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2004-2007 NORTHEASTERN INTEGRATED URBAN PROJECT AND THE "MEDELLÍN MIRACLE": AN URBAN LEGEND OR A MODEL FOR URBAN RENEWAL?

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for graduation with Honors in the International Studies

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Abstract
Since the rise of social urbanism planning in Medellín in the 1990’s, the city of Medellín has implemented several urban renewal projects aimed at addressing marginalization in Medellín’s informal settlements. Since 2008, the city received dozens of international awards which recognize the city’s urban renewal efforts as innovative, sustainable, and making a humane contribution. This paper compares the rhetoric of four select awards: The Innovative City of the Year Award, the Veronica Rudge Green Prize, Medellín’s winning bid to host the 7th World Urban Forum, and the Lee Kuan Yew World City Prize with the results of the 2004-2007 northeastern Integrated Urban Project (PUI). The analysis of this work draws upon four data sources: “objective” statistical data, photographs, and the results of two perception-based surveys. The results of the data conclude that the northeastern PUI intervention fails to live up to the innovative, sustainable, and humane claims of its merits, making only trivial contributions to address existing marginalization. The findings support existing claims that question the merits based on evidence of international policy transfer, neoliberal city modeling, and the limitations of the PUI’s spaces of exception. Additionally, the findings claim that the awards ignore the transformative work of peripheral settlers, arguing that informal model and transformative are not mutually exclusive in addressing Medellín’s marginalization.

Introduction
Since the beginning of the 1900’s and rise of the industrialized economy in Medellín, Colombia, the city of Medellín has received massive quantities of domestic migrants. Over the course of the 1900’s, declining regional agricultural industries and increased national and regional violence further exacerbated these migratory patterns (Hylton, 2007, 72 and Garcia et
al., Ferrari et al., 2018, 357). In the span of 40 years between 1950 and 1990, the total population of Medellín grew five times its size (Sotomayor, 2015a, 43). Medellín, unprepared and unequipped to provide housing and services to its rapidly increasing population grew into a city with two distinct worlds: the formally planned city, and improvised informal settlement. Informal settlements continued to grow and consolidate, especially through the 1970’s. These informal settlements were largely untouched by the Colombian government until the 1990’s, resulting in the consolidation of violence, poverty, and general inequality (Arteaga Rosero, 2016, 115-119).

The city’s various urban reform projects begun in the 1990’s have come to be coined “social urbanism.” One prominent example of social urbanism is the Urban Integrated Project (Proyectos Urbanos Integrales), also referred to by its Spanish acronym, PUI’s. The PUI’s aim to address the “historical debts” and exclusion of marginalized neighborhoods located in the city’s periphery by implementing joint social and infrastructural urban reform projects based on community collaboration. Instead of gradual implementation, the PUI implements infrastructural and social reform all at once (Sotomayor, 2015a, 7). Over the course of 11 years, between 2004 and 2015, the city of Medellín carried out three phases of PUI across eight comunas (communes) (Velásquez-Castañeda, 2013, 143).

Due to several social urbanism projects, Medellín has received over 40 international awards, between 2008 and 2014, recognizing the “Medellín Miracle”: the city’s transformation from one of the world’s most violent cities, rife with drug traffickers warring with the state, to a city of incredible urban upgrading meriting international praise (Sotomayor, 2015a, 2-3). The rhetoric of these international awards boasts innovation, sustainability, and humane contributions throughout Medellín’s new public works.
While many academics have offered their perspectives on the formulation, implementation, and outcome of the PUI’s, this paper seeks to compare the criteria and rhetoric of these international awards with the outcomes of the PUI. In doing so, this paper aims to assess whether the PUI’s achievements meet the criteria of these awards.

This paper will focus on PUI implementation in the northeastern region of the city between 2004 and 2007 and compare its achievements to the following four awards in particular: *The Innovative City of the Year Award* by Citi Bank, the Wall Street Journal & the Urban Land Institute, the *Veronica Rudge Green Prize* hosted by the Harvard University Graduate School of Design, Medellín’s winning bid to host the *7th World Urban Forum* of the United Nations-Habitat, and the *Lee Kuan Yew World City Prize* by the Urban Redevelopment Authority of Singapore and the Center for Liveable Cities Singapore. Amongst the numerous awards, these four awards stand out as playing particularly impactful roles in contributing to the international recognition of Medellín’s urban initiatives across mainstream news media sites such as the New York Times, the Washington Post, the Wall Street Journal, The Economist, The Huffington Post, and the Telegraph Co UK amongst others.

This paper is divided into three sections: background information, statistics, and an evaluation of award rhetoric in connection with the northeastern PUI. It will begin by contextualizing the rapid urbanization across Latin America, highlighting the city of Medellín as a model of Latin America’s rapid urban expansion. It will then present the differentiating characteristics of the northeast zone from other city zones, and thus justify limiting the scope of this investigation to the 2004-2007 PUI phase in Comunas 1 and 2. Next, this paper will provide a brief geographical overview of Medellín, and a brief citywide history, detailing the shift from an agricultural city to a densely populated industrial economy, as well as the specific history of
the northeastern zone. The focus will then transition to the history of Medellín’s urban planning, providing a detailed description of the projects implemented in the 2004-2007 northeastern PUI. Next, this work will draw upon four sources of data to evaluate the effects of the PUI works: 2 sources of perceptual survey data, in addition to photographs of the projects, and one “objective” statistical source, including poverty and homicide rates. Lastly, this paper will draw conclusions on the correspondence of the awards with the northeastern PUI based on the evidence provided in the literature review, citywide statistical data and an example of current, international policy transfer of the Medellín model.

**Regional Context: Rapid Urbanization in Latin America**

For the first time, human settlement throughout the world is showing a pattern of irreversible urbanization. In 1990, 43 percent of the world’s population was urbanized (UN-Habitat, 2016, 6). Currently, more than half of the world’s population resides in urban centers, and this is predicted to increase to 75 percent by 2050 (Echeverri & Orsini, 2011, 13).

However, Latin America is already extremely urbanized. With 80 percent of its 588 million people living in urbanized areas, Latin America represents the most urbanized developing region in the world. Between 1950 and 1990, the Latin American region shifted from 40 percent urbanization to 70 percent. While 75% of the world’s population will be urban by 2050, 90% of Latin America’s population will be urbanized (UN-Habitat, 2012, 19). As the Latin American population continues to expand city boundaries, forming new “mega regions and urban corridor,” cities will find it difficult to provide public works (UN-Habitat, 2012, 16, 18).

Exacerbating cities’ struggle to provide basic services is Latin America’s changing demographics: the region has been experiencing slowing population growth, resulting in an
aging population. While the average annual population growth in the 1960’s was 2.75 percent, the current growth is only estimated to be 1.15 percent. Declining fertility rates-- from 5.8 children in the 1950’s to a current estimated 2.09 children-- and increased life expectancy--from 51.4 years to 74.5 years—have further contributed to population decline, and aging population (UN-Habitat, 2012, 19). In anticipation of the transition to a majority elderly, dependent population, it is especially urgent to address development issues such as basic services and transportation.

Medellín, a model of the Latin American “urban explosion,” must deal with such issues (UN-Habitat, 2012, 18). According to the Colombian census, Medellín’s population grew five-fold from 358,189 inhabitants in 1951 to 1,834,881 inhabitants in 1993 (Sotomayor, 2015a, 43). Today, the population of the population of Medellín is 2.2 million, however the entire metropolitan region can include up to 3.5 million people (Medellín Como Vamos, 2018b, 26, and EDU, n.d. a, n.p.).

As massive urban explosion continues across developing nations, similar to Medellín’s experience, a skeptical examination of urban development programs that address the consequences of rapid rural to urban migration will serve as useful information for countries around the world.


According to Uran (2010), assuming that the implementation of PUI’s is universal across all zones will erase the history of each space. To speak only about the PUI on a citywide scale would fail to acknowledge unique zonal histories and their impact on the implementation and acceptance of modern municipal policies (Uran, 2012, 40). Uran also argues that to consider the informal settlements homogenous due to their shared marginalized status overlooks the immense
diversity between marginalized populations across city zones (Uran, 2012, 33). Following the spirit of the ideas expressed by Uran, this paper will focus specifically on the experience of the northeastern zone between 2004-2007.

The northeastern zone has many differentiating characteristics from other zones: the lowest human development index in the city before the PUI, the change in the residents perception of their zone during the implementation of the PUI, the tradition of community collaboration and leadership (Uran, 2012, 41), and the installation of the aerial metro-cable in the northeastern zone.

Firstly, at the start of the PUI Projects, the northeastern zone represented the lowest human development index across all city zones. Then, during the implementation of the PUI from 2004 to 2006, the northeastern zone saw the greatest increase in the human development index in the city, alongside the greatest increase in residents’ perception of quality of life. These statistics help to explain the current discourse that characterizes the northeastern PUI as one of the most effective implementations of a PUI or any social urbanism project in Medellín (Everrichi & Orsini, 2011, 15), suggesting the northeastern PUI may be a “best possible case” of PUI success. However, this paper will provide a skeptical investigation of these statistics, assessing the validity of the awards the PUI has received based on current trends and data.

Secondly, different to other zones, Comuna 1 has a tradition of community leadership to promote the development of basic services. The presence of Communal Action Groups (Juntas de Acción Communal- JAC) also have a history of interacting with the state, attempting to bring government resources to the neighborhood. This level of community organization to bring government resources to state-absent spaces positively influences the course of implementation of municipal policies (Uran, 2012, 40).
Lastly, the northeastern region was selected as the pilot location for the PUI Project due to the recent construction of the northeastern aerial metro-cable. The transit innovation associated with the new aerial metro-cable was considered a factor that could promote greater success in the implementation of the PUI. Due to the near-coinciding time frames of these two major state-based interventions in historically state-absent spaces has resulted in a highly intertwined rhetoric (Sotomayor, 2015a, 176). Thus, the intertwined perceptions of northeastern citizens make their experience incomparable to any other region during other PUI phases.

In summary, the focus of the northeastern zone in this paper is based off of many unique characteristics associated with the implementation of the northeastern PUI, including rates of inequality, increased perception of quality of life after PUI implementation, historical community collaboration efforts, and the northeastern PUI’s dependence on the aerial metro-cable installation.

**Literature Review**

Existing literature regarding the Integrated Urban Project represents two different perspectives. Mainstream news sources reflect the idea of a “Medellín Miracle,” representing the transformation from once the most dangerous city in the world to an innovative urban metropolis. In direct contrast, scholarly rhetoric supports that the Integrated Urban Project (PUI) is not a long-term solution to the pervasive socio-spatial inequality in Medellín. Few scholarly works focus exclusively on the northeastern zone. The paper takes into account literature that focuses exclusively on the northeastern zone as well as works that focus on different zones, and more general citywide interpretations.
Luisa Sotomayor writes most of the recent scholarly publications about the Integrated Urban Project. Her three publications: “Planning through Spaces of Exception- Socio-Spatial Inequality, Violence and the Emergence of Social Urbanism in Medellín” (2015a), “Equitable Planning through Territories of Exception” (2015b), and “Dealing with Dangerous Spaces: The Construction of Urban Policy in Medellín” (2017) provide critical analysis supporting the conclusions of this paper.

In Luisa Sotomayor’s publication “Planning through Spaces of Exception- Socio-spatial inequality, Violence and the Emergence of Social Urbanism in Medellín (2004-2007),” speaking to the title, examines the exceptional state of PUI’s and socio-spatial inequality in Medellín. Sotomayor argues that the PUI’s form spaces of exception, outside of the regulation of normal territorial ordinances. Development companies, including the former president of the Colombian Society of Engineers and Architects, have been constructing luxury, gated communities beyond the regulation of territorial ordinances on “at-risk” land (Sotomayor, 2015a, 169). This creates a “tragedy of space,” where residents in low-income positions have been excluded from basic services and development due to the high-risk topography, but high-income individuals have been afforded legal exceptions under the same precarious conditions (Sotomayor, 2015a, 169). Sotomayor concludes that this development discrepancy illustrates “differentiated citizenship” in Medellín, reflective of the different treatment of marginalized and higher socioeconomic groups (Sotomayor, 2015a, 169).

These ideas of socio-spatial marginalization are echoed again in Sotomayor’s publication “Equitable Planning through territories of exception: the contours of Medellín’s Urban Development Projects” (2015). In this work, Sotomayor states that Urban Development Projects (UDP) are limited in the amount of territory that they can actually transform, and on their own
are not sufficient tools on their own for resolving socio-spatial injustices (Sotomayor, 2015b, 390, 394). While the PUI’s represent some transformation, marginalization will persist in Medellín until planning codes are reformed (Sotomayor, 2015b, 376). Part of this insufficiency may be due to contradictions Sotomayor describes in “Dealing with Dangerous Spaces: The Construction of Urban Policy in Medellín” (2017). Sotomayor asserts that despite PUI’s mission to “provide better services, foster participation, and reduce socio-spatial segregation,” there are two remaining contradictions: “deep-seated inequality resulting from decades of normalized exclusion and the perpetuation of a regime of hyper-securitization and para-policing that recreates itself under new governance and spatial arrangements” (Sotomayor, 2017, 71). Instead of the PUI’s minimizing control of non-state actors, criminal actors have found ingenious ways to engage with PUI reforms to sustain “social, political, and territorial control” (Sotomayor, 2017, 86). (While this article is framed in the context of Comuna 13, in the central-western zone, its insight is relevant to the northeastern zone because her focus on Comuna 13 does not mean that these same problems do not also persist in the northeastern zone.)

Lastly, Sotomayor asserts that PUI are a strategic tool employed by the city to promote foreign investment (Sotomayor, 2017, 79, 80). The focus on attracting foreign investment is placed at direct conflict with the objectives of the program—to repay historical debts to marginalized populations—by placing the growth and image of the city over the needs and desires of extremely vulnerable residents.

Other influential author of literature on the PUI includes Kate Maclean and Armando Arteaga Rosero. In Kate Maclean’s book Social Urbanism and the Politics of Violence, titled “The Miracle? Social Urbanism” (2015), Maclean claims that the PUI model is similar to the Barcelona model, and shows distinctive parallels to 20th century iconic architect projects with the
construction of iconic works like the Spain Library Park (Maclean, 2015, 57, 63). However, Maclean states that while the PUI shows immense similarity these precursors, the PUI in Medellín is novel to these other models due to contexts of historical violence (Maclean, 2015, 58).

Maclean, lastly, creates a hierarchy of social urbanism innovation. While she argues the PUI is innovative in the context of Medellín’s history of violence, she also asserts that they are not the most innovative project implemented in the city. Maclean rather believes the “crown jewel” of social urbanism innovation is the transportation projects, namely the metro cable, and the aerial metro cable-car (Maclean, 2015, 61).

Lastly, Arteaga Rosero’s “Medellín: Public Space Reinvented: Case study: Integrated Urban Project- Northeast PUI (2004-2007) (Medellín: Espacio Publico Re-potenciado, Caso de estudio: Proyecto Urbano Integral –PUI- Nororiental (2004-2007))” provides one of the few evaluations that focus exclusively on the northeastern PUI projects. Evaluating the PUI projects 10 years after the start of their implementation through perceptual research surveying, Arteaga Rosero concludes that the success of PUI implementation has not been universal across Santo Domingo, Popular and Andalucía (the neighborhoods of intervention in comunas 1 and 2) (Arteaga Rosero, 2016, 217). Three of the 23 projects he examined achieved great success, while another three projects showed immense deterioration from lack of maintenance (Arteaga Rosero, 2016, 218-219). For every high achieving project, there was one low achieving project. The variability of success of the works shown in Arteaga Rosero’s research further encourages the examination of these works.

In addition to this scholarly work, the rhetoric of the awards Medellín has received play an influential role in the way the Northeastern PUI is regarded. While the criteria and rhetoric of
the *Innovative City of the Year Award*, the *Veronica Rudge Green Prize*, the winning 7th *World Urban Forum* site bid, and the *Lee Kuan Yew World City Prize* all slightly differ, each strongly convey ideas of innovation, sustainability, and a humane contribution to the city. The following subsections will provide a description of each award, the criteria of each award, and how each group claims the Medellín has met these challenges.

**Innovative City of the Year (2013)**

In 2012, Citi Bank, in collaboration with the Wall Street Journal and the Urban Land Institute (ULI) created the “Innovative City of the Year Award.” The Urban Land Institute selected 200 cities worldwide based on their innovation across 8 different categories: environment & land use, culture & livability, economic & investment climate, progress and potential, places of power, education & human capital, technology & research, and mobility and infrastructure. From these 200 cities, readers of the Wall Street Journal and internet users were encouraged to vote which city should be named city of the year. The competition resulted in more 980,000 total votes (Citigroup Inc., 2013, n.p.).

Citi Bank directly refers to the award as a “global advertising program […] to recognize the most innovative urban centers” (Citigroup Inc., 2013, n.p.). The award describes Medellín’s innovation as “find[ing] solutions to classic problems of mobility and environmental sustainability” making specific reference to the northeastern PUI, recognizing its “glistening new museums, cultural centers, libraries and schools [that] enrich the community (Wall Street Journal, n.d., n.p. author’s emphasis).

Backing the award, the Urban Land Institute’s (ULI) states that “the most innovative cities spark visions, remove barriers, and cultivate collaboration to improve the quality of life for
“residents” and that “through innovation and leadership, Medellín has sowed the seeds of transformation, leading to its recognition as a city with potential for long-lasting success” (Wall Street Journal, n.d, n.p). As the winner of this award, the ULI’s description of innovative cities inherently applies to Medellín.

**Veronica Rudge Green Prize (2013)**

In 2013, Medellín was awarded Harvard’s Veronica Rudge Green Prize in Urban Design specifically for the northeastern PUI projects. Harvard’s Veronica Rudge Green Prize was founded in 1986 to celebrate Harvard’s 350th anniversary, and 50 years of their design school. The award is given out biennially (Harvard University Graduate School of Design, n.d. a, n.p.).

The award’s criteria states that the project must have taken place within the past 10 years and “makes a positively contribution to the public realm of a city and improves the quality of urban life in the context,” as well as “demonstrate[s] a humane and worthwhile direction for the design of urban environment” (Harvard University Graduate School of Design, n.d. a, n.p, author’s own emphasis). According to Peter J. Rowe, a professor of Architecture and Urban Design at Harvard, the award also serves as a tool to promote awareness of social design issues within the Harvard Design School and lastly, to show the department’s value in urban design interventions (Harvard University Graduate School of Design, n.d. a, n.p.).

The award recognizes not only the role of the northeastern PUI, but its social urbanism project precursor, the installation of the areal metro-cable. The Veronica Rudge Green Prize justifies their selection of Medellín due to their “significant contribution toward improving the quality of life for approximately 170,000 residents experiencing severe social inequality, poverty, and violence,” sensitively integrating projects, and “developing processes that promote
ownership by the community” (Harvard University Graduate School of Design, n.d. b, n.p., authors’s own emphasis.).

7th World Urban Forum: Urban Equity in Development- Cities for Life (2014)

The World Urban Forum was founded in 2001 to serve as the United Nations conference to examine the multidimensional impacts of global, rapid urbanization. Additionally, the forum was designed to serve as a space for the exchange of information on “urban challenges,” collaborate with stakeholders, and facilitate networking amongst the stakeholders and other constituencies to find sustainable strategies for urbanization (UN-Habitat, n.d., n.p).

Medellín was selected as the host city for the 7th World Urban Forum in 2014, with the theme “Urban Equity in Development-Cities for Life.” The conference lasted from April 5th to April 11th and included over 500 different scheduled events. Medellín’s world urban forum is the most attended to date, with more than 23,000 attendees, with three out of every ten attendees being international guests (UN-Habitat, 2014b, 3).

The 7th World Urban Forum reports that Medellín is the “perfect setting” for the forum, “given its experience of the urban transformation it had undertaken in previous decades to overcome the huge problems […] In fact, the city of Medellín was a powerful demonstration of the positive change that can be achieved through good urban planning and programming in a relatively short time (UN-Habitat, 2014b, 3).

The conference focused around six subthemes: “urban equity in development law,” “urban planning and design for social cohesion,” “basic services: local business for equitable cities,” “innovative financing instruments for local authorities,” “raising standards for urban resilience,” and “a safe city as a just and equitable city (UN-Habitat, 2014b, 4).
During the program, Medellín offered four different “Medellín Lab Tours,” led tours through “some of the most vulnerable communities with mobility, educational resources, and safety” operating twice daily. These four tours include “The New North,” the “Urban Metamorphosis,” “Escalators,” and “Walk of Life” (UN-Habitat, 2014a, 252).

“The New North” tour is designed to “cover the main public interventions to public space and the new generation of centers of citizen and community inclusion,” with one of the tours four stops featuring the Spain Library (*Biblioteca España*) (UN-Habitat, 2014a, 252).

The program held over 500 events. Several of these events, organized by a variety of organizations focused specifically on Medellín as model for urban upgrading. Particularly, the session “Medellín: The Story,” “[brought] together key stakeholders to showcase on Medellín as a success story” and “Medellín: A City for Life” which presented Medellin as “an integral model of resilience,” to foster conversations to create new tools to achieve sustainable development in accordance with the new World Urban Agenda proposed by the UN-Habitat (UN-Habitat, 2014a, 33, 91). Additionally, sessions such as “How to appropriate Public Space to reduce Inequality” led by Despacio Colombia reflected on the “relationship between citizen participation in public space as a strategy to reduce inequality in the city,” with a focus on the experience of Medellín, in conjunction with Bogotá, New York, and London (UN-Habitat, 2014a, 111). Lastly, Red Colombiana de Ciudades Cómo Vamos, Colombia) presented “Inequality and the Dilemma of the Right to the City Versus Territorial Sustainability: Two Sides of the same Coin (UN-Habitat, 2014a, 137).

Within these events, several organizations held events that specifically engaged the Northeastern PUI. These events included “Parque Explora: Cities and Climate Change Initiative” hosted by UN-Habitat, “Barrio de Santa Cruz, Comuna 2: Rapid Place Making”
Lee Kuan Yew World City Prize (2016)

In 2016, Medellín was awarded the Lee Kuan Yew World City Prize, an award co-organized by the Urban Redevelopment Authority of Singapore, in conjunction with the Centre for Liveable Cities (CLC), a center established by Singapore’s Ministry of National Development and Ministry of the Environment and Water Resources in 2008. The CLC’s main objectives are to “distil, create, and share knowledge on liveable and sustainable cities” (Urban Redevelopment Authority Singapore, n.d. a, n.p.).

The Prize is named after Lee Kuan Yew, Singapore’s first Prime Minister, who is credited with implementing vast, extremely successful urbanization initiatives over the course of a few decades. In this spirit, the Urban Redevelopment Authority of Singapore and the CLC created the award for three reasons: first, to recognize leadership for “displaying foresight, good governance and innovation in tackling the many urban challenges faced, to bring about social, economic and environmental benefits in a holistic way to their communities,” secondly to place an “emphasis on practical and cost effective solutions and ideas,” and lastly, to “promote exemplary thought-leadership and exchange of ideas” (Urban Redevelopment Authority Singapore, n.d. a, n.p.).

The Lee Kuan Yew World City Prize site’s jury citation for their selection of Medellín states that Medellín is a model for urban innovation, as a city that transformed from violence to one that now “celebrates life” (Urban Redevelopment Authority Singapore, n.d. b, n.p.). Their achievement stems from their “creative and non-conventional solutions” and dedication to addressing they city’s deep-rooted problems that has “create[d] a more just, more human, freer and happier home for its inhabitants” (Urban Redevelopment Authority Singapore, n.d. b, n.p.).
The settlement of Medellín has been strongly influenced by Medellín’s geographical and topographical characteristics. Medellín, the capital of the Antioquia province, is located in the Aburra Valley in the central Andean region of Colombia (Garcia Ferrari et al., 2018, 354). The valley measures, at its widest, 7 kilometers, and 30 kilometers long. The valley contains 239 small watersheds, which has played a formidable role in shaping the development of the city and its industries (EDU, n.d.).

Medellín measures 380 kilometers squared and is divided into six urban zones: the northeastern, northwestern, central eastern, central western, southeastern, and southwestern zones. These zones are divided into 16 comunas (communes), each with a unique name and
The comunas are thus comprised of Medellín’s 249 barrios (neighborhoods) (Velásquez-Castañeda, 2013, 140).

Today, Medellín is the second largest city in Colombia. The city of Medellín has a population of 2.2 million people. However, the greater metropolitan area, comprised of 10 surrounding districts, and has a population of 3,550,000 people (Medellín Como Vamos, 2016, 26, EDU, n.d.a, n.p.).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Zone</th>
<th>Population</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Northeast</td>
<td>565,880</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northwest</td>
<td>517,661</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central east</td>
<td>360,681</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central west</td>
<td>357,741</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southeast</td>
<td>130,206</td>
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<tr>
<td>Southwest</td>
<td>293,083</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total population:</strong></td>
<td><strong>2,225,252</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Information from (both tables): (Medellín Como Vamos, 2018b, 26).

### The evolution to a populous Medellín

#### Economic development and Population Growth

From 1675 to the present day, the development of Medellín can be categorized into four phases: the gold-mining economy, the coffee boom of the 1880’s, the rise of industrialization, and globalized industrialization. These phases have largely been impacted by the interplay of economic development, national and regional violence, rural to urban migration, and intra-urban migration trends. These four phases represent three different forms of changes: the evolution of agricultural to an industrial based economy, low population density to exponential population growth, and lastly, a shift from a mostly formal and planned city to the creation of Medellín’s dichotomy of the formal and informal cityscape.
In 1675, Medellín was founded as a gold mining town, and as consequence, a large regional trading center. The success of the slave-based gold mining economy transformed Medellín Antioquia’s commercial capital one hundred years later by the end of the 18th century (Hylton, 2007, 72). By the 1880’s, Medellín’s peripheral farmland became the regional hub of coffee production, resulting in an economic “coffee boom.” However, the negative effect of end-of-the-century banking crises on the industry encouraged farmers to diversify from a sole cash crop, resulting in industrial entrepreneurship. The coffee market produced by the coffee boom played a critical role in forging commercial relations between Medellín and the outlying areas. The needs of the coffee farmers: financing, transportation, and distribution of their crops consolidated related enterprises in the city (Hylton, 2007, 73).

The turn of the century thus marked the start of the industrialization of the city with the expansion of principally the textile industry, as well as food, drink, and cigarette manufacturing. The expansion of the industrialized economy promoted rural to urban migration in search of work. In the span of 50 years, Medellín had transformed into the industrial center of the nation. By 1950, Medellín was the second largest economy in the nation (Hylton, 2007, 73). The migration of poor farmers and rural peasants to the city has remained characteristic of the vast majority of migrants to Medellín throughout the 20th and 21st centuries (Hylton, 2007, 73).

In the 1960’s and throughout the 1970’s, the regional coffee production entered into its second decline, with international competition from Hong Kong and Taiwan. The declining industry contributed to more regional poverty, and subsequently led to increase rural to urban migration (Hylton, 2007, 76). While migrants settled around the entire periphery of Medellín, the northern hillside particularly received an influx of self-help settlers looking for work in the city (Arteaga Rosero, 2016, 108). During the 1990’s, Colombia’s new tax reforms and liberalization
of markets led to deindustrialization of the Medellín economy, leading to job loss and the rise of the informal economy (Griggs et al., 2014, 3275).

**Violence and Population Growth**

Medellín’s rural to urban migration patterns have also been impacted by three distinct periods of national and regional violence. These three episodes of violence mark the shift from intra-government feuding to organized crime.

The first period, from 1899 to 1903, corresponds with the War of a Thousand Days (*La guerra de mil días*). While Medellín was not particularly impacted by the violence, displaced people relocated to Medellín, influenced by the growing commercial industry (Garcia Ferrari et al., 2018, 357). The second period, from 1946-1957, corresponds to a period of national bipartisan violence that led to the displacement of more than 2 million people nationally, resulting in further rural to urban migration (Garcia Ferrari et al., 2018, 357).

Finally, the last period of violence, distinct from the two previous periods, lasted from 1984 to 1999, and directly affected the city of Medellín. This “wave” of violence corresponds with the rise of regional narcotic trafficking (“narco-trafficking”) and drug related violence. This wave of violence resulted in the forced displacement of an estimated 1.7 million people (Garcia Ferrari et al., 2018, 357).

The sum of the waves of migration due to violence had a massive impact on the development of the city, as half of the city’s population was internally displaced persons (IDP’s) by the end of the 1900’s (Garcia Ferrari et al., 2018, 357).
The Rise of Self-help Infrastructure

The lack of state supervision over the influx of urban settlers led to, what have been coined, “self-help settlements,” or informal urbanization efforts. The defining characteristics of self-help settlements are: “illegal tenure, precarious dwellings, and violations of land-use regulations” (Sotomayor, 2015a, 52). Self-help settlements took on two forms: pirate developments (urbanización pirate) and land invasions (tugurios). Pirate developments are plots of land divided by the owner, without conforming to planning regulations. Land invasions, on the other hand, constitute an illegal land taking by the settler, without any form of regulatory land division (Arteaga Rosero, 2016, 107).

A feature characteristic of self-help settlements is the incremental construction, both on the individual and community level. Homes are typically constructed of scavenged, weak and unsuitable materials for construction, and are slowly replaced or upgraded. On the community level, these settlements slowly grow in terms in land density, as more people occupy available space. The incremental, relatively unorganized nature of these informal settlements heavily contributes to the lack of community and public spaces in these neighborhoods (Sotomayor, 2015a, 53).

Since the 1950’s, the percentage of Medellín’s total population residing in informal settlements has increased (Sotomayor, 2015a, 53). Unlike other self-help developments throughout Latin America, pirate urbanization was the principal form of acquiring land (Arteaga Rosero, 2016, 107).

Medellín’s self-help infrastructure is principally located on land with steep inclines, making these settlements susceptible to severe weather conditions, namely landslides and flash floods. Additionally, the distance of these settlements from the river ways contributes to their
geographically precarious condition (Garcia et al. 2018, 355). These types of settlement patterns result in “high and prolonged levels of illegality,” until city limits extend to incorporate further reaches of the periphery (Municipio de Medellín, 1996, 38). As a result, more than 80 percent of informal settlements settled in the 1970’s and 1980’s had not reached any form of legalization before the turn of the century (Municipio de Medellín, 1996, 38).

Today, it is estimated that nearly 50 percent of all Colombians live in “owner-occupied housing,” however, each situation can look very different, ranging from luxury accommodations to shacks (Garcia Ferrari et al., 2018, 355).

Medellín’s infrastructure was unprepared to absorb the massive urban expansion. As a result, Medellín has the third highest amount of homes in precarious housing conditions in Colombia. Medellin has 1.323 hectares of settlements in precarious conditions, which is representative of 21 percent of all residential area in Medellin (EDU, n.d. a, n.p.).

**The Northeastern Zone**

**Development of the Northeastern Zone**

The expansion of the northeastern region corresponds with the urban expansion of Medellín at the beginning of the 20th century, as a response to housing needs fueled by working-class migrants to the city (Arteaga Rosero, 2016, 108). The majority of the working-class migrant population came from the southeast region of the Antioquia department, and also in lesser numbers, more generally, from the eastern and western regions of Antioquia (Arteaga Rosero, 2016, 106).

The occupation of the northeastern region grew through three principal settlement patterns: large scale invasions with the intention to better the land and resell individual lots, pirate settlements, and small-scale land invasions (Arteaga Rosero, 2016, 107). Precarious
geographical features for land settlement, such as ravines resulted in the fragmented development of the northeastern zone. Until the 1960’s, settlers acquired land through pirate settlements. The start of the 1960’s represents the first land invasions through squatting practices. These new “squatted settlements” resulted in the formation of the barrios Popular, Granizal and Santo Domingo 1, on higher-up, unsettled hillside with steeper gradient (Arteaga Rosero, 2016, 113). Throughout the 1970’s and 1980’s, the northeastern settlements passed through a period of “settlement consolidation” with densification in the neighborhoods located lower on the hillside. Similarly, the isolation between barrios diminishes as avenues, bridges, and pedestrian walkways begin to take form, connecting neighborhoods together. Despite the increase in intra-northeastern zonal connectivity, these informal settlements faced major difficulty in inter-zonal transportation, and reaching the city center (Arteaga Rosero, 2016, 115-116).

The process of densification further intensifies through the 1990’s, with near total disappearance of neighborhood green spaces. By the 1990’s, most of the zone has access to basic services and paved roads. However, new developments represent more precarious-style developments, under less favorable topographic conditions (Arteaga Rosero, 2016, 117).

The Rise of Non-State Actors in the Northeast

Parallel to the densification of northeastern territory throughout the 1980’s, these neighborhoods also saw the rise of non-state actors and struggles for power. The northeastern neighborhood became a stronghold for the production and distribution of narcotics, as Pablo Escobar exerted his influence over state-absent territories. The network of narcotic production
and sales provided uneducated youth the “unheard-of opportunities for social mobility” (Hylton, 2007, 79).

Popular militias also used force of arms to establish neighborhood leadership in the absence of the state. While two principle popular militia groups, the FARC and ELN, established strong roots in the periphery of the city, the ELN held a stronghold in the northeastern region (Hylton, 2007, 81). The ELN, like other popular militias, played a major role in neighborhood development and “empowerment” through neighborhood improvement projects consisting of “clean[ing]-up, paving, painting, sports and recreation, […] patrols and the resolution of domestic and neighbourly disputes” (Hylton, 2007, 81).

**Aerial Metro-cable service to the Northeast**

In 2003, to address transportation challenges associated with the high-gradient topography of the northeast zone, the Metro Company of Medellín and the Municipality of Medellín co-financed the construction of the world’s first aerial cablecar to incorporate into the city’s Metro public transportation system. The installation of this cable car was intended to serve two purposes: to provide an alternative transportation method to zones with high-gradient topography, and encourage the access to, and development of “leisure spaces” in the serviced neighborhoods (Zapata et al, 2014, 4).

The cable car opened Metrocable link K in August of 2014, with four service stations. The car line travels directly through the three areas of PUI intervention: Andalucía, Popular and Santo Domingo. The implementation of this cable-car service and its intended objectives played a major role in selecting Popular and Santo Domingo, with their more precarious geographical
characteristics, in terms of both periphery and gradient, as pioneer sites for the Integrated Urban Project. (Zapata et al, 2014, 4-5).

**Urban Planning in Medellín**

**Early Urban Planning Efforts**

For the first half of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century, Medellín’s urban planning was exclusively conducted through local elites and private enterprise. The Society of Public Improvement (La Sociedad de Mejoras Públicas), also known as the SMP, was founded in 1899 and served as the primary actor in Medellín’s private planning (Sotomayor, 2015\textsuperscript{a}, 45). According to the SMP, They filled the absence of state in planning initiatives (La Sociedad de Mejoras Públicas, n.d., n.p.). The SMP became a key entity in the development of large-scale city projects including through sponsoring the formulation of Medellín’s first city plan, “Plan Future Medellín” in 1910. The progressive works initiated by local elite resulted in Medellín’s investment in public services eight times greater than other regions of the Antioquia department, and in fact, resulted in public services, such as street lights, electrical generators, increased sanitary regulations, and transportation routes better than the majority of Colombian cities (La Sociedad de Mejoras Públicas, n.d., n.p.). However, due to the elitist initiative, these planning services helped solidify the distinction between the planned and unplanned city, or the formal vs. informal divide (Sotomayor, 2015\textsuperscript{a}, 45).

Beginning in the 1940’s, the state began to assume more planning initiatives with the creation of (la Junta de Fomento Urbano), and more comprehensively by establishing the Public Companies of Medellín (Empresas Publicas de Medellín, EPM) (EPM, n.d., n.p, and Sotomayor, 2015\textsuperscript{a}, 78). The EPM is comprised of four autonomous entities: energy, water, sewer, and
telephones. In January of 1998, the EMP was declared an industrial and commercial company of the state (EPM, n.d., n.p).

Early municipal planning programs grew throughout the course of the 1950’s, with the rise of programs such as Little Houses of the Province (Casitas de la provincia) in 1956 and the Rehabilitation of Neighborhoods Fund (Fondo de Rehabilitación de Barrios) in 1964, which were designed to help with neighborhood upgrading (Municipio de Medellín, 1996, 30). However, more comprehensive, major scale, state-sponsored planning initiatives were not implemented until the 1990’s.

**1990’s: social crisis and rise of departmental planning initiatives**

The end of the 1980’s marked the start of great national consideration for planning efforts. This increase in national planning efforts is connected to three changes in national law.

First, in 1989, the 1947 Urban Reform Law was revised, as a consequence of national constitution revision. The reform resulted in the Urban Land Use Development Plan (Plano de Ordenamiento Terrestorial, POT), which stipulated that all municipalities with populations over 100,000 are required to develop a plan to “coordinate and control urban growth at short, medium, and long term” levels (Garcia Ferrari et al. 2018, 359). It took Medellín 10 years to complete its first POT, publishing it in 1999. From 1991-1997, Partial Plans (Planes Parciales, PP’s) were implemented across a national level to try to implement plans being developed in POT’s. (Garcia Ferrari et al. 2018, 360).

Secondly, at the turn of the decade in 1989, national law changed to permit the direct election of mayors, opposed to the previous system where the president would appoint regional authority. This, in combination with the creation of a new, decentralized constitution in 1991
equipped departments with the unprecedented power to implement planning initiatives (Garcia Ferrari et al. 2018. 359).

Lastly, in 1995, all mayor candidates became required to propose a municipal development plan (Plan de desarrollo Municipal) to implement over the course of their administration (Garcia Ferrari et al., 2018, 360). This requirement forced city leaders to constantly be evaluating urban planning.

**PRIMED**  
(Integrated Neighborhood Upgrading Program/Programa integral de mejoramiento de barrios subnormales)

One of the major city planning initiative implemented before the PUI was the PRIMED Program. Due to the city’s growing violence, President Cesar Gaviria created the Presidential Council for Medellín and the Metropolitan area in 1990 (La conserjería Presidencial para Medellín y el area metropolitan), also referred to as the CPMAM. The council was designed to research and address urban growth, where violence was a stronghold (Garcia Ferrari et al., 2018, 358).

To combat the violence, the CPMAM proposed the Integrated Neighborhood Upgrading Program (Programa integral de mejoramiento de barrios subnormales), also known as “PRIMED” in 1993. The PRIMED program was designed to be a two-phase program, with the first phase lasting from 1993-1997 and the second phase from 1998-2001. The PRIMED program was a joint national and municipal effort, with financing through the German, Spanish, and Swiss governments (Municipio de Medellín, 1996, 105). Only the first phase was executed, with the second phase remaining in preliminary implementation, as the program lost support when Gaviria left office (Velásquez-Castañeda, 2013, 142).
The PRIMED program’s main objectives were to “coordina[te] slum upgrading” in 15 self-help neighborhoods founded in the 1970’s and 1980’s, located in the northwest, central west, and central east zones. Upgrading initiatives included land tenure legalization, resettlement of peripheral families living on geologically high-risk land, the extension of public services to various comunas, and upgrades to existing infrastructure (Velásquez-Castañeda, 2013, 142).

The program’s interventions reached a total of 11,000 families. However, the failure to carry the second phase of the intervention contributed to existing mistrust between self-help neighborhoods, largely absent of state presence, and state interventions (Velásquez- Castañeda, 2013, 142). Due to its primary aims of “stimulating community ownership of new infrastructure and services,” “participatory planning of urban development,” the focus on “governance and governability,” PRIMED is often considered the ideological roots to the PUI (Garcia Ferrari et al., 2018, 359). Some of the objectives of PRIMED were incorporated into PUI’s in the central eastern and northwestern zones between 2006 and 2009 (Velásquez-Castañeda, 2013, 143).

**Foreign Influence in Medellín Planning: The Barcelona Model**

Beginning in 1979, during Spain’s transition a democratic government, Barcelona began to implement an urban regeneration model, termed “The Barcelona Model,” involving infrastructural upgrading and welfare programming based on civic participation (Degen & García, 2012, 1024). This model was designed to promote social cohesion by using the construction of new public spaces to serve as linkages between the geographic segregation of socioeconomic classes throughout the city by opening territory for common ground and social activities. Social programming was implemented though governmental, social, and voluntary partnerships (Degen & García, 2012, 1025). By the 1990’s, to help finance the urban redevelopment, the city formed public-private partnerships, led by the new public agency
“Barcelona Regional,” and aided in the formation of private municipal enterprises. In the model’s endeavor to promote quality infrastructure, the city opened architectural planning to Spanish and international architects (Degen & García, 2012, 1028).

In the 1990’s, policy transfer occurred between Medellín and Barcelona through planners and architects studying in Cataluña, as well as through programs such as the “Barcelona-Medellín Lecture Series” held in Medellín. Despite receiving vast international recognition, the model was appropriated differently by different countries. Western countries, Europe and North America took interest in the involvement of private actors in urban renewal, while Latin America, like Medellín, looked to the model with interest in its role in a context of democratization (Sotomayor, 2015a, 152).

Since the mid-1990’s, the Barcelona Model has faced skepticism between the city’s objectives of establishing global competitiveness, while fulfilling bottom-up democratic participation, arguing that “cultural refurbishing and tourism have encouraged gentrification […] and unaffordable housing prices in the periphery” (Degen & García, 2012, 1031).

**The Integrated Urban Projects (PUI’s)**

The Integrated Urban Project was proposed by Sergio Fajardo, the mayor of Medellín from 2004-2007, and were carried out by the Urban Development Company (EDU, n.d. a, n.p.). The Integrated Urban Project is formally defined as “a planning and physical intervention instrument in zones characterized by high indexes of marginality, segregation, poverty, and violence” (Echeverri & Orsini ,2011, 17). These projects became the foundation for the implementation of “Social Urbanism,” a term used to refer to urban planning measures which are designed to pay back historical debts that had accumulated during state absence from the
territories. The Integrated Urban Project aims to address the infrastructural inequality and low standards of living, the historical absence of state in the peripheral neighborhoods, and to specifically intervene in areas where “social segregation, poverty, violence, and lack of opportunity” have persisted (Velásquez-Castañeda, 2013, 143).

The PUI’s were implemented in three phases. The first phase of the program was implemented between 2004 and 2007 in the northeastern zone, comunas 1 and 2, and expanded to the central eastern zone, comuna 13, and northwestern zone, comunas 5 and 6 in 2006. The second phase took place between 2008-2011 and was implemented in the central eastern zone in comunas 8 and 9. The last phase lasted from 2012-2015 and was executed in barrio la Iguaná. The implementation of PUI’s ended in 2015 with the implementation of the new urban initiative: the Metropolitan Green Belt (Cinturón Verde Metropolitano), with objectives of limiting urban expansion (Velásquez-Castañeda, 2013, 143).

Table 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phases of the Integrated Urban Project</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PUI Phase</td>
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<tr>
<td>2004-2007</td>
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<tr>
<td>2008-2011</td>
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<td>2012-2015</td>
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Information: (Velásquez-Castañeda, 2013, 143)

Sotomayor (2015a) addresses how the PUI’s create spaces of exception in front of the Territorial Ordering Plan’s development (Sotomayor, 2015a, 166). Once the mayor’s plan of government is passed by the city council, the PUI’s are “protected” from any political opposition. Further, the EDU is required to follow legal procedure. Guidelines regulate that the government should relocate residents in contexts where standards cannot be met (Sotomayor,
2015a, 167). For example, in some areas of the intervention, the gradient reach a range of 16 to 20 percent, but city guidelines stipulate that sidewalks cannot be constructed on a gradient greater than 5 percent (Sotomayor, 2015a, 166). These spaces of exception, thus, allow the EDU the required flexibility to implement the infrastructure under typically not permitted spaces.

The implementation of NE Integrated Urban Project involved institutional coordination by the Empresa de Desarrollo Urbano with 21 entities: government actors, decentralized government entities, non-governmental organizations, international organizations, and other community actors. EDU executives, the Municipal Planning Department, the private secretary of the Mayor’s Office, the Department of Public Works, and the Treasury Department coordinate this complex network of institution alliances (Sotomayor, 2015a, 157). These entities coordinate the participation of other necessary institutions for project implementation based off of community needs identified in community outreach.

Table 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institutional Alliances</th>
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<tr>
<td>Organization:</td>
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<td>Government Actors</td>
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<tr>
<td>Decentralized Government entities</td>
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</table>
The projects of the northeastern PUI took place in three different barrios: Santo Domingo, Popular, and Andalucía and benefited a population of 170,000 inhabitants and covered a total area of 158 hectares (EDU, n.d. b, 2 and Sotomayor, 2015a, 160). Total spending of the Northeastern PUI reached $300 million USD over the course of its implementation. The 290 programs implemented in the northeast, In general, the projects can be categorized into six categories: parks and community centers, schools related infrastructure, health centers, streets and pedestrian promenades, scenic beatification, and housing resettlement programs.

Table 6
Northeastern PUI Infrastructure Projects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Project</th>
<th>Andalucía</th>
<th>Popular</th>
<th>Santo Domingo</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Parks and community centers | • Imagination Park  
• Spring Park of Our Lady  
• Centrality of Andalucía  
• Avenue 52 Park  
• Villa Niza Park | • Chess park  
• The Wells neighborhood park  
• Washing Place Park  
• Pablo the 6th Park  
• La Herrera Gorge Lineal Park  
• Peace and Culture Park  
• District Market Park | • Candelaria Park  
• Community Center Santo Domingo  
• Children’s Park  
• Outlook Park  
• Spain Library Park  
• Sports Complex Granizal Park  
• Cedezo (zone enterprise development center) Santo Domingo |
| Schools related infrastructure | | | • Santo Domingo Savio School  
• School Cafeteria-La Candelaria |
Through the creation of 20 new parks, in the first three years of the PUI, from 2004 to 2007, the average public space per inhabitant of the northeastern zone increased from .65 meters squared per person to 1.48 meters squared. This increase represents a 2.3 increase of public space per person (EDU, n.d. b, 28, 64).

In addition, social programming constitutes a major part of the PUI. Nearly $250,000 was spent, creating programs across the following areas: support to vulnerable groups, education, environment, public works and infrastructure, sports and recreation, health, and “other sectors” across 9 government entities (EDU, n.d. b, 70).

Table 7
Northeastern PUI Social initiatives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Secretary of Education (Secretaria de Educación)</th>
<th>Santo Domingo</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Library resources</td>
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<td>Technological program trainings</td>
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<td>Educational competitions</td>
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<td>Tuition funding</td>
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<tr>
<td>Secretary of Social Development</td>
<td>Microcredit financing (Seed Capital fund competition)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Worker training workshops</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Graphic by A. Hellem, information from (EDU, n.d. b, 1-118).
| Department of Social Development (Secretaria Desarrollo Social) | • Apprenticeship placement  
• Solidarity Cooperatives  
• Production Units |
| --- | --- |
| Secretary of Social Wellbeing (Secretaria de Bienestar Social) | • Free lunch & milk programs  
• Child shelters  
• Disability programs  
• Elderly programs  
• Community integration clubs (Club de Vida)  
• Psychological, familial and legal attention (Programa de Buen Vivir)  
• Humanitarian assistance for refugees  
• Disadvantaged Youth Program (Familias en acción) |
| Secretary of Health (Secretaria de Salud) | • Family healthcare subsidies  
• Mental health education and consultations  
• Healthy Schools Program  
• Healthy lifestyle programs  
• Sexual and Reproductive healthcare programs |
| Secretary of Citizen Culture (Secretaria de Cultura Ciudadana) | • Community manual on codes of behavior (manual de convivencia)  
• Community meetings  
• Youth Clubs  
• Arts and culture programs  
• Campaigns:  
  o Value of the Public  
  o Human rights  
  o Anti-poverty |
| Inder (Instituto de Deportes y Recreación de Medellín) | • Youth Sports Clubs  
  o Medellín in Movement Program  
  o Recreate your rights program  
• Play centers |
| Secretary of the Environment (Secretaria de Medio Ambiente) | • Established community emergency plans  
• Community outreach  
  o Recycling census  
  o Door-to-door solid waste campaign  
• 15 environmental projects (PRAES and PROCEDAS)  
• Environmental events (carnivals, workshops, committees)  
• Sterilization of cats & dogs |
| Secretary of the Environment (Secretaria de Medio Ambiente) | • Family based programs  
• Educational workshops (community manual, disarmament plant, human rights)  
• House of Justice Program (services brought to furthest periphery of comuna)  
• Citizens Guide Program (group and individual psychological and social programs) |

Graphic by A. Hellem, Information from (EDU, n.d. b, 1-118).
Examination of Space

In order to examine the achievements of the northeastern PUI, due to the social programming and infrastructural initiatives, both the state of infrastructure, and the way people feel need to be considered. This examination will consider four sources of data: “objective data,” two perception-based surveys, and photographs of the projects, providing perspectives on three levels: the scope of individual projects, the zonal level, and the citywide level.

First, this paper will examine data from the Medellín Como Vamos Objective Quality of Life Reports. Specifically, this paper will look at homicide rates, poverty according the national definition, unemployment, and financial investment benefiting vulnerable populations.

Next, the data analysis will focus on perception-based data. First, this work will examine the Medellín Como Vamos Citizen Perception Surveys. These surveys are financed by the Medellín Como Vamos Project and are intended to serve as a reflection of the perceptions of the average Medellín home. The results for these surveys were first published in 2006, and continue to be published annually. The survey includes the opinions of men and women older than 18 years old, representing all socioeconomic backgrounds in Medellín. The objective of the survey is to find out the perception of the current state of the city and the impact of the city administration. Surveys are conducted through face-to-face in-home interviews that follow a structured list of questions. Each annual survey collects approximately 1,500 interviews. Topics of these surveys include opinions on education, health, basic services, safety, transportation, environment, community development, economic situation, government entities on the household, neighborhood, and citywide levels (Medellín Como Vamos, 2017, 3). Some of the questions have changed over since the creation of the survey in 2006 to the present, thus, not all of the information is traceable over all 11 years of surveying. Additionally, the manner in which
the survey data is reported is not consistent over the surveys, which poses difficulty in the comparison of results.

However, the exact methodology for selecting the surveyed household locations within the zones is not specified. Furthermore, the credibility of these surveys is questionable, as it is unknown how the exact survey results could be influenced by survey participants’ proximity to PUI projects. The participants’ closer proximity to PUI projects could result in a higher perception of quality of life and satisfaction with the city and its institutions. On the other hand, increased distance from projects could result in a lower perception of quality of life. Ideally, these surveys show a diverse representation of citizen’s proximity to projects.

Next, this paper will examine the Place Performance Evaluation, a perception-based survey conducted in the northeastern region. The Place Performance Evaluation is a “guided observation strateg[y]” to where small groups examine spaces, and apply ratings based on their feeling in the space across four categories: comfort and space, access and connections, uses and activities, and sociability. These factors then are assigned a rating on a scale of one to four, with one and two indicating a “poor” state, and three and four indicating a “good” state. These Place Performance Evaluations were conducted on three separate dates, April 23, May 22, and June 20 in 2015 and were conducted by a small group of local social and community actors (Arteaga Rosero, 2016, 154, 158). The Place Performance Evaluations were carried out on the individual project level during the 2004-2007 northeastern PUI, and therefore provide an in depth examination of each project.

Lastly, the evaluation of research will conclude with the examination of photographs of select projects of the northeastern PUI. These photographs will provide before and after comparisons, and are supplemented with additional Google Maps Street View images.
Objective Quality of Life Report Results

This section will present current objective data from the Medellín Como Vamos Quality of Life Reports, presenting statistics on homicide rates, poverty and employment, and the city’s financial investment into vulnerable populations.

Homicide Rates

The annual homicide rates per 1000,000 inhabitants have decreased between 2000 and 2016. While the homicide rate was 160/100,000 (or 3305 total homicides) to 21.5/100,000 in 2016 (or 534 total homicides). The largest decrease in homicides occurred between 2002 and 2003, with a 1912 drop in total homicides. During the 2004-2007 northeastern PUI, the homicide rates remained relatively consistent between 2005-2007, decreasing from 782 total homicides to 771 homicides. Following the 2004-2007 PUI, homicide rates increased again, and have since experienced a decline from 2009 to 2016 (Medellín Como Vamos, 2017, 50).

Graph 1

![Total Annual Homicides Medellín, Colombia (2000-2016)](image)

Information from: (Medellín Como Vamos, 2017, 103), Graphic by A. Hellem.
Poverty and Employment

In Medellín’s metropolitan areas, the National Administrative Department of Statistics (DANE) draws the poverty line with a monthly income below $265.56, and extreme poverty as $119.96 or less monthly income. Since 2008, the amount of people formally defined as living in a state of poverty in Medellín has decreased by 52.8 percent, from 25 percent of the city living in a state of poverty to 14.1 percent (Medellín Como Vamos, 2017, 16).

Graph 2

Information from: (Medellín Como Vamos 2017, 16). Graphic by A. Hellem.

According to the most recent reports, comunas Popular and Santa Cruz continue to face the two highest rate of unemployment in the city. From 2014 to 2016, Popular’s unemployment experienced a net increase of 2.6 percentage points, and Santa Cruz experienced a net increase of 1.1 percentage points. In 2016, Popular’s unemployment was 4.7 percentage points higher than the citywide average, and Santa Cruz was 1.9 percentage points higher than the city average. Popular and Santa Cruz’ increased unemployment follows the citywide trend of increasing unemployment (Medellín Como Vamos, 2017, 81).
Table 8
Percentage of Unemployed Residents in NE PUI Intervention Comunas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2014</th>
<th>2015</th>
<th>2016</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Medellín average</td>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>9.0</td>
<td>9.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Popular</td>
<td>11.5</td>
<td>10.7</td>
<td>14.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Santa Cruz</td>
<td>11.2</td>
<td>11.0</td>
<td>11.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Information from: (Medellín Como Vamos, 2017, 81). Graphic by A.Hellem

**Investment in Vulnerable Populations**

From 2008 to 2016, Medellín has increased its overall investment for vulnerable populations. In 2008, the city of Medellín invested 2.2 of their budget into vulnerable populations. By 2016, the city invested 9.5 percent of their budget into vulnerable populations. This means that between 2008 and 2016, the city increased overall investment in vulnerable populations from 65,161,672 of pesos ($23,132.39 USD) to 326,757,353 pesos ($115,998.86 USD) (Medellín Como Vamos, 2017, 20). Between 2012 and 2016, Medellín invests the greatest percentage of their budget on vulnerable populations in comparison with the five largest Colombian cities, Barranquilla, Bogotá, Bucaramanga, Cali, and Cartagena (Medellín Como Vamos, 2017, 18).

In 2016, the greatest amount of this investment (43.1 percent) was allocated to early childhood, followed by 21.7 percent to attention and assistance for the elderly. People living in extreme poverty received 12.3 percent of total investment for vulnerable populations (Medellín Como Vamos, 2017, 20).

**Medellín Como Vamos- Perception of Quality of Life Surveys**

One form of perceptitional survey data is the Medellín Como Vamos annual perception-based surveys. The Medellín Como Vamos perception-based surveys provide citywide and zonal
perspectives from a larger population sample size. The analysis of this survey data will focus on perceptions of safety, quality of life, and poverty on both levels.

Satisfaction with Medellín and Quality of Life

Between 2008 and 2017, the citywide satisfaction with Medellín as a city to live in decreased. In 2008, 92 percent of people stated that they were satisfied with Medellín, and only 2 percent reported they were unsatisfied with Medellín. The perception of satisfaction with Medellín has consistently decreased. In 2017, 80 percent reported satisfaction with Medellín, and 6 percent reported a lack of satisfaction (Medellín Como Vamos, 2018a, 9). This data represents a 12-percentage point decrease in the citizen satisfaction of Medellín over a 9-year period.

Between 2013 and 2017, the perceived quality of life of northeastern residents has risen minimally from 6.5/10 in 2013 to 6.6/10 in 2017. This data, however, is significant when compared with the perceived quality of life of the other zones. Between 2013 and 2017, the northeastern zone has consistently represented the lowest perception of quality of life, with the exception of 2016, with the central-western zone rating lower. Finally, between 2016 and 2017, northeastern residents rated their perception of quality of life .6 points lower than the year before, with a shift from 7.2/10 to 6.6/10 (Medellín Como Vamos, 2018a, 11).

Safety

As survey data represents, there has been a decrease in the perception of citywide safety across Medellín. In 2006, survey data showed that 61 percent of people considered Medellín safe, while only 3 percent considered the city unsafe. However, in 2017, 47 percent of people reported that they consider Medellín safe. This represents a 14-percentage point decrease in the perception of citywide safety over the span of 11 years. On the other hand, in 2017, 20 percent of
people reported that Medellín is unsafe. This represents a 17-percentage point increase in the perception of lack of safety over the same 11-year time frame (Medellín Como Vamos, 2018b, 51).

In 2006, the northeast represented the zone with the highest perception of security. On a scale of 5 being very safe and 1 being very unsafe, the average northeastern resident reported a 4.2 perception of safety. This high perception of security, however, has not remained consistent. In the past three years, the northeast perception of security has continued to decrease. In 2015, the average perception of security was 4.0. In 2016, the average decreased to 3.9, and by 2017, the average perception of security was 3.6. Over the course of the three most recent survey years, the northeastern perception of security decreased almost half a point (Medellín Como Vamos, 2018d, 6).

**Self Perception of Poverty**

On a citywide scale, from 2006 to 2017, the self-perception of poverty has decreased. In 2006, 33 percent of the population identified as poor. By 2011, self-identifying poor reached a low of 12 percent of the city. Between 2011 and 2017, the percentage of self-identifying poor rose to 19 percent. However, the current self-perception of poverty has decreased a total of 14 percentage points since the northeastern PUI (Medellín Como Vamos, 2018c, 4).

The northeastern zone represents an inverse of the citywide trends. From 2012 to 2014, the northeastern region remained the zone with the highest perception of poverty, with 24 perceiving themselves to be poor in 2012, 29 percent in 2013, and 27 percent in 2014 (Medellín Como Vamos, 2014, 5). This trend has continued with the most recent statistics published. Between 2016 and 2017, the northeastern zone was the only zone to experience and increase in
self-perception of poverty, from 26 percent in 2016 to 29 percent in 2017 (Medellín Como Vamos, 2018c, 4).

The results of this survey show conflicting results. While general perception of quality of life and safety decreased, the sense of poverty also decreased. These statistics are representative of the weak impact of these works have on all residents quality of life, while at the same time, show the influence that simply knowing that there is development happening can have on an entire city’s perception of poverty. This idea is echoed by a northeastern resident that states, “Perhaps, it is okay for the guests, but the inside remains completely messed up. So here in Comuna 1 it happens the same thing: it is very well “organized” in the surroundings of the Metro Cable, but deep into the neighborhoods we’re screwed: no social investment, no infrastructure, no nothing” (Sotomayor, 2015a 172). With this in mind, the decreasing perception of quality of life and sense of safety, and the increasing sense of poverty is evidence for the unsustainability of the projects.

**Place Performance Evaluation**

In the Place Performance Evaluations, the comfort and space, access and connections, uses and activities, and sociability are each determined through four factors. In effort to examine how things look and how things feel, this survey will examine four of these guiding factors: the overall attractiveness, the cleanliness and quality of maintenance, to understand the state of the projects, and on the other hand, use the feeling of safety and the sense of pride and ownership to understand how the northeastern inhabitants feel. However, the division of these factors based on look and feel easily influences one another, and thus is not an entirely clean split.

The overall attractiveness of parks received mid-level ratings, scoring 3’s and 4’s with the exception of the Candelaria Park and the sports complex Granizal Park, which received a 4
for the overall attractiveness. The cleanliness and quality of maintenance of the parks received
greater variation than the scores for overall attractiveness. The Chess park received the a 1 for
bad cleanliness and quality of maintenance, while the Spring Park of Our Lady received a perfect
score of 4. The other parks received mid-level ratings, between 2 and 3, with the most recent
survey period showing more 2 ratings than 3’s.

All statistical data presented in this section is from Arteaga Rosero, 2016.

Key:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Condition</th>
<th>1 -Very good condition</th>
<th>2 – good condition</th>
<th>3 – bad condition</th>
<th>4 – very bad condition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Table 9
State of Infrastructure- Parks and community spaces, 2015

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PARK/COMMUNITY SPACE</th>
<th>Overall attractiveness</th>
<th>Cleanliness/Quality of Maintenance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>APRIL</td>
<td>MAY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imagination Park</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring Park of Our Lady</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avenue 52 Park</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chess Park</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Wells Neighborhood Park</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washing Park</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>La Herrera Lineal Park</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peace and Culture Park</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neighborhood Market Park</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Candelaria Park</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children’s lookout Park</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spanish Library Park</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Centrality of Andalucia</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zonal Enterprise Development Center (CEDEZO Santo)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In terms of feeling of space: the most recent survey data shows that majority of the parts rated 3 in perception of safety. The sense of pride and ownership of the parks, however, rates significantly lower than the perception of safety. Over all three survey periods, the survey group indicated low levels of pride and ownership, with majority 2 point ratings, and a two 1 point ratings.

Table 10
Feeling of the Space- Parks and community spaces, 2015

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PARK/COMMUNITY SPACE</th>
<th>Feeling of safety</th>
<th>Sense of pride and ownership</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>APRIL</td>
<td>MAY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imagination Park</td>
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<td>Spring Park of Our Lady</td>
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<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avenue 52 Park</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chess Park</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Wells Neighborhood Park</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Washing Park</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>La Herrera Lineal Park</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Peace and Culture Park</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
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<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Candelaria Park</td>
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<tr>
<td>Children’s lookout Park</td>
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<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spanish Library Park</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Centrality of Andalucía</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zonal Enterprise Development Center (CEDEZO Santo Domingo)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sports Complex Granizal Park</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Promenades, bridges, and roadways all receive high ratings for overall attractiveness, with mixed ratings, varying by each individual work, in regards to its quality and maintenance. The most recent survey period shows a majority overall good condition.
Table 11
State of Infrastructure- Promenades and bridges, 2015

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PROMENADE/BRIDGE</th>
<th>Overall attractiveness</th>
<th>Cleanliness/Quality of Maintenance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>APRIL</td>
<td>MAY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban Promenade-Street 107</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lookout Pedestrian Bridge</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peace Pedestrian Bridge</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avenue 42 B-upgrading</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Puerto Rico Street (Street 31 A)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban Promenade Street 106</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition, promenades, bridges and roadways received high perceptions of safety, and as a category, received an overall higher perception of pride and ownership than parks and other community spaces.

Table 12
Feeling of Space- Promenades and bridges, 2015

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PROMENADE/BRIDGE</th>
<th>Feeling of Safety</th>
<th>Sense of pride and ownership</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>APRIL</td>
<td>MAY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban Promenade- Street 107</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lookout Pedestrian Bridge</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Urban Promenade Street 106</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Lastly, the housing reform project, Juan Bobo Alta received good overall attractiveness ratings and perception of safety, but low quality of maintenance and perception of pride and ownership.
Table 13

State of Infrastructure- Housing reform

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HOUSING REFORM</th>
<th>Overall attractiveness</th>
<th>Cleanliness/Quality of Maintenance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>APRIL</td>
<td>MAY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing consolidation “Juan Bobo Alta”</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 14

Feeling of Space- Housing reform

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HOUSING REFORM</th>
<th>Feeling of Safety</th>
<th>Sense of pride and ownership</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Housing consolidation “Juan Bobo Alta”</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There is considerable difference between the sense of pride and ownership between parks and other community spaces with the bridges, roads, and promenades. These results highlight the invasive feeling of monumental architecture in these neighborhoods.

**Evaluation of Images**

In addition to perception-based data, images provide an important source for evaluating the state and feeling of each project. The photographic analysis will draw from each of the categories of infrastructure-based projects to include four parks, two walkways, and housing reform. The photographs included in this analysis were chosen based off of the results of the Place Performance Evaluations, including spaces that received exclusively high marks across all four categories (attractiveness, cleanliness/maintenance, safety, and pride/ownership), spaces that only received low ratings, and spaces with mixed ratings.
Image 4

Chess Balcony Park

Low ratings of attractiveness, cleanliness/maintenance, perception of safety and pride/ownership

The Chess Balcony Park provides formal infrastructure to the area. The seating provides a more formal area for people to sit. However, the low maintenance of the space is just as hazardous as to a pedestrian as the previous state. The great amount of concrete used also eliminates the possibility for additional green space, a rarity throughout the informal settlements.

Image 5

Avenue 52 Park

High rating of perception of safety, low perception pride/ownership

The Avenue 52 Park is another example of a mainly concrete public space. The location of the park, located between avenues offers a precarious location of residents to use the space for
recreation. The park appears to be a continuation of the sidewalk rather than a separate public space.

**Image 6**

**Imagination Park**

High rating of attractiveness and perception of safety, low rating of cleanliness/maintenance and perception of pride/ownership

The images of the Imagination Park show the construction of a massive concrete structure. The previous state appears to be a better use of the land, offering the residents the access to one of the few green spaces in the neighborhood. The faded paint contributes to a sense of project abandonment by the state and dirtiness. The structure offers no place for residents to sit and enjoy the space. The final image of individuals congregated on the corner streetlight is a clear reaffirmation of this idea—that the park is not meeting resident needs—a place to sit and enjoy the open space.

**Image 7**

**Sports Complex Granizal Park**

High rating of attractiveness, cleanliness/maintenance, perception of safety and pride/ownership

Image From: (Arteaga Rosera, 2016, 213).
The progression of photographs of the Granizal Sports Complex shows the formal development of an already established community space. The project upgraded the space from a dirt field to a synthetic turf space. The covered bleachers add more space for community participation in the sporting events, and the fences surround the field allow for the surrounding spaces to be utilized by other community members at the same time. The brick paving, turf, and court all appear to be in good condition.

Image 10

Lookout Pedestrian Bridge

High rating of attractiveness, cleanliness/maintenance, perception of safety, and pride/ownership
The Lookout pedestrian bridge creates a visually more profound connection between the two neighborhoods. The upgraded walkway not only supports greater traffic between the two sides, but invites people to cross. The panoramic view of the neighborhood from the bridge allows the users to see their neighborhood, and through this, create a stronger sense of ownership of their neighborhood.

Image 11
Peace Pedestrian Bridge

High rating of attractiveness, cleanliness/maintenance, perception of safety, low rating of pride/ownership

Image from (Arteaga Rosero, 2016, 173).

The Peace Pedestrian Bridge serves practical use, as users can travel to neighborhoods that are separated by a ravine. The greenery that surrounds the bridge offers a change of scenery from the dense settlement patterns of the neighborhoods. The walkway and railings appear to be in good condition, without faded paint or graffiti.

Image 12
Juan Bobo Alta

High rating of attractiveness and perception of safety, low rating of cleanliness/maintenance and perception of pride/ownership

Image from Arteaga Rosero (2016). Pg. 176
The housing consolidation of Juan Bobo shows a definitive need to provide safer housing for inhabitants in the area. However, the tall apartment style buildings erase the unique, self-help, self-accomplished feeling of the neighborhood. The brick tower style consolidation of marginalized people provides a similar sterile feel as projects such as Pruitt Igoe in Saint Luis and Cabrini Green homes of Chicago.

**Discussion**

From the award titles to the award criteria, the collective rhetoric of these awards highlight three achievements of the PUI: producing an innovative model for urban renewal, the worthwhile, sustainable nature of the program, and the humane contribution to the quality of life of the affected residents.

From background information to project results, this work reaffirms the conclusions of Sotomayor (2015a) and Maclean (2015) who already call into question the innovative structure of this model on both an international and national level, citing undeniable evidence of a policy transfer from the Barcelona Model to Medellín, and the precursor project PRIMED laying similar ideological roots. Additionally, the PUI shows strong continuations of 20th century monumental architecture (Maclean, 2015, 63). For example, the PUI model shows many parallels to Daniel Burnham’s 1909 Plan of Chicago, “built[ing] to overcome collective inferiority complexes and to boost business” (Hall, 2002, 189) by implementing interventions on two fronts: the infrastructural objectives, as well as the social objectives. The Plan of Chicago aimed to bring “aesthetic harmony, thereby creating the physical prerequisite for the emergence of a harmonious social order” (Hall, 2002, 192-193). Burnham specifically looked for economic development through the planning of new parkland, parkways, the redevelopment of the Chicago
lakefront, the strategic construction of public buildings by creating visual focal points, and new streets (Hall, 2002, 193). In the case of Medellín, the overwhelming infrastructural emphasis on park creation, and visual focal points, like the Spain Library Park are a 21st century representation of the City Beautiful Movement. Furthermore, the 20th century beautification projects were based on 19th century models, such as aesthetic harmonization of Paris, specifically the economic development, through tourism, and the social cohesion brought through these spaces of redevelopment (Hall, 2002, 193). Therefore, the PUI shows strong roots in even 19th century western planning models rather than something new and unique.

More so, the northeastern PUI is illustrative of neoliberal thought in urban planning. Typical elements of neoliberal planning promote “administrative efficiency, entrepreneurialism, and economic freedoms,” which in the planning setting, aims to create a “growth-first approach” in development (Sager, 2011, 148). While no city is the perfect prototype of comprehensive neoliberal thought, the economic context of the city, the private-public partnership, and the urban entrepreneurialism are representative of the vast culmination of neoliberal ideology in the northeastern PUI. The period of deindustrialization that Medellín faced during the 1990’s laid the framework for the rise of the “classic” neoliberal city. Thus the city’s goals of driving economic growth created opportune conditions to implement neoliberal policies that aim to drive foreign investment in their city.

The profit oriented, entrepreneurial success of the EDU and it’s implementation of the PUI is exacerbated in the EDU’s implementation PUI replication in Asunción, Paraguay. In 2017, the Urban Development Company (Empresa de Desarrollo Urbano) of Medellín announced that the transformation in Medellín would be replicated in the barrio of La Chacarita Alta in Asunción, Paraguay (EDU, 2017, n.p.). This replication will entail a four-step project
with citizen participation in each phase with the principal interest of intervening in the neighborhood on the “physical, social, environmental and institutional” levels. The project will consist of the “formalization of the neighborhood” which consists of creating public spaces and legalize land titles, upgrading basic services including electricity, waste water systems and storm sewer drainage, and potentially relocating 150 families. The total scope of the project would directly benefit 800 families in the neighborhood. The EDU will provide technical support in conjunction with the Paraguayan National Secretary of Housing and Habitat (SENAVITAT) and financed through the Inter American Development Bank (BID). The SENAVITAT mentions the EDU a “magnificent example” and a “global vanguard,” having won many awards in development in periphery settlements in Medellín (Gobierno Municipal de Asunción, 2017, n.p.).

The implementation of the PUI in La Chacarita Alta is two fold: first the projects are so drastically different in size that the project experience will be completely different to the project experience in Medellín. This lack in similarity represents the export of model for profit, rather than actually offering a parallel experience to implement. Also, in the context of Auñnción, the Medellín PUI’s can bring transformation, but not a miracle. This change in rhetoric highlights the fact that Medellín’s violent history and reputation makes it easier for them to gain “good credit” for any attempted upgrading.

The nature of creating spaces of exception represents an immediate contradiction to sustainability. The “express policymaking” and flexibility achieved through the PUI’s are contingent on the mayors platform, and thus naturally are required to be fast-pasted, as anything not achieved during their time as mayor is not guaranteed to be completed. In establishing PUI’s, the city does little to actually address the planning ordinances, upholding the “city of the norm,”
rather than pioneering new regulations that will provide for continued formalization, upgrading, and individuals access to dignified homes with public services (Sotomayor et al., 2015, 167).

However, there are several larger problem at play associated with the rhetoric and merit of “innovation.” First, to merit the northeastern PUI “innovative” ignores the decades long ingenuity of the periphery settlers who have worked to achieve basic services for their communities without state support. In comparison, the construction of concrete parks and upgraded roadways represents a trivial contribution by the state, when considering that these individuals have developed land --from a space without any basic services-- to a livable community. If the settlers’ work does not bolster transformative or miracle rhetoric, neither should the PUI. Invasive or illegal development is not a justifiable excuse to exclude the works from innovative recognition. Just because the current development does not meet territorial ordinances does not mean it has not made a dignified contribution that is honorable of recognition, for example, achieving accessible housing for thousands of people.

Further, by calling the city’s actions innovative inherently raises the question “What is the problem that is being solved?” and further places actors into a binary of problem causer and problem solver. By calling the city innovative creates the notion that the city has found solutions to problems. More, this rhetoric insinuates that these problems were not theirs, and that the city never had a responsibility to address the pervasive “societal debts” that were accumulating in the northeastern zone. This assumption would dangerously imply that the settlements and settlers are the problem causers, which overlooks their valuable contribution to the city, not only from the capitalist perspective of their necessary cheap labor contribution to Medellín’s industrialized economy, but also the cultural diversity they offer to the city.
Due to their current state, the sustainability of these projects is already called into question. Many of the projects, namely the Imagination Park, Peace and Culture Park, Chess Park, several streets, and the Juan Bobo Housing Reform already reflect poor maintenance. Just as the lack of public works shows state absence in these neighborhoods, ill-maintained projects illustrate the same level of state abandonment. In fact, the most poorly maintained PUI projects represent an even stronger sense of state absence. The deteriorated infrastructure reflects the states acknowledgement of the residents’ marginalized conditions, while at the same time shows on actually finding solutions to genuine needs. This concept is supported by the declining perceptions of quality of life in the northeast region in both the Medellín Como Vamos surveys as well as the Place Performance Evaluations, particularly the low perception of pride, ownership, and safety in these spaces.

Likewise, the social aspect of the PUI’s lack not only innovation, but also sustainability. In regards to the social component of the PUI, programs like such as free meals are not interventions that help equip residents with the resources of achieving self-sufficiency. Additionally, the participation of any of the social programming is contingent on individuals to first meet their own basic needs.

Lastly, while many works of the PUI have made several useful contributions, namely bridges connecting neighborhoods divided by ravines, and improved roadways, it is critical to distinguish the idea of useful contributions from humane contributions. A humane contribution moves beyond practicality or desirability, addressing immediate needs regarding residents’ wellbeing. As the PUI’s were being implemented, more than half a million of Medellín residents still did not have basic services such as water, sewage, and electricity (Hylton, 2007, 89). With this data in mind, the financial investment represents both fiscal irresponsibility and irresponsible
leadership, allocating money to social luxuries rather than helping residents secure the bare minimums of public services.

**Conclusion**

In conclusion, while some of the works are useful and aesthetically appealing, the PUI proves itself to be an urban legend rather than a model for peripheral settlement upgrading. The influence of the Barcelona Model, 19th and 20th century iconic infrastructure projects, and neoliberal characteristics show the pervasive influence of western planning in the PUI. Thus, the awards serve as motors promoting western models of development, furthering western interests in international development to create comfortable climates for outsourcing businesses. Further, there is little innovation to be found in grandiose architecture placed in front of self-help housing. This visual contradiction is a clear demonstration of the lack of humanity in the projects. While projects like Juan Bobo show potential for addressing the immediate needs of the residents, the use of funds for other project represents the city’s acknowledgement of the problems at hand, but little effort to address these problems head on. Instead, the monumental works recast a shadow of second-class citizenship to the inhabitants. Individuals are able to see a glimpse of what they deserve, but the limit the city will go to actually value and address their basic needs.

The positive impact of any of the projects implemented depends on consistent, sustained state presence and maintenance in comunas 1 and 2. The deteriorated conditions of parks and consistently low perceptions of pride and ownership illustrate the urgency to adopt territorial ordinances that will create projects that will honor the strong sense ownership of the residents in the informal spaces they have worked hard to construct, but also align with adjusted city standards and development goals.
Lastly, to really confront the divide of the two worlds of Medellín: the formal and the informal, the city needs to—despite all of the informal city’s challenges—value the contribution of the settlers. This valorization includes recognizing that these settlers have worked as citizen and state, meeting the duties of the state (to the best of their ability) when the state did not have the capacity to do so. This corrective outlook would impact the way Medellín is recognized in awards, and produce a more accurate global portrayal of what has really been achieved through the PUI.

Ultimately, the northeastern PUI has created urban slums adorned with modern architecture. Through the bold claims of the awards rhetoric, the northeastern PUI interventions are able to pass on an international scale as transformative miracles. Moving forward, awards should not only consider what government entities say has happened, but take a deeper look into citizen-based perceptions to make their award decisions.
References


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