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Murder Capital to
Modern Miracle?
The Progression of
Governance in
Medellin, Colombia

Veyom Bahl

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Graphics and layout: Giorgio Talocci



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Murder Capital to Modern Miracle? The Progression of Governance in Medellin, Colombia

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May 2012

ISSN 1474-3280

Abstract. The most violent city in the world only twenty years ago, Medellín, Colombia is now a beacon of progressive urban development. Governance and structuration theory provide an analytical framework through which three stages of this remarkable transformation can be assessed. During an illicit hegemony, narco-traffickers and state military forces ruthlessly controlled the city, and clientelism and corruption went unchecked. The principle results of the period were fixity of violence, a destabilization of formal government and a systematic disempowerment of the urban poor, who populated the city's precarious mountainsides. Progressive interventions, inspired by a wave of decentralization in the late-1980s, sought to redress growing informality and enable local agency. The city's first resulting policy experiment, PRIMED, was short-lived, however, because it did not improve municipal administration, strengthen community organization or build a political clientele around pro-poor

governance. Learning from PRIMED, the current social urbanism agenda has ignited a political movement for poverty alleviation and directed spectacular infrastructure investment to the city's poorest regions. Yet, as social urbanism reaches maturity, escalating violence and the city's competitiveness agenda risk derailing its redistributive goals. Viewing these three periods in continuum suggests that while efficiency, agency and equitable distribution are critical components and outcomes of good governance, the level of interdependence fostered—particularly through strong state leadership—profoundly influences both the longevity of good governance practice and the durability of its impact. The city's trajectory, furthermore, offers some substantiation of structuration theory. Local political leadership has built and financed a progressive discourse, which has, over time, established new social structures to govern the city's public affairs.

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1. Introduction: the significance of Medellín, Colombia

With more than half of the world living in cities and urbanization intensifying, “the human condition has become the urban condition” (Amin, 2006, 1012). Yet, as Latin American cities demonstrate, the urban environment is a site of extraordinary contradiction.

Latin America is among the most urbanized regions of the world, with 79 percent of its population residing in cities (UN-HABITAT, 2010, 12). Cities generate 60 percent of Latin America’s gross domestic product (Cadena, et al., 2011, 1). Yet, Latin America is also the “land of inequality,” where the poorest 30 percent earn only 7.5 percent of income (UN-HABITAT, 2008, 67), and more than 110 million people live in slums (UN-HABITAT, 2010, 32). The 1980s are referred to as “the lost decade” (Schuurman, 1993, 191). Authoritarian governments, economic decline, heavy indebtedness, impervious clientelistic political culture and failed economic restructuring produced “truly incalculable” ramifications for urban poverty (Harris and Nef, 2008, 87).

Medellín, Colombia, is in many ways, a microcosm of these tensions and transformations. Colombia was enmeshed in a decade-long civil war that affected the lives of millions mid-century. Violence catalyzed extensive migration to industry-rich Medellín, which was unprepared for rapid urbanization (Palacios, 2006; Lamb, 2010). Millions settled in precarious, mountainside slums, and the city’s official response to resulting poverty was neglect or repression (Blanco and Kobayashi, 2009; PRIMED, 1996). Once economic decline took hold beginning in the 1950s, the city became entangled in a logic of unrest and violence linked to a burgeoning international drug trade. By the 1990s, Medellín was the deadliest city in the world (Hylton, 2007; Lamb, 2010).

Yet, two decades later, the city is a beacon of urban development innovation. Under the philosophy of “social urbanism,” successive mayors have mobilized the city’s political capital to address extreme poverty and inequality (Echeverri, 2008; Devlin, 2010). Rhetoric has been backed by spectacular infrastructural investment, cross-sector partnerships and a determined effort toward participatory democracy (Brand and Dávila, 2011; Fukuyama and Colby, 2011; Hylton, 2007). Colombia is among the most successful countries in the world for reducing slum incidence, having overseen a near-40 percent reduction since 2000 (UN-HABITAT, 2010, 39-40). Nonetheless, new tensions have arisen between

Medellín’s aspirations for more inclusive public affairs and its desire for efficacy, competitiveness and the establishment of a global model for urban development (Brand, 2010).

This paper seeks to analyze this profound shift in Medellín through the lens of governance and structuration theories. On the one hand governance theory suggests that, in an increasingly interconnected world, cities have greater capacity to engage a multitude of actors toward progressive and effective urban development. Qualifying that optimism, structuration theory reminds that progress is, ultimately, a balancing act between the forces of structure and human agency. With this in mind, this paper evaluates the extent to which Medellín has in the past or now does represent a model of good governance—one that promotes effectiveness, agency, equitable distribution and interdependence.

This paper is structured in three parts. To cohere social urbanism and its antecedents, Chapter Two introduces the theoretical underpinnings of this analysis. Governance theory is situated in relation to, first, Anthony Giddens’s duality of structure and agency and, second, the nature of the contemporary urban environment. The chapter concludes with an analytical framework, synthesizing how relevant theoretical debates could inform a case study.

Chapter Three employs this analytical framework to study governance in Medellín in three periods: first, an era of illicit governance defined by violence and narcotrafficking; second, a short-lived experiment in governance innovation in informal settlements known as PRIMED (the Spanish acronym for a policy entitled “Integral Program for Subnormal District Improvement in Medellín”); and third, the city’s current urban development philosophy known as “social urbanism.” Though each is presented separately, time frames overlap and each period critically informs those in its future. For this reason, corresponding dates are not assigned to the eras studied.

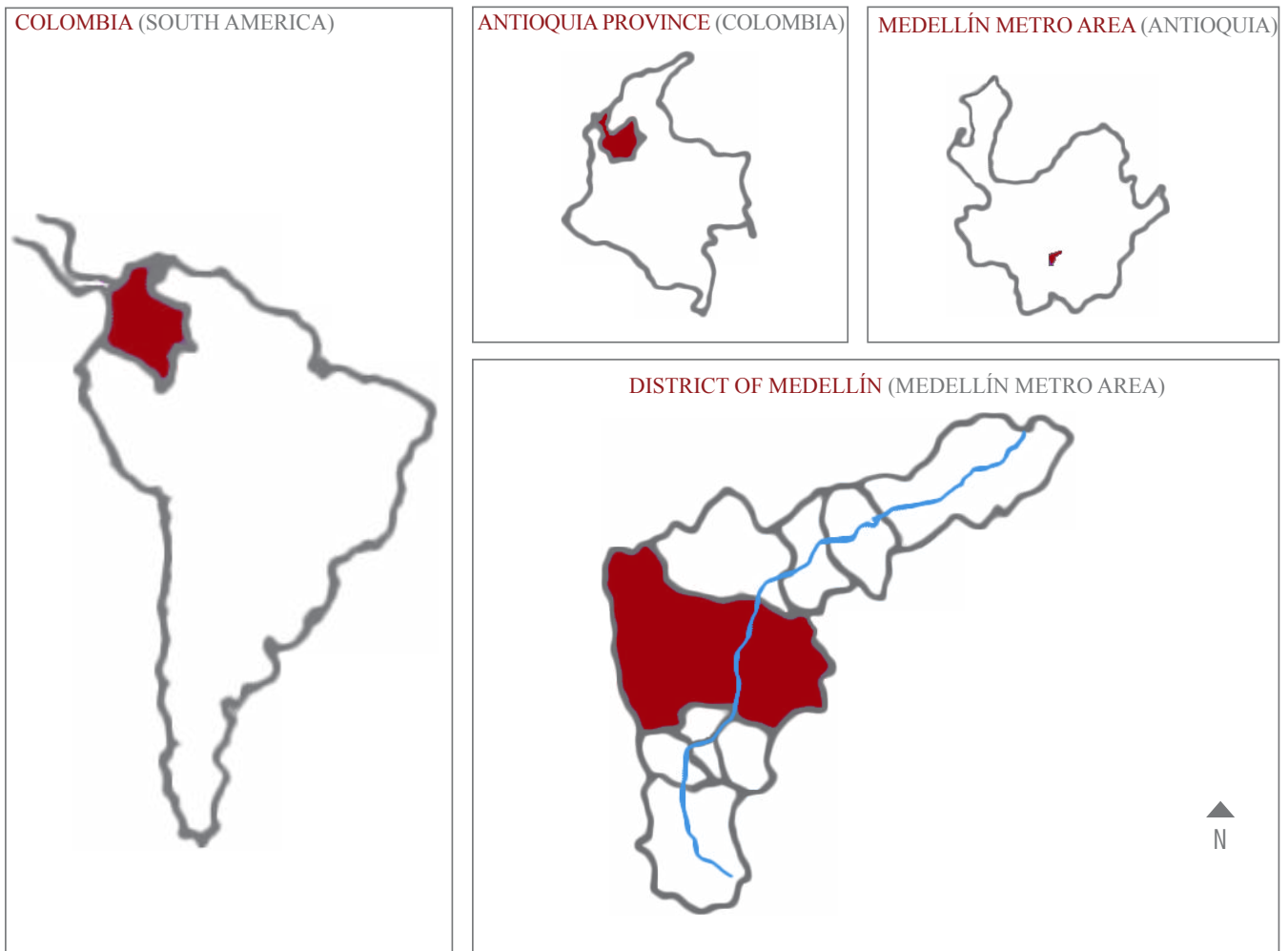
Finally, Chapter Four presents summary arguments on the extent to which Medellín has, over time, met the ideals of good governance and the factors that have driven or constrained progressive shifts in its balance of structure and agency. The chapter concludes with considerations on the prospects for Medellín and social urbanism.

The research finds that the era of a narco-trafficking stronghold, despite its illicit nature, represented a form of governance, even though its principle results were fixity of violence, a destabilization of formal government and the systematic disempowerment of individual choice. PRIMED's holistic interventions, by contrast, sought to actively enable agency and channel city resources toward the poor. The program was short-lived, however, because it did not strengthen municipal administration, build a political clientele or embed interdependence. Learning from PRIMED, social urbanism has successfully ignited a political movement around good governance for poverty alleviation. Yet, the proliferation of social urbanism as a model risks prioritizing city marketing above the social needs the ideology is envisioned to serve. Viewing the three periods in continuum suggests that while efficiency, agency and equitable distribution are critical components and outcomes of good govern-

ance, the level of interdependence fostered—through state leadership—strongly influences both longevity of practice and durability of impact.

It is worth noting that the research has been constrained in three principal respects. First, social urbanism is current and evolving, and urban development research on Colombia disproportionately studies the capital, Bogotá. Consequently, contemporary research on Medellín focuses more on policy and process than on outcomes. Second, while this work acknowledges Medellín's inherent heterogeneity and its attendant challenges, the research does not take an explicitly gendered perspective. This is due both to space constraints and the limited catalogue of gender-based literature on Medellín. Finally, the author has translated all Spanish-language sources, a limitation to the extent that nuance in local speech may have been inadvertently overlooked.

Figure 1.1. Regional maps. Source: Author's elaboration.



2. Analytical framework: governance, structuration & the city

2.1 Notions of governance

A discursive shift. Over the last fifteen years, a discursive shift has emerged in government and political administration: “[t]erms such as ‘governance,’ ‘institutional capacity,’ ‘networks,’ ‘complexity,’ ‘trust,’ ‘deliberation’ and ‘interdependence’ dominate the debate, while terms such as ‘the state,’ ‘government,’ ‘power’ and ‘authority’...have lost their grip on the analytical imagination” (Hajer and Wagenaar, 2003, 1). Though “social science is no less immune to fads than popular culture,” this shift in vocabulary is, in fact, “captur[ing] changes in both the nature and topography of politics” (ibid.).

The ascension of this discourse encapsulates a half-century of changes in economic, political and social organization. Simply put, the move from state-centered governing paradigms in the 1950s to market-dominated interventions in the 1980s placed questions of efficacy and responsibility at the center of debates on the management of public affairs (Jessop, 1998, 3). Which institutions would be most effective in responding to public needs? Which institutions were, ultimately, accountable for progress? These questions implied a “gradual shift in focus...from input control to outcomes and output control,” in the conduct and organization of public affairs (Pierre and Peters, 2000, 4).

Yet, under increasing international (some say global) integration of government, economics and culture, the conventional dualisms of state versus market and private versus public appeared incompatible with the range of actors, powers and relationships that shaped contemporary public life (Jessop, 1998, 3). Famously, Manuel Castells argued for defining cities as spaces of *flows* and societies as systems of *networks* (1996, 468). Hajer and Wagenaar added that “we can discern shifts in networks: new networks eroding the power of previously powerful ones. Moreover, there is the *instability* of networks: the awareness that society experiences a ‘new modernity’ in which established institutions might prove less stable and solid than we assumed and are less well positioned to keep risks at bay” (2003, 5, *emph. original*).

Ideals and Opportunities. Though the word “governance” was not new, it was adopted in the 1990s to account for all manner of phenomena: from a minimal state to good governance, corporate governance to new

public management, and from self-organizing networks to socio-cybernetic systems (Rhodes, 1996, 653). Governance was, furthermore, identified at multiple levels of interaction: interpersonal, inter-organizational and inter-systemic (Jessop, 1998, 2).

For the present purposes, governance is broadly understood as “the process of social and economic coordination, management and steering” of public affairs, not confined to the state apparatus (Painter, 2009, 313). It implies “a movement from the hierarchical, top-down exercise of power and rules of state-based systems, to more horizontal, networked systems reliant on the interaction of independent and inter-dependent actors who share a degree of trust” (Dávila, 2009, 41).

The rapid acceptance of the governance lexicon has been, in part, politically motivated. Amid neoliberal antagonism to a hierarchical and bureaucratic state—and parallel citizen frustration with state ineffectiveness—the dialogue of governance promoted a “new and more contemporary image at the same time as it provided some degree of support and legitimacy to further cut-backs in public expenditures” (Pierre and Peters, 2000, 6).

Despite these multiple, even dubious, origins, “governance” has substantial appeal. It immediately links “the political system with its environment...Thinking about governance means thinking about how to steer the economy and society” (Pierre and Peters, 2000, 1). The term “*good governance*” has been ascribed a variety of meanings, most notoriously associated with neoliberal structural adjustment programs. Nonetheless, elements of the “good governance” discourse promote cross-sector partnerships and citizen participation, which are “viewed as *empowering, democracy enhancing* and more *effective forms of governing*” (Swyngedouw, 2005, 1992, *emph. added*). Furthermore, broadening responsibility for governing enlivens a focus on *efficiency* (Rhodes, 1996, 653, *emph. added*). The term not only indicates a changed understanding of how social activity is coordinated, but also predicates a shift in how society thinks about public affairs, helping:

“practitioners and theorists alike to unlearn the embedded intellectual reflexes....There is a move from the familiar topography of formal political institutions to the edges of organizational activity, negotiations between sovereign

bodies, and inter-organizational networks.... The disparate actors who populate these networks find nascent points of solidarity in the joint realization that they need one another to craft effective political agreements...acceptable to all who are involved (and to expand the circle of involvement)" (Hajer and Wagenaar, 2003, 3).

Challenges and Considerations. Notwithstanding these opportunities, the dynamics of governance raise new challenges for public affairs. Hajer and Wagenaar (2003) identify five:

- ***New Space of Politics.*** First, a governance framework emphasizes "politics that takes place *between* organizations," rather than through the imposition of state models (Hajer and Wagenaar, 2003, 8, *emph. added*). In an important critique, Erik Swyngedouw argues that governance discourse fabricates "a proliferating maze of opaque networks, fuzzy institutional arrangements, ill-defined responsibilities and ambiguous political objectives and priorities" (2005, 1999). Despite differing outlooks, both conceptions highlight that moving from a one-actor terrain toward more fluid governance raises questions

of responsibility, authority and accountability. Jon Pierre and Guy Peters have aptly responded that, even with a "new space of politics" (Hajer and Wagenaar, 2003, 8), the state remains a central actor with ultimate responsibility for "provid[ing] a set of goals for governing" (Pierre and Peters, 2000, 31).

- ***Politics and Policymaking Under the Condition of Radical Uncertainty.*** In a postmodern turn, governance theory acknowledges that politics and policymaking operate "under the condition of radical uncertainty" (Hajer and Wagenaar, 2003, 10). Government is no longer assumed (nor can contend) to hold "absolute knowledge" (*ibid.*). In this environment, "concrete problem solving, joint responsibility, continuous performance-based and collective learning become potential building stones of a viable alternative strategy" (*ibid.*).

- ***The Increased Importance of 'Difference' for our Understanding of Politics.*** Contemporary, particularly urban, societies are extraordinarily heterogeneous. Accountable to a multitude of groups, institutions of governance become more responsible for "translation: between languages, between discourses, and ultimately between people" (Hajer and Wagenaar, 2003, 11). Swyngedouw disputes the possibility of translation, arguing that while

Figure 2.1. Panorama of Medellin. Source: Duque, 2006.



governance enables participation and reignites state-civil society relationships, governance also “redefine[s] and reposition[s] the meaning of (political) citizenship and, consequently, the nature of democracy itself....New arrangements of governance have created new institutions and empowered new actors, while disempowering others....leading to a substantial democratic deficit” (2005, 1991).

For this reason, Pierre and Peters advocate for a state-centered model of governance; “[m]arkets may be efficient in allocating resources but...the state remains the only creature in society that can play [the] political—and democratic—role” (2000, 13). Thus, “the most important thing that governments can do is take all the valid, but conflicting and expensive, wants and demands from society and convert those into a set of more or less coherent policy statements” (ibid., 31). In this ambition, shifts toward participatory democracy can aid in understanding the multitude of public interests (ibid., 45).

- *Acting upon an Awareness of Interdependence.* Under governance, problem solving becomes a collaborative task requiring extensive coordination. Undeniably optimistic, interdependence suggests that “the essence of dealing with policy conflicts might be a more substantial process of deliberation, shared problem solving and developing regimes of joint responsibility than merely interest-based bargaining” (Hajer and Wagenaar, 2003, 11).

- *Polymaking and the Dynamics of Trust and Identity.* Finally, despite increasing interdependence, “trust cannot be assumed” (Hajer and Wagenaar, 2003, 12). The complexity of governance arrangements necessitates that policymaking be “not simply about finding *solutions* for pressing problems,” but also about “*finding formats that generate trust* among mutually interdependent actors” (ibid., *emph. original*). Swyngedouw contends this idealism is unwarranted. He argues that, rather than promoting trust and identity, the instruments of governance “are an integral part of the consolidation of an imposed and authoritarian neoliberalism, celebrating the virtues of self-managed risk, prudence, and self-responsibility” (2005, 1998). He adds that:

“network-based forms of governance do not (yet) have codified rules and regulations that shape or define participation and identify the exact domains or arenas of power....While such absence of codification potentially permits and elicits socially innovative forms of organization and of governing, it also opens up a vast terrain of contestation and potential conflict that revolves around the exercise of (or the capacity to exercise) entitlements and institutional power” (ibid., 1999).

Thus, on the one hand, governance is thought to better encapsulate the realities of public affairs and enhance

democracy, effectiveness, and efficiency through collective action. On the other hand, governance is seen as challenging these very ideals by changing the nature of democratic practices and promoting high—some would argue unachievable—aspirations of partnership, interdependence and trust. The role of the state emerges as a critical variable in determining the extent to which governance achieves its promise.

2.2. Structure and agency

Theory of Structuration: Reconciling “Empire-Building Endeavors”. Social justice theory prizes self-determination and self-development—that each individual should have both the *option* to choose the life she wants to lead as well the *capacity* to bring that vision to fruition (Young, 1990). Central to this theorization is a debate that has generally eluded governance discourse: what capacity do ordinary people have to shape their environments? To what extent does the individual have efficacy within and against the social, political and economic structures implicated in his surroundings? To what extent can governance alter long-standing structures of domination?

In a series of seminal works released in the late 1970s and early 1980s, Anthony Giddens expounded precisely on this balance between “structure” and “agency” in human society (Giddens, 1976; Giddens, 1979; Giddens, 1981, Giddens, 1984). Culminating in a work entitled *The Constitution of Society: Outline of the Theory of Structuration*, Giddens argued that social theories had become “entrenched” in a misguided division between society and the individual (Giddens, 1984, xx). On the one hand, functionalist and structuralist thought, despite other divergences, “tended to express a naturalistic standpoint... strongly emphasize[ing] the pre-eminence of the social whole over its individual parts (i.e., its constituent actors, human subjects)” (ibid., 1). On the opposing end of the spectrum, interpretive sociology, hermeneutics and phenomenology rejected the “tendency...to see human behavior as the result of forces that actors neither control nor comprehend” (ibid., xvi). These schools emphasized “action and meaning,” and “there [was] not much talk of constraint” (ibid., 2). Giddens found the dichotomy unsatisfactory in its simplicity:

“If interpretive sociologies are founded, as it were, upon an imperialism of the subject, functionalism and structuralism propose an imperialism of the social object. One of my principal ambitions...is to put an end to each of these empire-building endeavors” (ibid., 2).

Giddens promulgated the Theory of Structuration, “based on the premise that this dualism” of subject and object—

of society and individual—as binary opposites “be reconceptualized as a duality” (1984, xx). By “duality” Giddens sought to highlight “the essential recursiveness of social life” (1979, 5). Put more simply, “[w]e should see social life not just as ‘society’ out there or just the product of ‘the individual’ here, but as a series of ongoing activities and practices that people carry on, which at the same time reproduce larger institutions” (Giddens and Pierson, 1998, 76). Under structuration theory, society is not “the plastic creation of human subjects” (Giddens, 1984, 30), not least because humans cannot determine all the consequences of their actions (Giddens, 1979, 7). Nonetheless, human activity shapes and reshapes—while is itself shaped by—the structures in which it takes place (Giddens, 1984).

Agency: Actors as Knowledgeable Beings. In understanding the individual, Giddens began from “hermeneutic starting-point” (1984, 3), deriding that “a good deal of social theory...has treated agents as much less knowledgeable than they really are” (ibid., xxx). Though he distinguished between practical consciousness (what individuals know), discursive consciousness (what individuals know and are able to articulate) and the unconscious, Giddens explained that actors “monitor continuously the flow of their activities...[T]hey also routinely monitor aspects, social and physical, of the contexts in which they move” (ibid., 5). Giddens roundly emphasized that “every social actor knows a great deal about the conditions of reproduction of the society of which he or she is a member” (1979, 5).

Agency, or “the efficacy of human action,” is intimately connected to human knowledgeability (Sewell, 1992, 2). Referring not to the “intentions people have in doing things but their capacity to do those things in the first place...[a]gency concerns events of which an individual is the perpetrator, in the sense that the individual could, at any phase in a given sequence of conduct, have acted differently” (Giddens, 1984, 9). Thus, agency implies the capacity to “exert some degree of control” over circumstances (Sewell, 1992, 20). In this respect, agency is the “basis of power” (Giddens and Pierson, 1998, 84), conceived as the “transformational capacity to get things done” and “the ability to achieve one’s wishes, even against the desires of others” (Tucker, 1998, 82).

For Giddens, both knowledgeability and agency are innate (1984, 3). However, agency is “formed by a specific range of cultural [rules] and resources available in a person’s particular social milieu. The specific forms that agency will take consequently vary enormously and are culturally and historically determined” (Sewell, 1992, 20). Furthermore, at any given moment, an agent is positioned socially, spatially and temporally within: immediate surroundings and relationships (“co-presence”); varied social roles (“time-space distancing of societal totalities”); the

flow of day-to-day activities (“daily time-space paths”); an individual life history (“life cycle”); and, finally, the life cycle of the institutions that frame one’s context (“the *longue durée* of institutions”) (Giddens, 1984, 84-85). The influence an individual’s specific set of agencies can have is, therefore, ultimately conditioned upon this time-space “positioning” (ibid., 24).

Structure: Rules, Resources and Domination.

The other element of Giddens’s duality underlines that knowledgeable human agents act within societies that are influenced—even governed—by structures. Giddens identifies three types: structures of signification, domination and legitimation (Figure 2.1) (1984, 30). Structures of signification influence modes of discourse, significance and meaning. Structures of domination impinge upon political and economic institutions through the authorization and allocation of resources. Structures of legitimation regulate normative behavior through legal institutions. These structures “make it possible for discernibly similar social practices to exist across varying spans of time and space and which lend them ‘systemic’ form” (ibid., 17).

Structures exist in two types: rules and resources. Rules are “generalizable procedures applied in the enactment/reproduction of social life” (Giddens, 1984, 21). They are the formal and informal, explicit and implicit laws, practices, norms, symbols and assumptions that guide human activity. Rules allow agents to “know what one is supposed to do in particular situations” (Tucker, 1998, 81). An understanding and awareness of rules “is the very core of that ‘knowledgeability’ which specifically characterizes human agents,” although “such knowledge does not specify all the situations which an actor might meet with” (Giddens, 1984, 21).

Resources are also of two varieties: allocative and authoritative (Giddens, 1984, 33). Allocative resources are those which “generat[e] command over objects, goods or material phenomena. Authoritative resources refer to types of transformative capacity generating command over persons or actors” (ibid.). Giddens has faced consistent criticism over his relatively obscure definition of authoritative resources; nevertheless, “the gist is clear enough: allocation is essentially economic domination, authorization politico-ideological” (Callinicos, 1985, 145).

The interplay of rules and resources determines the extent to which structures come to “express forms of domination and power” that actually influence human activity (Giddens, 1984, 18 and 33). Sewell explains that “[rules] not empowered or regenerated by resources would eventually be abandoned and forgotten, just as resources without cultural [rules] to direct their use would eventually dissipate and decay. Sets of [rules] and resources may properly be said to constitute structures only when they mutually imply and sustain each

other over time” (Sewell, 1992, 12).

Structuration: Influence through “Virtuality”. For Giddens, structures form one of three levels of social organization (Figure 2.2). “Structures,” as discussed, include rules and resources. Further abstracted, “systems” are sets of recurring social interactions, which are informed by structures. The highest level is “structuration,” or the way in which social systems are produced and reproduced over time as a result of changes or constancies in structures (Giddens, 1979, 66).

The idea of structuration is Giddens’s declarative statement on how agency and structure interact: far from reified, structures are “both the *medium* and the *outcome* of the practices which constitute social systems” (1981, 27, *emph. added*). While “[s]tructures shape people’s practices...it is also people’s practices that constitute (and reproduce) structures” (Sewell, 1992, 4). Under this duality:

“[S]ociety is a structured phenomenon and... the structural properties of a group or a society have effects upon the way people act, feel and think....[But] society only has form and

that form only has effects on people in so far as structure is produced and reproduced in what people do” (Giddens and Pierson, 1998, 77 and 82-83).

“In and through” human activities, “agents reproduce the conditions that make [their] activities possible” (Giddens, 1984, 2, *emph. added*).

This worldview is sustained through Giddens’s conception of structures as “virtual.” Rules and resources “are characterized by the ‘absence of subject’” and exist exclusively when invoked through the actions of knowledgeable agents (Giddens, 1979, 66). “Structure,” Giddens writes, “is out of time and space, save in its instantiations and coordination as memory traces” (1984, 25). Put another way, structures “are *contingent claims* which have to be sustained and ‘made to count’ through the effective mobilization of sanctions in the contexts of *actual encounters*” (*ibid.*, 30, *emph. added*). Without exercising human agency to reinforce rules or mobilize resources, structures would cease to exist.

Enablement versus Constraint. It is worth restating three elements of structuration theory. First, Giddens defines structures as being “recursively organized.” Rules

Figure 2.2. Types of structures. Source: Elaborated by the Author from Giddens, 1984.

Structure(s)	Theoretical Domain	Institutional Order
Signification	Theory of coding	Symbolic orders / Modes of discourse
Domination	Theory of resource authorization Theory of resource allocation	Political institutions Economic institutions
Legitimation	Theory of normative regulation	Legal institutions

Figure 2.3. Levels of social organisation. Source: Elaborated by the Author from Giddens, 1979.

Level	Definition
Structure	Rules and resources, organized as properties of social systems. Structure only exists as “structural properties.”
System	Reproduced social relations between actors or collectivities, organized as regular social practices
Structuration	Conditions governing the continuity or transformation of structures, and therefore the reproduction of systems

and resources are neither fixed nor once-built. Rather, their production and reproduction are ongoing. Second, for Giddens, rules and resources are “virtual” and exist only once “instantiated” by knowledgeable human agents. By consequence, human agency is at any moment inherently capable of altering structures and potentially upending forces of domination. Finally, rules and resources are mutually sustaining. Agency that alters rules cannot be wholly effective in changing structures without also impacting the control and dissemination of allocative and authoritative resources. The converse holds as well.

To what extent, however, can structures constrain agency? This is a final point on which Giddens has received the most fervent criticism. Giddens acknowledges that “the more institutions bite into time and space, the more resistant they are to manipulation or change by any individual agent” (Giddens, 1984, 170). Giddens also writes that structures are “both enabling and constraining” (Giddens, 1979, 70). However, he “sedulously avoid[s]” any “specification of the *stringency* of constraints” (Archer, 1990, 78, *emph. added*). By “making [structure and agency] mutually constitutive,” structuration theory “prevents examination of their interplay....Structural properties are integral to social constitution and reconstitution, but when do they throw their weight behind one or the other?” (*ibid.*, 78 and 83). Similarly, Giddens offers “no discussion of the historically specific conditions that lead oppressed groups to resist, and that provide their resistance with sources of organization and power” (Callinicos, 1985, 140).

Margaret Archer argues that Giddens’s lack of specificity results in a theoretical “hyperactivity of agency,” in which actors “generically enjoy very high degrees of freedom” (1990, 77). Though what she and others like Arthur Stinchcombe appear to demand is a predictive—rather than explanatory—science of society, they raise legitimate questions as to “what sorts of milieux can produce what sorts of outputs to structures” (Stinchcombe, 1990, 56). Giddens explains that “the conditions of social reproduction vary so widely between different types of society” that such specificity at a theoretical level is unreasonable (1979, 215). One objective of the present analysis, then, is to explore these interactions within the context of a particular case.

2.3. Implications for the city

Cities are the most dynamic testing ground for the ideals of governance and structuration theory, offering contextual complexity to theoretical analysis. Urban areas are now home to 3.3 billion people—more than half of the world’s population (UNFPA, 2007, 1). Indeed, by 2030, urbanites are expected to number 5 billion, with urban growth continuing at “an unprecedented scale” (*ibid.*).

This population growth has yielded complex and contradictory cities—capital and power rich and increasingly heterogeneous, yet notorious for inequality and informality (Amin, 2006; Mayer 2007; Robinson 2006; Sandercock, 1998; Soja and Kanai, 2007).

Though cities have had economic prominence since at least the Industrial Revolution, capital has become increasingly concentrated in cities as a result of a new wave of economic integration (Soja and Kanai, 2007). Cities are increasingly seen as command centers for global flows of capital, culture and labor, particularly under new “flexible” economic models that allow for integrated, yet transnational production and distribution (Sassen, 1991; Soja and Kanai, 2007). Furthermore, this economic focus on cities has coincided with their political transformation (Brenner, 2004). The diversification and decentralization of state powers to multiple levels of government has created “new state spaces” (*ibid.*) in which municipal governance can, theoretically, more efficiently allocate resources and “ensure the public sector responds to the needs and aspirations” of its constituencies (Alam, 2006, 2).

A less optimistic view of these shifts raises concerns over the capacities and interests of municipal administrations. Local government “now performs new tasks that are more technically complex and politically sensitive than the tasks they performed before” (Alam, 2006, 4), exacerbating the “emergent, contingent, contested, and potentially unstable outcomes” of local administration (Brenner, 2004, 85). A case in point is economic steering, which increasingly tests cities’ abilities to respond to local demands while pursuing international economic competitiveness. Municipal administrations have been criticized for “place-marketing...and new forms of local boosterism,” which can ignore local imperatives or impede local decision-making (Mayer, 2007, 91; Safier, 2002).

The urban environment is also characterized by extraordinary heterogeneity. Heightened by internal and international migration, this diversity is not only evident in the people who compose the city—varied by age, class, ethnicity, gender, religion, ability and sexuality—but also their interests and interactions (Sandercock, 1998, 165). Heterogeneity has made more pronounced “the challenges of negotiating...multiplicity and difference” (Amin, 2006, 1012). Changing social, economic and demographic structures “can call into question longstanding notions of citizenship and national identity” (Sandercock, 1998, 165). The idea of a “public interest” also becomes contested as municipal administrations are tasked with understanding diverse “ways of being” and “ways of knowing,” and building what Leonie Sandercock calls “an epistemology of multiplicity” (*ibid.*, 181).

Finally, in stark contrast to their embedded wealth and power, many of the world’s cities are also characterized by pronounced inequality and informality (Harris and Nef,

2008, 13). In Latin America, “exploitative relations of capitalist production and distribution, the hierarchical structures of power and forms of coercion, and the networks of political and social influence” have produced among the most unequal cities in the world (ibid., 4). Though:

“some degree of geographically uneven development has always been present in the human occupation of the earth...the global distribution of wealth and power today is almost surely more polarized (and unjust) than ever before, with growing numbers of the super-rich concentrated in a few favored spaces and places while a billion or more people live, often strikingly adjacent, in increasingly compacted slums” (Soja, 2010, 57; Davis, 2006; Soja and Kanai, 2007).

Indeed, while informality is not synonymous with poverty, informal settlements are linked to economic insecurity, precarious housing, disease, malnutrition, drugs and violence (UN-HABITAT, 2003, vi). In fact, 80 percent of urban expansion in the Amazon, one of the world’s fastest growing regions, has occurred in informal settlements (Davis, 2006, 17).

The urban environment, thus, is defined by tensions: on the one hand, “[d]ense and heterogeneous cities and city regions have become the driving forces of the global economy, generating enormous wealth as well as technological innovation and cultural creativity....But at the same time, urban agglomerations can also function to intensify inequalities and social polarization” (Soja and Kanai, 2007, 68). While, “the myriad bolt-holes that are to be found in cities provide some possibility to the millions of dispossessed, dislocated and illegal people stripped of citizenship to acquire some political capital” (Amin, 2006, 1012), “too often, the reality of local, empowering institutions and programs fails to match the rhetoric” (Kearns and Paddison, 2000, 849).

The city highlights critical questions for governance and structuration theory. How effective can governance be in sites of diversity and heterogeneity? How well can governance balance structure and agency—and distribute capital and power—to counter extreme urban poverty and inequality? How well can the ideals of governance foster interdependence among the multitude of actors in the urban environment?

2.4. Analytical Framework

Synthesis of Theoretical Arguments. Given increasing international connectedness, cities have been conceived of as spaces of flows and societies as systems of networks. Concomitant with these changes to the or-

ganization of human activity, a notion of “governance” has emerged. Responsibility for organizing and coordinating public affairs is being devolved to a range of actors and sectors. Governance theory promotes a vision of society that is heterogeneous and uncertain, but effectively shaped by collaborative problem solving among actors of mutual trust.

While social structures can influence, constrain or dominate action, knowledgeable human agents also shape the structures that surround them. Composed of rules and resources, structures are “virtual” and exist only as agents invoke, produce and reproduce them. Though agencies vary by individual and across time and space, a capacity for agency is innate and implies that human actions can, indeed, be mobilized toward structural change in the city. The notion of a duality of structure is entirely compatible with the optimism of good urban governance. balance structure and agency—and distribute capital and power—to counter extreme urban poverty and inequality? How well can the ideals of governance foster interdependence among the multitude of actors in the urban environment?

Indicators of Analysis. Bringing together governance, structuration and the urban context, four analytical criteria emerge to assess the quality of urban governance:

- **Distributing Rules and Resources.** Virtual rules and resources are retained and controlled by human beings and given power through action (Giddens, 1984). Thus, the control and mobilization of a city’s rules and resources impinges directly upon whether structures are maintained or reconceived (ibid.). What is to be evaluated are the impacts of governance—whether agents in contemporary cities are granted equitable control over the production and reproduction of rules, and the mobilization and distribution of the city’s wealth in authoritative and allocative resources. Of critical importance is that rules and resources be mutually enforced for systemic change.

- **Achieving Effectiveness.** While acknowledging that policymaking occurs “under the condition of radical uncertainty” (Hajer and Wagenaar, 2003, 10), “efficiency and effectiveness in the use of resources still matter” (Kearns and Paddison, 2000, 848). Indeed, among the core precepts of governance is that a broader engagement of actors can result in a more effective management of urban affairs—that intended outcomes can be achieved efficiently and responsibly (Hajer and Wagenaar, 2003; Jessop, 1998, Pierre and Peters, 2000; Swyngedouw, 2005). The objective of the present analysis is to test the extent to which these claims are reflected in practice or whether governance is pursued more as a means to devolve responsibility.

- **Enabling Agency.** Though agency is innate, it is also

conditioned by individual life experiences and social structures (Giddens, 1984; Sewell, 1992). As such, to enable agency, particularly in heterogeneous and unequal cities, requires improving individuals' capacities and opportunities to act, and to act with influence. The goal is not to guarantee predetermined outcomes in favor of the urban poor. Rather, in light of Giddens's duality of structure, the objective is to evaluate the extent to which governance practices progressively shift the balance of structure and agency in favor of local capacity and decision-making authority. Without enabled agency, structures of signification, dominance and legitimation persist unchallenged.

- *Embedding Interdependence.* Finally, governance in a networked society is believed to foster collaboration,

trust, joint responsibility and collective decision-making by the heterogeneous actors in the city (Hajer and Wagenaar, 2003). The inclusion of more actors in governance, furthermore, can be seen as a means of enhancing the proximity and representativeness of institutions to their constituents. What is of interest is not only whether these utopian ideals are manifest in the praxis of governance, but also whether they become embedded so as to set precedents for future collaborative action toward the same progressive ends.

In the following chapter, these four analytical criteria are employed to assess the success of governance in ameliorating conditions of urban poverty over three periods, constituting a half-century in the history of Medellín.

3. Case study: governance progression in Medellín

3.1. Historical development

City origins. Medellín is the “most conservative city in Colombia, the continent’s most conservative country” (Hylton, 2007, 71), and yet, over the last two decades, Medellín has produced among the most progressive urban development innovations.

Medellín is the capital of Antioquia, a northern province home to 12 percent of the Colombian population and source of nearly 15 percent of gross domestic product. With 3.5 million people, the Metropolitan Area of Medellín is Colombia’s second largest and has rapidly urbanized over the last sixty years, becoming a political, economic and cultural hub (Blanco and Kobayashi, 2009, 81). The Metropolitan Area of Medellín is composed of ten municipalities, of which the municipality of Medellín is largest and wealthiest. The municipality of Medellín is further composed of 16 districts (comunas), which are clustered to the east and west of the Medellín River within the Aburrá Valley.

Colombia’s mountainous topography has created geographical divides, its diverse population has created social divides, and its unequal capitalist development has created socio-economic divides, which have proven immensely challenging to govern centrally (Palacios, 2006, xiii and 265). As a result, Colombia has operated as a patchwork of cities and city-networks, and Medellín has historically operated with a measure of independence (ibid., 226; Lamb, 2010, 175).

Medellín was founded as a commercial center and gold-mining town in 1675. The city became the economic capital of the region by the late-1700s, and in the late-1800s induced the first Colombian industrialization on the profits of thriving coffee exports. Economic opportunities in Medellín formalized still-present links between the city and its rural surroundings, as the city became a destination for migrant laborers in manufacturing and industry (Hylton, 2007; Palacios, 2006).

Early prominence and state weakness also engendered a distinct local entrepreneurialism; in contrast to many Latin American cities, Medellín’s growth was not due to North American investment, but rather to “native” business (Hylton, 2007, 73). In tandem with the Catholic Church, Medellín’s economic sector developed a culture that prized discipline, work ethic, hierarchy and authority (Melguizo

and Cronshaw, 2001, 113; Lamb, 2010, 36 and 296). In the 1940s, Colombia was entrenched in a decade of civil war, known as La Violencia. Medellín emerged physically unscathed, yet violence in the countryside accelerated migration to the city and rapid urbanization (Lamb, 2010). At the same time, local elitism—which fomented clientelism in both business and politics—viewed urban poverty as an invariable corollary to industrialization. In 1947, *Life* magazine dubbed Medellín a “capitalist paradise” (Hylton, 2007, 75).

Violent submersion. By the late 1950s, however, Medellín’s prosperity was declining. Coffee prices were falling, and burgeoning Asian manufacturing reduced demands for local exports (Hylton, 2007, 76; Lamb, 2010, 37). Nonetheless, migration to the city continued at a “dizzying pace” (Melguizo and Cronshaw, 2001, 114). Medellín’s population grew from 350,000 to 1.5 million between 1951 and 1985 (Figure 3.1) (Fukuyama and Colby, 2011). With housing and employment shortfalls, millions settled in the physically and socially precarious mountainsides, where the state was noticeably absent (Figure 3.2) (Lamb, 2010, 82). Low school retention brought high youth inactivity and unemployment (PRIMED, 1996, 36). A “marginal citizenry” became embedded into a “sharply segregated and exclusionary” urban fabric (Melguizo and Cronshaw, 2001, 114). By 1972, 50 percent of the population—600,000 people—lived in informal settlements (PRIMED, 1996, 29).

The economic decline and rise in inequality coincided with the formation of the Medellín cartel. Locals, including Pablo Escobar, understood that “smuggling cheap goods—clothing, cigarettes—from the duty-free zone of Panama to beat high import tariffs would prove a lucrative alternative to domestic production and an effective means of money laundering” (Hylton, 2007, 78). Smuggling eventually provided avenues for international distribution of cocaine processed in Colombia. Growing frustrations with the government’s inability to address poverty incited social unrest and a “dynamic that confer[red] legitimacy on revolutionary projects and violent alternatives” (Barón and Mond, 2001, 13; Lamb, 2010, 207). In general, “the 1980s saw an escalation in armed conflict at the national level; with the emergence of paramilitary groups, self-defense groups, militia organizations, and others of their ilk, the boundaries between political, social, and criminal motives blurred” (Melguizo and Cronshaw, 2001, 114-115).

The consolidation of illicit economies provided a battleground for local power. Violence escalated precipitously, and in 1991, Medellín was the most violent city in the world (Figure 3.3) (Echeverri, 2008). In December 1992 alone, the city reported 647 murders, an average of more than 20 homicides each day (Lamb, 2010, 118). By 1989, 45,000 youths had been assassinated, and the following decade would bring the death of 55,000 more (Carvajal, 2011, 2-5; Hylton, 2007, 72). Indeed, “the logics of narco-trafficking and the associated violence became embedded in the local economy, social and political practices;” “indices of corruption and clientelism became elevated...and levels of poverty worsened” (Carvajal, 2011, 2-5; Avilés, 2006). In 1994, while other Colombian cities grew, employment fell in Medellín by 1.5 percent and unemployment jumped from 12.4 to 14 percent (PRIMED, 1996, 36). Though urban planning had been institutionalized in 1899 (Hylton, 2007, 73), the state was ill-equipped to confront the multitude or gravity of development challenges (PRIMED, 1996, 21).

Contemporary Transformations. Neoliberal economic policies instituted in response to these alarming realities “fail[ed]...to address endemic poverty, massive inequality, rising informality in the business sector, and violent conflict” (Bateman, et al., 2011, 1). The informal sector provided an increasing share of jobs in Medellín—rising from 50.2 percent in 1984, to 51.8 percent in 1992, and 55.7 percent in 2000 (Betancur, 2007, 1).

Amid the country’s downward spiral, however, seeds of transformation were planted as decentralization policies emerged internationally. Though narco-traffickers would

maintain a stronghold on Medellín until a peace agreement was forged in the mid-2000s, governance decentralization offered both vertical and horizontal shifts of power—strengthening local governments and incorporating non-state actors (Dávila, 2011). In the late-1980s, Colombia began to institutionalize citizen participation and strengthen local democracy as a formal response to violence and disenfranchisement (Calderon, 2008; Carvajal, 2011; Dávila, 2009).

Mayors mobilized their newfound prominence and power by “enacting bold fiscal and institutional reforms, helping to reduce crime and violence, fostering tolerance and the creation of a ‘citizen culture,’ and launching major urban programs that helped coalesce major shifts in their cities’ trajectories” (Dávila, 2009, 38). Medellín mayors (and their peers in Bogotá) have begun “a new generation of municipal programs seeking to physically upgrade existing [informal] settlements and to integrate them both physically and socially into the fabric of the city” (Brand and Dávila, 2011, 2). High-profile, holistic interventions executed through cross-sector collaboration and participatory methods have given Medellín a “makeover” (Hylton, 2007). The city increasingly “embodies an impressive combination of imagination and boldness” (Brand and Dávila, 2011, 2).

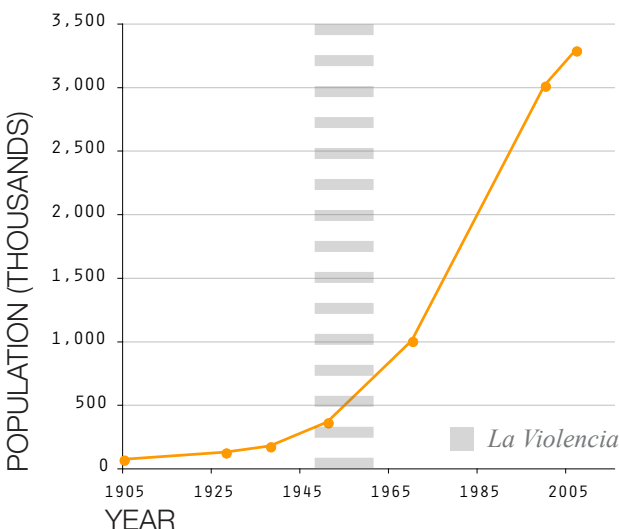
Why Medellín? Medellín brings together the many contending forces of the contemporary city—migration, heterogeneity, informality, public administration, international economic integration and illicit activity, to name but a few. From its origins as an economic nerve center within an unmanageable national territory; to its status as the deadliest city in the world, governed by narco-trafficking; to its noteworthy resurgence as a progressive force for urban development, Medellín exemplifies Neil Brenner’s argument that local actors critically shape contemporary political, social and economic development (2004). Medellín is increasingly recognized around the world as a model of “highly competent city management” (Dávila, 2009, 39), and this not in spite of its violent past.

To what extent is Medellín’s transformation exemplar of “governance”? What has been its trajectory, and what have been its merits? How has governance in Medellín, in its various forms since the 1950s, addressed the priorities of achieving efficiency, enabling agency, distributing rules and resources, and embedding interdependence?

3.2. Period one: illicit governance (Violence and Narcotrafficking)

Research on contemporary Medellín tends to view the city’s current political climate as having overcome a period of lawlessness—a period *without* governance. Quite

Figure 3.1. Population growth (Medellín Metro Area). Sources: PRIMED, 1996; MedellínInfo, 2000.



the contrary, the illicit stronghold over Medellín represents a distinct form of governance. The complex interactions between the state, communities, narco-traffickers, paramilitaries, guerrillas, local gangs and state armed forces were, indeed, a “process of social and economic coordination, management and steering” (Painter, 2009, 313), even if the primary achievement of that governance has been a “murderous downward spiral” (Hylton, 2007, 78) of violence and conflict (Ferreira and Segura, 2000; Lamb, 2010; Melguizo and Cronshaw, 2001).

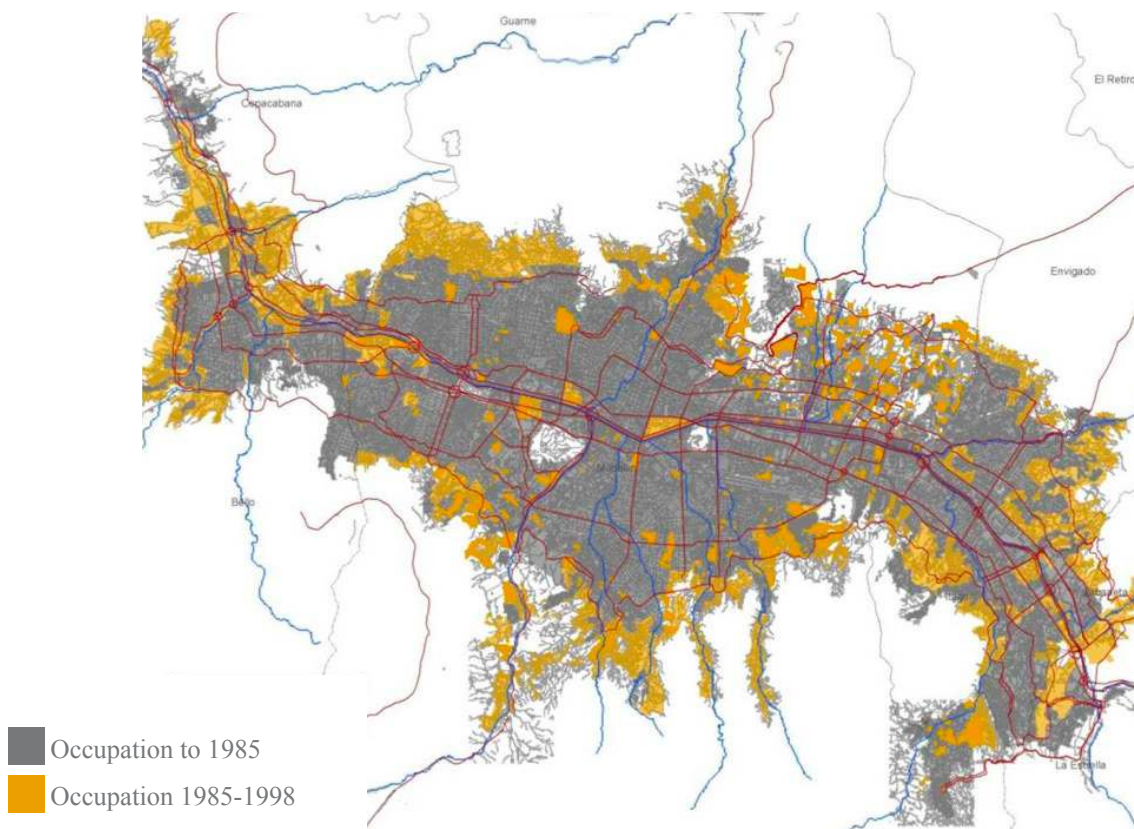
The rise of an illicit governance structure in Medellín can be attributed to several factors, principal among them: economic downturn beginning in the 1950s; the city’s inability to cope with mass in-migration following *La Violencia*; the economic opportunity of the drug trade; and the historic weakness of the Colombian central government (Fukuyama and Colby, 2011; Hylton, 2007; Lamb, 2010; Palacios, 2006, PRIMED, 1996). By the 1980s, Medellín had also adopted neoliberal economic paradigms to bolster a powerful and independent private sector. The city’s capitalistic patterns became further ingrained, with families increasingly dependent on employers for support and politicians willing to provide services through clientelism and corruption (Hylton, 2007). These policies exacerbated urban poverty and did little to quell violent reactions

(Bateman, et al., 2011; Avilés, 2006; Harris and Nef, 2008).

Responding to growing economic insecurity, local gangs and left-wing guerilla forces multiplied the already violent presence of narco-traffickers (Melguizo and Cronshaw, 2001). The national government “operated only a small army and national police. Members of the country’s traditional elite liked things this way, preferring to protect themselves by arming local paramilitaries. Over time, the paramilitaries grew in size, power and independence” (Fukuyama and Colby, 2011). Violence became mainstream, and the state lacked resources to respond. A governance structure had been inadvertently established through the complex interactions of the wealthy and poor, the formal and informal, and the violent and otherwise illicit—interactions framed by conflicting economic, political and social objectives.

Distributing Rules and Resources. Under this system of governance, capitalist structures “remained subject to a family monopoly, and manufacturing never developed from light consumer goods into heavy goods and machinery” (Hylton, 2007, 76). Imperviousness in economic organization heavily restricted “any trickle-down wealth effect” (ibid.). Neoliberal economic restructuring

Figure 3.2. Urban expansion (1985-1998). Source: Dávila, 2011.



prompted declines in the agrarian economy and manufacturing, while further entrenching inequality (Ahumada and Andrews, 1998; Avilés, 2006). Indeed, by the late-1990s, 0.3 percent of holdings controlled 60 percent of productive land; 10 percent of the population held 58 percent of national income; and unemployment reached 20 percent, with devastating consequences, particularly for poor urban youth (Avilés, 2006, 391; Hylton, 2007, 77). The city's response vacillated between ignoring or actively repressing informality and poverty (PRIMED, 1996).

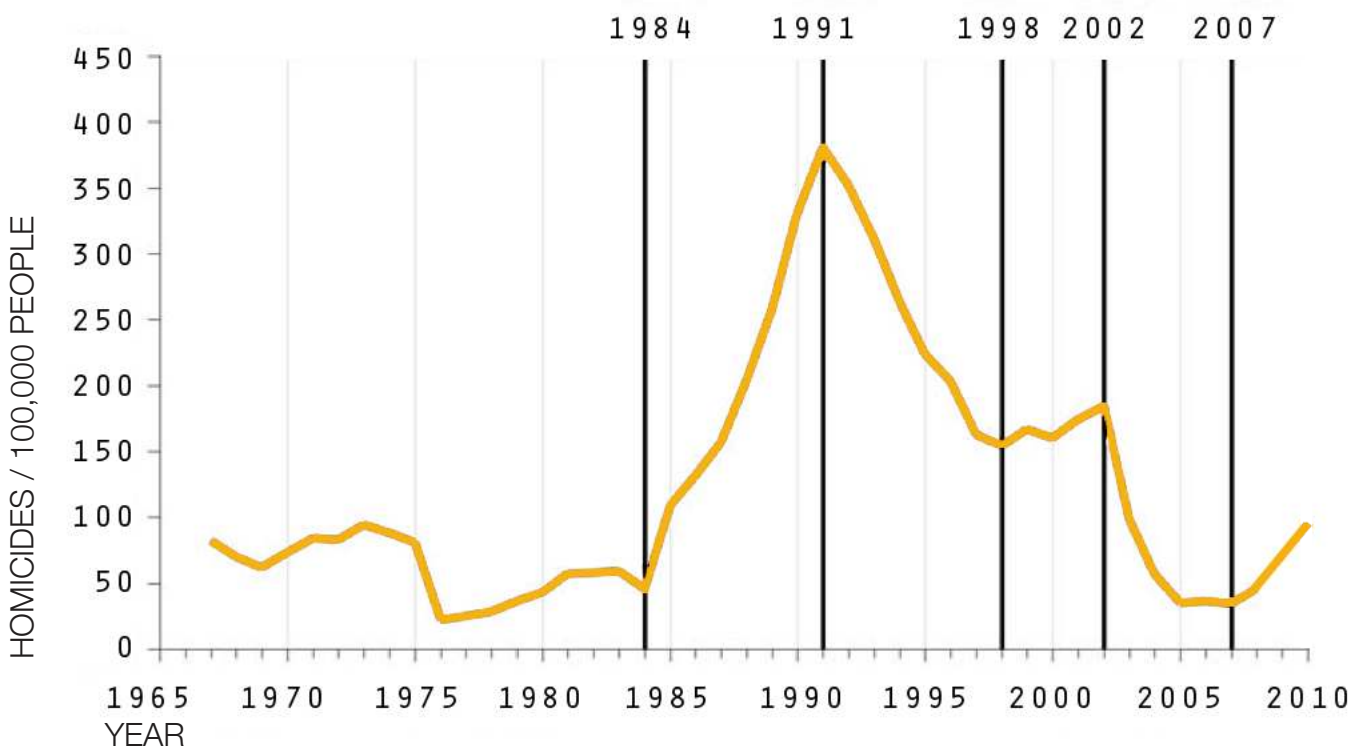
Yet, outside the formal economy, Medellínenses found support through illicit resources. Pablo Escobar and the Medellín cartel employed “the *plata* [that] came from the drug trade—hundreds of millions of dollars per month by the mid-1980s” to bribe city officials, while also funding social programs, building soccer fields, churches, schools and “even entire *barrios* where poor people living in shacks could be relocated into brick houses with electricity and running water” (Lamb, 2010, 51). In exchange, Escobar was able to recruit “small street gangs...on an ad hoc basis to carry out select assassinations and other acts of violence” from those areas that had been tacitly ignored or actively repressed by the state (*ibid.*). Local militias opposing narcotraffickers followed suit; “their activities included improvement projects such as clean-up,

paving, painting, sports and recreation, as well as night patrols and the resolution of domestic and neighborly disputes” (Hylton, 2007, 81; Melguizo and Cronshaw, 2001).

These were the perverse positives of illicit governance: despite propagating violence and disorder, for some, the system provided “the means—money, identity, respect—to escape” poverty (Lamb, 2010, 46). By consequence, the rules of violence and drug trafficking offered viable, even legitimate livelihoods, “a model of upward mobility for broad sectors of the population” (Melguizo and Cronshaw, 2001, 118-119). The price paid would be “thousands of corpses,” “the lure of easy money,” and “a broken system of authority relations, in which neither one's family, nor one's community, nor one's church, nor one's government had the credibility needed to enforce norms of behavior that could enable peaceful coexistence and maintain social, familial, or personal stability” (Lamb, 2010, 71).

Achieving Effectiveness. For the ruling drug class—perhaps also for elements of the political elite—this form of governance was effective, as it conferred short-term command over local capital and power. Narcotraffickers and state military forces were ruthless in maintaining their

Figure 3.3. Homicide rates. Sources: Lamb, 2010; Corrales, 2010.



domination, while the political class partly secured livelihoods through corrupt allegiances to those forces (Avilés, 2006; Hylton, 2007; Lamb, 2010).

Yet, from a longer-term perspective, the governance structure produced a highly ineffective “negative stalemate” in which neither the state nor the armed factions could triumph (Barón and Mond, 2001, 26). Neoliberal restructuring aimed to produce a “low-intensity democracy,” in which the state took a secondary role in all matters, including security (Avilés, 2006, 383). Through its retrenchment, the state would, theoretically, allow for political opposition, individual freedom and a more attractive environment for foreign investment. However, neoliberal reforms failed to integrate swaths of the urban population and promoted a privatization of violence, whereby responsibility for repressing internal conflict was “in large part shifted to private groups of armed civilians” (ibid., 381-382). The Colombian state had “neither the power nor the authority to settle social conflicts or enforce the law,” resorting instead to “deals, compromises, and confrontations” (Melguizo and Cronshaw, 2001, 112). The local government, in turn, was a “weak agent...bargaining as if it were on the same level as other armed groups. It never appear[ed] as the legitimate locus of power with the right to impose its will” (ibid., 127). A cyclical pattern emerged in which violence and clientelism exacerbated the weakness of public institutions, and in turn, permitted further violence (Ferreya and Segura, 2000; PRIMED, 1996).

The ordinary residents of Medellín, ultimately, suffered. Upheaval over the city’s command functions effectively deteriorated the urban fabric, degraded the livelihoods of the urban poor, and forestalled political and economic progress. Even once migration stemmed in the 1980s, neither governance nor social integration improved (Melguizo and Cronshaw, 2001, 114).

Enabling Agency. Agency enabled during the period was not the intent, but rather a byproduct, of illicit governance. Though mismanagement had dismantled the legitimacy of the political system and fed political alienation (Nickson, 1995, 146), economic and security challenges fueled social organization (Carvajal, 2011). Over 200 civic strikes took place in Colombia between 1970 and 1986 (Nickson, 1995, 146), and “a broader urban left was becoming visible, as worker, student and guerrilla networks began to converge” (Hylton, 2007, 77). Though their protests—in some cases, kidnapping and extortion—were met with “savage repression by state forces” (ibid.), these actions represented a (violent) civic engagement that sought to challenge the governance structures in place.

Despite their history of political struggle, many civic organizations founded during this period are now viewed not as representatives of social dissatisfaction but as

“part extremist...masquerading as a political movement” (Lamb, 2010, 213). Furthermore, beyond civic organization, agency was limited or severely constrained. The Colombian population failed to grow influential voices of opposition to narco-trafficking hegemony:

“The 15,000-20,000 guerrillas, the 5,000 paramilitaries, the rogue elements within the state security agencies, and the organized criminal groups...do not represent the 37 million Colombians. But the 37 million Colombians have never given a clear voice to a rejection of extrajudicial state violence and the systematic impunity of its perpetrators or of the protagonists of the conflict and their methods” (Barón and Mond, 2001, 15-16).

In an environment defined by violence, “citizens act simply out of self-preservation or the survival instinct. Unable to count on the legally constituted state or its system of justice...they turn to the armed group that offers the most favorable alternative or perhaps simply have to submit to whichever group has taken over the zone” (Melguizo and Cronshaw, 2001, 112). Elites who advocated for a low-intensity democracy also “allowed or promoted state and para-state repression as a necessary complement to economic and political change” (Avilés, 2006, 392). Though Medellínenses possessed innate agency, their ability to express it was immobilized or, at best, strongly influenced by structures of violence.

Embedding Interdependence. Interdependence in a society marked by such tensions is undoubtedly an illusory ideal. Within the ruling classes, “interdependence” was manifest in mercurial allegiances, lasting only as long as expedient. Ruling families “reproduc[ed] modes of domination characteristic of domestic servitude,” and social relations “emphasiz[ed] ‘absolute personal loyalty and obedience’ to help shape a working-class ethos of vertical ties to patrones and prompt, efficient execution of orders” (Hylton, 2007, 74). Even within the maze of narco-trafficking, an alliance of convenience, including state forces and Escobar’s former associates, would turn against Escobar and see to his being jailed in 1991 and then killed in 1993. The network formed for his defeat would then establish “a new order” under Diego Fernando Murillo, or Don Berna, and his criminal allies, *La Terraza* (ibid., 83-85).

Early attempts at militia demobilization also failed because of distrust and poor collaboration (Melguizo and Cronshaw, 2001; Lamb, 2010; Rozema, 2008). Under various names—“peace camps,” “Coosercom,” “Convivir”—successive administrations spent over a decade testing methods to reintegrate violent agents. Yet, individuals linked to paramilitaries were placed on government commissions, demobilization was poorly financed, demobilized agents were killed by residual forces, and ru-

mors spread that even then-President Ernesto Samper's election campaign had been funded, in part, by narcodollars (Lamb, 2010, 209).

Demobilization would not be marginally successful until 2002, when it was conceptualized through a collective ideal: that "peace is good business" (Barón and Mond, 2001, 14). Murillo took credit for the shift, stating that he understood the "need to create the 'necessary climate so that investment returns, particularly foreign investment, which is fundamental if we do not want to be left behind by the engine of globalization'" (Hylton, 2007, 86). The irony is that, despite Murillo's hand in the disintegration of Medellín, arguing in favor of a collective ideal earned him momentary legitimacy through a "fusion of politics, property and organized crime" (ibid., 85).

Alan Gilbert raised a critical question emerging from this period:

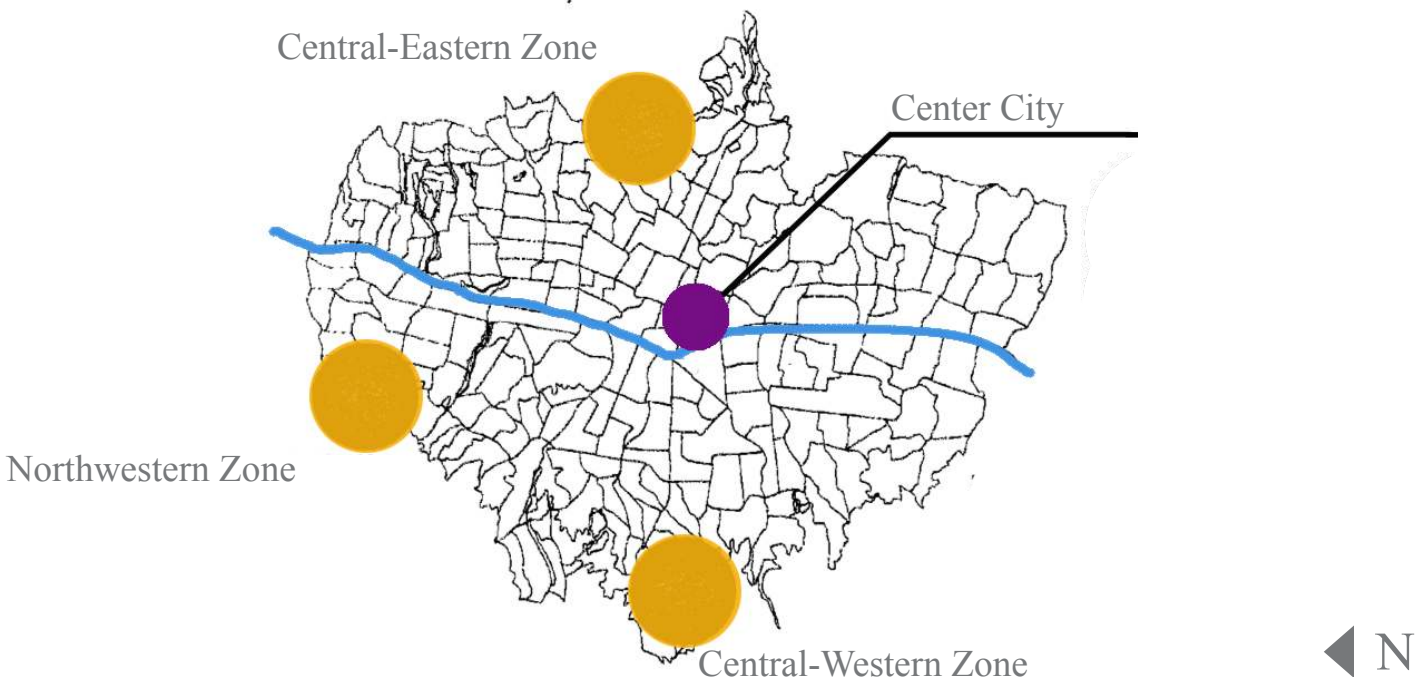
"[T]he main need throughout Latin America is for better urban leadership....[I]t is difficult to know how it can possibly emerge under current circumstances. Without more resources and a change in the political economic system, how can urban leadership be strong without being autocratic, how can local democracy emerge when even elected governments repress community autonomy?" (1992, 228).

3.3. Period Two: Governance Experimentation (PRIMED)

Like much of Latin America, Colombia began decentralizing state authority to municipal governments and citizens in the 1990s (Nickson, 1995; Nickson, 2010). Mayors were first elected by popular vote in 1989 (Lamb, 2010, 127); the 1989 National Urban Land Reform mandated that urban policies "address the integration of subnormal [informal] settlements" (Calderon, 2008, 56); a new national constitution was ratified in 1991, "defining participation as a constitutive principle and function of the Colombian State" (Carvajal, 2011, 2-5) and increasing local governments transfers to 41 percent of national revenue by 2001 (Betancur, 2007; Nickson, 2010) ¹; and the 1997 Law of the Territorial Order mandated that municipal administrations create local development plans (Calderon, 2008, 58).

Thus, in the midst of continuing violence (Hylton, 2007), impervious clientelism (Ferreya and Segura, 2000), growing informality (PRIMED, 1996), and the "inglorious end" to neoliberal economic policies (Bateman, et al., 2011, 1), the municipal state was being granted greater responsibility to address local crises through participatory methods. In particular, the precarious conditions associated with informal housing were of growing concern; 80 percent of new settlement in Medellín over the previous 20 years had been informal (PRIMED, 1996, 37). These

Figure 3.4. PRIMED intervention zones. Source: PRIMED, 1996.



urban realities and political transformations inspired the Integral Program for Subnormal District Improvement in Medellín (*Programa Integral de Mejoramiento de Barrios Subnormales en Medellín*, or PRIMED). PRIMED sought the “bettering of life quality of the population of subnormal districts in the city” and “the unification of the city and the improvement of district cohabitation” (PRIMED, 1996, 59). Holistic interventions were to be the means of urban reconstitution in the poorest areas of the municipality of Medellín—including narcotrafficking and paramilitary strongholds (Betancur, 2007; PRIMED, 1996).

PRIMED had six objectives: strengthen planning, management and inter-institutional collaboration; promote community participation and state-civil society partnerships; improve basic infrastructure, public services and public spaces; upgrade informal housing; secure land tenure for informal settlements; and mitigate geological risks on the mountainsides (PRIMED, 1996, 59; Betancur, 2007, 4). Though estimates vary, the program aspired to reach 140,000 to 200,000 people living in 30 to 70 informal settlements (Calderon 2008, 56; Blanco and Kobayashi, 2009, 80). The first of two phases was to run from 1992 to 1997 and would target three informal districts, which were most amenable to immediate intervention (Figure 3.4). The second phase would begin after an evaluation of the first and would target the remaining five informal districts (Consejería Presidencial Para Medellín, 1993, 14). PRIMED’s US\$31 million cost was funded predominantly by KfW, a German development bank (31.3 percent) and national sources (68.5 percent), including housing subsidies, municipal funds and community contributions in cash or in kind (ibid.).

Distributing Rules and Resources. Undoubtedly its greatest success, PRIMED’s underlying objective was that “residents of subnormal zones stop to be ignored (sic)” (PRIMED, 1996, 119) and that the city invest in local priorities (Betancur, 2007, 4). This represented a radical shift in rules for a municipality that previously relied on “repressive measures against people illegally occupying any space” (PRIMED, 1996, 30), including “slum clearance, isolated paternalistic interventions...and political clientelism or negligence” (Betancur, 2007, 2). Furthermore, Medellín indicated a desire to offer “flexible treatment” to informal lifestyles, accepting that they may “interfere with certain formal standards” and regulations (PRIMED, 1996, 50).

Though no independent evaluation was conducted, PRIMED staff estimated the program benefited 51,000 people, only 25-30 percent of the target but approximately 20 percent of the population in informal settlements in the municipality of Medellín (Consejería Presidencial Para Medellín, 1993, 14; PRIMED, 1996, 12; Betancur, 2007, 2). Pedestrian infrastructure cover rose from 40 to 60 percent (compared with an average of 90 percent in the

rest of the city). Approximately 2,800 square meters of public spaces were developed, and water and sewer systems were extended to 90-95 percent of households. More than 3,500 dwellings were improved (Betancur, 2007, 6). PRIMED also offered funding for “collective initiative projects” identified by communities, thus marginally shifting control of public resources to communities (PRIMED, 1996, 117) ². Though PRIMED also hoped to achieve land tenure regularization, existing legislation and landlords constrained its efforts (Betancur, 2007, 10). Approximately 2,100 households received legal tenure, falling short of a targeted 5,180 (ibid.).

Though these achievements are no small feat, particularly in Medellín, PRIMED failed to gain a political constituency (see Interdependence), and the program was terminated before beginning its second phase. The five informal zones most in need of intervention were left without the city’s support (Consejería Presidencial Para Medellín, 1993, 14). Furthermore, PRIMED’s underlying approach to rule and resource distribution was disconcertingly two-sided. Rhetorically, PRIMED sought to better integrate informal settlements into the urban fabric. Yet, the municipality also argued that PRIMED would “lead to densification, and consequently, a better use of urban land, diminishing demand pressures for new housing in the last available lands in the city” (ibid., 15). Similarly, the municipality was motivated to PRIMED because “[a]ll the important cities of the world are getting ready to be acquainted with the global economy... and Medellín city cannot be the exception” (Sergio Naranjo, quoted in PRIMED, 1996, 11). PRIMED was implicitly tied to an international competitiveness agenda, which required ameliorating but also containing informality.

Achieving effectiveness. All PRIMED interventions “aimed at improvements in economic conditions and quality of life with long-term social impacts” (Betancur, 2007, 5-6). Moreover, PRIMED actively sought to fight “the loss of governmental legitimacy” (PRIMED, 1996, 42) precipitated by “the extremes of paternalism, political patronage/clientelism, favoritism, and isolated or crisis interventions....It assumed an apolitical form of intervention based on high levels of professionalism and efficiency. It operated on the basis of a carefully designed plan and criteria for each of its components” (Betancur, 2007, 4).

In 1999, PRIMED conducted a random survey of 300 participant households. Results were “likely skewed” as two-thirds of respondents had received home improvements, and no baseline survey was conducted (Betancur, 2007, 10). Nonetheless, “ninety-six percent of respondents indicated that their quality of life had improved. The highest levels of satisfaction came from home improvements (66%), public spaces (49%), and legalization of tenure (36%)....In fact, PRIMED had the highest credibility among government entities at 48%, followed by the utility company (14%)” (ibid.).

Researchers, however, offer a more critical account. First, Andrew Nickson argues that major political reforms in Latin America “did not bring about any reform of municipal management style,” and municipal administrators remained ill-equipped to implement the decentralization agenda (Nickson, 1995, 154). PRIMED acknowledged that delays in project execution made it “typical to listen to sentences like: ‘PRIMED is one more program of the Administration; it is only promises’” (PRIMED, 1996, 80). Second, though PRIMED established contact with local armed groups at each site (ibid., 65), resistance, bribery demands, and renegotiations when militia leadership changed stymied implementation (Betancur, 2007, 7). PRIMED’s office in the Central-Western Zone (Zona Centro Occidental) was also caught in violent crossfire in May 1994, leading “many of the officials” to seek psychological support (PRIMED, 1996, 93).

Third, PRIMED did not offer job training, employment opportunities with PRIMED were temporary, and skills acquired did not aid in securing full-time positions (Betancur, 2007, 10). Finally, PRIMED’s efforts were constrained by technological challenges, incomplete information and the difficulties of coordinating with local organizations (PRIMED, 1996, 98). Though UN-HABITAT would list PRIMED as an urban development “best practice” in 1996 (Blanco and Kobayashi, 2009, 81), PRIMED is, ultimately, faulted for its overly ambitious agenda and rather ineffective implementation (Betancur, 2007, 8).

Enabling agency. The municipality acknowledged outright that a “divorce between the civil society and the public administration had been generating for a long time, due to the absence of adequate...mechanisms that could allow the community and civic participation” (PRIMED, 1996, 39). To its credit, PRIMED:

“wanted community involvement all the way from determination of needs and establishment of priorities to implementation and maintenance. The agency was convinced that if the community did not gain ownership, the program could not achieve its intended and more intangible goals...namely, the effective insertion of the area into the city, trust in government, its institutions, and the rule of law, and continuation of the work” (Betancur, 2007, 5).

Community participation was, thus, closely aligned with PRIMED’s broader goals of efficiency, efficacy and democratic legitimacy. PRIMED set up offices near the sites of intervention and were in regular contact with local leaders through five sector-based community committees per zone of intervention (PRIMED, 1996, 65 and 116).

Despite these efforts, however, the practice of participa-

tion proved deficient. While the communities were involved in “those aspects of the implementation in which local consent was required,” they were generally “absent from the initial planning and decision-making process” (Betancur, 2007, 9). PRIMED objectives were “heavily biased toward the priorities and agendas of government” (ibid.), and from the outset, other local needs (predominantly non-infrastructure) were “discarded” as “out of the program possibility” (PRIMED, 1996, 109). In attempt to reasonably manage expectations, PRIMED “appeared before the community with concrete proposals that” PRIMED had independently determined “corresponded to real sector problems” (ibid.). As a result, community participation took on a passive and consultative, rather than collaborative function.

Moreover, due to immature local organization and limited capacity-building efforts, only 18 “collective initiative projects” were funded while PRIMED had the funds to support 240 (Betancur, 2008, 8-9). PRIMED did not effectively spur longer-term social organization as it had intended; community committees shut down once PRIMED implementation was complete. While PRIMED acknowledged some of these shortcomings and had established workshops to aid in community capacity building, the program did not survive to see those efforts tested (ibid.).

Embedding interdependence. PRIMED acknowledged openly that for success, “traditional jealousy and antipathy” would have to be overcome, and “a participative style of management [would have] to be developed on the basis of a continuous flow of information and an intense communication” (PRIMED, 1996, 50 and 52). Though PRIMED was administered under the Housing and Social Development Corporation of Medellín and was accountable to the Mayor, it operated through an independent structure. As such, it maintained a reputation free of clientelism and “attract[ed] an array social forces (e.g. the Catholic Church, philanthropic entities, institutes and universities) that had been traditionally alienated by the politically charged and self-interested parties commonly involved in this type of work” (Betancur, 2007, 4-5).

In theory, PRIMED served a coordinating and oversight role, bringing together the activities and resources of other government agencies, NGOs and subcontractors. Yet, PRIMED lacked the capacity to coordinate the “complexity of an approach with so many partners and elements,” particularly as it worked around prior patronage-based agreements that had been negotiated in the communities (Betancur, 2007, 7). Coordinating committees were overstuffed and responsibilities were not clearly delineated (ibid., 8). With delays and inefficiencies in project management, PRIMED struggled to maintain community support (PRIMED, 1996, 97).

Furthermore, PRIMED’s independent administrative structure conferred a political isolation that would, ultimately, impede its longevity. PRIMED “was not properly inserted into the general agenda of the municipality... As such, it did not enter the organic municipal structure guaranteeing its full inclusion in the general plan for the city” (Betancur, 2007, 8). The program faced its demise in 2000 both because “traditional representative and technocratic planning mechanisms” resisted and resented its innovative approach (Calderon, 2008, 61) and because the program’s placement within the municipal bureaucracy ensured that only “limited electoral capital... could be derived from...[its] isolationist culture” (Betancur, 2007, 11). PRIMED “never entered the political ideals and agendas of the moment” (Calderon, 2008, 57; Blanco and Kobayashi, 2009). When PRIMED was terminated, the Medellín establishment lost a hard-earned “trust in the capacity and legitimacy of administrative institutions” (Calderon, 2008, 62), which only years earlier, PRIMED had claimed was its “greatest program achievement” (PRIMED, 1996, 104).

poverty, poorly coordinated state interventions, a deficit of public spaces, insufficient housing and a deteriorating natural environment” (Calderon, 2008, 54). In 2004, Medellín had COL\$7 billion to pay obligations of COL\$84.4 billion (Devlin, 2010, 8). Violence had precipitated massive capital flight; 1.9 million Colombians emigrated between 1996 and 2005 and almost US\$10 billion left the country between 1998 and 2003 (Rettberg, 2007, 484). Critics also feared that Mayor Luis Pérez (2001-2003) was “adverse to participatory and democratic processes” (Carvajal, 2011, 2-5).

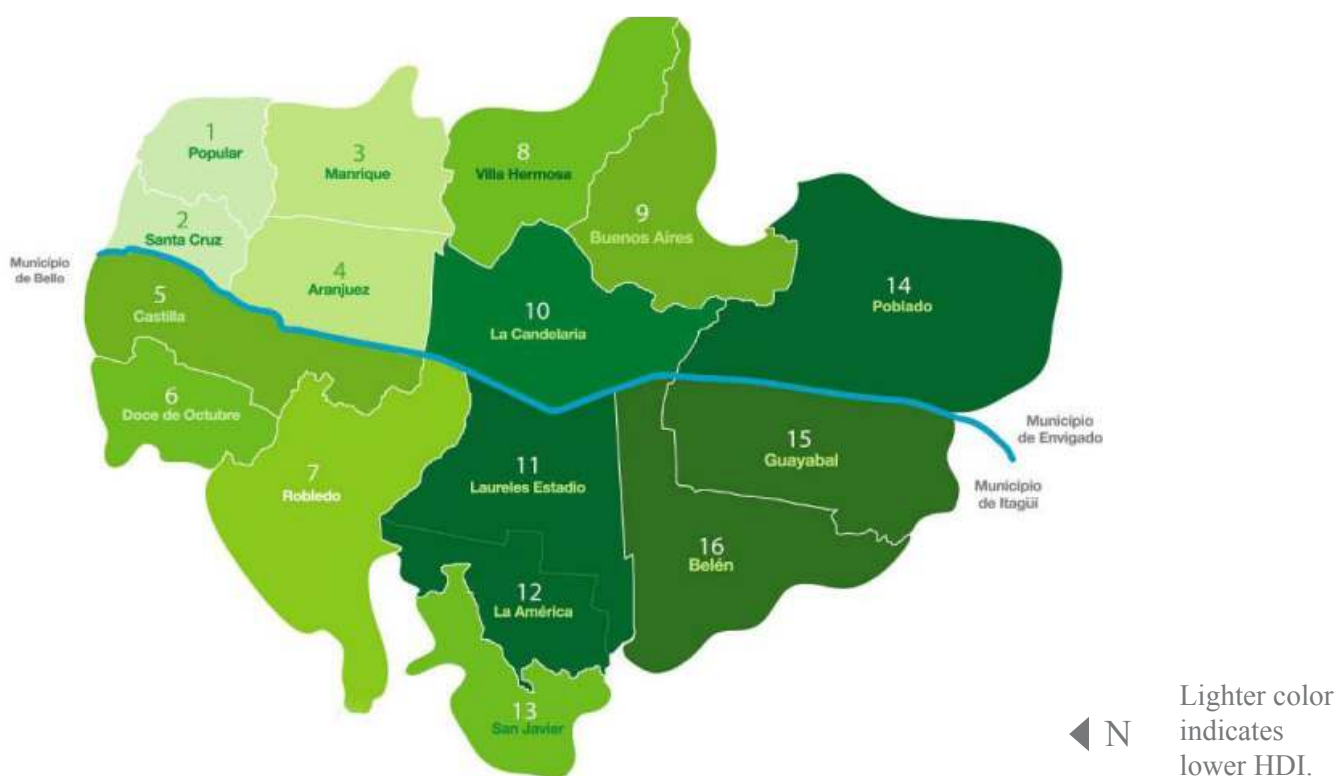
“Things began to change with the election of Álvaro Uribe as president of Colombia in 2002....Uribe dramatically expanded Colombia’s military and national police and launched an all-out offensive” against paramilitaries, ultimately, negotiating a pacification strategy (Fukuyama and Colby, 2011). For Medellín, the turning point came when Sergio Fajardo, “a mayor of a distinct political class,” was elected to serve from 2004-2007 (Carvajal, 2011, 2-5). Fajardo represented a unique blend of populism and establishment, building a reputation for empathy toward the poor while retaining links to influential business interests through his personal networks (Devlin, 2010, 2). Fajardo was elected with more votes than any mayoral candidate in Medellín’s history (ibid.).

3.4. Period Three: Governance Renown (Social Urbanism)

At the end of PRIMED, Medellín still faced “high levels of

In the early 1990s, Fajardo had brought together “fed-up

Figure 3.5. Medellín Human Development Index. Source: Echeverri, 2008.



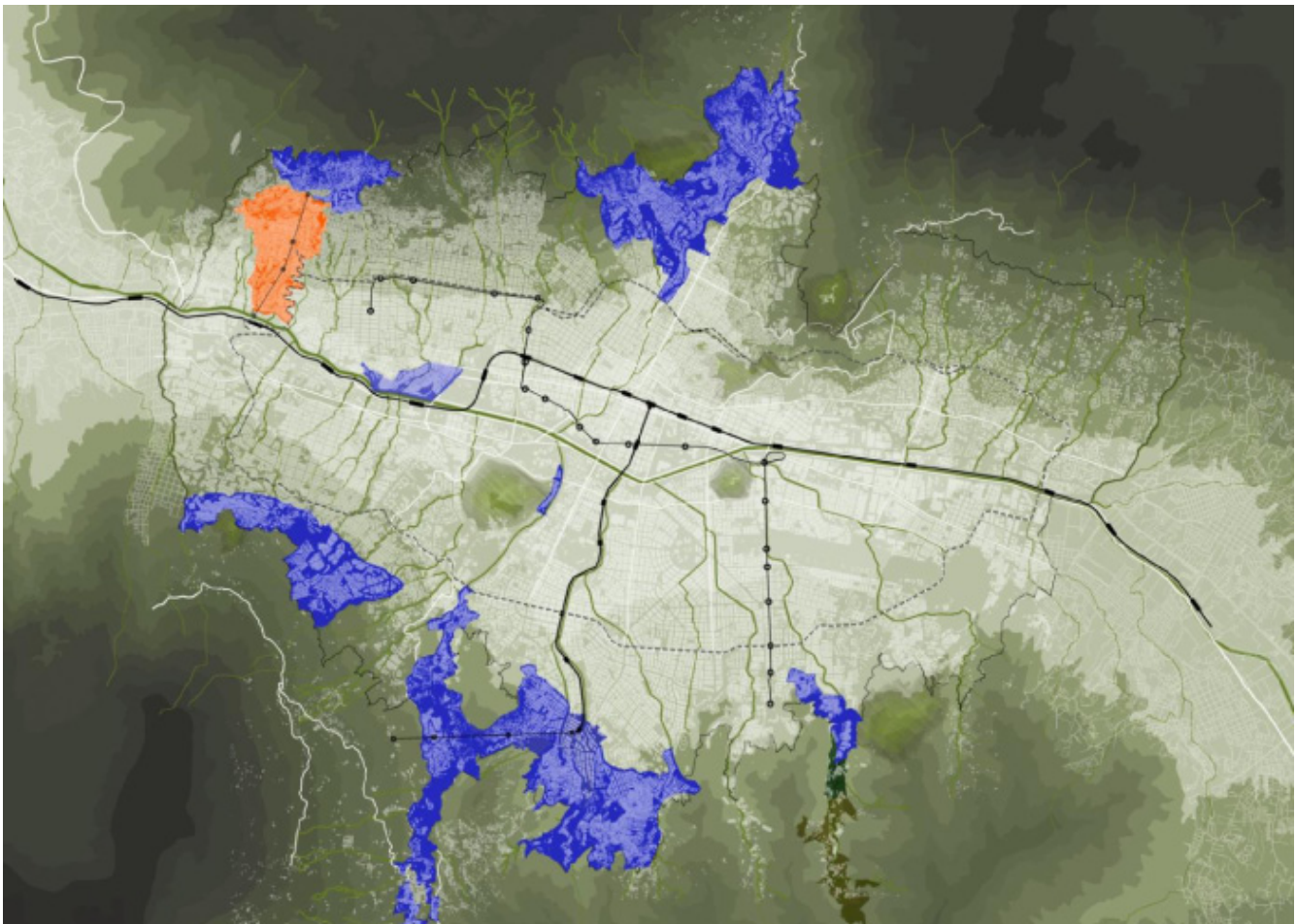
members of the city's community organizations and religious, academic, and business institutions...to discuss ideas to fix their embattled city" (Fukuyama and Colby, 2011). Those conversations identified twin challenges in Medellín: "profound social inequalities and historically-accumulated debts [to the poor], and deep-rooted violence" (Echeverri, 2008). From that analysis, a "social movement came to life" (Alonso Salazar, quoted in Fukuyama and Colby, 2011), and with the Fajardo's election more than a decade later came "a political revolution...to turn the ideas into a real-world policy agenda" (Fukuyama and Colby, 2011). Fajardo called for "social urbanism," a governance framework that channeled "great investments in urban projects" to the areas with the city's lowest Human Development Index scores (Figures 3.5 and 3.6) (Brand, 2010). Social urbanism scaled up and redirected PRIMED's prescription. An integrated system of civic infrastructure, social housing, transportation projects and economic development became the "flagships" of broader transformation (Echeverri, 2008) that, unlike PRIMED, did not only address functional need, but also promoted high-visibility "spaces of citizen-

ship, democracy and co-existence" (Medellín, quoted in Brand, 2010).

"Diligently executed," these Integral Urban Projects (Proyectos Urbanos Integrales, or PUIs) are carried out in five phases—Diagnosis, Planning, Design, Implementation, and Animation—and each has social, institutional and physical objectives (Calderon, 2008; Medellín, n.d.). Social objectives focus on community participation, organization and leadership (Medellín, n.d.). Institutional objectives call for "coordinated action among all municipal actors" and promote "alliances with the private sector, NGOs, national and international organizations and community-based organizations" (ibid.). Physical objectives prioritize time management and quality (ibid.). On paper, social urbanism is exemplar of the governance discourse.

Distributing rules and resources. Social urbanism continues PRIMED's progressive transformation of the rules that structure Medellín. Its aspirations to improve

Figure 3.6. PUI intervention zones. Source: Echeverri, 2008.



“quality of life” are articulated in terms of “pride and self-esteem” and ensuring the poor “feel integrated in the development of the city” (Echeverri, 2009, 2). Critically, municipal resources bolster these rules. “Total spending by Medellín’s city government doubled between 2004 and 2008” due, in large part, to revenues from “a high municipal tax rate that is tolerated by a uniquely civic-minded business elite” (Fukuyama and Colby, 2011) and from *Empresas Públicas de Medellín*, the public utility provider mandated to give 30 percent of its net profit to the city (Brand, 2010; Brand and Dávila, 2011; Bateman, et al., 2011). Participatory budgeting, furthermore, grants citizen authority over five percent of the municipal budget (Schmidt, 2011)³.

Library-Parks. Between 2004 and 2007, Medellín constructed 1.3 times more public space than had been built in the 53 years prior, including 20 new parks (Calderon, 2008, 83). Architectural competitions were held to design high-profile library-park and secondary school complexes, “buildings which, for their scale, form, materials and colors, contrast strongly with their surroundings, and clearly announce that the local administration is providing facilities, worthy of envy even in the wealthy areas of the city” (Brand, 2010). Furthermore, library-parks enter into local life through community and cultural activities, such as reading and computer literacy programs (McDermott, 2010).

Metrocable. Under Fajardo’s predecessor, Luis Pérez, Medellín also innovatively installed cable cars associated with ski slopes for transit to and from mountainside settlements. Constructed with local labor, the “Metrocable” transports 67,000 people daily (Blanco and Kobayashi, 2009, 85). Public space improvements, housing upgrades and environmental risk management flank the Metrocable, sowing more holistic urban renewal. In fact, “the value of public investment in complementary urban upgrading projects exceeded by a factor of six the cost of building the cable-car system itself” (Brand and Dávila, 2011, 18). Three bridges have also been constructed to connect districts across Medellín’s mountainsides. The spectacular imagery of these interventions has transformed how “a critical area of the city was perceived by insiders and outsiders...leading to relevant social, socio-spatial and socio-economic revitalization, while promoting inclusive patterns of urbanization” (Blanco and Kobayashi, 2009, 76).

Microenterprise. PUIs are also associated with Cultura E, a program to enhance local entrepreneurialism. Fourteen business development centers (*Centros de Desarrollo Empresarial Zonal*, or CEDEZOs) have been established in the poorest neighborhoods; a microfinance institution (*Banco de las Oportunidades*) has offered over 50,000 loans in eight years to microenterprises (Beszterczey and O’Neil, 2011); and business leaders have established the consortium *Pro-Antioquia* to promote economic growth

by harnessing local production for their supply chains (Bateman, et al., 2011).

Despite remarkable redistributive potential, concerns are emerging over awareness of library-park programming and their accessibility due to distance from residential zones (McDermott, 2010). Similarly, the Metrocable prohibits carrying large loads, which diminishes its utility for informal vendors. In fact, less than ten percent of public transport journeys in the areas surrounding Metrocable stations utilize the Metrocable/Metro combination (Brand and Dávila, 2011, 8 and 13). Finally, it is unclear the extent to which microenterprise is generating growth or “recycling poverty” by not strengthening consumer demand or building more sustainable small- and medium-enterprises (Bateman, et al., 2011, 3).

Enabling agency. Building on 1980s and 1990s policy changes, Fajardo’s election signaled that “public participation in Medellín was no longer considered as a threat but rather as a mean (sic) to legitimize a new democratic model” (Calderon, 2008, 62). Participatory processes in social urbanism “recognize cultural, demographic, territorial and ethnic diversity” and have contributed to “maturation of local citizenship” (Carvajal, 2011, 9).

The Diagnosis stage involves a survey of community organizations on-site, and community input on analyses of the existing urban fabric. A “Workshop for Urban Imagining” (*Taller de Imaginarios Urbanos*) also solicits community members’ ideas to help shape interventions (Calderon, 2008, 76-77). Like PRIMED, community committees are then established during Planning. Official PUI teams are “constantly in contact” with these committees, and “some [PUI team] members are located directly in the area of intervention” (Calderon, 2008, 68). As with PRIMED, however, PUI programs are strongly biased toward physical developments; “(though highly participatory), the PUI Team comes already with predetermined plans and projects” (ibid., 99). By consequence, community visions for non-infrastructure interventions are overlooked, leading to a Planning stage that is more “consultative” than “shared control” (ibid., 100).

During the Design phase, a second series of “Workshops for Imagining Projects” (*Talleres de Imaginarios Por Proyecto*) ask community members to envision ideal designs for projects that have passed the Planning stage. Responses to questions like: “What does this place mean to me?” “Which memories does this place bring to me?” and “What would I like [it] to have?” are molded into actionable strategies for community approval and, thereby, provide “shared control” over decision-making (Calderon, 2008, 99 and 101). Communities are then involved in Implementation through employment, and in Animation as they take symbolic ownership of completed projects through community events.

Unlike PRIMED, these engagements have catalyzed deeper community organization for commerce, local tourism, and infrastructure maintenance (Calderon, 2008, 84). The municipality has signed “civic pacts” with communities, not only outlining post-construction responsibility sharing, but also helping communities to “develop an awareness of what they could contribute to collective endeavors, no matter how humble their means, and, perhaps more importantly, a sense of what they were entitled to expect from the government” (Devlin, 2010, 7). Criticisms of agency enablement in social urbanism—that power struggles “cannot be shaken by participation, but are rather reflected and replicated directly in it” (Carvajal, 2011, 5-7)—are characteristic of those launched against participation processes more generally.

Embedding interdependence. Social urbanism has benefited greatly from the history of PRIMED. Indeed, actors who participated in PRIMED have helped execute social urbanism programs, thereby allowing for “the PUI Model to build on a process that in spite of its shortcomings had already mobilized part of the community and created the beginnings of the mainstream of acting on slum areas” (Calderon, 2008, 91). Furthermore, PRIMED taught that a lack of interdependence would hinder program longevity. Fajardo’s tactics demonstrate his awareness of this point: for more than a decade, he established “an unorthodox coalition of business people, grassroots community organizers, and the middle class” to sign on to his “radical political agenda,” (Fukuyama and Colby, 2011; Brand and Dávila, 2011).

As mayor, Fajardo bred interdependence by example, prizing transparency, co-responsibility and open communication. He appeared regularly on radio, in print, and on television to answer constituent questions. Indeed, “[p]eople had the perception that Fajardo was in the street every day,” prepared to work collaboratively with Medellínenses to tackle the city’s challenges (Devlin, 2010, 7). By consequence, a candidate from the social urbanism movement was elected to succeed Fajardo; “[t]hat two mayors with the same roots succeed each other in office had never happened before” (Sergio Fajardo, quoted in Dávila, 2009, 53).

PUIs also clearly define roles for each actor. Again learning from PRIMED, PUIs are integrated into the city’s development plans, such that their success is considered “strategic for achieving the development of Medellín” as a whole (Calderon, 2008, 92). Although raising questions as to whether PUIs are collaborative or simply coordinated, PUI teams maintain databases of planned projects across all public agencies and seek to link them as appropriate (ibid., 95). Funding for PUI interventions has also come, in large part, from Empresas Públicas de Medellín, a uniquely interdependent institution in its own right

(Brand, 2010; Brand and Dávila, 2011; Bateman, et al., 2011).

Finally, in another departure from PRIMED, social urbanism projects aim to create high-visibility community spaces and are less oriented toward small-scale infrastructural improvements. Library-parks seek to provide functional learning environments, but also spaces of gathering (Calderon, 2008, 76). Similarly, the Metrocable provides conveyance for mountainside settlements, and yet has also promoted local tourism, bringing Medellínenses to parts of the city they had never seen (Brand, 2010).

Achieving effectiveness. Owing to demobilization negotiated by the Colombian state, during Fajardo’s term “the paramilitaries largely...refrained from overt violence....Fajardo’s timing was fortuitous” (Devlin, 2010, 2). Nonetheless, Fajardo’s effective capitalization of those opportune years deserves much credit. Not seeking membership in a major political party and still winning election in a landslide gave Fajardo unprecedented credibility⁴. He steadfastly opposed clientelism, and “for the first time, councilmen had to seriously consider the consequences of opposing a popular mayor” (ibid., 4). Fajardo “budget[ed] based on results,” and his ethical management had broader impact. Over his term, industrial and commercial tax filings increased by nearly 45 percent (ibid., 8).

Though Fajardo did not tackle corruption in the police or lower levels of government (Devlin, 2010, 10), PUIs have been lauded for effective management and financing. The Urban Development Corporation (Empresa de Desarrollo Urbano), which implements PUIs, “brings together tested techniques, young professionals and academics...a fortuitous combination that allows for new ideas to be implemented in very short time frames” (Brand, 2010). Though keystone projects are relatively inexpensive (library-parks cost US\$6 million, and the Metrocable US\$25 million per line), PUIs have been paid for almost entirely through the city’s capital funds, not new borrowing or external donations (ibid.). Unlike PRIMED, continuity of funding and efficient approvals have reinstated trust in the state (Blanco and Kobayashi, 2009, 88).

Yet, an unnerving concern is emerging. Current Mayor Alonso Salazar’s (2008-2011) slogan for the city is “Medellín: Supportive and Competitive,” in contrast to Fajardo’s “Medellín: The Most Educated” (Brand, 2010; Echeverri, 2008). Salazar’s lexicon “juggles two fairly incompatible logics” (Brand, 2010), reflecting demands that mayors achieve both socio-political objectives, while also enhancing their cities’ competitiveness (Dávila, 2009; Dávila, 2011). While high-visibility projects meant that “for the first time, the people of Medellín ‘actually saw things happening’” (Devlin, 2010, 7), “the aesthetic impact” can also be employed “to promote an economically competitive and socially progressive image” (Brand

and Dávila, 2011, 16, *emph. original*). Concerns surfacing over: inaccessibility of the library-parks (McDermott, 2010); limited economic impact of microenterprise (Bateman, et al., 2011); the Metrocable's negligible impact on mobility, economic activity or land values (Brand and Dávila, 2011); and the sheer lack of outcome assessment

(Devlin, 2010) do not inherently cast doubt on the motivations behind social urbanism. They do, however, highlight the competing objectives at play—delivering high-*visibility* versus high-impact urban interventions. The international attention that social urbanism has garnered threatens to obscure improvements that remain to be made.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 3

1. Despite the Constitution's democratization focus, legislators bowed to Pablo Escobar and included non-extradition as a fundamental right (Lamb, 2010, 61). The non-extradition clause was repealed in 1996 (*ibid.*, 129).

2. Medellín also implemented participatory budgeting from 1997-2000 (Urán, 2004, 2) and again beginning in 2004. Me-

dellín is one of the world's largest cities with a participatory budgeting scheme; it currently accounts for five percent of the municipal budget (Devlin, 2010; Schmidt, 2011).

3. See Footnote 10.

4. In July 2010, Fajardo joined the Green Party (León, 2010).

4. Conclusions: prospects for Medellín & Social Urbanism

4.1. Distinct governance experiences

Each of three periods in Medellín's recent history represents a distinct governance experience. Historical circumstances, and resulting interplays of structure and agency, produced in each era a particular blend of effectiveness, agency, rules and resource distribution, and interdependence, and consequently, disparate success in addressing the city's historic poverty and inequality.

Illicit Governance: Stagnation and Survival. At mid-century, the city was unprepared for extensive in-migration and unable to meet housing and economic needs. Violence destabilized Medellín, which was governed by the illicit rationality of narco-traffickers, paramilitaries and guerrillas. The hegemony of armed agents created powerful structures of domination, in which ordinary citizens' actions were reduced to survivalism. Some forms of social organization took root, but did so without meaningful voice or legitimation in a weak and clientelistic political system. With the state bargaining with thugs, drug lords relying on mercurial loyalties, and narco-traffickers buying community allegiance through resource distribution, the prospects of genuine interdependence or a change in the city's treatment of the poor appeared distant.

Although innate, agencies "vary dramatically from one social world to another depending on the nature of the particular structures that inform those social worlds" (Sewell, 1992, 20-21). The extreme realities of this "positioning" are evident in this period of Medellín's history. Medellín's negative stalemate defied the potential of structures to be recursively organized. Indeed, the actions of people overwhelmed by the threat of violence served largely to instantiate that hegemony and reinforce the structures that dominated their daily lives.

PRIMED: Aspiration versus Achievements. By the mid-1990s, structures of legitimation—laws and norms—were changing in Medellín as decentralization policies and a new constitution strengthened local agency and participatory democracy. PRIMED was a manifestation of the era's optimism, as well as inexperience, in good governance. Though biased toward the resource improvements officials desired, PRIMED effectively revitalized part of the urban infrastructure. Street and housing upgrades were not, however, linked to administrative overhauls.

PRIMED ineffectively managed its partnerships, offered tokenistic opportunities for community agency and failed to coalesce diverse political interests around its progressive objectives.

The era proved to be a moment of transition for Medellín, one in which a belief that structures could be recursively organized was rekindled. Yet, "agency is not intentions, but capacities" (Giddens, 1984, 9). Without fully addressing ongoing violence; without widespread civic participation or long-term social organization; without safeguarding legal changes with authoritative resources; and without embedding interdependence through its ideals, PRIMED could not effect lasting changes and was abandoned. PRIMED's ultimate contribution, therefore, was to inspire a shift in structures of signification and legitimation; empathetic modes of discourse and laws emerged to challenge exclusion and confront the illegitimacy of a culture of inefficiency, corruption and violence.

Social Urbanism: Achievement versus Acknowledgment. Violence subsided during Mayor Fajardo's term, and through his progressive leadership, the city underwent a "rebirth [that] is nothing short of astonishing" (Fukuyama and Colby, 2011). More than a decade of intellectual formation—no doubt informed by the aspirations and shortcomings of PRIMED—unleashed social urbanism. Shared ideals on the objective of and mechanisms for poverty alleviation were the basis of good governance. Though projects were implicitly linked to the interests of the city's managerial class, Mayors Fajardo and Salazar have actualized their commitment to effective management, political devolution and agency enablement.

Social urbanism is, in some ways, validation of structuration theory. Social urbanism represents the fruition of the city's rekindled faith in the recursive organization of structures—that structures can, indeed, be changed. Medellín's leadership, furthermore, believed that they, as political agents, could enact those changes; by building a progressive discourse, they could instantiate new structures of signification, domination and legitimation. Finally, attaching *both* authoritative and allocative resources to their progressive visions allowed for structural changes that are producing meaningful impacts in the lives of the urban poor.

What remains to be seen, however, is: the extent to which

social urbanism is packaged for captive audiences without reference to context; the manner in which social urbanism is executed moving forward, as Medellín capitalizes on a boost in its international brand; and, by contrast, the extent to which Medellín allows social urbanism to evolve to continue addressing its poverty. Social urbanism is approaching maturity—and receiving attention comparable to PRIMED in 1996. The city’s decisions now will determine whether, unlike PRIMED, this era meets its potential.

4.2. Lessons from a Broader Perspective

Viewing the three eras from a wider historical perspective provides additional, broader insights into the nature of governance success and Margaret Archer’s question on when structural properties “throw their weight” behind constitution or reconstitution of society (1990, 83). Three overarching conclusions emerge: the state is a critical player, interdependence is a critical component and time is a critical factor for achieving good governance.

First, the state has, undeniably, been the principal player in Medellín’s remarkable transformation. Under the narco-trafficking hegemony, emboldened by neoliberal cut-backs of state authority, Medellín demonstrated that “[w]hen the state exits the stage, so do responsive government and democracy” (Pierre and Peters, 2000, 13). A weak state neither addressed the needs of its expanding urban population, nor pursued reforms to strengthen agency. PRIMED demonstrates, however, that state effectiveness “is often the outcome of the tug-of-war between the role the state wants to play and the role which the external environment allows it to play” (ibid., 26). Though democratic ideals emerged in PRIMED, clientelism and political inefficiencies constrained the program’s potential. Social urbanism was developed through intellectual partnerships outside the state. However, those intellectuals’ ascension to the mayor’s office—where they commanded political capital, authority and municipal finances—moved social urbanism from philosophy to practice.

Erik Swyngedouw has raised important criticisms of governance theory, particularly questioning how representa-

Figure 4.1. Progression of governance in Medellín. Source: Author’s Analysis.



tiveness, legitimacy and accountability are assured when the state devolves responsibility (2005). Medellín demonstrates, however, that state leadership need not be lost in the practice of governance, but rather a decentralized, participatory and effectively managed state is capable of upholding democratic principles through governance. The state is neither always powerful nor always the arbiter of good governance. Indeed, much of why social urbanism has succeeded is that its leaders injected new life into a weak and unresponsive state. Nonetheless, progressive change—certainly of the magnitude that has been seen in Medellín—necessitates that the state be actively engaged in, if not leading, the effort.

Second, Medellín's trajectory highlights that interdependence is a critical component for achieving good governance. While efficiency, agency and rule and resource distribution are, undoubtedly, important means and outcomes, the level of interdependence fostered strongly influences the strength of partnerships, the longevity of good governance practice and the durability of its impact in those other realms. Narcotraffickers battled distrust, and PRIMED struggled against political torpor. Social urbanism has succeeded, by contrast, in large part, because it was implemented not just through policy, but through a political movement. Sergio Fajardo left office with a near-90 percent approval rating (Devlin, 2010, 1), having "managed to elicit a conceptual mental change" in Medellín (Sergio Fajardo, quoted in Dávila, 2009, 53).

The four analytical drivers of good governance do, however, feed upon one another. Interdependence seeks to build trust and collaboration, including with ordinary citizens. Genuine participation and rule and resource distribution strengthen interdependence, by instilling faith in the political process. Effective interventions, particularly those derived from people's agency, similarly build trust. Good governance, in other words, breeds good governance by setting in motion progressive practices and confidence that rhetoric is backed with meaningful action.

Finally, Medellín's long, sometimes lethargic, transformation is evidence that time is a critical factor in achieving good governance. Part of why PRIMED failed was that, following decades of survivalist lifestyles, community agency simply had not matured. With time, citizenship capacities have grown, and, by consequence, social urbanism shows far greater potential for lasting change than its antecedent. The same can be said of the city's capacity to deal with violence. Current escalations aside, with time, the city experimented, failed and grew an understanding of how best to deal with and reintegrate insurgent actors. Suggesting that time is necessary is not advocating for complacency. Rather, the city's *long-term* struggle has built a transformation that, quite simply, could not have been achieved in a matter of months.

Time also offers the city a repository of perspective. The historical realities of narcotrafficking hegemony are still present in the city's psyche and influence how people interact and how social urbanism leaders conduct their affairs. In a 2008 campaign by the Love for Medellín Foundation (*Fundación Amor Por Medellín*), a man sings, "The place where I was born, and where I grew up with friends. The city for my children, where I live and work. Medellín, I grew with you. Your progress is for all" (*Fundación Amor Por Medellín*, 2008). The sense of history, of shared growth, serves as a rallying call for Medellínenses to resist abandoning what has been built. With the benefit of hindsight, the current challenge is to anticipate future shortcomings and begin addressing them in their infancy.

4.3. Prospects for Medellín and Social Urbanism

Medellín is "one of those cities that...leaped from infancy to decadence without ever having gone through maturity" (Melguizo and Cronshaw, 2001, 113). While Medellín's historical prominence gives the city a culture of confidence, it has had to link its relatively immature capacities to its bold aspirations. From what is already understood of the philosophy and practice of social urbanism, at least five strategies for improvement are clear:

First, for social urbanism to effectively represent needs, it must expand from its initial mandate for high-profile infrastructure to all manner of projects that can effect positive change in the lives of the urban poor. If participatory processes result in communities envisioning improved health facilities, for example, then social urbanism must be able to channel city resources to those ends, without relying exclusively on participatory budgeting. Expanding the remit of social urbanism can also serve as an essential check on those who may seek to capitalize on its visibility for city marketing ends.

Second, and closely related, social urbanism must continue growing its community engagement and participatory design practices. The imagining workshops are an instrumental mechanism to ensure agency, accountability and effectiveness. That participation in the planning stage is seen as "consultative" rather than as "shared control" offers an obvious area for improvement.

Third, though social urbanism has instilled profound interdependence around political narratives, it must continue to grow its private sector collaborations. The Overseas Development Institute rightly highlights the need for stronger consumer demand and greater support for *Cultura E* to generate more sustainable economic impacts (Bateman, et al., 2011).

Fourth, social urbanism owes its success, in part, to a

containment of violence between 2002 and 2007. Since then, however, violence has escalated, and Medellín is again the fourth most violent city in the world (Corrales, 2010). Though homicides are still far below their 1991 high, current violence has diminished the use of public space, debilitated the social fabric and jeopardized community organization (Convivamos, 2010). Yet, the national and local states' responses have been "erratic" (Corrales, 2010). Both the physical security of Medellínenses and the hard-earned social and political improvements of social urbanism depend on a more concerted re-engagement by state authorities.

Finally, social urbanism began as an "intellectual project" (Sergio Fajardo, quoted in Dávila, 2009, 49). The intellectual exploration that initiated this transformation

should not be lost as the movement reaches maturity. Social urbanists must continue to explore potential for new interventions and new partnerships in poor communities while building on the successes of those already implemented. Furthermore, with seven years of practice behind it, research is desperately needed on social urbanism's wider impacts. How has housing infrastructure improved health and safety? How has civic infrastructure improved learning? How has transportation infrastructure improved economic opportunity? These analyses should be carried out with sensitivity to the diversity of the city's inhabitants, studying impacts on women and men, the elderly and young, the native and the migrant. Whether Medellín can finally close its chapters of illicit and unsuccessfully aspirational governance depends on these findings.

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