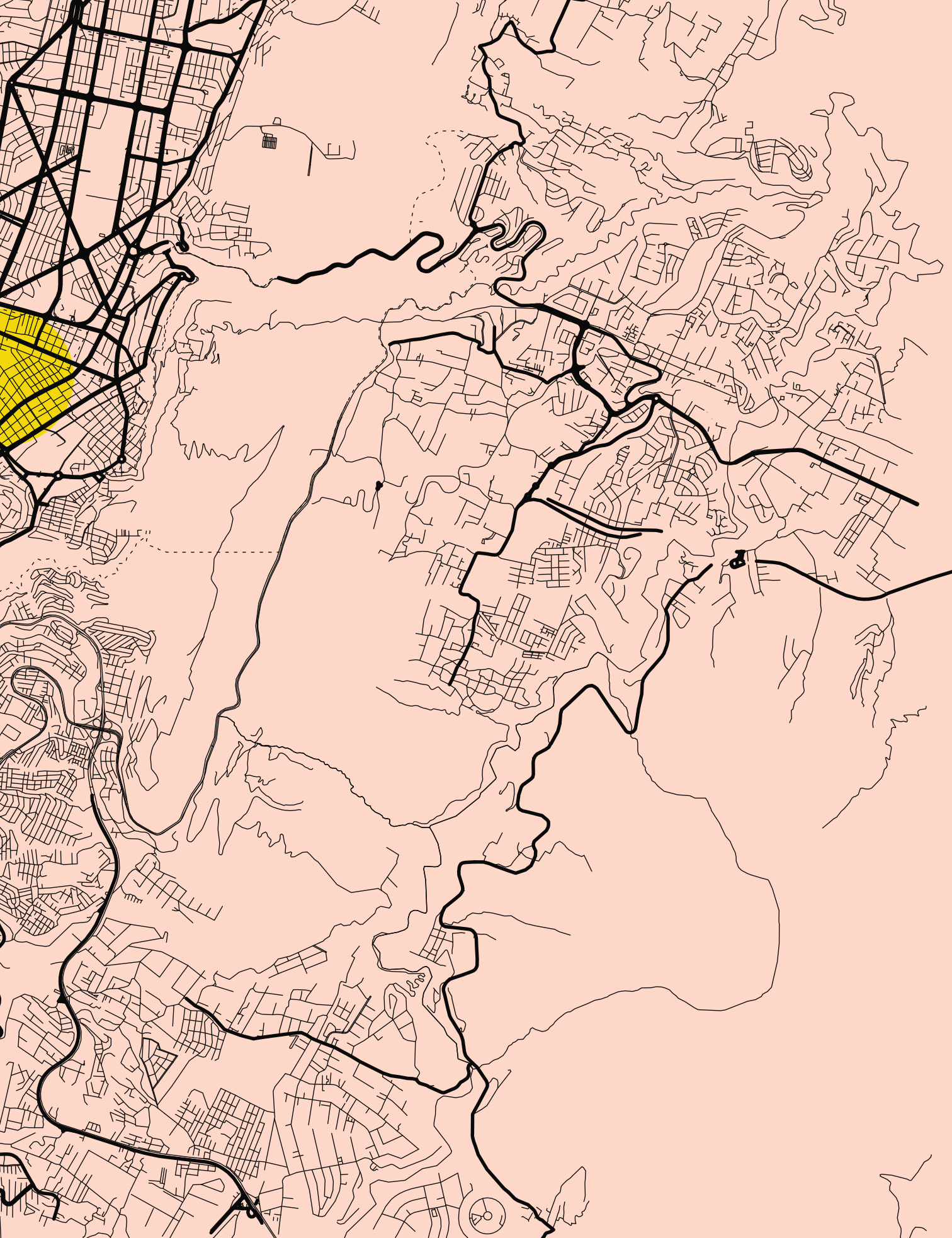
Valdivia, Chile



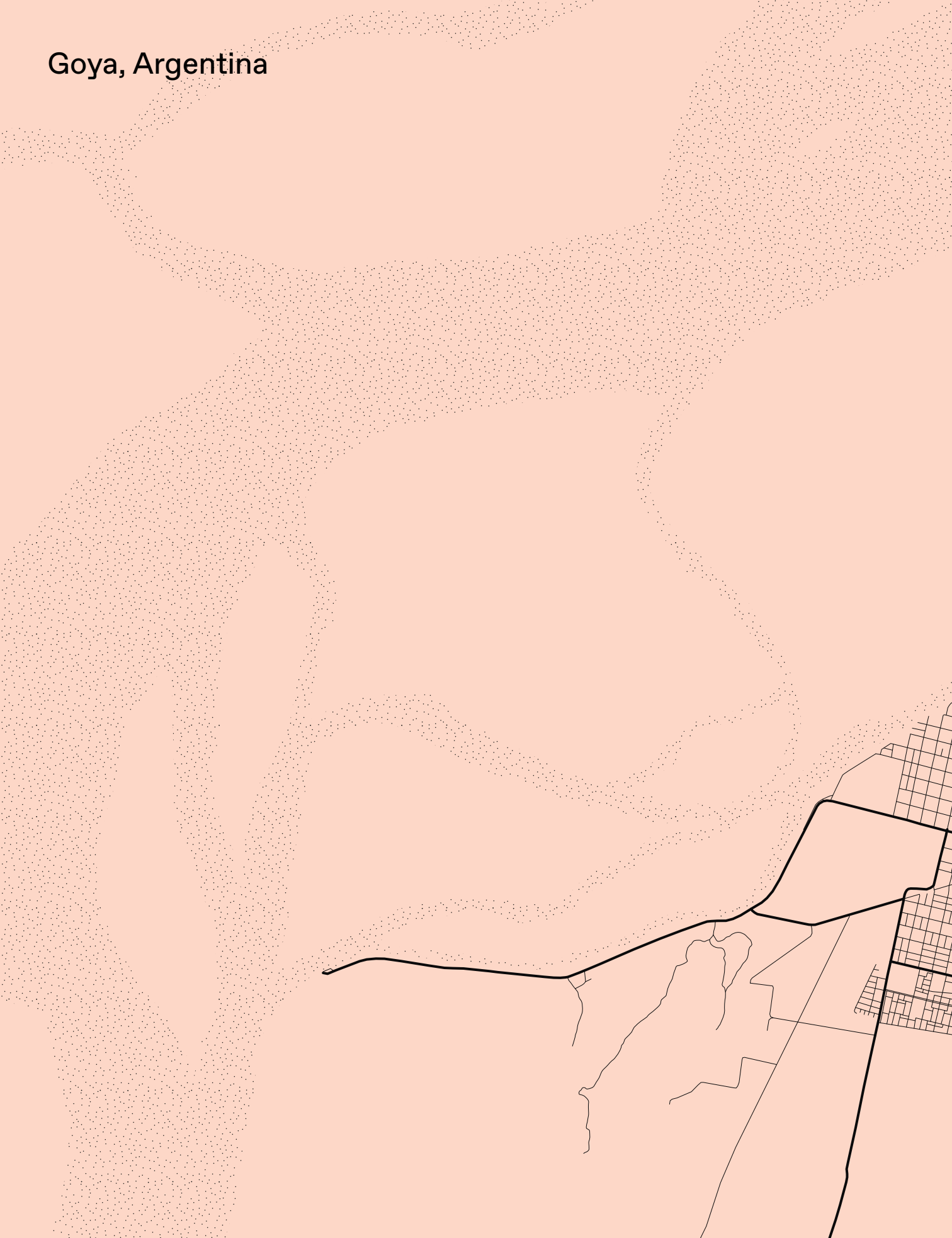


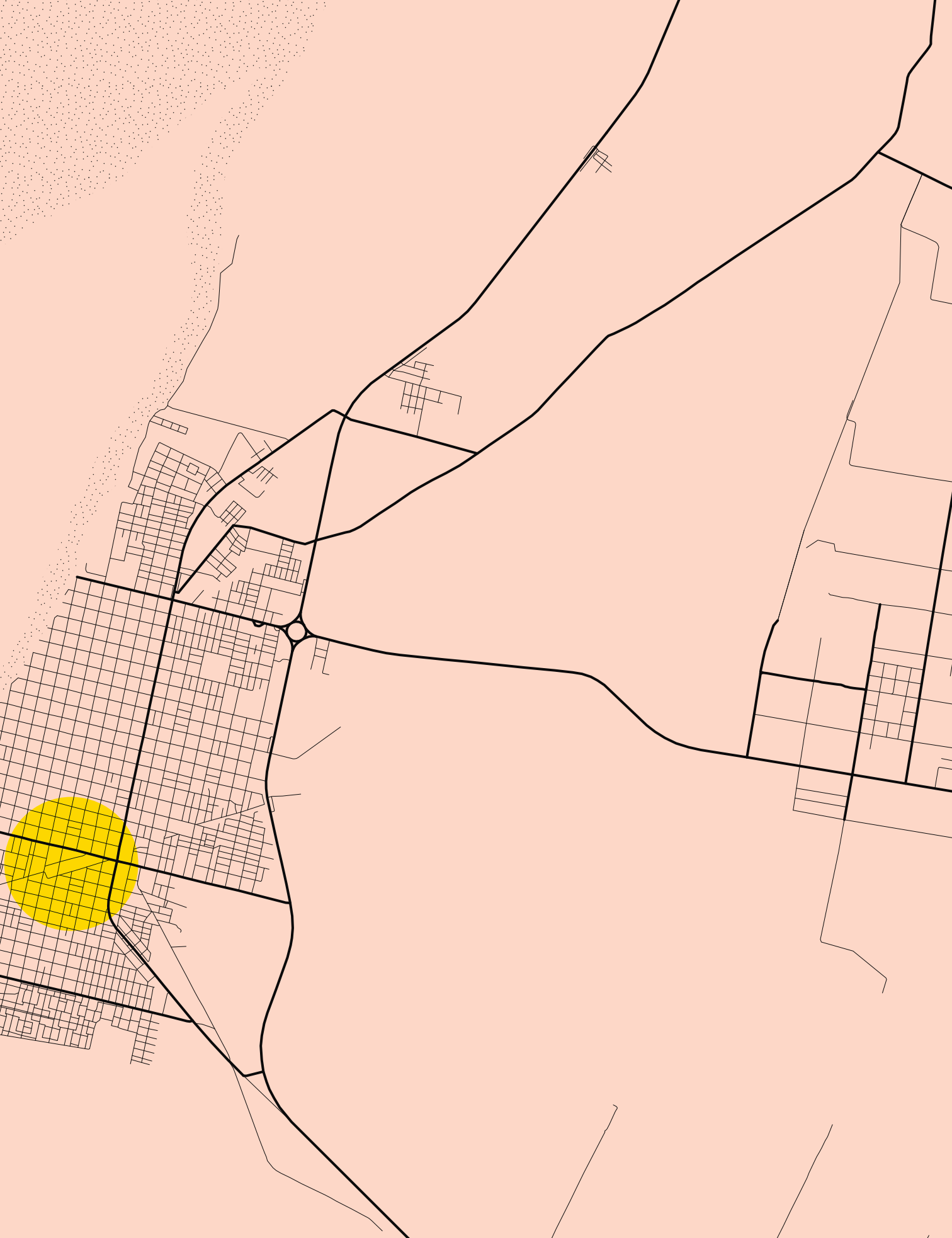
Quito, Ecuador



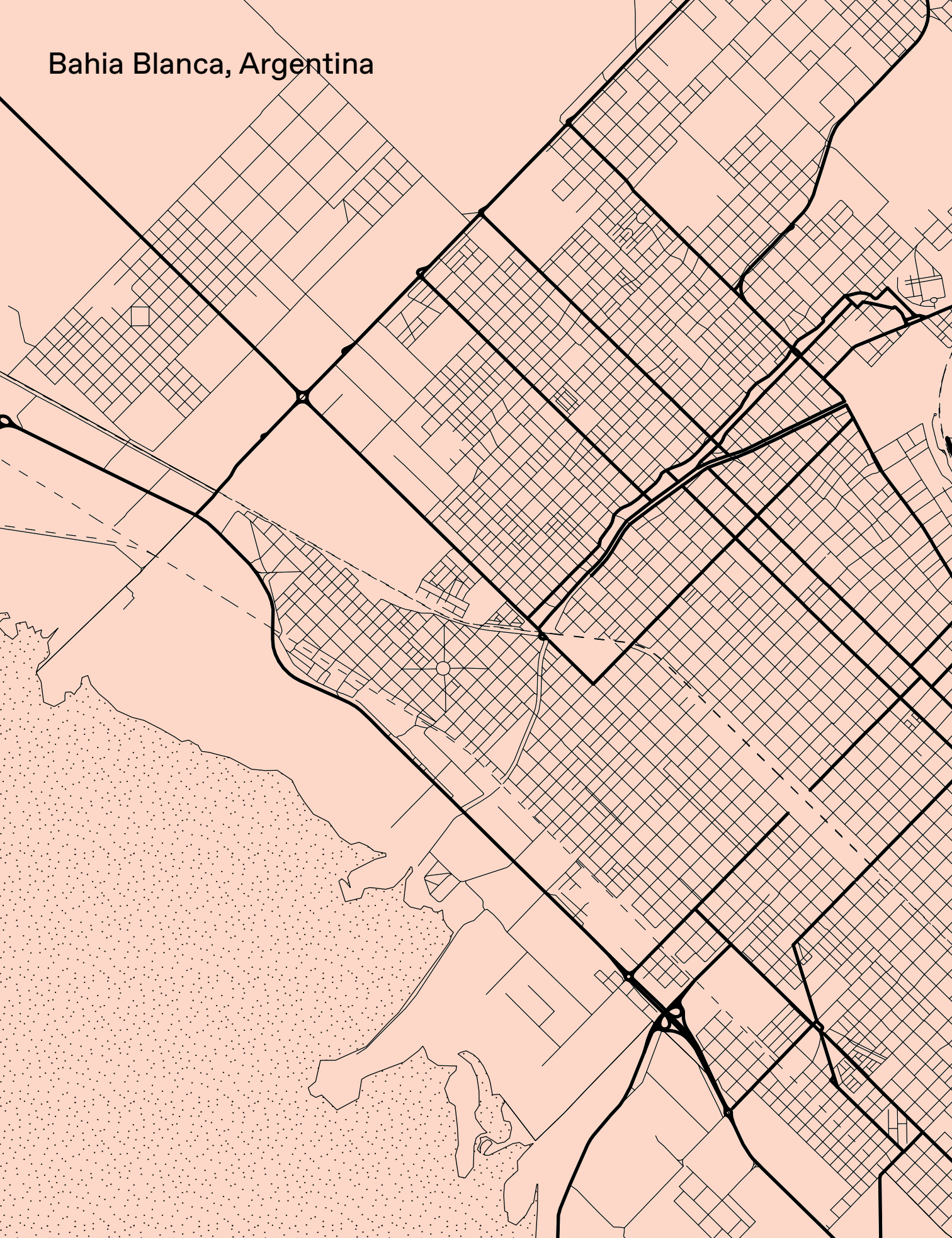


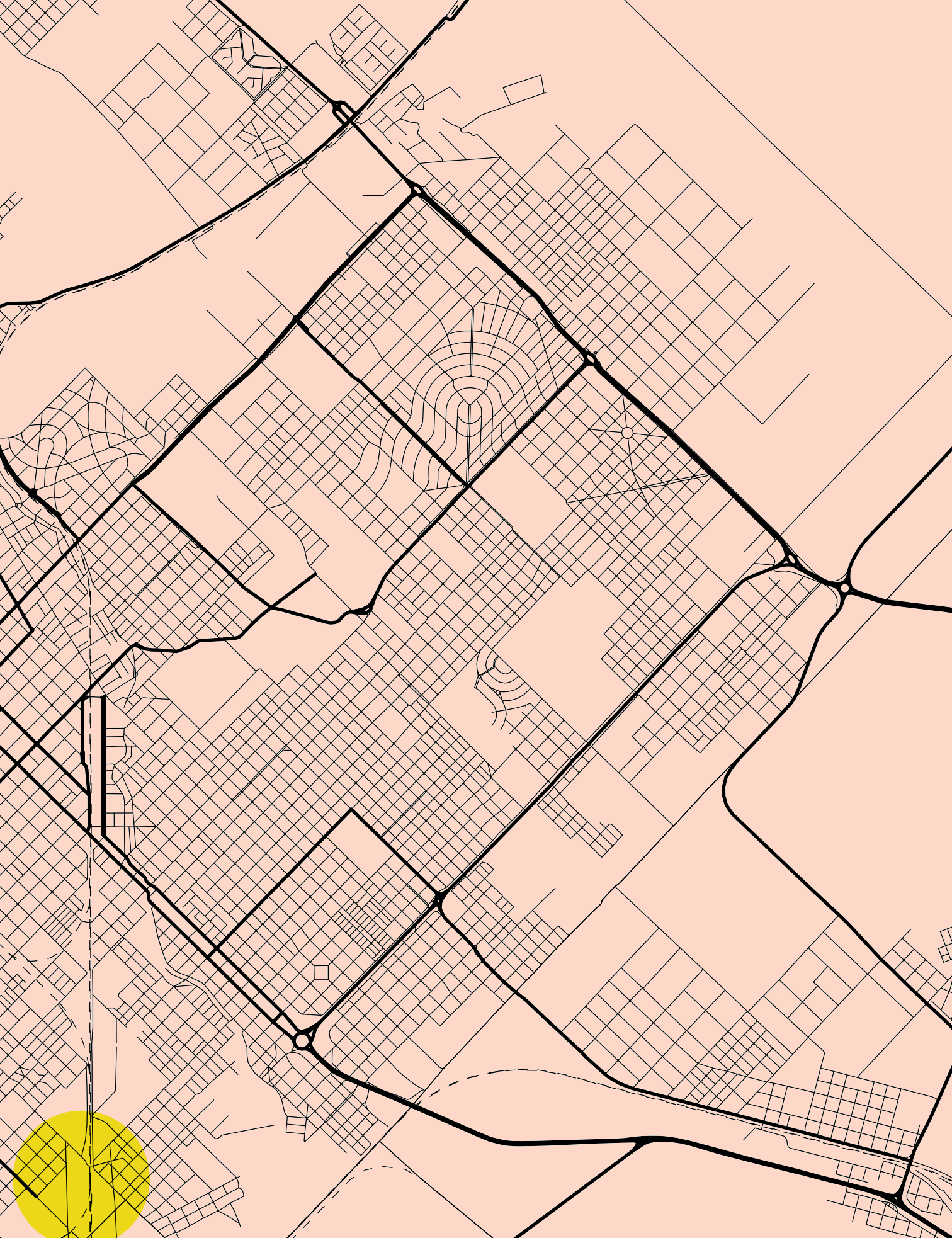
Goya, Argentina



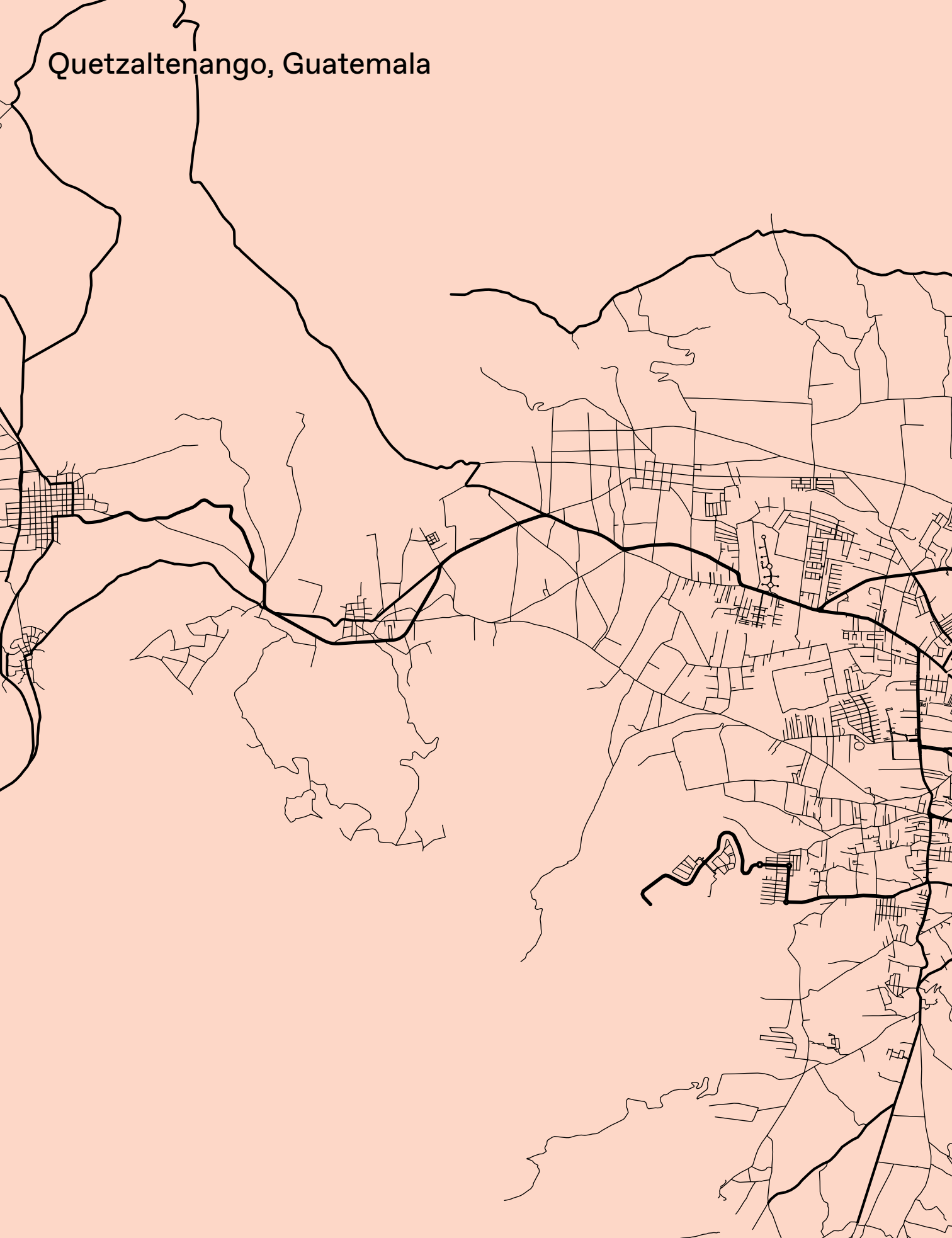


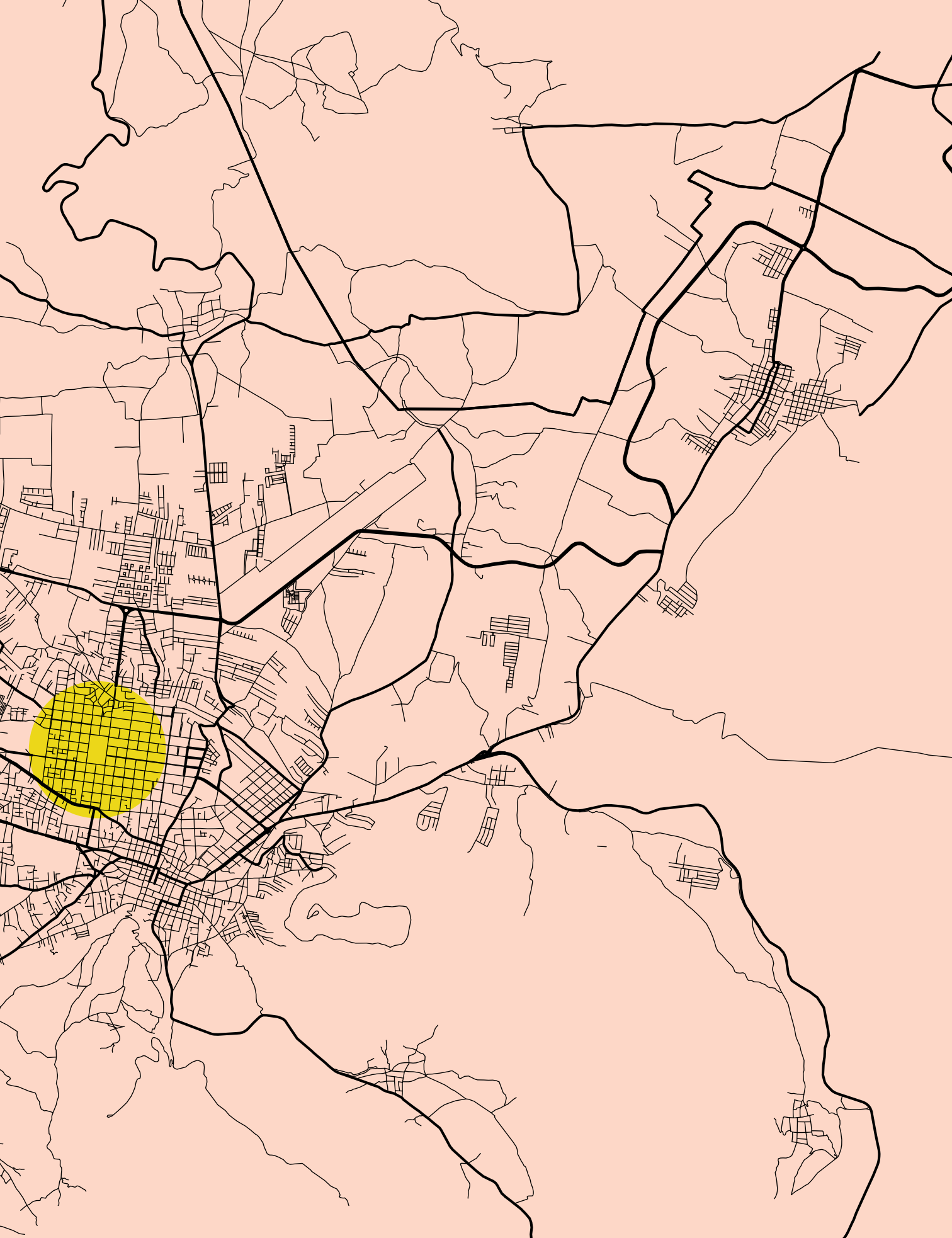
Bahia Blanca, Argentina



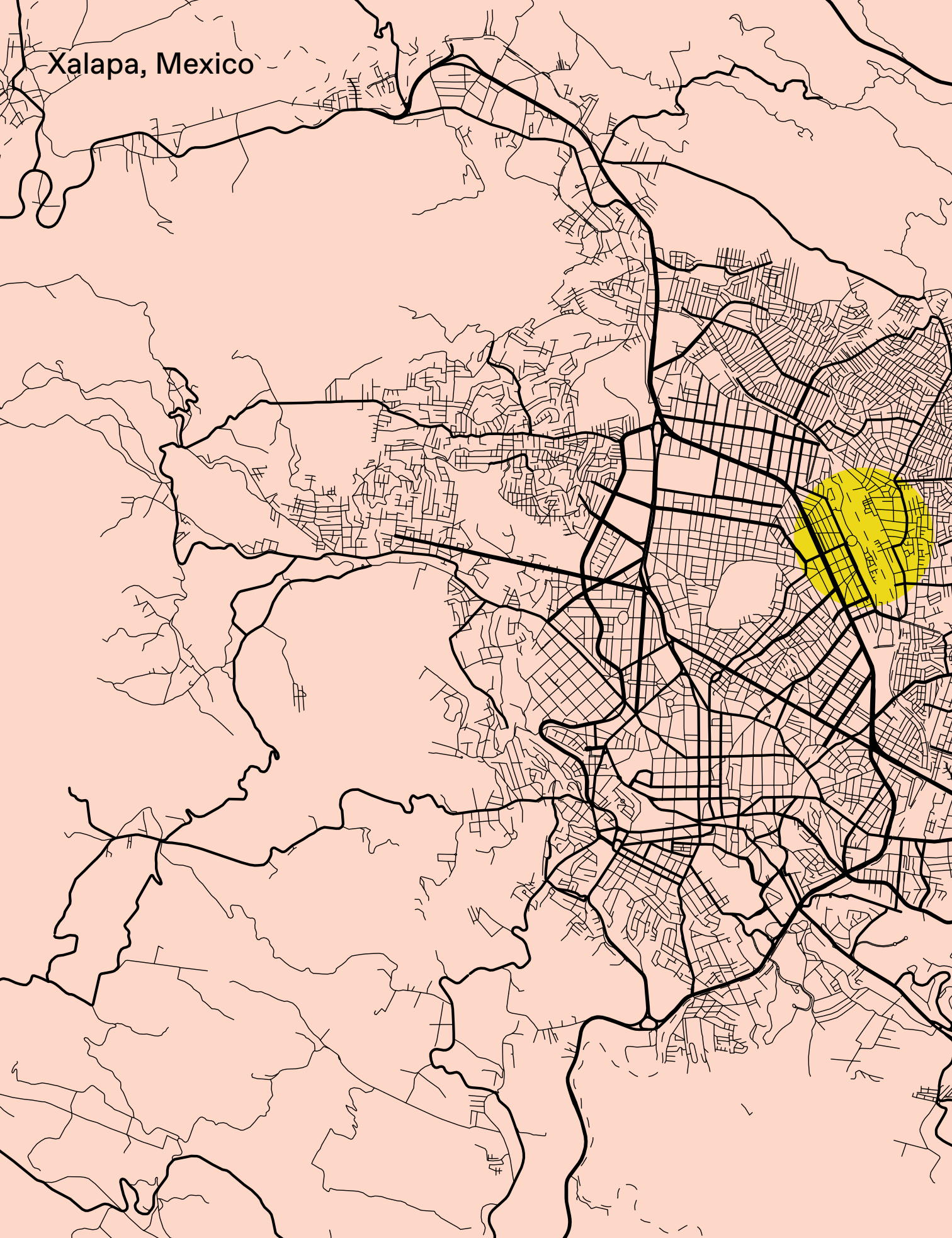


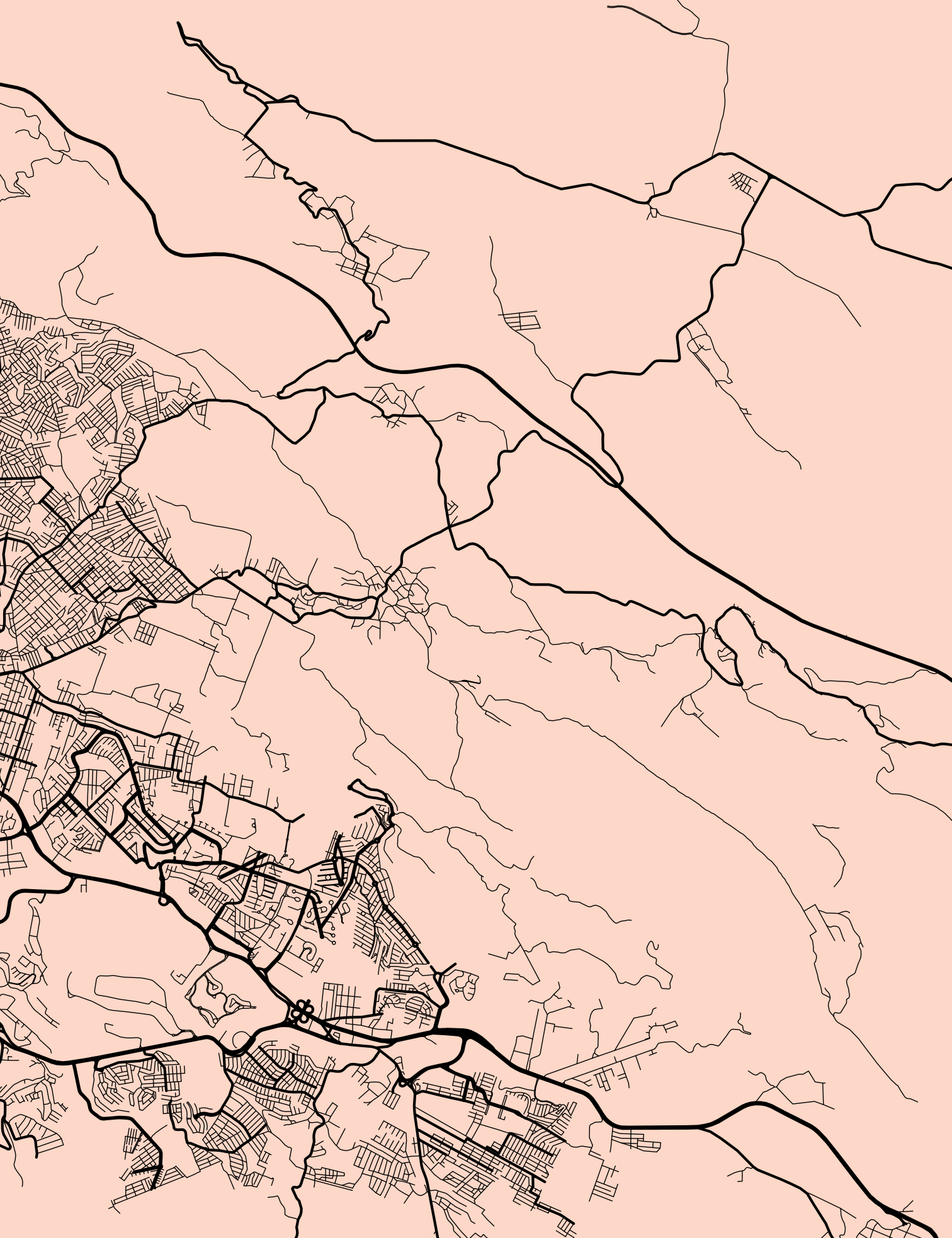
Quetzaltenango, Guatemala



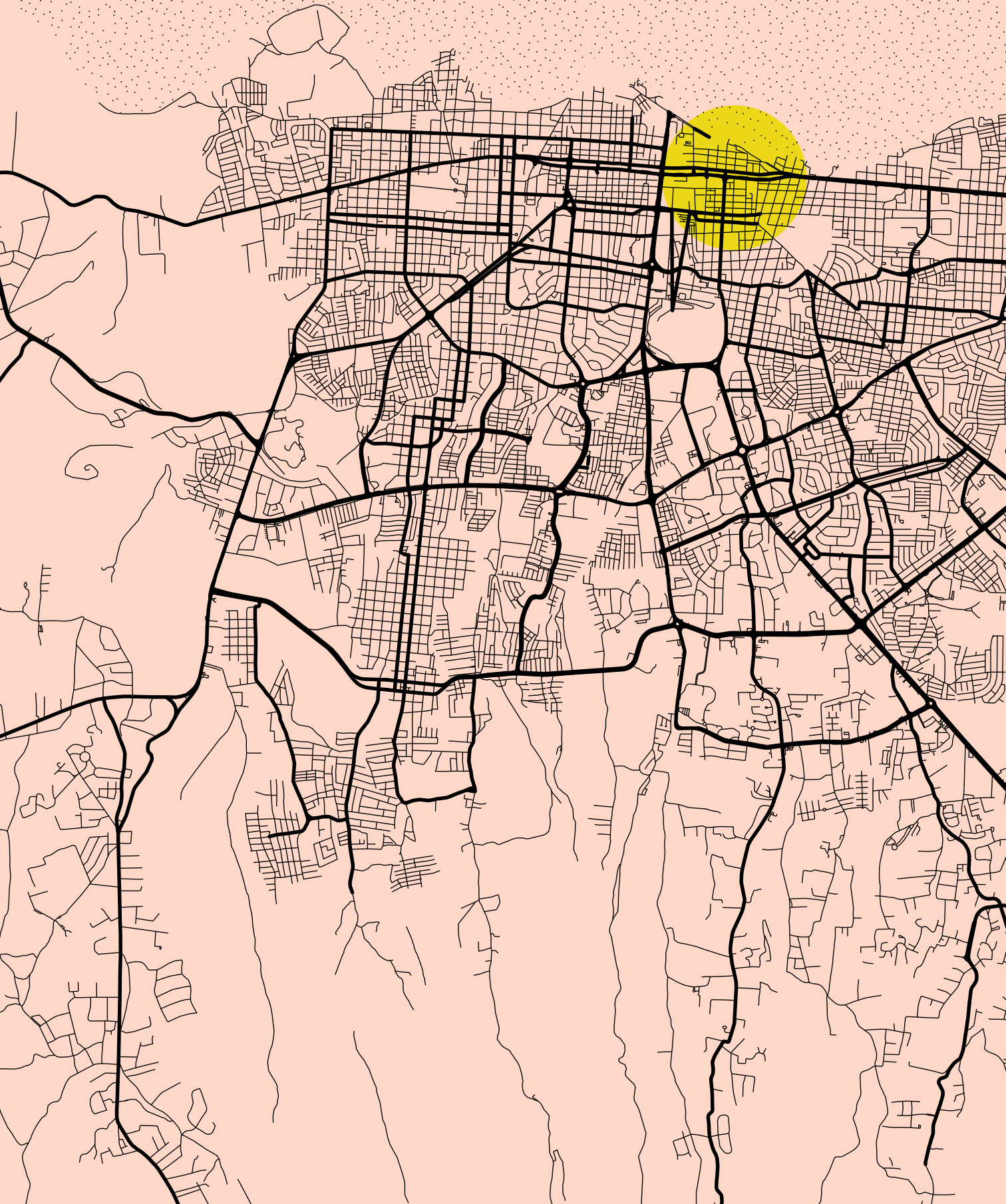


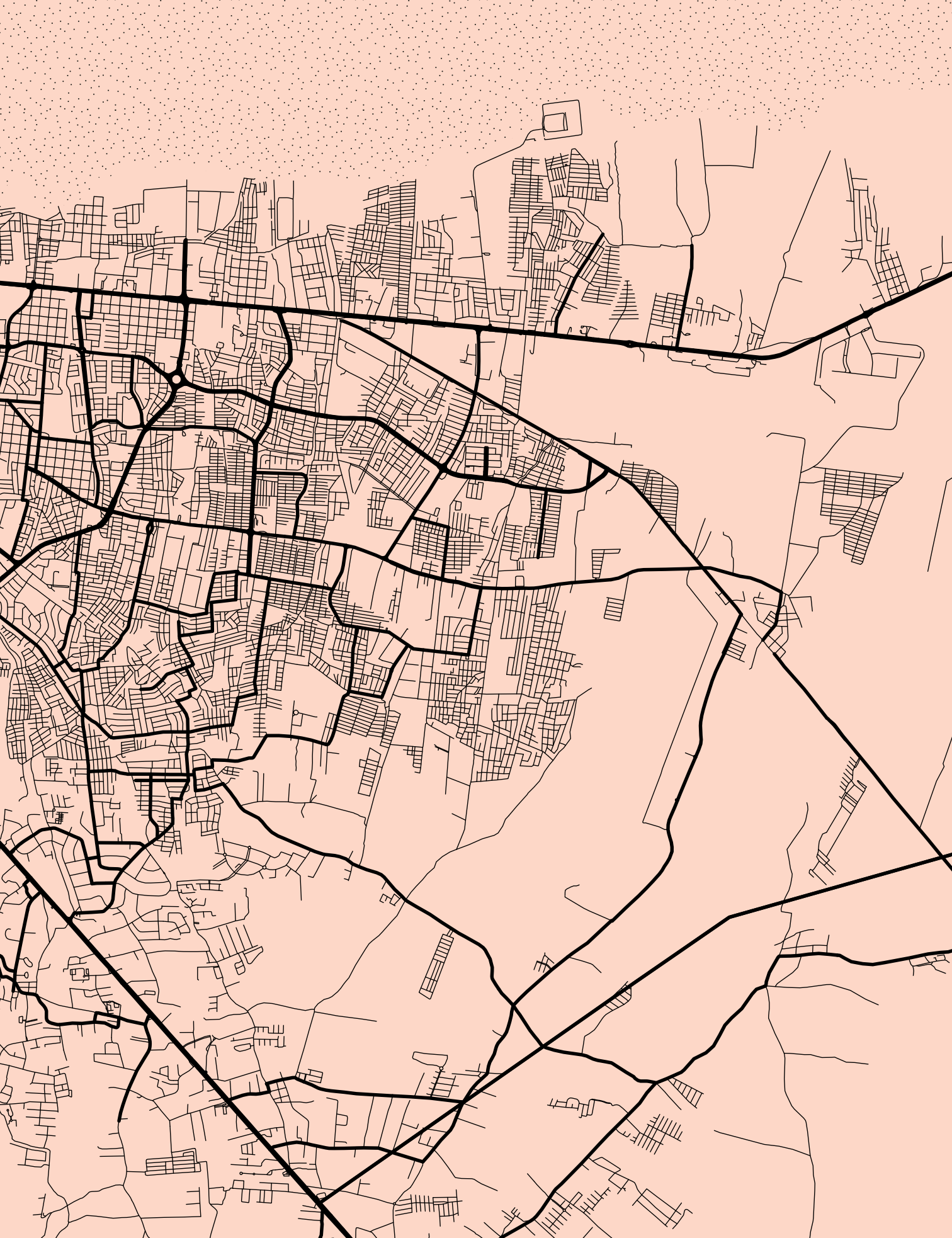
Xalapa, Mexico





Managua, Nicaragua







Nassau

Xalapa

Campeche

Montego Bay

Santiago de los Caballeros

Santo Domingo

Quetzaltenango

Managua

San Jose

Panama City

Monteria

Paramaribo

Pasto

Quito

Jujuy

La Serena / Coquimbo

Goya

Mendoza

Valdivia

Bahia Blanca

Puerto Montt / Puerto Varas

Urban Design Lab Handbook

**Dialogue-oriented urban transformation
processes and practical approaches from
Latin America and the Caribbean**

Roland Krebs, Markus Tomaselli (eds.)

Contents

Introduction

Preface	Andres Blanco, Tatiana Gallego Lizon	29
Introducing the Urban Design Lab	Roland Krebs, Markus Tomaselli	30
The Need for an Urban Laboratory	Roland Krebs, Daniela Sanjinés	38
Emerging Topics in Latin American and Caribbean Cities	Dominique Mashini, Emma Grün	42
Photoessay 1	Ramón Zamora	49

A Evolution

Community, Participation and Urban Transformation	Alvaro Ramoneda, Patricio Jerez	68
Habitat and Social Inclusion in Urban Planning: Participation and Investigation in the Urban Design Lab Methodology	Alicia Gersovich, Olga Wainstein	72
The Urban Design Lab in Latin American Cities: A View from Academia	Andreas Hofer	74
Diagrams of Participatory Urbanism	Luis Fernando Castillo	78
Tailor-Made Urbanism: Urban Design Lab in Panama City		80

Guest Contributors

Ultra-Light Metropolis: The Ephemeral Megacity of the Kumbh Mela	Rahul Mehrotra, Felipe Vera	82
Culture as an Incubator for Urban Transformation	Alfredo Brillembourg, Hubert Klumpner, Alexis Kalagas, Diego Ceresuela	86
The City at Eye Level: Focusing on the Plinth	Hans Karssenberg, Jeroen Laven, Mattijs van't Hoff, Meredith Glaser	89
Towards a Human-Scale City in Latin America	Mayra Madriz	93
Photoessay 2	Ramón Zamora	97

B Methodology

A Practical Approach to Urban Planning	116
Research	120
Stakeholder Dialogue	124
Project Design	128
Simple Toolbox for Participative Planning and Design Workshops	132

Guest Contributors

Medellín—A “City for Life”	Jorge Pérez-Jaramillo	138
Cultivating “Urban Complexity” in Latin America	José Luis Vallejo, Belinda Tato	142
The Design of Public Policy	Fernando de Mello Franco	146
In Situ Planning: Moderating Urban Development Processes Locally	Siri Frech	149

C Solutions

Integral Urban Strategies for the Regeneration of Central Areas	157
Central Nassau Urban Regeneration Plan, Nassau, The Bahamas	158
Integrated Housing and Mixed-Use Strategy for the Historic Center of Paramaribo, Suriname	166
Vivimos Juntos: Integration and Densification of the Historic Center of Managua, Nicaragua	174
Urban Strategies for a Livable Downtown Montego Bay, Jamaica	178
Volver al Centro: Integrated Urban Revitalization of the Historic City Center of Santiago de los Caballeros, Dominican Republic	184
Barrio Mercado: Rehabilitation Strategy of the Central Market of Monteria, Colombia	188
Connected City: Pasto River Fluvial Park, Pasto, Colombia	194
Neighborhood Revitalization and Sub-Centralities	199
Urban Regeneration Plan of the Calidonia District, Panama City, Panama	200
Photoessay 3	209
Urban Renovation Plan of Barrio Infanta, Las Heras, Mendoza, Argentina	226
Alto Comedero Urban Renovation: A Strategy for Social and Spatial Integration, Jujuy, Argentina	232
Urban Regeneration Plan of the Eje Pacífico—González Víquez, San José, Costa Rica	238
Conceptual Design for the Improvement of Barrio Collico, Valdivia, Chile	246
A New Sub-Center for the East of San Francisco de Campeche, México	254
La Mariscal: Activation of Borja Yerovi Plaza, Quito, Ecuador	258
Transformation Strategies for Abandoned Railway Infrastructure	265
Improvement of Intercultural Center at Former Railway Station, Quetzaltenango, Guatemala	266
Goya Central Park: Reinterpretation of the Former Railway Station, Goya, Argentina	272
Nodo Spurr: Integration of Former Railway Station into System of Centralities, Bahia Blanca, Argentina	276
Connecting Xalapa: Integrated Revitalization of Railway Corridor, Xalapa, Mexico	282
Integral Strategies for Metropolitan Areas	287
Five-minute city—Ciudad Juan Bosch Metropolitan Extension Plan, Santo Domingo Este, Dominican Republic	288
Metropolitan Public Space Integration Plan, Puerto Montt and Puerto Varas, Chile	296
Metropolitan Landscape and Green Habitat: Rio Elqui and Parque El Culebrón, La Serena and Coquimbo, Chile	304
Guest Contributors	
Community Capital in Action: New Financial Models for Resilient Cities Daniela Patti, Levente Polyak	312
Digital Strategies for Low-Income Neighborhoods Katja Schechtner	316
Photoessay 4 Ramón Zamora	321
The Immanent Potential of Vacant Spaces Oliver Hasemann, Daniel Schnier, Anne Angenendt	338
Airport Landscape Initiative Charles Waldheim	341
D Outlook	
Interview with Jorge Perez Jaramillo	346
About the Contributors	350
Urban Design Lab—Project Teams	355
Colophon	363

Preface

Andres Blanco, Tatiana Gallego Lizon

Very often we are told that the main problem that cities in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) are confronted with is lack of planning. The usual narrative goes like this: in the LAC region, the remarkable pace of urbanization (urban population rising from 25% of the total in 1925 to 75% in 2000) has been coupled with an absence of land-use plans; at the same time, the persistence of informal labor practices has resulted in chaotic urban growth characterized by, among other things, a housing deficit that affects 41 million urban households (32% of the total); four out of five of these households do not have access to any proper infrastructure, or are exposed to inadequate construction materials, overcrowding or insecurity of tenure.

Yet there has been no shortage of plans in the region. Some LAC cities are even close to a century of planning efforts. Coincidentally, it was an Austrian planner, Karl Brunner (1887–1960), who introduced planning in Chile, Colombia and Panama. Not only did he direct the creation of some of the first land-use plans, which he preferred to call *planes reguladores*, but he also played a crucial role in the establishment of urban planning academic programs.

Every planning professional doing background research in the LAC region has been much surprised to encounter an impressive stack of old plans or attempts at planning. Indeed, the problem has not been a lack of plans but very weak implementation, which has handed over the role of defining the way in which the built environment is produced to formal developers, pirate subdividers or squatters.

Partly, the reason why “lot by lot urbanism” characterizes most LAC cities is the missing piece between land-use plans at city level and real-estate projects at building level. There are some exceptions to this, namely the few areas, usually of formal expansion, that have been regulated by partial or master plans. These areas are easy to pinpoint because they often look out of place compared with the rest of the city—featuring adequate services, good public spaces and suitable connections with the urban fabric.

The Urban Design Lab (UDL) bets on this middle level of planning, one that is also people-centered and highly participatory. Thanks to the UDL methodology, communities, academia and practitioners can imagine urban space on a broader scale than the individual parcel. An important feature has been the combination of Austrian experts with local academics as a way to balance technical expertise with place knowledge and to build up local capacities.

As with any good method, the UDL has grown by adapting to new contexts and reflecting on lessons learned—the chapters of this book attest to that. The unsettled issue that is still in doubt is actual implementation. The case of Santo Domingo Este shows the latest iteration of the methodology, combining the experimental approach of the newly created Cities LAB at the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) with the UDL’s participatory process. We hope that the introduction of tactical urbanism approaches—as promoted by the Cities LAB—will not only help with design but also increase the likelihood of implementation. This will allow the UDL to continue benefiting both cities and citizens in the LAC region and to make a lasting impact.

Introducing the Urban Design Lab

Roland Krebs, Markus Tomaselli

The Urban Design Lab (UDL) has acted in more than twenty emerging cities in Latin America and the Caribbean as a moderator of dialogue-oriented urban planning, exploring urban imaginaries and collecting creative ideas in order to translate them into design solutions. Each of these processes was unique and unpredictable—enriched by the participation of a diverse group of actors coming together as co-designers within highly complex urban contexts.

After working on-site in these cities over the past four years, we are now eager to share our experience and the knowledge that we collectively built up—within a framework allowing for inclusive and innovative urban processes. We would like to encourage the readers of this handbook to make use of our toolbox, tailor it to their needs and start similar processes in their own cities. Thanks to their high degree of flexibility, our tools may be combined in various ways and adjusted to local conditions—thus generating tailor-made planning processes.

This publication delves into the UDL methodology—and related projects—in depth. It also paints a broader picture of emerging urban challenges, the ongoing theoretical discourse, and creative solutions to complex problems. To do justice to the variety of possible approaches, we invited colleagues met along the way to contribute articles.

Rapid global urbanization and ongoing informal processes are continuously challenging both inhabitants and the authorities in charge of large cities. It would be far-fetched to believe that top-down planning can lead to a sustainable, livable urban environment in the

21st century. Hence we focus on integration and collaboration between communities and neighborhoods, as well as with entrepreneurs and planning institutions. We are deeply convinced that any urban project needs the support and acceptance of the affected population if it is to improve their quality of life.

As a corollary, we will highlight the potential of co-designing to ensure a more sustainable urban transformation.

Last but not least, cities have a strong emotional dimension and the Urban Design Lab Handbook reflects this. Beyond evident similarities in the challenges faced by the region's urban centers, every city we worked in possessed unique features; a particular cultural and social fabric was embedded in every urban landscape. The unique spirit of each of these built environments is depicted in the photo essays scattered throughout the Handbook.

The UDL takes a proactive approach to investigating and testing urban planning and design tools. This is achieved by deploying design-based solutions in emerging cities and developing real cases with real people. The most important lesson that the UDL has taught us is the need for adaptable, flexible, non-static planning tools that can catalyze transformative urban processes. It is for this reason that we are presenting our findings in a handbook. This is not a book of recipes for success but rather an invitation to adapt, transform, and enrich our insights through constant dialogue between urban practitioners, academics, public administrators, local stakeholders, and communities across the world.

Public spaces have always been at the heart of urban life. We are convinced that, regardless of how design and architecture principles may change over time, improved urban environments will be experienced by both visitors and residents through their public spaces. People have a need for proximity to facilities and services that are found in urban centers, but also crave interaction among themselves. Over the past few years, many projects have showed us that the quality of public space ranks as one of the main issues for residents. Indeed, improvements in the built environment are not enough. We are convinced that a better spatial configuration, higher environmental quality and greater usability of space are among the key factors for successful urban development.

We argue that urban planning, urban design, and architecture have to start from a people-centered perspective and fit in with the specific local context. Before the first drop of paint even touches the canvas—before the first line of any architectural sketch is drawn—any urban strategy should be developed through continuous interaction and dialogue with a vast swathe of neighbors and community members. Drawing on thorough on-site research and a plethora of project experience gained during the past four years, we have refined a methodology and compiled a catalog that, hopefully, will provide some inspiration for your urban projects and research.

The Urban Design Lab Handbook is not meant to be read from cover to cover—it is a collection of useful tools and case studies. The first chapter of the book, “Evolution”, provides an overview of ongoing urban challenges in the LAC (Latin America and the Caribbean) region and of the development of the UDL. The second chapter, “Methodology”, is the user manual of the UDL planning methodology. In the third chapter, “Solutions”, we describe the outcomes of UDL projects in more than twenty LAC cities. Finally, the last chapter, “Outlook”, presents a vision for contemporary planning and deals with the new role played by architects and urban planners. In between these chapters, you will read about projects and approaches by friends of the UDL who inspired our work; these were used as starting points for the development of our own methodology.

This book was made possible by an initiative of the Austrian Ministry of Finance (BMF), which established a collaboration between the Institute of Urban Design and Landscape Architecture at the Vienna University of Technology and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB). BMF funding enabled activities in more than a dozen countries in Latin America and the Caribbean. We would also like to thank all our other partners and donors, who made it possible to offer numerous design studios, study trips and seminars, thus enriching the curriculum of TU Wien students, and to draw several urban development experts into higher education over the past years. Special thanks also go to Prof. Dr. Andreas Hofer (TU Wien), who was decisively involved in the development of UDL tools from the very beginning. This research-led teaching enabled us to develop this Handbook, along with contributions by many local and international experts, the work of our consultants, and the financial support of the Austrian government.

Introduction

EUROPE +

|||||
Summer Workshop
St. Ägyd am Neuwalde,
Austria
(18 to 20 August 2014)

|||||
Fast Forward City Symposium
Lessons from Latin America's
Urban Growth,
Vienna, Austria (23 April 2015)

|||||
Ars Electronica
Festival "Post City",
Linz, Austria
(September 2015)

CENTRAL AMERICA / CARRIBEAN



MANAGUA, NICARAGUA
Urban Managua/Apear/ÖAD
Research Project
(October 2012 to September 2014)



MANAGUA, NICARAGUA
Action Plan Design
(February 2014 to May 2014)



MONTEGO BAY, JAMAICA
Action Plan Design
(August 2013 to October 2013)

QUETZALTENANGO, GUATEMALA
Action Plan Design,
first Urban Design Lab
(December 2012 to February 2014)

PANAMA CITY, PANAMA
Urban Design Lab
(December 2014 to August 2015)
Model Building Workshop and
Public Hearing in Panama City
(23 to 26 June 2015)

2013

2014

2015

SOUTH AMERICA



MONTERIA, COLOMBIA
Mercado Central Project
(May to October 2014)

VALDIVIA, CHILE
Urban Design Lab
(February to March 2015)

XALAPA, MEXICO
CAMPECHE, MEXICO
QUETZALTENANGO, GUATEMALA
MANAGUA, NICARAGUA
PASTO, COLOMBIA
SANTIAGO DE LOS CABALLEROS, DOMINICAN REP:
Urban Design Lab
(November 2014 to February 2015)

Introduction



UN-HABITAT Expert Group Meeting
“Urban Labs: A tool for integrated and
participative urban planning”,
Barcelona, Spain
(2 to 3 February 2016)



Urban Future Conference,
Graz, Austria
(2 to 3 March 2016)



Casablanca Smart City
Conference and Expo,
Casablanca, Morocco
(18 to 19 May 2016)

NASSAU, THE BAHAMAS
Urban Design Lab
(October 2015 to August 2016)

2016



Lecture and Design Review:
Bogotá Urban Laboratory —
New Typologies to Reclaim
Public Space, ETH Zurich,
Urban Think-Tank,
Chaired by Brillembourg and Klumpner
(11 October 2017)



Mayors Symposium —
Strengthening Local
Government Capacity
in South-East Europe,
Vienna (Austria),
World Bank Group
(26 to 27 February 2018)



XIV Bienal Internacional
de Arquitectura
“Derecho a la Ciudad”,
SAN JOSÉ, COSTA RICA
(23 to 25 May, 2018)

SANTO DOMINGO,
DOMINICAN
REPUBLIC
Urban Design Lab
(May to
September 2018)

2018

2017

GOYA, ARGENTINA
Urban Design Lab
(March to July 2016)

BAHIA BLANCA, ARGENTINA
Urban Design Lab
(March to July 2016)

PUERTO MONTT /
PUERTO VARAS, CHILE
MetroLab
(December 2015 to April 2016)

COQUIMBO /
LA SERENA, CHILE
MetroLab
(December 2015 to April 2016)

LAS HERS/MENDOZA, ARGENTINA
Urban Design Lab
(February to June 2017)

SAN SALVADOR DE JUJUY, ARGENTINA
Urban Design Lab
(February to June 2017)



QUITO, ECUADOR
Habitat III Village and El Cubo:
Cine Urbano Festival +
Urban Design Lab Workshop

PARAMARIBO, SURINAME
Urban Design Lab
(June to October 2017)



Festival Internacional de Innovación Social (FIIS),
Santiago de Chile (5 to 8 December 2017)

SAN JOSÉ, COSTA RICA
Urban Design Lab
(November 2016 to October 2017)

El Cubo: San Jose Urban Lab Cine Urbano Festival
(23 to 25 March 2017)



XX Bienal de Arquitectura y Urbanismo
“Diálogos Imposterables”,
VALPARAISO, CHILE
(26 October to 10 November 2017)

Xalapa, Mexico

Xalapa, officially called Xalapa-Enriquez, is a city located in southeastern Mexico and has a population of 387,879 (2009). Mexico is divided into 32 federal entities and Xalapa is the capital city of Veracruz. The economy of Xalapa is mainly based on the commercial sector, but in cultural terms is also significantly shaped by its main university, Universidad Veracruzana. Besides, there are various other universities that also attract students from around the world.

Campeche, Mexico

Campeche, officially called San Francisco de Campeche, is a city located in southeastern Mexico and has a population of 220,389 (2010). The economy of Campeche is mainly based on mining, agriculture and fishing. Furthermore, Campeche is the nation's main producer of pumpkin seeds. Campeche was founded in 1540. The typical colonial Spanish city walls and the historical center are well preserved and are protected as a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Quetzaltenango, Guatemala

Quetzaltenango, also known as Xela, is a city located in southwestern Guatemala and has an estimated population of 152,743 (2013), with approximately 300,000 in the surrounding metropolitan area. It is the second-largest city of Guatemala and the capital of the Quetzaltenango District. It lies at an altitude of 2,330 meters above sea level. The economy of Quetzaltenango is mainly based on producing wheat, maize, fruit, and vegetables. Since the late 1990s, Quetzaltenango's economy has prospered; it is expected to grow even more strongly in future.

Managua, Nicaragua

Managua is the capital city of Nicaragua and has a population of 1,033,622 (2016). It is located on the southern shore of Lake Managua. Its economy is mainly based on the financial sector—all of the country's major banks are located in the city. Managua is also the main political, social, cultural, educational and economic center of Nicaragua. The center of Managua was devastated in 1972 by a deadly earthquake and was never fully rebuilt. Since the 1990s, informal settlements have revived the center of Managua.

Nassau, The Bahamas

Nassau is the capital city of the Commonwealth of the Bahamas and has an estimated population of 274,400 (2016). The economy of Nassau is mainly based on tourism, but farming and fishing remain important sectors of the economy even though only a fraction of the land is arable and nearly all food is imported.

Santiago de los Caballeros, Dominican Republic

Santiago is the second largest city in the Dominican Republic, and the fourth largest in the Caribbean. The population is around 500,000 inhabitants. The settlement was founded by the Spaniards in 1495 and remains to be the cultural, political, industrial and financial centers in the Caribbean. Santiago has over 300 manufacturing companies, which employ more than 14,000 people or 12% of the labor of Dominican Republic.

Montego Bay, Jamaica

Montego Bay is a city located in northwestern Jamaica with a population of 110,115 (2011). Jamaica is administratively divided into fourteen parishes and Montego Bay is the capital of the parish of St. James. After the capital Kingston, it is the second-largest anglophone city in the Caribbean. Montego Bay is a popular holiday destination that has invested in modernization in the past years. However, in January 2018, a state of emergency was declared—following a spate of shootings and murders—and is still in force.

San José, Costa Rica

San José is the capital, as well as the largest city, of Costa Rica and has a population of 333,288 (2015), with almost 2.1 million in the surrounding metropolitan area. The city lies at an altitude of 1,170 meters above sea level. Costa Rica has developed into an important location in the field of education and San José, in particular, hosts many different universities.

Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic

Santo Domingo, officially Santo Domingo de Guzmán, is the capital and largest city of the Dominican Republic. Its metropolitan area is the largest in the Caribbean by population, with 2,908,607 (2010), while the capital city itself counts around a million inhabitants. Santo Domingo is the cultural, financial, political, commercial and industrial center of the Dominican Republic.

Panama City, Panama

Panama City is the capital city of Panama and has a population of 880,691 (2010), with over 1.5 million in the surrounding metropolitan area. As the political and administrative center of the country, the economy of Panama City is mainly based on the commercial and financial sectors. It is highly dependent on trade activities associated with the Panama Canal. The historical city center is a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Pasto, Colombia

Pasto, officially called San Juan de Pasto, is a city located in southwestern Columbia and has an estimated population of 500,000 (2018). Columbia is divided into thirty-two regions and a capital district; Pasto is the capital city of the Nariño region. The city lies at an altitude of 2,897 meters above sea level. The economy of Pasto is mainly based on trade and service industries, but tourism also plays a significant role.

Goya, Argentina

Goya is a city in northeastern Argentina and has a population of 77,349 (2010). It is located on the eastern shore of the Parana River. Goya offers some touristic activities, such as visiting tobacco and rice mills or sport fishing, and tourism has become its most important economic sector. The city also has a small inland port.

Quito, Ecuador

Quito is the capital city of Ecuador and has a population of 2,671,191 (2011). It lies at an altitude of 2,850 meters above sea level, which makes it the second-highest capital city in the world. The economy of Quito is mainly based on textiles, metals and agriculture. Quito is at the heart of the most important economic region in the country.

Mendoza, Argentina

Mendoza is a city in the west of Argentina and has a population of 115,041 (2010), with over one million in the surrounding metropolitan area. It is the capital city of the province of Mendoza. Its economy is mainly based on the export of wine—several vineyards are located in the region. Furthermore, the city also exports petroleum, oil, gas and petrochemical products, along with olives, fruit and vegetables.

Valdivia, Chile

Valdivia is a city in southern Chile with a population of 154,432 (2012). The economy of Valdivia is mainly based on forestry-related activities, as well as the metallurgical industry, naval construction, agriculture, cattle breeding, aquaculture and food processing. Tourism also plays an important role, and there are several universities and schools, both public and private.

La Serena, Chile

La Serena is the capital city of the Coquimbo region in the north of Chile and has a population of 198,163 (2012), with over 400,000 in the surrounding metropolitan region. The economy of La Serena is mainly based on tourism. In the summer months, the population doubles as a result of the many people coming to visit the city's attractions—mainly the beaches. La Serena shares a common metropolitan area with Coquimbo.

Puerto Montt, Chile

Puerto Montt is the capital city of the Los Lagos region in southern Chile and has a population of 218,858 (2012). The Calbuco volcano—one of the most active volcanos in Chile—is located thirty kilometers to the east of the city; it last erupted in 2015. The economy of Puerto Montt is mainly based on forestry-related activities, as well as agriculture, cattle breeding and tourism. Puerto Montt shares a common metropolitan area with Puerto Varas.

Coquimbo, Chile

Coquimbo is a city with more than 200,117 (2012) inhabitants; it is located on the Pan-American Highway. The gold and copper industries led to the city's importance in the middle of the eighteenth century. Today, the city is an industrial and shipping center undergoing rapid economic and population growth. Coquimbo shares its metropolitan area with La Serena.

Monteria, Colombia

Monteria is a city located in the north of Colombia and has a population of 454,032 (2015). Colombia is administratively divided into thirty-two districts and Monteria is the capital of the district of Córdoba. The city is located along the Sinú River, which connects its inland seaport to the Caribbean Sea. The economy of Monteria is mainly based on cattle farming and a relatively strong, booming commercial district.

Paramaribo, Suriname

Paramaribo is the capital and largest city of Suriname. Located in the north of the country, it has a population of 240,924 (2012). It is situated on the 480 km long Suriname River, which flows across the country. The economy of Paramaribo is mainly based on the business and financial sectors, but tourism is increasingly growing in importance. The historic inner city of Paramaribo has been a UNESCO World Heritage Site since 2002.

Jujuy, Argentina

Jujuy, officially called San Salvador de Jujuy, is a city in northern Argentina and has a population of 257,970 (2010). Argentina is divided into 23 provinces and one autonomous city: Buenos Aires. Jujuy is the capital of Jujuy Province. It is located near the Andes at the junction of the Xibi River and the Río Grande de Jujuy at 1,238 meters above sea level.

Goya, Argentina

Goya is a city in northeastern Argentina and has a population of 77,349 (2010). It is located on the eastern shore of the Parana River. Goya offers some touristic activities, such as visiting tobacco and rice mills or sport fishing, and tourism has become its most important economic sector. The city also has a small inland port.

Puerto Varas, Chile

Puerto Varas is a city in southern Chile with a population of 41,255 (2012). The city is located on the southern shore of the Llanquihue Lake, which is the second-largest lake in Chile. Various activities related to the Llanquihue Lake attract tourists thus the economy of Puerto Varas is mainly based on tourism. Puerto Varas shares its metropolitan area with Puerto Montt.

Bahia Blanca, Argentina

Bahia Blanca is a city in southeastern Argentina and has a population of 301,572 (2010). Argentina is divided into 23 provinces and one autonomous city: Buenos Aires. Bahia Blanca is located in the province of Buenos Aires. Its seaports are among the most important in Argentina, with an average natural depth of 15 meters. As a result, the economy of Bahia Blanca is mainly based on industries related to the ports.

The Need for an Urban Laboratory

Roland Krebs, Daniela Sanjinés

The work we do as urbanists, architects, or planners, is all about people. People are at the center of all we do. As Jan Gehl (2010), the renowned urban designer and architect, observed, “For decades, the human dimension has been an overlooked and haphazardly addressed urban planning topic” and “Only architecture that considers human scale and interaction is successful architecture.” People-centered planning and design, from process to product, is the crux of what we do in the Urban Design Lab (UDL). We improve the lives of city dwellers in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) through transformative urban design; the city is our canvas, the people are the paint, and the UDL is the brush. Without the paint, i.e. the people, we have nothing, and nothing we do will last or be sustainable. Because cities are continuing to grow, and some are breaking at the seams, human-focused planning and design is more important than ever.

Today, LAC makes up the second most urbanized region on the planet—there eight out of ten people live in cities (United Nations, 2014). Over the past two decades, the region’s urban population and economic growth have increasingly taken place in intermediate-sized cities, which are expanding exponentially. Today, approximately 260 million people live in 198 LAC cities counting more than 200,000 inhabitants and generate sixty percent of Latin America’s GDP. UN-Habitat predicts that Latin American cities will include ninety percent of the region’s population by 2050.

This phenomenon has left LAC cities struggling to respond adequately with long-term, context-specific, strategic city planning. Emerging cities continue to face growing challenges calling for innovative approaches. The reclamation of the public realm has proven to be an effective avenue, not only towards more sustainable urban environments but also towards the integration of marginalized communities into the urban fabric.

The debate about the state of urban areas, deficient planning, and flawed management strategies is not confined to the developing world. In the northern hemisphere these are relevant issues as well: How can we manage the city’s spatial growth along with its social, natural, cultural and economic challenges? How do we effectively plan for an emerging city without neglecting “urbanity” and “humanity”?

Before diving into these important issues, we wish to quickly look back on past developments, starting with the early days of modern urban planning and design in Latin America and the Caribbean—for the region has been a veritable laboratory for several international, innovative planning theories.

Urban Laboratories of the Twentieth Century

Urban population growth, incremental processes of industrialization and the arrival of automobiles initially led to the expansion of urban centers during the first decades of the twentieth century (Almandoz, 2007). Between 1850 and 1930, Latin American and Caribbean cities began institutionalizing urban agendas inspired by European conceptions. Urban ideas from France derived from “Haussmannian surgery” and the Beaux-Arts tradition (Almandoz, 2002) were especially influential, on the one hand in responding to unsanitary living conditions in working class quarters, and on the other hand in the design of residential suburbs for the bourgeoisie.

Le Corbusier's visit to Argentina and Brazil in 1929 had a strong impact on city development in the region. For instance, the Regulatory Plan for the City of Buenos Aires (1947–49) was prepared by Juan Kurchan and Jorge Ferrari Hardoy in collaboration with Le Corbusier (Sennott, 2004). Also, his influence on Brazilian architecture and planning was evident, as shown by the 1938 commissioning of the new Ministry of Education and Health building (MES) in Rio de Janeiro, where Le Corbusier, Lucio Costa and Oscar Niemeyer served as principal architects and Roberto Burle Marx as a landscape designer. The latter three were also put in charge of the urban planning, architectural design, and landscape design of Brasília, the new Brazilian modernist capital city, in 1956 (Segre, 2007). These two projects exemplify the influence of the Swiss-French architect and planner on Brazil's foremost planners and designers during the twentieth century (Irazábal, 2009).

Urban conceptions—from Camillo Sitte's to Ebenezer Howard's—began permeating the local planning agenda in the region. By the 1930s, more precisely from 1929 until 1948, European planners such as the Austrian architect and urban planner Karl Brunner were invited to establish public institutions and formal plans, and to engage in urban academic discourse in cities like Santiago de Chile, Bogotá, and Panama City (Hofer, 2009).

By the 1950s, following several visits by representatives of CIAM (International Congresses of Modern Architecture)—including Le Corbusier and a planning and architectural duo, the Town Planning Associates of Paul Lester Wiener and José Lluís Sert (1957)—the urban principles of the modern movement had become part of the local discourse and materialized as master plans for several cities (Havana, Chimbote and Bogotá, among others) from 1939 until 1957 (Mumford, 2008). Simultaneously, architecture schools and planning institutes were set up, consolidating a growing local culture of urban planning throughout the continent.

However, starting in the second half of the twentieth century, accelerated urban growth and increasing rural exodus led to the arrival of impoverished families. These set up house in informal settlements on the urban fringes far beyond the reach of administrative bodies, public services and planning strategies. In the 1960s Latin America, which was suffering from a growing housing shortage, became a testing ground for urban ideas again. In Lima in 1969, research by John Turner and architectural theorist Christopher Alexander resulted in the experimental social housing project PREVI.

By the 1980s, after the fall of military regimes throughout the region, processes of re-democratization and the implementation of neoliberal policies had an impact on the social configuration and spatial structure of sprawling LAC cities (Hall, 1988). Furthermore, decentralization processes transferred territorial planning responsibilities to unprepared municipalities; often lacking resources and qualified staff, these municipalities were overwhelmed with the task of properly addressing urgent urban challenges.

Today, cities throughout the LAC region are continuing to develop in a generally informal, haphazard manner; indeed approximately one in every five urban inhabitants resides in a slum (UN-HABITAT, 2015). This clearly highlights the failure of these cities to respond adequately to urban growth; it is an urgent call for changes to the status quo of planning procedures.

An important step towards a paradigm shift was the Favela-Bairro; started in 1993, this slum-upgrading program in Rio de Janeiro was led by Argentinian architect Jorge Mario Jauregui and financed by the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB). Favela-Bairro converted favelas (slums or informal settlements) into regular neighborhoods by applying dialogue-oriented planning techniques. This program and its successor (since 2010) Morar Carioca are considered pioneers of the new paradigm for the improvement of emerging cities in developing countries, i.e. renovating neighborhoods with very poor living conditions instead of relocating their inhabitants (Jauregui, 2014).

From early 2000, another particular case of experimental urban planning and design emerged from the crime-ridden city of Medellín. Thanks to the design and implementation of a comprehensive territorial development plan, strategic projects were set up in cooperation with architecture schools in urban laboratories; these tested innovative solutions to Medellín's social problems, serving as catalysts for urban transformation (McGuirk, 2014). Today Medellín's urban projects—calling for a new, people-centered urban planning paradigm for the region—are an inspiration to a new generation of architects and urban planners.