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“The most important innovations are those that change thinking patterns.”

– unknown

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Abstract

Medellín's transformation from the world's most violent city during the 1990s into an innovation hub two decades later is principally attributed to the urban governance model of 'Social Urbanism'. However, the role of social innovation in the city's transformation is ambiguous in mainstream discourses. This master's thesis seeks to describe the perspectives of relevant actors in Medellín's transformation process and to evaluate the contribution of social innovation to transformation.

A transdisciplinary case study is conducted based on a literature review that interlinks theoretical concepts from urban development and governance studies with social innovation theory and conflict transformation studies. This allows for a discussion of the stakeholders' perspectives collected through lead question interviews and participant observations.

Combining a historical contextualization of the city's development and an analysis of selected case examples, this study finds that Medellín's urban, social, cultural and economic transformation was a collective effort. Social innovation occurred in different dimensions but was restricted in its transformative potential. One major finding of this study is that the role of the social sector has been undervalued due to primarily capitalocentric conceptions of innovation, enforced by public institutions. Therefore, an alternative map of the 'ecosystem of transformation' in Medellín was co-constructed with stakeholders from the public, private, social and educational sector. This ecosystem reveals the web-like character of the interwoven connections between them.

It is concluded that combining transformative social innovation theory with peace and conflict transformation studies may provide possible solutions to remaining structural problems that require systemic changes, such as high inequality levels. It is therefore recommended to engage in multi-level and cross-sector dialogue and support the creation of inclusive spaces and the implementation of public policies for social innovation.

For future research, it is recommended to extend the analysis of the ecosystem of actors in Medellín's transformation to its impact on a regional, national and international scale from a transdisciplinary and participatory research perspective.

Keywords: urban development, Social Urbanism, social innovation, ecosystem of innovation, social transformation, conflict transformation

Zusammenfassung

Die Transformation Medellíns von der gewalttätigsten Stadt der Welt in den 90er Jahren zu einem Innovations-Hub zwei Jahrzehnte später wird vorwiegend auf das stadtplanerische Governance-Modell des ‚sozialen Urbanismus‘ zurückgeführt. Welche Rolle dabei soziale Innovationen gespielt haben, bleibt in Mainstream-Diskursen über den Wandel der Stadt unklar. Diese Masterarbeit beschreibt die Perspektiven relevanter Akteur_innen auf den Transformationsprozess von Medellín und bewertet den Beitrag sozialer Innovation zu Transformation.

Aufbauend auf einer Literaturrecherche, verbindet die transdisziplinäre Fallstudie die theoretischen Konzepte von Stadtentwicklungs- und Governance-Studien mit sozialer Innovations- und Konflikttransformationstheorie. Dies ermöglicht eine Diskussion der Perspektiven der Stakeholder, welche durch Leitfrageninterviews und teilnehmende Beobachtung erfasst wurden.

In dieser Studie wird eine historische Kontextualisierung der Stadtentwicklung mit der Analyse ausgewählter Fallbeispiele kombiniert. Daraus geht hervor, dass die städtische, soziale, kulturelle und wirtschaftliche Transformationen Medellíns eine gemeinsame Anstrengung war. Soziale Innovationen traten in verschiedenen Dimensionen auf, wiesen aber ein eingeschränktes Transformationspotenzial auf. Ein wesentliches Ergebnis ist, dass die Rolle des sozialen Sektors unterbewertet wurde, aufgrund vorwiegender kapitalorientierter Innovationskonzepte, die von öffentlichen Institutionen gefördert werden. Daher wurde in Zusammenarbeit mit Akteursgruppen aus dem öffentlichen, privaten, sozialen und Bildungssektor eine alternative Karte des ‚Innovations-Ökosystems der Transformation‘ in Medellín erstellt, die den Netz-Charakter verflochtener Verbindungen zwischen ihnen aufzeigt.

Es wird der Schluss gezogen, dass die Kombination von transformativer sozialer Innovationstheorie mit Friedens- und Konflikttransformationforschung mögliche Lösungen für verbleibende strukturelle Probleme bieten kann, wie beispielsweise die große Ungleichheit, die systemische Veränderungen erfordern. Daher wird empfohlen, sich an einem mehrstufigen und sektorübergreifenden Dialog zu beteiligen und die Schaffung integrativer Räume und öffentlicher Strategien für soziale Innovationen zu unterstützen.

Für zukünftige Forschung wird empfohlen die Analyse des Ökosystems der Akteur_Innen der Transformation Medellín auf ihre Auswirkungen auf regionaler, nationaler und internationaler Ebene aus einer transdisziplinären und partizipativen Forschungsperspektive auszuweiten.

Schlagwörter: Stadtentwicklung, sozialer Urbanismus, soziale Innovation, Innovations-Ökosystem, soziale Transformation, Konflikttransformation

Resumen

La transformación de Medellín de la ciudad más violenta del mundo durante la década de 1990 a un centro de innovación dos décadas después se atribuye principalmente al modelo de gobernanza urbana del ‘urbanismo social’. Sin embargo, el papel de la innovación social en la transformación de la ciudad es ambiguo en los discursos convencionales. Esta tesis de maestría busca describir las perspectivas de los actores relevantes en el proceso de transformación de Medellín y evaluar la contribución de la innovación social a la transformación.

Se realiza un estudio de caso transdisciplinario basado en una revisión de la literatura que vincula los conceptos teóricos de los estudios de desarrollo urbano y gobernanza con la teoría de la innovación social junto con los estudios de transformación de conflictos. Esto permite una discusión de las perspectivas de los actores involucrados recolectadas a través de entrevistas cualitativas y observaciones participantes.

Una contextualización histórica del desarrollo de la ciudad es combinada a un análisis de ejemplos de casos seleccionados en este estudio, que concluye que la transformación urbana, social, cultural y económica de Medellín fue un esfuerzo colectivo. La innovación social se ha producido en diferentes dimensiones, pero su potencial transformador ha sido limitado. Una de las principales conclusiones de este estudio es que el papel del sector social ha sido desvalorizado debido a las concepciones principalmente capitalocéntricas de la innovación, impuestas por las instituciones públicas. Por lo tanto, se co-construyó un mapa alternativo del ‘ecosistema de transformación’ de Medellín con actores del sector público, privado, social y educativo que revela el carácter tejido de las conexiones entrelazadas entre ellos.

Se concluye que la combinación de la teoría de la innovación social transformadora con estudios de paz y la transformación de conflictos puede proporcionar posibles soluciones a los problemas estructurales restantes, como los altos niveles de desigualdad que requieren cambios sistémicos. Por lo tanto, se recomienda promover el diálogo intersectorial a varios niveles y posibilitar la creación de espacios inclusivos y políticas públicas para la innovación social.

Para futuras investigaciones se recomienda extender el análisis del ecosistema de actores de la transformación de Medellín a su impacto a escala regional, nacional e internacional desde una perspectiva de investigación transdisciplinaria y participativa.

Palabras claves: desarrollo urbano, urbanismo social, innovación social, ecosistema de innovación, transformación social, transformación de conflictos

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Abbreviations

ACI	–	Agency for Cooperation and Investment
BCN	–	Don Berna’s Paramilitary Group
CEPAL	–	Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
CUEE	–	Committee of University Enterprise State
EDU	–	Urban Development Agency
ELN	–	National Liberation Army
EU	–	European Union
EPM	–	Public Companies of Medellín
FARC	–	Armed Revolutionary Forces of Colombia
GEA	–	Group of Antioquian Entrepreneurs
IDB	–	Interamerican Development Bank
LASIN	–	Latin American Social Innovation Network
NGO	–	Non-Profit Organization
OECD	–	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
PAR	–	Participatory Action Research
POT	–	Urban Land Use Plan
PUI	–	Integrated Urban Project
SIX	–	Social Innovation Exchange
STI	–	Science, Technology and Innovation
TRANSIT	–	Transformative Social Innovation Theory

1 Introduction

1.1 Research Topic and Interest

The Colombian city of Medellín has transformed from the world's most violent city in 1991 into an innovation hub two decades later. Successive mayors and their administrations have been promoting the design and upgrading of mobility infrastructure, public spaces as well as educational facilities (see e.g. P. Brand & Dávila, 2011; Garcia Ferrari, Smith, & Calderon, 2018). This upgrading strategy has been emphasizing the combination of participatory practices in urban governance and inter-institutional collaboration in an attempt to address high violence levels and promote social inclusion (see e.g. Maclean, 2015; Turok, 2014; Urán Arenas, 2010; Velásquez & Pinzón, 2008). These municipal urban planning programs, also referred to as 'Social Urbanism' (P. Brand, 2016; Doyle, 2018b), have long been regarded as the city's successful solution to ending drug violence and including poorer neighborhoods into the socio-economic development of the city.

These various changes have also improved Medellín's reputation. The formerly highly violent city is now attracting foreign multinationals (ACI Medellín, 2019), as well as national and international tourism (Castillo-Palacio, Harrill, & Zuñiga-Collazos, 2017). In 2013, Medellín won the 'Innovative City of the Year' prize awarded by the Wall Street Journal and Citibank. One year later, it hosted the seventh UN-Habitat's World Urban Forum titled "Urban Equity in Development". However, Medellín's recent recognitions are also proof of an increased focus on external marketing strategies that emphasize the city's branding as a modern innovation hub (P. Brand, 2016).

The city's transformation has led to the formation of a new set of associations. The current municipal development plan focuses on establishing Medellín as an economy of knowledge. 'Transformation', 'innovation' and the 'ecosystem of Medellín' are now commonly utilized buzzwords in popular discourses. Nevertheless, these buzzwords appear to carry different connotations, which are worth revealing by examining the perspectives of different stakeholders in Medellín's transformation including the public sector, universities, private enterprises as well as the seemingly neglected civil society sector.

Research Interest and Relevance

My research interest in the topic lies primarily in the fact that cities such as Rio de Janeiro have replicated some of Medellín's urban planning projects, such as cable cars or park libraries, in order to achieve the associated positive outcomes. I was able to observe some of these projects during my previous academic work for my master's thesis in Interdisciplinary Latin American Studies about community communication in Rio de Janeiro's favelas¹ in 2017/18. The urban projects in Rio de Janeiro appeared to be less successful than those in Medellín – for instance, the cable car in *Complexo do Alemão* and the park library in *Manguinhos* had already been shut down for a year when I visited. This sparked my personal interest in analyzing why similar projects succeeded in Medellín. Therefore, I was keen to find out which factors have actually contributed to Medellín's transformation, of which nature this transformation consisted and on which underlying conceptions of innovation it was based, and what role innovation played.

Since Medellín serves as a model for many conflict cities in Latin America, e.g. the *Laboratorio Medellín* (Medellín Laboratory) (2011), this topic is highly relevant. It is important to understand what kind of implications the replication of Medellín's strategy carries in other contexts and to critically assess to which extent they can be replicated. Therefore, my broader research interest lies in understanding under which conditions social innovation can lead to transformation.

Moreover, as public discourse about Medellín's transformation seems to be dominated by institutional actors, I would like to investigate the perspective of the stakeholders involved in the transformation process themselves. Through this, I seek to outline a comprehensive picture of opinions held by different stakeholders, including those that have been discounted.

Research Topic in Short

In view of the outlined research problem and interest, the topic of this thesis is the description of the perspectives of relevant actors involved in Medellín's transformation process and the respective evaluation of the contribution of social innovation to transformation.

¹ Beßler, S. (2018). *Community Communication for Social Transformation: The Perspective of Community Journalists from Rio de Janeiro's Favelas* (Master's Thesis). University of Vienna, Vienna.

My Personal Perspective

Since my research project is based on qualitative social research, combining desk research and empirical fieldwork, it is important to reflect on my own background and role in the research process as well as on research ethics. I have an interdisciplinary study background in International Business and Latin American Studies. For this research study, I understand ‘transformation’ as a social one, building on the argumentation that I developed in my first master’s thesis on community communication for social transformation.²

My understanding as a critical social researcher of International Development Studies and the close work with communities in Rio de Janeiro’s favelas, where I applied the participatory action research methodology (Fals-Borda, 2006), have taught me that an activist research posture requires political positioning and a systematic reflection on how personal convictions inform the understanding of the research problem (Hale, 2001, p. 14). Even though this research study does not draw on a purely activist research methodology, it has still shaped my decolonial understanding as a researcher. A decolonial research posture further attempts to deconstruct and overcome persisting power structures by questioning the Eurocentric orientation of knowledge production (Mignolo, 2012). Therefore, I aim to cite local scholars from Colombia and Latin America throughout my work and highlight those voices, which otherwise might not have been made visible.

My decolonial and transdisciplinary perspective is reflected in the approach and methodology for this research study in chapter 2. Such a perspective makes it possible to adequately grasp the complexity of the topic as discussed in the following sub-chapter.

1.2 State of the Art and Transdisciplinarity

This section provides an overview of the current literature on the disciplines that provide theories or analytical concepts for the theoretical framework of this thesis. It is then examined how a transdisciplinary analysis contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of the research topic on the social innovation and transformation of Medellín. Finally, the relevance of this thesis to development studies is outlined.

² See Beßler (2018), which is further elaborated in chapter 3.1.3.

Urban Development Studies

So far, there has been abundant research on Medellín's transformation in the field of urban development studies, often based on the foundational work of Henri Lefebvre's 'right to the city' (1968). More recently, political-economic analyses of Medellín's development have been performed (e.g. Franz, 2018a, 2018b; Molina-Saldarriaga & Salinas-Arreortua, 2018; Moncada, 2016). These critical urban scholars have analyzed Medellín's transformation process with respect to power constellations and within the context of globalization and neoliberalization processes, drawing from David Harvey's work (2006, 2007, 2008). In particular, Rachel Berney's (2013) research on the right to the city in Bogotá should be highlighted, as it explicitly examines the transformation of Bogotá's public space from the perspective of political economy. She argues that neoliberal capital reshaped public space in an undemocratic way and increased the invisibility and complexity of class and social fragmentation. Berney's findings allow for important connections to the Medellín case, suggesting that similar political-economic configurations are in effect there.

Urban Governance Studies

Medellín has been abundantly analyzed with respect to its public policies of 'Social Urbanism' (P. Brand, 2016; Doyle, 2018b) from an urban planning and governance perspective. Some of these analyses highlight the importance of local governance in the transformation of Medellín (e.g. Leyva, 2010) or the significant role of citizen participation in public policy-making (e.g. Eslava, 2017; Urán Arenas, 2010).

Critical voices focus on the limited effects that Social Urbanism has had in reducing the city's overall inequality levels, as the programs have privileged only certain exemplary areas while fostering mechanisms of exclusion from 'urban innovation' within the city's poorer districts (P. Brand, 2016; Garcia Ferrari, Smith, Coupe, & Rivera, 2018). Additionally, the Social Urbanism programs are considered to be at risk of commodification and misuse by urban governors for city branding purposes (P. Brand, 2016; Doyle, 2018b).

Academic scholarship has been exploring the effect of Medellín's transformation on violence and security levels (see e.g. Maclean, 2015; Sotomayor, 2017). Recent studies have started questioning the direct impact of Medellín's public policies on the reduction of urban violence (Doyle, 2018a; Humphrey & Valverde, 2017) and suggest that specific

aligned interests of economic, political and criminal actors have sustained Medellín's transformational agenda (Moncada, 2016).

Social Innovation Theory

Social innovation theory focuses on institutional changes that facilitate social innovation and on the different spatial scales at which social innovation occurs: theories addressing empowerment, improvement of governance structures, creation of human development agencies, modes of participation and shared decision-making (MacCallum, Moulaert, Hillier, & Vicari, 2009), theories that deal with the relationships between agency, structure, institutions, culture and discourse (Moulaert, Jessop, & Mehmood, 2016), as well as globalization and social innovation processes and strategies (Klein & Roy, 2013) (following Moulaert, MacCallum, & Hillier, 2013, p. 19).

In their comprehensive review on social innovation theory in “Advanced Introduction to Social Innovation” (2019), Frank Moulaert and Diana MacCallum state that literature on social change finds evidence of transformative potential in different aspects of social innovation. Some EU-funded approaches draw on social practice theory (Howaldt, Kaletka, Schröder, & Zirngiebl, 2018; Howaldt, Kopp, & Schwarz, 2015) by studying international, institutionalized social innovation initiatives. For instance, the University of Québec's *Centre du recherche sur les innovations sociales* (Research Center of Social Innovation) interrogates the relationship between social innovation and institutional change (Klein, Camus, Jetté, Champagne, & Roy, 2016). Furthermore, the Waterloo Institute for Social Innovation and Resilience (Westley et al., 2013) follows an ‘ecosystem approach’ drawing on theories of ecosystem resilience building to demonstrate how new ideas have invoked systemic change (following Moulaert & MacCallum, 2019, pp. 40–41). In addition, Avelino and Wittmayer (2016) provide a framework for describing transformative social innovation by linking governance with transition studies.

This thesis understands social innovation as a product, service or model that satisfies unmet human needs, as socially emancipatory agency and as a driver of cohesive social relations (see Anderson, Puerta, & Cipolla, 2018; Moulaert, Mehmood, MacCallum, & Leubolt, 2017). For this thesis, a territorial approach to social innovation theory is applied, as this perspective allows a focus on local development and the inclusion of excluded groups in different spheres of society (see e.g. MacCallum et al., 2009; Moulaert

et al., 2013). Moreover, this thesis builds on the critical institutionalist approach to ‘transformative social innovation theory’ (TRANSIT) (Avelino et al., 2017; Avelino & Wittmayer, 2016; Haxeltine et al., 2017), as it examines how social innovation transforms social contexts and institutions on different scales. Conceptualizing social innovation as a catalyst for socio-political transformations allows for a precise examination of how social innovations can be transformative, which is at the core of the present research issue. The dimensions of social innovation as well as the different scales of transformative social innovation on the basis of Moulaert and MacCallum’s (2019) summary are described in more detail in the analytical framework in chapter 3.1.

In the Latin American context, social innovation has been practically investigated by the Latin American Social Innovation Network (LASIN) (Anderson et al., 2018), by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (CEPAL, 2019)³ and by the Interamerican Development Bank (IDB), which has studied the panorama of social innovation in Colombia (Interamerican Development Bank, 2015).

Concerning the role of social innovation in Medellín’s transformation, literature contributions only provide a broad analysis. Simmons et al. (2018) seek to uncover the link between governance as an innovation process and socio-economic ‘regime transition’ in Medellín towards a more equitable urban society. Additionally, Ruta N has been studied as a ‘regional innovation agency’ within Medellín’s ‘innovation system’ by means of a knowledge management terminology (Morisson, 2019a, 2019b).

Furthermore, specialized literature is increasingly adopting the theme of social innovation driving urban development (Hamdouch & Galvan, 2019; Thompson, 2018). Of particular interest for this thesis is Matthew Thompson’s (2018) study, which analyzes the case of economic development policies for Liverpool in the UK from an urban governance perspective while establishing two different conceptualizations of innovation. For this reason, his work is particularly relevant to this thesis as its focus lies on understanding how innovation has contributed to Medellín’s transformation. Therefore, it is possible to adequately apply part of Thompson’s analytical framework, in particular his differentiation between capitalocentric and transformative social innovation (see in

³ See an interactive map of social innovations provided by CEPAL:
<https://www.socialinnovationatlas.net/map/>

chapter 3.1.2 and 3.1.3), to Medellín's transformation and to focus in detail on the perspective of the actors involved in the city's transformation.

Contributions from Peace and Conflict Transformation Studies

The key to a comprehensive understanding of the municipal government's quest to tackle urban violence, reduce inequalities, succeed in the global city competition and foster economic development is the inclusion of the context of the national armed conflict and peace process in this analysis. For this purpose, concepts drawn from peace and conflict transformation studies contribute to the formulation of a sound analytical framework.

In this context, a postmodernist definition of peace is used – calling for many peaces (Dietrich & Sützl, 2006) while understanding that there exists more than one peace for society and communities, in “an attempt to free peace from any pre-given meaning” (Dietrich, Echavarría Alvarez, & Koppensteiner, 2006, p. 168) – recurring to the works of Ivan Illich, Wolfgang Sachs and Gustavo Esteva. The latter two critically question the term ‘development’,⁴ suggesting that it is a Western concept⁵ that tries to promote homogeneity and linear progress, thus erasing alternative concepts; therefore there cannot be only ‘one’ peace (Dietrich et al., 2006).

Moreover, this work follows Wolfgang Dietrich's understanding of ‘elicitive conflict transformation’ (Dietrich, 2013) in addition to related contributions by John P. Lederach (1997, 2005) and Paulo Freire (2014 [1970]). According to Lederach, the construction of peace may succeed through a vast mix of visions, processes, networks and mechanisms, aimed at the transformation of conflicts (Lederach, 1997). This thesis adopts Lederach's approach to imagining peace in a situation of conflict: “The real challenge of authenticity and the moral imagination is how to transcend what has been and is now, while still living in it” (Lederach, 2005, p. 59). In addition, this thesis uses his concept of ‘multi-track diplomacy’ in order to examine change processes realized at different levels by grassroots leaders, non-profit organizations (NGOs) or academic leaders and high-level visible leaders (Lederach, 1997, p. 39). Freire is regarded as a peace educator due to his

⁴ For a critical review of the concept of ‘development’, see Gustavo Esteva's essay on “Development” (2010 [1992]) in Sachs (2010 [1992]).

⁵ This term refers to Western as the countries of the global North – understanding ‘North’ and ‘South’ not in a mere geographical meaning. The global North comprises the central economies, whereas the countries of the global South are not at the core of global capitalism, see in Kothari, Salleh, Escobar, Demaria, and Acosta (2019), p. xxi-xxii.

‘conscientization’ methodology, which helps people to free themselves from oppressive conditions or, in this case, structural violence (Harris, 2004, p. 12). According to Freire, ‘transforming social reality’ necessitates challenging dominant elite power and revolutionizing existing class structures (Beßler, 2018, p. 30) in a political-economic sense.

Lederach’s and Freire’s concepts described above demonstrate that social and conflict transformation share a common ground and that it makes sense to view them interrelatedly. Both social innovation and conflict transformation theory focus on changing social relations (Jessop, Moulaert, Hulgard, & Hamdouch, 2013; Lederach, 2005) and ‘systemic changes’ on multi-levels (Avelino et al., 2015; Haxeltine et al., 2017; Pel & Bauler, 2014; Unesco Chair for Peace Studies, 2014) (see chapter 3.1.3).

As this short literature review shows, most studies on Medellín’s transformation are governance-oriented and focus on participatory democracy and decentralization aspects of policy-making. Therefore, it is increasingly important to listen to the people involved in these processes. Such an approach also follows the premise of elicitive conflict transformation since it supports the idea that people in conflict situations know best how to solve the problem, instead of providing them with a prescribed solution.

Transdisciplinarity

The diverse theoretical fields and concepts outlined above – drawn from urban development, governance and social innovation theories, which have been applied to the phenomenon of Medellín’s development, and peace and conflict studies which contribute to its understanding – illustrate the complexity of the research problem.

Consequently, this thesis follows the integrated concept of transdisciplinarity, which is “a research and organizational principle that, in being problem-oriented, goes beyond subjects and disciplines” (Mittelstrass, 2018, p. 72). Such a transdisciplinary approach, which transgresses the boundaries of historical established disciplines (Jäger & Springler, 2015; Mittelstrass, 2018), contributes to a better understanding of the different aspects of Medellín’s transformation.

In this study, I will not only interlink different analytical concepts from different disciplines as outlined above but also contrast the different perspectives of various involved actors. This allows for an integrated approach that also crosses the borders

between science and society, combining scientific and practical knowledge. This bears particular importance for key theoretical fields of this study, as political economy (Jäger & Springler, 2015, pp. 24–25) and critical urban studies are both inscribed into transdisciplinary tradition (Streule, 2013). Likewise, peace and conflict transformation studies are calling for a transdisciplinary approach (Galtung, 2010). Moreover, social innovation is considered a driving force behind transdisciplinarity, as it also transcends the borders between problems and fields of knowledge or practice (Moulaert et al., 2013, p. 13).

Relevance for Development Studies

Accordingly, the transdisciplinary character of this master's thesis makes this research topic highly relevant to development studies. Providing academic reflections on alternative models for socio-economic development in urban contexts and on the role that social innovation plays in sustained social transformations seems key to facing the challenges of inequality exacerbating phenomena of the 21st century. Indeed, globalization, neoliberalization and urbanization are of particular concern to development studies. In addition, this work also takes a post-development and decolonial stance on the notion of 'development'.

1.3 Research Questions and Objectives

Based on the research problem described above, my interest for the topic and the literature revision, I developed the following main research question:

How do selected stakeholders assess Medellín's transformation process from 1991 to the summer of 2019?

And the related sub-questions:

- 1. What role do stakeholders attribute to social innovation in Medellín's transformation process?*
- 2. How do stakeholders and scholars conceptualize social innovation and understand its relation to transformation?*
- 3. Whom do stakeholders identify as the most important actors in this process?*
- 4. What is their opinion on the ecosystem of innovation in the city?*

Accordingly, this research's main objective is to contribute to a transdisciplinary understanding of how social innovation can lead to transformation based on the case study of Medellín. Furthermore, this study seeks to:

- Outline a more diversified picture of Medellín's development, broader than common public discourse currently proposes.
- Reveal underlying assumptions on innovation and development within common discourses.
- Develop a comprehensive mapping of the main actors of the city's transformation for further research on the issue.
- Discuss implications for replicating the so-called model of Medellín in other Latin American contexts.

Thus, this master's thesis seeks to contribute to a profound understanding of the socio-economic and cultural transformation of Medellín, which might be useful to researchers and practitioners working within the realm of urban and social transformation. In the concluding remarks, this thesis also provides policy recommendations for decision-makers on a local governance level.

In this introductory chapter, the issue of the research topic, its relevance and my interest in it were presented. The outline of the various contributions from different disciplines have demonstrated the complex interconnections, which justify this research's transdisciplinary approach and methodology. Moreover, this overview has provided the research questions and objectives that guide this investigation.

2 Methodological Framework

In this chapter, the methodological considerations for a qualitative case study research design are first outlined. Thereupon, the methods chosen for answering the research questions are presented: literature review, participant observations and lead question interviews.

2.1 Methodology

Qualitative Case Study

Given the complexity of the research topic, involving the description and evaluation of the main stakeholders' perspectives on the transformation of Medellín, I chose to conduct a qualitative case study research. Due to this study's qualitative research problem, a case study research is an adequate research design, as literature describes it as a mostly qualitative inquiry (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Merriam, 2009; Stake, 2006). Furthermore, a case study serves to "understand complex issues in real world settings" (Harrison, Birks, Franklin, & Mills, 2017, p. 1). According to the most common literature on case study research, such as Stake (2006), Merriam (2009), Yin (2014) and Simons (2009): "The fundamental goal of case study research is to conduct an in-depth analysis of an issue, within its context with a view to understand the issue from the perspective of participants" (as cited in Harrison et al., 2017).

Among scholars, the terminology of case study research is used in an opaque manner, and there is no unambiguous common understanding as to whether a case study is a methodology, a method or both. After analyzing the state of the art of case study research, Harrison et al. (2017) conclude that a case study is not a method but a research strategy, as multiple sources and methods may be used (Merriam, 2009; Stake, 2006; Yin, 2014), and that it is important to clearly develop the ontological and epistemological premises that guide the chosen approach.

For this specific research topic and according to my understanding as a decolonial oriented and critical social researcher, as explained in the introductory chapter, I chose Merriam's (1998) pragmatic constructivist approach to case study research, which departs from the premise that reality is constructed intersubjectively through socially developed meanings. Utilizing Merriam's approach further allows for the implementation of multiple methods to gain the required knowledge about the area of inquiry as explained in the following sub-chapter.

2.2 Methods

Triangulation of Methods

For case study research, methods of data collection and analysis require to be systematized, following a detailed chain of evidence (Merriam, 2009). Hence this master's thesis draws upon different methods to ensure the validity of the results by utilizing the triangulation approach. As described by Uwe Flick, “[t]riangulation means that researchers take different perspectives on an issue under study [...] Furthermore it refers to combining different sorts of data on the background of the theoretical perspectives, which are applied to the data” (Flick, 2007, p. 41).

In the particular case of case study research, according to Florian Kohlbacher (2006, pp. 15–16), triangulation happens on two different levels. Firstly, data is triangulated by integrating different material and evidence collected using various methods. Secondly, triangulation is achieved by applying a method of analysis (qualitative content analysis) that has not been particularly developed for this purpose to a different research design (case study research), as explained in the next sub-chapter.

For triangulation purposes, I have combined the qualitative methods of participant observation together with lead question interviews to generate an empirical data base in the form of a research diary and audio files, which are later analyzed using the different theoretical perspectives described in the subsequent chapter.

Participant Observation

One of the chosen methods for this study is participant observation. It is defined as observation from a participant's perspective, which may influence the observed situation due to their own participation in it (Flick, 2009, pp. 226–227). I chose this method in order to familiarize myself with the local context and to understand the implementation of the government's transformation strategy by working as an intern at a public institution, Ruta N, visiting exemplary places in the city and by evidencing this through taking field notes in a research diary.

Lead Question Interviews

The second qualitative method chosen for data collection was lead question interviews. Lead question interviews allow for open questions with pre-structured theme categories

(Dannecker & Vossemer, 2014, pp. 158–160). The preceding literature review and the collected information from the participant observations, along with my own experiences from visits to urban transformation projects throughout the city, provide the basis for lead question construction in line with the research questions developed in chapter 1.3.

My interview guide (see appendix 9.1) encompasses the following topic areas:

- Personal view on the factors relevant to the transformation of Medellín
- Own understanding of innovation and social transformation, as well as their relation
- Naming the main actors of the city's transformation and evaluating the ecosystem of innovation
- Assessing shortfalls and present issues for Medellín's development

2.3 Research Process and Sampling Criteria

In this section, the sequential steps in my research process, along with the sampling criteria, are outlined and an overview of the empirical data generated by the research methods implemented is provided.

Literature Review

Preceding the field phase, I conducted a rough literature review on the topic of the transformation of Medellín, primarily finding research papers that analyzed urban governance strategies connected to Social Urbanism. Additionally, I familiarized myself with literature on urban development and social innovation theories in order to gain a broad understanding of the topic.

At the begin of my research stay, I contacted the Political Analysis Center of the EAFIT University,⁶ as my initial aim was to participate in a specialized university course on the Colombian conflict and its impact on Medellín. Unfortunately, this course did not take place, but instead I was able to use this connection to access specialized local literature on the research topic. Using this particular university in Medellín as a reference point was beneficial, as the EAFIT University has fundamentally influenced the public policy debate on the city's transformation and many secretaries of the City Hall have studied

⁶ <http://www.eafit.edu.co/centro-analisis-politico>

there. Thus, I was also able to establish contact with renowned professors conducting research on this thesis's topic or related issues.

Research Stay at Ruta N's Laboratory of Innovation

Before my research stay in Medellín, I attended a lecture series hosted by the Latin American Research Group at the University of Vienna⁷ in December 2018. I was able to meet representatives of the Laboratory of Innovation of Ruta N, who presented their work on innovation in education and discussed their efforts to transform the formerly highly violent city and improve the quality of life of Medellín's citizens.

Ruta N is a public joint-venture that has cooperated with the Mayor's Office of Medellín, since 2009, in the implementation of its strategic vision of an economic model based on innovation. Ruta N's mission and vision statement proclaims:

We lead the economic development of the city towards intensive activities in science, technology, and innovation, in an inclusive and sustainable way. By 2021 innovation will be the main driving force of the economy and welfare of the city, based on a world-class ecosystem. (Ruta N, 2018)

Ruta N serves as the exemplary public institution in the transformation process of Medellín for the analysis of how the municipal transformation agenda has been implemented by public and private actors. Furthermore, choosing Ruta N allows for an examination of the impact public institutions have on local economic development, as its main purpose is to improve the quality of life of the inhabitants through innovation. For this purpose, Ruta N has developed a series of strategies that facilitate the economic development of the city towards more businesses focusing on science, technology and innovation, which are analyzed in further detail in chapter 5.2.

Due to Ruta N's central role as a public institution in the transformation of Medellín, I decided that a research stay as an intern at the Laboratory of Innovation from mid-March until mid-June 2019 would provide a good opportunity to collect data material for my research issue. In July 2017, the Laboratory of Innovation opened under the name *Laboratorio de Creación* (Laboratory of Creation) in order to support the creation of prototypes for firms. In August 2018, the renamed *Laboratorio de Innovación*

⁷ <https://www.univie.ac.at/intpol/home/forschung/519-2/forschungsgruppe-lateinamerika/>

(Laboratory of Innovation) amplified its scope of action to fostering innovation in the enterprise, government and education sector (Laboratorio de Innovación, 2019b).

During my internship there, I was able to attend workshops with school teachers and firms that sought to stimulate innovative processes. In addition, my focus was also on social entrepreneurs and their challenges in upscaling their projects or in finding the right funding support. This internship allowed me to establish contact with various actors of the private, public and educational sector and facilitated the access to otherwise unavailable interview partners.

Reflection on the Access to the Research Field

It is important to reflect on my access to the research field (Froschauer & Lueger, 2003, p. 33). In my case, conducting an internship at Ruta N allowed me to participate directly in projects related to the implementation of the public policies connected to the transformation process of Medellín. As mentioned above, the additional connection to EAFIT's Political Analysis Center provided me with access to internal documents and high-ranked professionals or officials within the City Hall. Indeed, this also shaped the initial interview contacts, primarily with institutional actors, especially at the City Hall. The resulting bias in my sampling process is evaluated in the following paragraph.

Sampling Criteria

Following a purposive sampling strategy for comprehensive data collection (Flick, 2009, p. 122), I determined that my interviewees are representatives from the main sectors in the ecosystem of actors in Medellín's transformation. For facilitation purposes, it is further required that the initial interview participants are represented in the already existing ecosystem of innovation as developed by Ruta N (see in chapter 5.2). This provided the necessary stability marked by the practicability and access issues of a time restricted research stay of three months in Medellín. However, it soon became apparent that this interview selection criterion would only reproduce opinions that are already visible in the institutionally led discourse on Medellín's transformation. Therefore, in addition to the main actors mentioned to me by interviewees, I was actively trying to reach out to grassroots and other smaller organizations within the social sector or stakeholders that I believed were underrepresented in my study, such as community leaders and NGO representatives.

Empirical Data Corpus

In the end, I conducted 34 personal interviews, 8 with representatives from the public sector, 6 with representatives from the private sector, 6 with representatives from the public-private sector, 8 with representatives from the social sector and 6 with representatives from the educational sector – with a total duration of 19 hours (see appendix 9.2). All interviews were conducted in Spanish (except with Makaia’s Co-Founder, which was conducted in English) and they were sound-recorded with the previously obtained permission of the interviewees. This facilitated the transcription of the interviews significantly as my first language is German.

Through the accompanying documentation in a research diary, I was able to keep track of the collected case study material for illustration and documentation purposes during my participant observations, such as visits to exemplary projects of Medellín’s urban transformation or to different socio-economic *comunas* (city districts),⁸ as well as during participation in program events hosted by different secretaries, public discussion forums about themes such as the narco-culture, events with social entrepreneurs of the city and visits to important places relevant to the city’s transformation, such as the *Casa de la Memoria* (House of Memory).⁹

2.4 Evaluation Methods

It is important to have a sound data analysis strategy that guides the appropriate interpretation tools in order to have a compelling case study (Yin, 2014, p. 130).

Qualitative Content Analysis

Philipp Mayring’s (2010) qualitative content analysis was applied to the 34 interviews, amounting to over 19 hours of recorded audio material, along with the various field notes and case examples gathered from participant observations.

“Qualitative content analysis aims to preserve the advantages of quantitative content analysis but at the same time apply a more qualitative text interpretation” (Kohlbacher, 2006, p. 10). As such, this method condenses the collected material (Flick, 2009, p. 328). For the methodological strategy of a case study research design, Merriam (2009)

⁸ Medellín is administratively divided into 16 *comunas* (city districts). However, Colombians use this term only for the poorer hillside areas, as explained in chapter 4.1. I apply the term in the same way.

⁹ <https://www.museocasadelamemoria.gov.co/>

specifically proposes, in addition to the detailed chain of evidence mentioned in chapter 2.2, qualitative content analysis in order to ensure the quality of case studies. Moreover, Mayring's method allows to unambiguously analyze subjective viewpoints (Flick, 2009, p. 328), to deal with complexity, pursue a theory-guided analysis and integrate context as well as different materials and evidences (Kohlbacher, 2006, pp. 16–18).

For the interview analyses, I followed Mayring's different steps for qualitative content analysis as explained in Flick (2009, pp. 307–328). First, I selected relevant interview passages from the great amount of existing material. These passages had to correspond to the categories deduced from my interview guide (see appendix 9.1) Thus, the coherence of the collection and interpretation of my empirical data was assured, as the sections in the interview guide are linked to the sub-questions of my research question, which are based on my theoretical framework.

Then I applied the categories to all interview transcripts utilizing Mayring's 'summarizing content analysis' (2010, p. 472) to paraphrase and condense relevant information. As I conducted my lead question interviews in a partially open manner, I successively found new important passages which I paraphrased and to which I ascribed a new category, utilizing another of Mayring's techniques: 'explicating content analysis' (2010, p. 473). This allowed for the inclusion of new ideas and a contextual analysis of the said content. In this way, I was able to circumvent some of the shortfalls of the rather schematic interpretation of qualitative content analysis (Flick, 2009, p. 328). Afterwards, I applied the categories to my field notes as well as my research diary in order to achieve a complete material collection.

Ecosystem Mapping

The benefit of utilizing a qualitative content analysis is that it can be combined with other qualitative analysis methods (Mayring, 2010). For the purpose of creating a map of the ecosystem of actors in Medellín's transformation process, I decided to include a mind-mapping tool to illustrate the most important sectors and actors (see appendix 9.3). The thereof achieved results are further discussed in chapter 6.3.

Finally, I analyzed the empirical material in accordance with the developed categories and with the theoretical and contextual framework described in chapter 3 and 4.

In this chapter on methodology, it has been explained how the case study methodology is in line with the complexity of the issue of this thesis. Thereupon, the utilized qualitative methods and the interview selection criteria were outlined. Finally, the evaluation methods that are most adequate for the analysis of my empirical material were presented. The next chapter forms the theoretical framework upon which the analysis of the empirical material in chapter 5 and 6 will build.

3 Theoretical Framework

As this study focuses on the analysis of social innovation and transformation in Medellín's development, this chapter discusses the conceptualizations of transformative social innovation in contemporary literature by setting it in relation to the context of urban development.

3.1 Conceptualizations of Social Innovation

Firstly, it is important to understand the meaning of 'innovation' as such. Contemporary literature on social innovation distinguishes between 'invention', the discovery or creation of a new thing or idea, and 'innovation', i.e. the practical application of invention to new contexts (Jessop et al., 2013).

Secondly, due to the variety of definitions of social innovation in scholarly, political and professional practices and discourses, this study outlines the prevalent features of social innovation.

In Search of a Definition of Social Innovation

The global network on Social Innovation Exchange (SIX)¹⁰ has defined a working definition of social innovation which has been adopted by the Latin American Social Innovation Network (LASIN).¹¹ According to them, social innovation comprises “[n]ew ideas, product service and models which meet social needs and create new social relationships and collaboration. Innovations which are both good for society and enhance society's ability to act” (Anderson et al., 2018, p. 371).

This definition is amplified by a comprehensive study funded by the European Union (EU) on “Social innovation as a trigger for transformations” (Moulaert et al., 2017) which reviewed 25 EU-funded projects launched between 2008 and 2016 and analyzed the development of social innovation research and its different theoretical conceptualizations. The authors provide a working definition of social innovation that highlights the key elements that they identified in their literature review on social innovation research. Accordingly, the EU study understands social innovation as “a combination of at least 3 dimensions: collective satisfaction of unsatisfied or insufficiently met human needs,

¹⁰ <https://socialinnovationexchange.org/>

¹¹ <http://www.lasin-eu.org/>

building more cohesive social relations and, through socio-political bottom-linked empowerment, work toward more democratic societies and communities” (Moulaert et al., 2017, p. 10).

The comparison of the EU’s definition of social innovation with the one provided by SIX, reveals that they are very similar in emphasizing the objective of social innovation as the satisfaction of human needs, fostering social relations and empowerment. The definition by SIX understands social innovation to refer to “an ethical position of social justice” (Moulaert et al., 2013, p. 17), whereas the EU’s adds the aspect of democratization of societies and communities.

Dimensions of Social Innovation

In their latest monography called “Advanced Introduction to Social Innovation”, Frank Moulaert and Diana MacCallum (2019) identify the core dimensions and scales of the dynamics of social innovation in order to analyze their empirical case studies within these dimensions. Similar to the SIX and EU definitions above, the authors identify three dimensions in the frameworks developed by their social innovation research colleagues: ‘satisfaction of human needs’, ‘changing social relations’, and ‘collective empowerment’ on the micro, meso and macro scale (Moulaert & MacCallum, 2019, pp. 50–52). The micro scale focuses on organizational dynamics, assets for development and scalability; the meso scale describes institutional and governance dynamics, space-time, place and discourse; and the macro scale addresses socio-political transformation as well as inclusionary and exclusionary dynamics (Moulaert & MacCallum, 2019, table 4.1, pp. 51-52).

This thesis draws on their categorizations, as they follow a socio-territorial approach of social innovation, which has been utilized by others to analyze social innovation as driving urban developments (e.g. Hamdouch & Galvan, 2019) and is thus suitable to this research’s topic.

The above described broad definitions and dimensions of social innovation allow for the recognition of a variety of forms – “social, cultural and educational emancipation, social movements, bottom-up organizations aiming at the satisfaction of human needs, new forms of bottom-linked governance, in addition to solidarity and the social economy” can be understood as social innovations (Moulaert et al., 2017, p. 6). The outcomes or impact of social innovation depend on the specific territorial, institutional and political contexts,

as well as historical processes that shaped their emergence, implementation and governance (Moulaert, 2013; Novy & Leubolt, 2005, p. 2023). In addition to the path and context dependency, social innovation is also concerned with changing power relations in the dynamics of social relations (Moulaert et al., 2013, p. 17).

3.1.1 Historical and Contemporary Scholarship of Social Innovation

Concerning the historical evolution of social innovation,¹² innovation was mostly considered synonymous with technological innovation from the first third of the 20th century until the 1980s. Instead, the term ‘social innovation’ was coined earlier than the term ‘innovation’ (Moulaert & MacCallum, 2019). Godin (2015) states that it was first used in 15th-century religious texts in the Western hemisphere.

Contrary to its dominant meaning in contemporary times, Innovation had a highly socio-political and ideological connotation, which explains why it was a passionately contested term till the end of the 19th century. Until then it was at the heart of socio-political debates, more a slogan or an ethical ambition of ‘change’ and ‘revolution’, in conflict with the conservative ambition of maintaining societal relations as they were. (Moulaert et al., 2017, p. 13)

As of the 1970s, academic and policy interest in social innovation had returned, especially in the domains of urban and regional development. And in the 1980s, innovation was rediscovered within a systems approach to innovation (Lundvall, Dosi, & Freeman, 1988) and economic development (Edquist, 1992; Moulaert & Sekia, 2003).

The authors of the EU publication mention that:

This wave of work on economic and technological innovation overshadowed the more than two centuries-old history of SI [social innovation] [...]. In consequence, the socio-political and human dimensions of development and innovation were pushed to the back, and technology as well as business organisation came to the front as drivers of development. (Moulaert et al., 2017, p. 11)

Nevertheless, the exaggerated focus on technological innovation has led to a (re-)discovery of the importance of social innovation and the social impact of technological innovation (Moulaert et al., 2017, p. 17), especially in recent literature on innovation systems (e.g. Isaksen & Trippel, 2017; Moulaert & Sekia, 2003). Likewise, social

¹² For a detailed overview of the historical conceptualizations of (social) innovation see the tabular overview in table 1 in Moulaert et al. (2017, p. 16) or its reworked version in Moulaert and MacCallum (2019, pp. 27–28)

innovation has been experiencing an increase in popularity among policy makers and academics which “can be interpreted as a necessary corrective strategy to tackle the social problems emerging due to state retrenchment and austerity policies” (Moulaert et al., 2017, p. 11).

Social Innovation as Policy Panacea and Public Sector Reform?

Social innovation is an opaque term, as ‘social’ and ‘innovation’ alone are complex concepts to grasp. Combined, they create even more confusion as the term has been used in an ambiguous manner (Jessop et al., 2013). Social innovation guides social and political movements aiming to pursue human development, while at the same time it is seen as a panacea for solving the crisis of the welfare state (Moulaert et al., 2013, p. 17).

It therefore makes sense to ask: “Is social innovation about innovation?”. By posing this question, Silveira and Zilber (2017) reveal in their bibliometric study of the main authors and citations on the theme over the past 20 years that most research connects social innovation to entrepreneurship or investigates it within the framework of institutional theory and public policy analysis. Additionally, in practice, social innovation is “à la mode” (Jessop et al., 2013): For instance, social innovation guides OECD (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development) policy advice on the role of social entrepreneurship in combating socioeconomic restructuring or social exclusion, and it is promoted in strategies of organizations and foundations such as Ashoka Innovators for the Public¹³ or the Schwab Foundation for Social Entrepreneurship¹⁴ in partnership with the World Economic Forum, which globally promotes market-driven social innovation. Likewise, in the UK, the Young Foundation is championing the entrepreneurial concept of social innovation, and in the US, Obama has established the Social Innovation Fund within the White House (Thompson, 2018, p.7).

Overcoming Conceptual Dualities?

In conclusion, the above described research landscape on social innovation exemplifies that there is a lack of clarity with regard to the definition of social innovation. There appears to be a competition of between different understandings of innovation – technological and economic in nature on the one hand or social on the other. Nonetheless,

¹³ <https://www.ashoka.org>

¹⁴ <https://www.schwabfound.org/>

such a dual understanding is also delusive as social impact becomes more relevant to technological or organizational innovations. This lack of clarity may also be attributed to “its over-simplistic use as a buzzword in a multiplicity of policy practices associated, for example, with the rationalization of the welfare state and the commodification of sociocultural wellbeing” (Moulaert et al., 2013, p. 13).

For this master’s thesis, however, it is useful to distinguish two broad research streams on social innovation in order to establish a clear analytical framework. According to Moulaert et al. (2017, p. 24), there exists a certain dualism in the social innovation research landscape which the authors contest and provide their own differentiation into two streams. On the one hand, Moulaert et al. (2017, p. 6) identify the ‘practical organizational stream’, which presents social entrepreneurship as a driver of innovation and considers value creation to result from organizational means. On the other hand, they identify the ‘territorial development stream’, which emphasizes social innovation as a concept for meeting human needs and for the promotion of political mobilization among vulnerable and marginalized communities.

Based on this assessment, this study also distinguishes two fields of innovation. As mentioned in the introductory chapter, Thompson’s study (2018) on social innovation for urban transformation has particular importance for this research, as it analyzes social innovation with respect to its value for urban development. Therefore, his distinction is applicable to my analysis. Thompson differentiates between ‘capitalocentric’ and ‘transformative social innovation’, which will be explained in more detail, along with how these conceptions relate to the urban context, in the following sub-chapters.

3.1.2 Capitalocentric Innovation

“Innovation is perhaps the buzzword in local economic development policy” (Thompson, 2018, p. 1). According to Thompson (2018), the conventional notion of ‘innovation’ refers to neoliberal ideas such as higher productivity, technological progress or global competitiveness. This conception of innovation suggests that innovation is thus conflated with ‘invention’ (Thompson, 2018, p. 7). He supports Gibson-Graham’s (Gibson-Graham, 2006, 2008) notion of ‘capitalocentrism’, which relates all forms of life to capitalism, and applies it to the term ‘capitalocentric innovation’. As such, innovation is related to capitalism and makes other practices invisible (Thompson, 2018, p. 5). According to Thompson, innovation is most commonly perceived in a capitalocentric

manner, as it is associated with the “popular imagination on technological invention and organizational change to produce efficient gains and new growth opportunities” (2018, p. 5 after Drewe, Klein, & Hulsbergen, 2008a). To illustrate this claim, Thompson cites Blake and Hanson’s (2005) study, in which they demonstrate that the grey literature treats innovation as directly related to economic growth.

Under a capitalocentric approach to innovation, local economic development is focused on exogenous investment, export-oriented innovation industries and large-scale state-led urban renewal (Thompson, 2018, p. 4). Peck’s (2017) conceptualization of the ‘entrepreneurial city’ adequately describes how neoliberal urban policy has fostered enterprise and entrepreneurialism since the 1980s. Local economic development has hence foregrounded the entrepreneurial capacities of the private sector by installing ‘enterprise zones’ (Thompson 2018, p. 5). These days, the creative industry, which is considered to be closely related to innovation, is regarded as a “panacea to the economic problems of deindustrializing cities” (Peck, 2005 as cited in Thompson, 2018, p. 5), once again establishing a connection between innovation and capitalism.

Post-Development and Decolonial Critique on Innovation

The literature review demonstrates that discourses on social innovation are shaped by European and Canadian scholarship, despite the presence and evolution of social innovation in Latin America, e.g. the experiences in Brazil (Novy & Leubolt, 2005). As a decolonially positioned researcher, I therefore consider it important to present a brief overview of the Latin American critique on the outlined approaches to social innovation.

In Svampa’s “Latin American Critique of Development” (2019), she identifies three different periods: the critique of consumer society, post-development and post-extractivism. To give a few examples for each period (following Svampa, 2019, pp. 19–20): During the 1980s, critiques of consumption were based on Ivan Illich’s highly influential notion of ‘conviviality’ (Illich, 1973) as a cultural critique of the rationality and materialism in post-industrial society. Post-developmentalism comprises the second period: Gustavo Esteva (2010 [1992]) criticized the modern concept of development as a Western post-war invention and Arturo Escobar (1995) criticized the division between the ‘developed’ and the ‘underdeveloped’ as an instrument of colonial domination which led him to propose alternatives *to* development instead of development alternatives. The third period of Latin American Development critique started in the early 2000s and is still

ongoing. Under the term of neo-extractivism¹⁵ Latin American critics oppose the extractivist exploitation of nature for economic development in mega-projects following a productivist logic.

Taking the critical stance of post-development scholars from Latin America to this research's topic, entails a questioning of the local development model based on growth and progress inherent to colonial and capitalist logics of technological advancements. Therefore, Arturo Escobar (2012) and Gustavo Esteva (2010 [1992]) would oppose to a capitalocentric approach to innovation as described by Thompson (2018, p. 4). Sayaka Oki (2019) even argues that the current concept of innovation resembles 'progress' as interpreted by elite policymakers and intellectuals in terms of meaning and the role it plays. Post-development and decolonial critique disapproves of precisely this idea of 'progress' as it has been exported to the Latin American continent by the global North and adopted by local elites, since this dominant idea imposes a global hegemonic power patron, according to Aníbal Quijano (2000).

In the "Pluriverse" post-development dictionary, Kothari et al. (2019) criticize Eurocentric approaches to economic development, as they neglect the diversity of views on planetary well-being and its protection in line with *buen vivir* ('well-being' based on conviviality),¹⁶ cooperation and nature conservation. Indeed, seeing innovation as merely connected to high-tech sectors and the entrepreneurial productivist growth paradigm, "stresses innovation as a means to decouple growth from natural capital depletion" (U. Brand & Lang, 2019, p. 56).¹⁷ It also deprives the concept of other possible interpretations that might provide creative solutions to problems and socio-economic and ecological transformations (see Joly, 2019). Critical issues, such as unequal access to capitalocentric innovations and the lack of action in response to structural problems, e.g., spatial inequalities manifesting in concentrated unemployment, missing opportunities or skill gaps and associated problems, remain unsolved (see Thompson, 2018). Many authors caution against a purely economic view on social innovation which reduces the potential of social innovation (see also Lechevalier, 2019).

¹⁵ See Eduardo Gudynas (2012) for more details on neo-extractivism as an economic development model.

¹⁶ For details on the *buen vivir* concept, see Alberto Acosta (2012).

¹⁷ One example is the 'Green Growth Strategy' promoted by the OECD.

The next sub-chapter gives an overview of a transformative concept of social innovation, which seeks to go beyond its capitalocentric and technological mainstream conceptualization as criticized by post-development or decolonial researchers.

3.1.3 Transformative Social Innovation

An emerging field regards social innovation as disruptive, understanding social innovation approaches as counter-hegemonic conceptions of innovation and as a problem-solving strategy in response to urban policy failure or an approach to innovating institutions and political configurations (Thompson, 2018). In such a transformative understanding of innovation, the concept is disentangled from its capitalist conceptualizations and re-appropriated for progressive social change (see e.g. in Avelino et al., 2017; Avelino & Wittmayer, 2016; Drewe, Klein, & Hulsbergen, 2008b; Moulaert, Swyngedouw, Martinelli, & González, 2010).

Learnings and Definitions from TRANSIT

The EU has funded research on (transformative) social innovation in response to uneven urban development and inner-city decline. Accordingly, it makes sense to examine a specifically relevant project in more detail, as it provides important learnings and analytical conceptualizations for this thesis: TRANSIT ('transformative social innovation theory'). Albeit EU-funded, the research project includes partners and researchers as well as selected cases from Latin America. Therefore, the findings can be applied to this thesis.

TRANSIT took place from 2014 until 2017 and sought to provide a progressive social innovation theory by studying the relation of social innovation to transformative change by focusing on globally networked social innovation initiatives in Europe and Latin America (see e.g. Avelino et al., 2015; Haxeltine et al., 2017; Pel & Bauler, 2014).¹⁸ Thus, TRANSIT provides a conceptual framework for this master's thesis seeking to contribute to the understanding of how social innovation drives transformation.

A key feature of the TRANSIT approach is to view social innovation (SI) specifically in terms of how it leads to the creation of new *socio-material relations*, both between the members of an initiative and between members and any aspect of society with which they interact. (Haxeltine et al., 2017, p. 9)

¹⁸ For a full documentation of the project outcomes, please find all TRANSIT resources here: <http://www.transitsocialinnovation.eu/downloads>

This additionally highlights the path- and context dependency of social innovation outlined earlier. TRANSIT further understands transformative change “as a persistent adjustment in societal values, outlooks and behaviours of sufficient ‘width and depth’ to alter any preceding situation in the social-material context” (Haxeltine et al., 2017, p. 17).

In this vein, transformative social innovation

can now be understood as a process by which social innovation challenges, alters or replaces the dominant institutions in a specific context. Rather than as a ‘type’ of innovation, we consider TSI [transformative social innovation] as a particular ‘process’ that contributes to transformative change in the existing institutional arrangements in the context. (Haxeltine et al., 2017, p. 11)

According to TRANSIT, social innovation is only considered to be transformative, if it reconfigures institutions.

In my first master’s thesis on community communication for social transformation (Beßler, 2018), I analyze how social change can happen and how it differs from social transformation. I followed Oscar Jara’s (2010) definition who regards

social change as a change in society (a partial modification of relationships within a social structure or system) or, more radically, a change of society (a mutation that leads to building a new system that is different from the previous one), in which case the notion is closer to social transformation or even social revolution. (Jara, 2010, p. 289)

For social transformation to be achieved through communication, I concluded that social change occurs when a change in communication on an individual level leads to a change of structures on a community level, which can then ultimately be considered a transformation of society as whole. According to Jara (2010), “[d]ifferent definitions concur that society is a system of multiple and diverse relationships, thus social change refers to the modification of such relationships” (p. 288). In this context, the link to the dimension of social innovation developed above, namely the ‘change of social relationships’, is evident. Moreover, my previous work shows that changes on different levels have to occur in order to be considered transformation and not merely change. The next paragraph elaborates on this in more detail.

Multi-Level and Multi-Actor Perspective

“Change in only one dimension is not considered to be a societal transformation. There have to be related changes in several dimensions in the context, and they have to happen simultaneously and across an array of places” (Haxeltine et al., 2017, p. 10). This quote illustrates why it is beneficial to combine a multi-level perspective and lessons from transition studies (Avelino & Wittmayer, 2016; Nyseth & Hamdouch, 2019; Simmons et al., 2018) in order to explore the transformative character of social innovation. In the following, it is further explained how this relates to the multi-actor approach in conflict transformation.

A ‘multi-level’ approach (Avelino et al., 2017), views social innovation as a process of change that occurs on interdependent levels spanning ‘niches’, ‘regimes’ and ‘landscapes’. When the different levels are reinforced, a transition from one system to another occurs. These levels are to be understood to be similar to Moulaert and MacCallum’s (2019) ‘micro’, ‘meso’ and ‘macro’ scales, which they identified for the social innovation dimensions of ‘satisfaction of human needs’, ‘changing social relations’ and ‘collective empowerment’ (see chapter 3.1). In the same vein, TRANSIT characterizes social innovation as composed of ‘multi-actors’, which are stabilized and channeled by institutions, to which Pel and Bauler ascribe the role of setting ‘the rules of the game’ (2014, p. 2).

Thompson (2018) adapts this ‘play and game’ analogy by assessing how social innovation can occur within the constituent system, in his analysis of the socio-economic development of urban policies in Liverpool, United Kingdom. He problematizes the neoliberalizing urban regime and argues for broader definitions of innovation that allow for the reconfiguration of institutional logics before being captured by them. Thompson concludes that innovations can be socially transformative when implementing a multi-actor and cross-sector, transdisciplinary approach.

Furthermore, elicitive conflict transformation theory also uses a multi-actor approach, building on John Paul Lederach’s (1997) vertical categories of top, middle-range and grassroots leaders in processes of ‘multi-track diplomacy’. Lederach later based this idea of including various actors on his “web approach as a social theory for peacebuilding” by conceptualizing actors as web-weavers, relating to actors from different levels (Lederach, 2005, p. 80).

These multi-level and multi-actor perspectives are relevant to the case of Medellín, as the present study seeks to understand social innovation on a micro scale within niches such as particular neighborhoods, system innovation within different regimes such as housing or education policies on a meso level, and finally on a macro scale of historical trends such as the turn towards a knowledge economy. It also examines the roles of various stakeholders on different levels and from different sectors by locating them within the ecosystem of Medellín's transformation.

For the purpose of establishing a sound theoretical framework for how social innovation leads to transformation, social innovation theory, transition studies and social innovation theory provide important concepts. The next sub-chapter extends the theoretical framework to key concepts from urban governance and urban development theory and explains the socially innovative aspects of the concept of 'Social Urbanism', which is of great relevance to the case of Medellín.

3.2 Social Innovation and Transformation in Urban Development

In relation to the research issue, it makes sense to adhere to a territorial development perspective on social innovation as this thesis focuses on local development and the inclusion of excluded groups in different spheres of society (see e.g. MacCallum et al., 2009; Moulaert et al., 2013). Theoretical contributions on 'participatory democracy' or 'collective governance' have contributed to the comprehension of social innovation in an urban context and in understanding the role of civil society in Medellín's transformation.

In their work on the "The Transformative Power of Social Innovation in Urban Planning and Local Development", Nyseth and Hamdouch (2019) argue that social innovation is strongly related to both spatial planning and local development approaches due to its institutional, political, cultural and socioeconomic dependency. According to the authors, social innovation "influences territorial development in given places and at certain times" (Nyseth & Hamdouch, 2019, p. 2).

The analytical framework developed in the following is later utilized to examine how social innovation and transformation in Medellín are viewed by involved actors. Therefore, theoretical discussion of Social Urbanism, a concept central to the Medellín experience and key to understanding the city's socio-economic development, cannot be omitted.

3.2.1 Socially Innovative Aspects of Social Urbanism

'Urbanismo Social' or 'Social Urbanism' describes the physical interventions in poorer city sectors in Medellín over the period from 2002 until 2010. These were above all aesthetic in nature, as high quality architecture "aimed to materialize the idea of inclusion" (P. Brand, 2016, p. 4), but also functional, since they aimed at improving quality of life indices as well as access to public services (P. Brand, 2016, p. 4).

Otherwise, the 'Medellín model', in addition to the architectural projects of Social Urbanism, includes aspects of 'good governance'. In the case of Medellín, this comprises "planning, fiscal discipline, transparency, participation and communication, with a substantive emphasis on education, culture, entrepreneurship, inclusion and 'peaceful coexistence'" (P. Brand, 2016, p. 4).

It becomes clear that Social Urbanism reflects the conviction that spatial changes lead to social changes through implementation of municipal urban planning programs to end drug violence and to include poorer neighborhoods in the socio-economic development of the city. The interrelations are depicted in the nexus of space, transformation, violence and peace. According to Lederach, conflict transformation is "about finding resources based on relationships, connectors, and social spaces within the setting that had a capacity to generate processes of change" (Lederach, 2005, p. 80). His quote explains the connection between social transformation to conflict transformation.

In discussions about social innovation in a specific city, Medellín in this case, literature and popular discourse commonly refer to 'urban innovation' (see P. Brand, 2016; Garcia Ferrari, Smith, Coupe et al., 2018; Laurent, 2019). Although this term is often limited to mere physical makeovers, this research employs a broader understanding of 'social innovation' since it also aims at investigating transformative potential.

The present chapter focuses on specific innovative aspects of Social Urbanism. As related changes need to be effective in various dimensions for transformation to occur (Haxeltine et al., 2017, p. 10), the dimensions of social innovation are applied to Social Urbanism. The three dimensions have been summarized by Moulaert and MacCallum (2019) in their revision of social innovation theory and are combined with a fourth dimension from TRANSIT: (1) satisfaction of human needs, (2) changing social relations, (3) collective empowerment and (4) socio-political transformation (see chapter 3.1). Drawing this theoretical connection between Social Urbanism and its traits of transformative social

innovation provides the ground for a discussion of the case examples and interview material in chapter 5 and 6.

(1) Satisfaction of Human Needs Dimension

Social urbanism is related to the ‘satisfaction of human needs’ dimension of social innovation, as its purpose was to foster social equity through urban interventions, prioritizing urban areas with severe socio-economic issues. “The focus was on providing people with a say on ways to re-conquer spaces lost to violence; scoping out and experimenting with new ideas” (Simmons et al., 2018, p. 246).

The aim was to tackle social exclusion by fulfilling human needs through the application of new approaches to innovation and governance: the need for transport connectivity through mobility projects such as aerial cable cars (see) or metro lines; the need for quality education through new schools; the need for public life through the creation of public spaces such as the *Parque Bibliotecas* (Library Parks); the need for decent and legitimate work through the provision of entrepreneurial and employment opportunities, e.g., the entrepreneurial support centers (CEDEZOs) in *comunas*.

A critical view on human needs and planning

At this point, it is interesting to briefly look at Ivan Illich’s criticism of ‘needs’, as he claims that “thirty years ago ‘needs’ was one of a dozen concepts out of which a global world-view was shaped”, which has inscribed the satisfaction of needs into a market logic (Illich, 2010 [1992], p. 108). By this logic, urban planning, which aims at the ‘satisfaction of human needs’, “embodies the belief that social change can be engineered and directed, produced at will” (Escobar, 2010 [1992], p. 145). In his critique of ‘planning’ as a European concept, Escobar suggests that criteria of rationality and efficiency reproduce the idea of progress through economic development, which marginalizes other systems of knowledge and concepts of social change (Escobar, 2010 [1992], p. 151).

(2) Changing Social Relations and (3) Collective Empowerment Dimension

Social urbanism is also related to the social innovation dimensions of ‘changing social relations’ and ‘collective empowerment’ due to its objective to create public spaces for the purpose of community and trust building in addition to including the inhabitants of marginalized city districts into planning processes and decision-making.

Participatory democracy through community participation

Participatory democracy through community involvement in planning processes has the purpose of developing democratic behavior and strengthening civic identity (Simmons et al., 2018; Urán Arenas, 2010). In Medellín, citizen participation was also key “to disarm[ing] politically violent actors and clientelistic politicians” (Urán Arenas, 2010, p. 127).

In addition to community participation, participatory democracy has a second important feature, namely ‘participatory budgeting’. This field has been studied in order to trace the emergence of and changes in social innovation (Cipolla, Afonso, Wittmayer, Bibiana, & Rach, 2016). The role of social innovation in urban development has been extensively analyzed by examining participatory budgeting in Brazilian cities (Novy & Leubolt, 2005). The concept of participatory budgeting, especially in Porto Alegre in Brazil has existed long before it was strongly linked to the Social Urbanism project in Medellín. Additionally, in contrast to common believe, Medellín’s participatory budgeting initiative had already been introduced by mayor Juan Gómez Martínez in 1998.

It was a political initiative designed to leverage reflexive governance experiments by empowering citizens to determine their own priorities and increase transparency of how funds are spent. The specific ways to implement the participatory budget and the kinds of programmes that it supports was contentious. Nevertheless, it overturned decades of development in which investment was steered by political and economic elites at the city level who did not grasp the socio-economic priorities of people in the comunas. (Simmons et al., 2018, p. 246)

This quote demonstrates the inherent empowerment of participation in planning, as it provides the members of the community with a channel to express their priorities.

A critical view on good governance approaches and (dis)empowerment

In general, ‘good governance’ discourses promote cross-sector partnerships and citizen participation and are considered empowering and democratic forms of governing (Swyngedouw, 2009). Yet, Franz (2018b) argues that good governance approaches fail to study regional economic development. He argues that “the historical and the social evolution of context-specific power balances, the interests, capabilities and position of elites and firms within this balance, and the interaction between place-based actors and place-less globalized dynamics” (p. 7) have to be evaluated in order to be able to

holistically comprehend the institutional implementation and enforcement capacities of regional governance agencies.

Critical voices of post-development scholarship further question whether empowerment is actually achieved: “Participatory democracy fails to eliminate the verticality of democratic societies [...] in which professionals assume legislative, executive and judiciary power in each field and prevent the participation of common people in the functions of government” (Esteva, 2019, p. 100). Such critics view governance as an elite endeavor that excludes common people from policy-making.

(4) Socio-Political Transformation Dimension

In addition to Moulaert’s and MacCallum’s (2019) three dimensions of social innovation, another dimension should be considered: the ‘socio-political transformation’ dimension as provided in TRANSIT literature, which has also been adopted by Moulaert and MacCallum (see figure 3.2, p. 47). With respect to the decolonial and post-development critique outlined above, this trait of Social Urbanism is equally important to examine, as the socio-political transformation dimension requires a systemic approach to social innovation.

Systemic changes through windows of opportunity

With regard to systemic changes, Nyseth and Hamdouch state that social innovation can ‘open windows’ for more democratic dialogue (2019, p. 4). The authors reference ‘windows of opportunity’, which have been analyzed by Avelino et al., suggesting that “actors can strategically propose systemic alternatives when windows of opportunity appear” (2017, p. 199). In addition, these windows open on a micro scale and can be transferred to the meso or macro scale: “All these are windows of opportunities for social creativity which may emerge from challenges to institutional practices. Innovation often emerges from conflict: opportunity spaces at micro scales may make creative strategies possible at macro scales” (Moulaert et al., 2013, p. 17).

In the context of Social Urbanism, this means that a change in the city’s governance model opens a window of opportunity at the micro scale for residents to promote their own visions for the development of the community. This process is facilitated by the provision of state resources, funding and the inclusion of their visions in municipal and

national development plans on the meso and macro scale (see Simmons et al., 2018, p. 246).

Thus, windows of opportunity can induce systemic structural changes, as they are simultaneously integrating dialogical processes on multi-level scales. TRANSIT literature contests the ‘systemic’ nature of transformative change (Avelino et al., 2015; Haxeltine et al., 2017; Pel & Bauler, 2014). Likewise, elicitive conflict transformation literature follows a systemic approach (Unesco Chair for Peace Studies, 2014) based on Lederach’s (1997) vertical categories of top, middle range and grassroots leaders, regarding the altering of the dynamics of human interaction as the objective of constructive social change (Lederach, 2005).

3.2.2 Ecosystems of Innovation

Literature on social innovation has also included a focus on ‘systems of innovation’ (Moulaert et al., 2017). “The concept of ‘national innovation systems’ was introduced in the 1990s to describe the network of institutions that interact in a country to make knowledge flow among research institutions, firms and government agencies” (Nelson, 1993 as cited in Anheier, 2012).

As mentioned in the introduction, stakeholders in Medellín use the term ‘ecosystem of innovation’. At Ruta N at the Laboratory of Innovation, an ecosystem is defined as: “Community of living beings whose vital processes are related to each other and are developed according to the physical factors of the same environment”¹⁹ (Real Academia de la Lengua Española, 2019). Accordingly, the term ‘ecosystem of innovation’ is inspired by natural ecosystems²⁰ and has been adopted to describe the flow of information and knowledge (see Acuto, Steenmans, Iwaszuk, & Ortega-Garza, 2019; Morisson, 2019a, 2019b). Connected to this idea are terms such as ‘digital ecosystems’ or ‘cluster’. Innovation districts, such as the district in which Ruta N is located, form one kind of cluster, comprising start-ups, firms and research centers that “aim to facilitate creation and commercialisation of new ideas, and often focus on re-urbanisation projects” (Acuto et al., 2019, p. 97).

¹⁹ Own translation, original quote in Spanish: *Comunidad de los seres vivos cuyos procesos vitales se relacionan entre sí y se desarrollan en función de los factores físicos de un mismo ambiente.*

²⁰ Westley et al. (2013) explicitly follow an ‘ecosystem approach’ by drawing on theories of ecosystem resilience for the role of innovation in resilient social systems.

Smart City Debate

With regard to ecosystems of innovation, the debate on ‘smart cities’ “has become quite popular among scholars and practitioners as the new challenge for global competitiveness” (Ferraris, Santoro, & Papa, 2018, p. 52). This illustrates the contemporary tendency discussed above to view innovation as a tool for increasing competitiveness. Smart cities are generally understood as open, user-driven innovation ecosystems that improve company’s innovation by integrating governments, companies, users, research centers and universities into innovation processes (Ferraris et al., 2018, p. 52).

The debate on Smart Cities has also significantly shaped urban debates in the global South, as the concept promises more efficient use of resources, a decrease in pollution and an improved quality of life (March, 2019, p. 68). March criticizes that “mainstream understandings of the Smart City denote a high degree of technological determinism” (2019, p. 68) as higher technology use is assumed to improve the quality of life for everybody. “Therefore, under the Smart City imaginary, technological change spearheads social change” (March, 2019, p. 68).

March considers this reasoning problematic since “it overestimates the transformative capacity of technology while overshadowing the structural political-economical dimensions of socio-environmental urban problems, such as poverty, discrimination or inequality” (2019, p. 69). He further suggests that “hegemonic Smart City deployments replace the pursuit of socio-environmental justice and the ‘right to the city’ with that of the democratization of technology” (2019, p. 69) and that they “reinforce existing unequal power relationships and enhance social disparities and exclusion of some stakeholders” (2019, p. 69).

Triple, Quadruple or Multi-Helix?

This exclusion of stakeholders finds repercussions in the distinction of a ‘triple helix’ of actors in an ecosystem, comprised by the (1) state, (2) market, and (3) science. However, this does not include the civil society sector. However, even within debates featuring rather technical understandings of innovation, e.g. by Etzkowitz (2008, p. 11), the importance of civil society is highlighted. Innovation system literature increasingly adds (4) of civil society as a category, resulting in a ‘quadruple helix’ (Avelino & Wittmayer, 2016, p. 630).

Nonetheless, from the perspective of transition studies, Avelino and Wittmayer criticize that civil society as a fourth category appears to encompass everything other than ‘market’ or ‘government’ (2016, pp. 630-631). They emphasize that it is not only important to differentiate between different organizational sectors, such as (1) state, (2) market, (3) community and (4) third sector, which includes social enterprises and cooperative organizations, but also between actors at different levels of aggregation, i.e., (a) sectors, (b) organizational actors, and (c) individual actors. This differentiation is illustrated in figure 1 below.



Figure 1: Level of organizational actors in different sectors (Avelino & Wittmayer, 2016, p. 637)

Distinguishing such levels allows for an analysis of power shifts by not only determining the distribution of power, but also the types thereof (Avelino & Wittmayer, 2016, p. 644).

For the analysis of ecosystems of social innovation, Emilio Ricci and Roberto Concha Mathiesen (2018) developed a ‘multi-helix’ of social innovation, emphasizing the role of entrepreneurs, as illustrated in figure 2.

Within their model, they understand social innovation as induced by civil society, which – in dialogue with academia, the state, enterprises and their community – develops a new solution to a problem that has not been satisfactorily resolved through existing solutions (Ricci & Concha Mathiesen, 2018, p. 37).

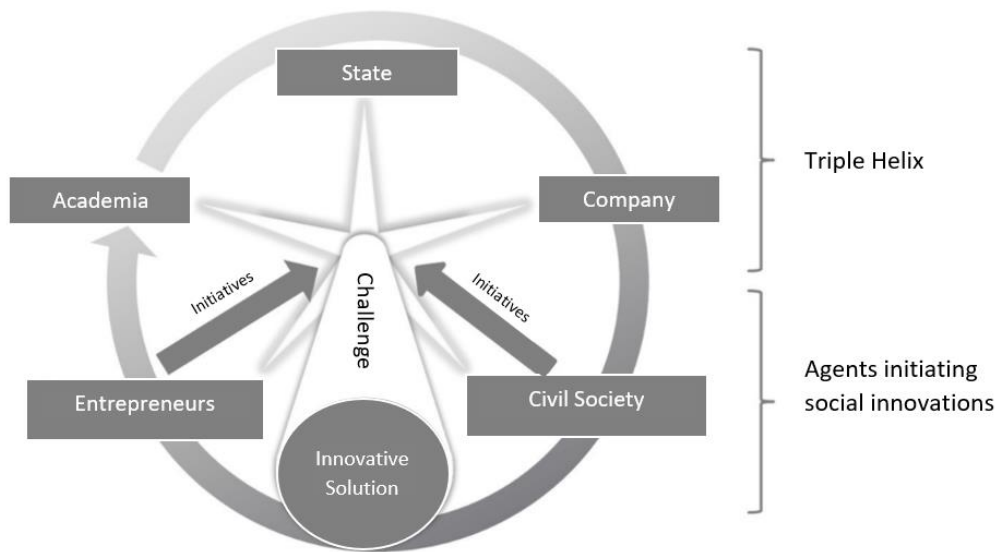


Figure 2: Multi-helix of social innovation, own illustration based on Ricci & Concha Mathiesen (2018, p. 37)

Regardless of the conceptual differences in both actor models, approaching the issue from a perspective that includes a plurality of actors, especially those who are not part of academia, businesses or the public sector, might help overcome some of the criticism of “conventional forms of fostering local competitiveness via cluster formation of the so-called ‘triple helix paradigm’” (Fernandes, Novy, & Singer, 2013, p. 394). In a similar vein, Jessop et al. argue that social innovation research should be more reflexive than the largely functionalist ‘innovation system approaches’ and beware of a ‘de-ethicization’ evoked by the mainstreaming of social innovation (Jessop et al., 2013, p. 120).

Social Capital in Ecosystems

Examining the concept of ‘social capital’ in ecosystems might resolve the issue of irreflexivity in functionalist approaches to analyzing ecosystems. The existing literature suggest a clear link between social innovation and social capital as demonstrated in a study which applies social network analysis to ‘social innovation ecosystems’ (Alcaide Lozano, Moliner, Murillo, & Buckland, 2019). Additionally, Moulaert and MacCallum categorize social capital under the social innovation dimension of ‘changing social relations’ and on the macro scale of inclusionary and exclusionary dynamics (Moulaert & MacCallum, 2019, table 4.1, pp. 51-52). A basic understanding of social capital is provided by Elinor Ostrom (2005) who defines three forms of social capital that are fundamental for collective action: (1) trust and norms of reciprocity, (2) networks and different forms of civil society participation, (3) formal and informal rules of institutions.

Adolfo Eslava (2017) builds on Ostrom's work and criticizes the tendency of most public decision-makers to highlight the technical-political dimension while ignoring existing bonds within a community: such as trust, cooperation and other social dynamics. He argues that public policies thereby depreciate the dimension of community knowledge, i.e., the social capital. He even comments on potential negative effects public policies might have on collective capacities, as "it is possible to affirm that policy analysis based only on terms of efficiency or discourses, State or market ends up enhancing tools of power and knowledge which may cause damage to human attributes and collective capacities"²¹ (Eslava, 2017, p. 39). Eslava concludes that urban policies are required to "take that local institutionality – built on attributes such as trust and capacities like cooperation – to strengthen state intervention and harmonize it with collective arrangements rather than presenting it as invasive or paternalistic."²² (Eslava, 2017, p. 25).

In Mode of Synthesis

This chapter has developed a theoretical framework which allows conceptualizing social innovation and its transformative potential for the context of urban development. The study draws on Moulaert and MacCallum's (2019) summary of the three different dimensions of social innovation research: (1) satisfaction of human needs, (2) changing social relations, (3) collective empowerment in combination with the lessons from transformative social innovation research developed in TRANSIT (4) changed dominant institutions, hinting at socio-political transformation (see Haxeltine et al., 2017). This is useful to analyze the perspectives of the involved actors in chapter 6. Moreover, the concept of 'innovation systems' was explored in order to be able to analyze Medellín's ecosystem of innovation in chapter 5.

²¹ Own translation, original quote in Spanish: *es posible afirmar que el análisis de políticas basado solo en términos de eficiencia o discursos, Estado o mercado termina por realzar herramientas de poder y saber que pueden causar daño a los atributos humanos y a las capacidades colectiva.*

²² Own translation, original quote in Spanish: *tomar esa institucionalidad local – construida sobre atributos como la confianza y capacidades como la cooperación- para fortalecer la intervención estatal y hacerla armoniosa con los arreglos colectivos en lugar de presentarse como invasiva o paternalista.*

4 A Review of Medellín's Transformation

This section provides a brief contextualization of Medellín's transformation by reviewing how the city's spatiality, narcotrafficking and the dynamics of the national armed conflict have conditioned its transformation process. As argued earlier, considering the historical and contextual embedding of the research topic is vital for the transdisciplinary research based on social innovation theory, political economy approaches as well as conflict transformation theory.

For the purpose of this thesis, chapter 4.1 sketches the conditions for the city's development before 1991, which is identified as the year when the social innovation and transformation period began. Medellín's beginnings, urban migration as a result of rural violence and narcotrafficking's impact are the topics presented. Then, in chapter 4.2, key developments after 1991²³ are briefly outlined due to their relevance to the focus of this work: the power reconfigurations after the Medellín Cartel's narcoterrorism and the urbanization of the Colombian armed conflict. Thereafter, the Social Urbanism era, during which it was attempted to improve the state of the city marked by violence and inequality, is outlined in chapter 4.3. Finally, chapter 4.4 reviews critical assessments of the impact of Social Urbanism, as voiced in literature.

4.1 Medellín's Conditionalities Before 1991

Medellín's Spatiality

Medellín is the capital of the Department of Antioquia and the second largest city in Colombia with 2.5 million inhabitants, as of 2019 (DANE, 2019). The city's steep topography results from the fact that it is not only surrounded by but also embedded in a mountain range (Garcia Ferrari, Smith, Coupe et al., 2018, p. 354), see figure 3.

As figure 4 illustrates, Medellín is administratively divided into 16 *comunas* (districts) and 5 *corregimientos* (rural townships). The *comunas* themselves can be further subdivided into 249 *barrios* (neighborhoods), which are further divided by invisible boundaries not shown on any municipal map but defined by territorial strongholds of urban militias.

²³ Since literature on Medellín's socio-economic development and violence trajectory greatly diverges, this thesis follows the periodization of the National Center for Historic Memory (2017) for facilitation purposes.

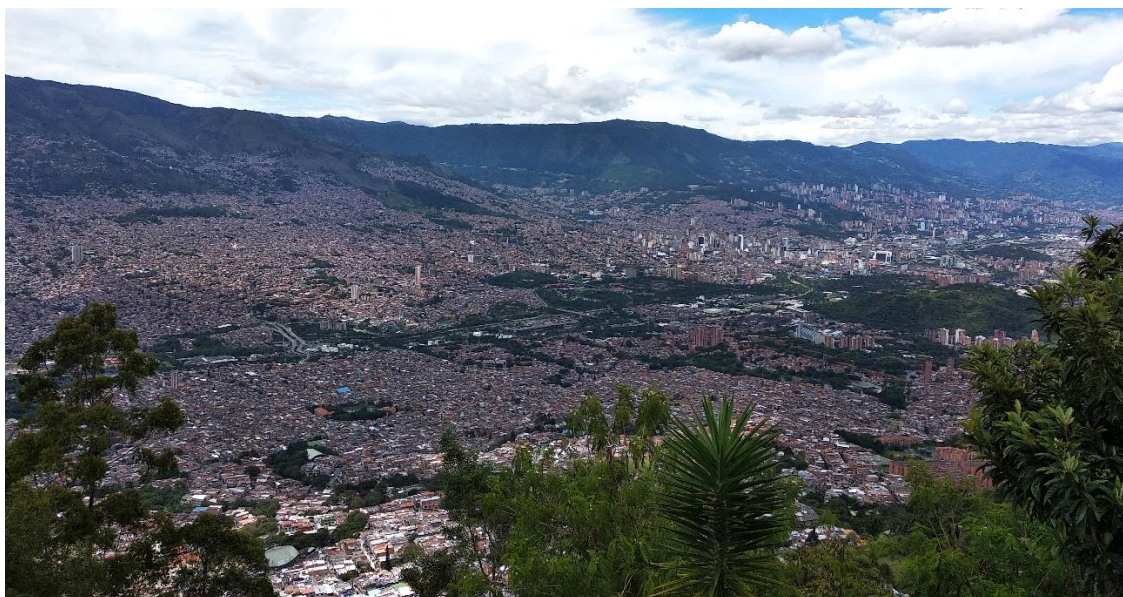


Figure 3: View on Medellín's valley from comuna 6, 12 de octubre, barrio Picacho (own picture, June, 2019)

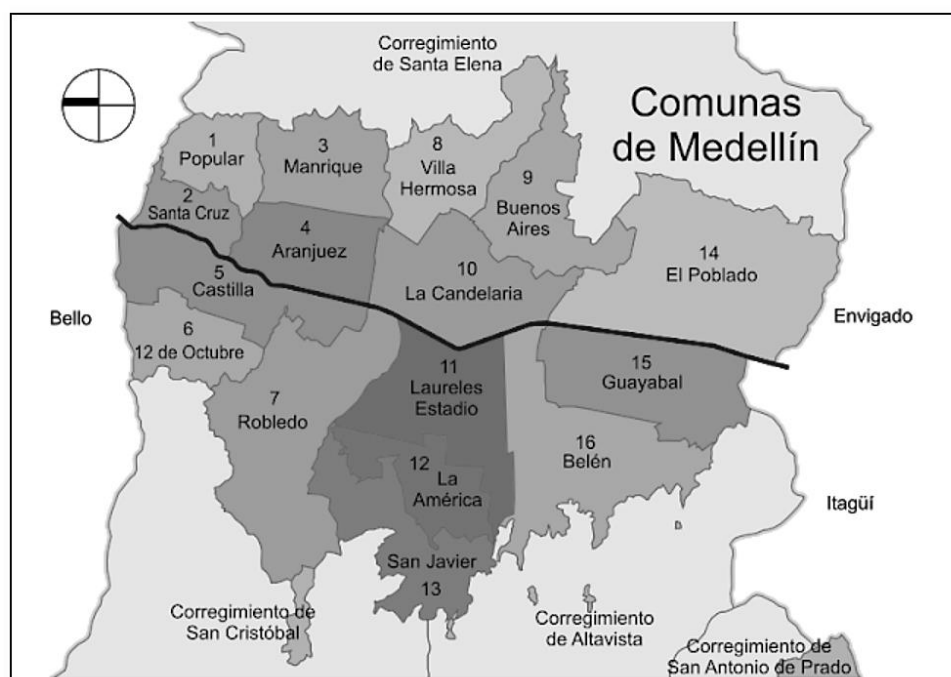


Figure 4: Map of Medellín's comunas (Morrow, 2019)

Although Medellín is formed by 16 *comunas*, only the poorer city areas especially in the northeast and northwest, are referred to as such. Other city districts in the Southern part are never associated with the popular images and stereotypes conveyed by the word *comunas*.²⁴

²⁴ For a profound discussion of the effect of stereotyping certain city areas, see my master's thesis on *favelas* in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil in Beßler (2018).

From Coffee to Textile to Knowledge Economy

Since Medellín is situated in an upland valley in the coffee department of Antioquia, the city was founded as a gold-mining town and trading center in 1675. In the 18th century, it became the region's commercial capital (Hylton, 2010, p. 340).

Hylton (2010, pp. 341-342) reviews Medellín's history: By the end of the 19th century, the Antioquians who had settled in the south to install the *eje cafetero* (coffee axis) were concerned about the price vulnerability of a single cash crop and therefore diversified into light manufacturing. The textile industry was crucial to the city's development, led by family businesses and supported by the Catholic church. Industrial migration from the coffee region of South Antioquia shaped paternalist patterns of rural clientelism. At the beginning of the 20th century, the coffee boom and industrial growth led to a rapid urban expansion in Medellín; its population doubled within two decades. Meanwhile, Antioquian elites adopted a modernizing ideology. By the late 1960s, Medellín's prosperity was in decline as coffee prices fell and Asian textile manufactures became highly competitive (Hylton, 2010, p. 345). These factors precipitated the structural industrial crisis in the 1980s.

Rural Violence and Urban Migration

When analyzing urban development in Medellín, it is essential to look at the national context of migration and internal displacements to the city mainly caused by rural violence.

In the 1950s, a 10 year-long civil war (*La Violencia* – The Violence) turned Medellín into a primary migratory destination, as rural guerrillas had begun to form a permanent part of the Colombian political landscape. By the 1960s the two largest leftist guerrilla groups constituted themselves into the FARC and the ELN (Hylton, 2010).

In the 1970s, paramilitary groups, that initially provided security to large landowners against guerrilla extortion and kidnapping, emerged. Yet by the 1980s, the state's armed forces were revealed to have close ties to the paramilitaries, who were now fulfilling counterinsurgency goals with the systematic use of force and terror (Hylton, 2010). These processes resulted in the urban periphery of Medellín gradually falling under the control of militias, paramilitaries, drug cartels, urban guerrillas and criminal companies, increasing rural migration to the city (Hylton, 2010).

According to data of the UN-Habitat, 50 percent of the residents in Medellín had arrived as internal displaced persons by the end of the 20th century (Garcia Ferrari, Smith, Coupe et al., 2018, p. 357). This significantly shaped the city's development, as the migrant population mainly occupied the hillside areas which were not the municipality's priority in urban infrastructure development (Garcia Ferrari, Smith, Coupe et al., 2018, p. 358). Moreover, a lack of housing and employment opportunities led to socially precarious conditions for the population in Medellín's hillside areas.

High Inequality: Spatial Poverty and Violence Distribution

These migratory processes contributed to the city's high inequality levels, manifested in a Gini coefficient of 0.51 in 1991, the year of the highest murder rate. Other cities had a Gini coefficient of 0.47 – making Medellín one of the most unequal cities in comparison to other cities in Latin America (Humphrey & Valverde, 2017). Alarming enough, in 2018, Colombia's Gini coefficient has even reached 0.52 (DANE, 2018).

Medellín is characterized by a spatial distribution of poverty across the city; hillside areas are more prone to violence (Maclean, 2015).

Medellín Cartel's Narcoterrorism (1982-1994)

Rapid urban growth triggered by rural migration to the city, the economic decline and increasing urban inequalities caused the emergence of multi-dimensional violence in hillside areas (Maclean, 2015). The formation of Pablo Escobar's Medellín Cartel coincided with these developments. From 1982 until 1994, Medellín was under its control (Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica, 2017). Primarily, male urban youth was affected by narco-trafficking and terrorism by the Medellín Cartel. As argued in chapter 4.3, Social Urbanism intended to address these conditions.

The textile industry of Medellín was replaced by the drug industry. In the 1970s and 1980s, the Medellín Cartel's administered cocaine export business proved to be a far more dynamic economic model than the manufacturing business, as many people from the working, middle and upper-middle class became involved in Escobar's activities, achieving higher earnings than in the licit economy (Hylton, 2010, p. 347). The violence of the new *clase emergente* (emerging class) conflicted with the old oligarchic family's conservatism, but they soon engaged in broader alliances as the money from the cocaine trade helped to fuel a real estate boom (Hylton, 2010, p. 348).

1991 – a Decisive Year

Since several key events occurred in 1991 that induced the city's change process, it is identified as the starting point of Medellín's social innovation and transformation. Accordingly, the research question of this thesis seeks to analyze Medellín's transformation process from 1991 onwards.

Violence Peak

In 1991, Medellín was ranked the world's homicide capital. Urban violence reached its peak, culminating in 381 homicides per 100,000 inhabitants and between 1990 and 2002, 55,000 people were killed – mostly young men (Hylton, 2010, p. 339). As further detailed in 6.1, 1991 was also the point at which the city's inhabitants realized their unpromising situation.

Constitutional Change and Consejería Presidencial

There are two key factors to Medellín's transformation process: a constitutional change that decentralized state power in 1991 and the *Consejería Presidencial* (Presidential Council).

In his paper on “*El Proceso de Construcción de Estatalidad Local (1998-2009)*” (“The Process of Local Stateness²⁵ Construction”) (2010), Leyva discusses the importance of the expansion of local governance capacities for the transformation of Medellín. After the narcoterrorism period, the city's local government had a small degree of institutional centrality and made minimal public investments (1992-1998). Elite circles dominated traditional politics which were grounded in party-based loyalty and implied clientelist favors (Leyva, 2010, p. 279). According to Leyva (2010), the change of the constitution in 1991 decentralized state power. Together with an increase in public spending, the inclusion of other actors into the development planning and execution thereof, as well as a reevaluation of the importance of social powers significantly enhanced the local government's ability to transform the city.

In addition, the *Consejería Presidencial* for Medellín was created in 1991 in order to provide support in solving the city's problems in cooperation with international actors from the development sector (Leyva, 2010). For instance, the *Corporación Paise Joven*

25 According to Leyva, stateness means the centrality of the state in society (2010, p. 272).

(Corporation Young Paisa), in cooperation with the German GTZ, KfW, USAID, established a program for youth at risk. The *Consejería Presidencial* brought the city's youth into focus in order to lower the high violence levels by initiating the dialogue between different actors (as detailed in 6.1).

4.2 Power Reconfigurations and Urbanization of the Armed Conflict from 1995-2005

Power Reconfigurations after the Medellín Cartel's Narcoterrorism

In his essay on "The Cold War That Didn't End – Paramilitary Modernization in Medellín, Colombia", Hylton (2010) states that "historic yet dynamic patterns of political repression, regional configurations of capital accumulation, and patriarchal networks of local power" (p. 338) shape the situation in Colombia and present Medellín as the place where these structures are the most visible. He outlines the political-economic constellations that led to coalitions of the conservative municipal government and right-wing paramilitaries in their fight against leftist guerilla groups, such as the *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias* (FARC) and *Ejército de Liberación Nacional* (ELN) and the complex interlinkages between finance, real estate and insurance stakeholders emerged from the production and export of cocaine and still persist in today's structures.

Hylton explains how Escobar's war against political and business rivals put Colombian President Gaviria's administration in the early 2000s under U.S. pressure to form an alliance with the Cali Cartel and Escobar's former associates *Los Pepes*. They were now assisting in destroying Escobar's infrastructure and allies. After Escobar's assassination in 1993, his violent reign was replaced by a newly emergent paramilitary order under Don Berna from the *Bloque Cacique Nutibara* (BCN, 2003–2008), who gradually placed independent criminal gangs under his control. This ensured the security level which was needed so that the neoliberal transformation of the city could take place.

Hylton further resumes:

By 1995, the influence of the *clase emergente* [emerging class] was apparent at three different levels. First, the links forged through Los Pepes had strengthened the ties between state-security organs, narcoparamilitaries and Medellín's gangs. Second, cocaine capital laundered through real estate, finance, insurance and construction had now captured the state government of Antioquia in the person of Álvaro Uribe. (Hylton, 2010, p. 356)

According to Humphrey and Valverde (2017, p. 163), the military operations that evicted the leftist guerillas from *Comuna 13* in 2002²⁶ proposed the security pre-conditions for the neoliberal transformation of Medellín while displacing many residents and installing a new paramilitary order. This is illustrated by Hylton's statement:

This fusion of politics, property, and organized crime, reflected in the paramilitary grip over security for capital investment, links the city's bad old days to its good new ones, and largely determines the present and future shape of the built environment. By the time he demobilized the BCN in November 2003, Don Berna had become the undisputed don of dons in Medellín, accomplishing what Escobar could not: the unification of organized crime with the establishment. (Hylton, 2010, p. 357)

Urbanization of the Armed Conflict²⁷

The *Universidad de Antioquia* and *Universidad EAFIT*, the NGO *Corporación Región*, and the City Hall of Medellín discuss in "*Medellín: Memorias de una Guerra Urbana*" (Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica, 2017) the urbanization of the armed conflict and the complex interrelations of three central actors: guerrillas (*Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia* (FARC) and the *Ejercito de Liberacion Nacional* (ELN) or militias (*Milicias Bolivarianas*); paramilitaries (*Bloque Metro*, *Bloque Cacique Nutibara* – *BCN*, *Frente José Luis Zuluaga*) as well as members of the Armed Forces of the State (military and police) (Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica, 2017, p. 24).

In this sense, when we speak of the urbanization of the armed conflict, we are not thinking of the occupation of spaces in the city by illegal actors external to it, but rather of the articulation and deployment of war strategies in the city through the joint action of local actors and actors linked to the national conflict.²⁸ (Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica, 2017, p. 25)

The National Historic Memory Center's document refers to data provided by its observatory (*Observatorio del Centro Nacional de Memoria*) and the Unit for Attention and Integral Reparation for Victims (*Unidad para la Atención y la Reparación Integral*

²⁶ *Operación Orión* was the most emblematic military operation carried out between 16th and 17th October 2002 in San Javier.

²⁷ For a detailed review of the emergence and trajectory of the Colombian armed conflict, see the work of the National Center for Historic Memory (2015) (*Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica*).

²⁸ Own translation, original quote in Spanish: *En este sentido, cuando se habla de la urbanización del conflicto armado no se está pensando en la ocupación de espacios de la ciudad por actores ilegales externos a ella, sino en la articulación y despliegue de estrategias de guerra en la ciudad a través de la acción conjunta de actores locales y actores vinculados al conflicto nacional.*

de Victimas). It reveals that between 1980 and 2014, at least 132,529 persons were victims of the armed conflict in Medellín (Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica, 2017, p. 25).²⁹

In his book on Medellín's fragile liberation from high violence, Gerard Martin (2012) gives an overview of the city's display of 'resilience' through its citizens and institutional reforms. Yet he warns that these developments are at risk due to the all-overshadowing narcotrafficking business that has pushed all adversaries. According to Martin, Medellín's 'social decomposition', as he calls it, is not sufficiently explained by the exclusionary character of the city in face of a demographic explosion, by missing regulations and by the oligarchy's conduct. Comparing the developments in Medellín to those in Bogotá, he argues that another reason is that narcotrafficking was basically the only viable option for urban youth.

The next sub-chapter addresses the local government's strategies for establishing intervention mechanisms with the help of its policies of Social Urbanism in order to address the high violence levels among urban youth. It also schematically outlines Medellín's development and focuses on the period after the security measures and political-economic power constellations allowed for changes to take place.

4.3 Social Urbanism and Establishment of Institutional Order from 2006-2014

Social Urbanism is regarded as the beginning of a 'new urban order' in Medellín (Humphrey & Valverde, 2017, p. 163), initiated by the election of a progressive mayor, Sergio Fajardo in 2004. Medellín's transformation was launched by the introduction of the Urban Land Use Plan (*Plan de Ordenamiento Territorial – POT*) (Garcia Ferrari, Smith, Coupe et al., 2018, p. 358). With the first POT in 1999, land use management tools such as the Integrated Urban Project (*Proyecto Urbano Integral – PUI*) were introduced in order to facilitate large-scale projects (Ortiz, 2014).

Democratic Governance and Citizen Participation

In addition to the POTs, Medellín's mayors presented their own Development Plans. Thus, in 2004, this urban planning framework allowed Fajardo to introduce his 'Social Urbanism' model. Fajardo gained power with his social movement *Compromiso*

²⁹ Due to this research's limited scope and topical focus, the document can only be schematically outlined. However, it is encouraged to examine their comprehensive document in more detail.

Ciudadano (Citizen Engagement), formed in the 1990s, consisting of prominent NGOs, trade unions, business leaders, neighborhood associations and voices from the political left, center and right. In a personal interview, Federico Restrepo, former member of the *Compromiso Ciudadano*, comments:

We have never belonged to the public sector. Never. A group of 50 people from different sectors of society gathered. Sergio Fajardo was a mathematician and Alonso Salazar was a researcher, a social communicator who wrote about the tragedy of the city and worked in NGOs. For example, I have an engineering background. We said that if we do not dare to administer the city, to participate in the public, we will never achieve what we want to build. Traditional parties - zeros! We decided to establish an independent movement with which, along with the support of the citizens, we could come to power. In 2000, we presented ourselves in the elections and lost, but we insisted and in 2003, we won with the government of Sergio Fajardo. We won by a huge difference, which gave us, in a way, the legitimacy to do what we wanted - and what we believed in.³⁰ (I-7)

Maclean talks about this movement as an alliance between the economic elite and a 'reflexive middle class' constituted by independent social movements, NGO workers and university academics intended to challenge clientelist and *caudillo*-style leadership (2015).

The City's Development Plans

According to Leyva (2010), from 1999-2003, under Mayor Luis Pérez Gutiérrez (2001-2004) the ties with the social sector that had been established in the early 90s were cut, as he built on the City Hall's unilaterality. This led to the abolishment of some progressive programs in education, security and housing as well as a reorganization of social movements (Leyva, 2010).

After Pérez's term, social movements reorganized and regained importance within Fajardo's government. Leyva (2010) explains that during Fajardo's and Salazar's

³⁰ Own translation, original quote in Spanish: *Nunca hemos pertenecido al público. Nunca. Venía un grupo de 50 personas de diferentes sectores de la sociedad. Sergio Fajardo era un matemático y Alonso Salazar era un investigador, comunicador social que se dedicaba de escribir sobre la tragedia de la ciudad y pertenecía a ONGs. Yo por ejemplo vine de la ingeniería. Dijimos que si nosotros no nos atrevemos a administrar la ciudad, a participar de lo público, nunca vamos a lograr que nosotros queremos construir. Partidos tradicionales – ceros! Decidimos de establecer un movimiento independiente con lo que y con el apoyo ciudadano pudiésemos ir al poder. En el año 2000 nos presentamos en las elecciones y perdimos, pero insistimos y en 2003 ganamos con el gobierno de Sergio Fajardo. Ganamos con mucha diferencia con nos daba de una manera la legitimidad de hacer lo que queríamos – y lo que creíamos.*

government period from 2004 until 2010, public capacities were shared in their conception as well as their execution by the City Hall with social actors. These more horizontal structures challenged the old paternalist, vertical method of policy-making in Medellín, which had enabled violent actors to rise to power in the 1980s and 1990s (Maclean, 2015).

As mentioned in chapter 3.2.1, Social Urbanism is based on the premise that the solutions to a city's social problems are linked to its physical structure. Fajardo's 2004 – 2007 Development Plan "*Medellín, compromiso de toda la ciudadanía*" ("Medellín, a commitment of all citizens"), incorporated a broad number of physical projects and policy initiatives, as it sought "to fight poverty, develop transparency and zero corruption, and create urban physical interventions to connect poor areas with the city". This vision for the city shaped the framework for radically new governance processes and public policies. On the one hand, architectural upgrading took place, mainly focused on building transport infrastructure, public education facilities and new public spaces in areas suffering the most severe levels of poverty and crime. On the other hand, those projects were accompanied by various policies, such as the afore mentioned participatory budgeting initiatives and the *banco de los pobres* (bank of the poor), which provided micro credits in marginalized areas of the city and supported entrepreneurial projects (Samper Escobar, 2010, p. 92).

The subsequent 2008 – 2011 Development Plan "*Medellín es solidaria y competitiva*" ("Medellín is solidary and competitive") by Fajardo's successor, Alonso Salazar, continued the social inclusion efforts of the previous plan, as it considered persistent poverty and inequality the main obstacles to integral human and urban development (P. Brand & Dávila, 2011). Salazar's development plan, which relied on competitiveness, also presented a continuity for the economic development focus of Fajardo's plan, which defined entrepreneurship and cluster economy as the pillars of the policy, in addition to education.

Medellín's neoliberal governance strategy of an entrepreneurial city while attributing the responsibility of its success to its citizens (P. Brand & Dávila, 2011) is still evident in the current development plan conceived by Federico Gutiérrez (2016-2019): "*Medellín Cuenta con Vos*" ("Medellín is Counting on You").

Public-Private Partnerships

“The neoliberalization of urban political-economic space has created new forms of urban governance based on economic deregulation and decentralization” (Humphrey & Valverde, 2017, p. 160). Ideological shifts in urban planning were decisive for Medellín’s superficial ‘makeover’, as large-scale projects were funded through private-public partnerships and private companies acting as quasi-public institutions (Garcia Ferrari et al., 2018, p. 363).

Two important institutions in the context of public-private partnerships merit special mention: the role of the Urban Development Agency (*Empresa de Desarrollo Urbano – EDU*) and the Public Companies of Medellín (*Empresas Públicas de Medellín – EPM*). Under Mayor Fajardo, EDU has been set up to deliver and manage the PUIs. EDU became the city’s housing, land and regeneration agency. To this day it owns, manages and develops land for and on behalf of the city (Garcia Ferrari et al., 2018, p. 360). Since 1955, EPM has been responsible for the management of four different utilities (energy, public water supply, wastewater infrastructure and telephone services). EPM operates as a private firm but is owned by the city of Medellín which has allowed it to play an important role in the city’s socio-economic development. Federico Restrepo, EPM’s CEO from 2008-2012, comments respectively in a personal interview:

It is the most important development vehicle in any city in Latin America. Why is it useful for a city to have a company like EPM? Well, in Medellín the library parks and schools were financed with EPM resources. It also developed many social programs.³¹ (I-7)

In the Corporate Annual Governance Report, EPM declares that it transfers 30% of its profits to the municipality every year (EPM, 2018). EPM has thus invested into projects such as the metro line, new schools and learning centers and other public places. Garcia Ferrari et al. confirm that this is a unique phenomenon across cities in the global South (2018, p. 357). Leyva contests that the public expenditure capacity has increased ten times from 1990 to 2008 and three times since 2000 (2010, p. 272), providing the conditions that made Social Urbanism possible.

³¹ Own translation, original quote in Spanish: *Es el vehículo de desarrollo más importante que tiene una ciudad en Latino América. ¿Por qué le sirve a una ciudad de tener una empresa como EPM? Pues, en Medellín los parques de bibliotecas y colegios fueron financiados con recursos de EPM. También desarrolló muchos programas sociales.*

Recent Recognitions of Medellín's Transformation

Since 2013, Medellín has become internationally recognized as a city of transformation and won several innovation awards.³² These prizes reward physical projects as well as participatory strategies: Medellín's metro line, its innovation district and its institutions of innovation such as Ruta N, public-private financial support for projects, e.g. by EPM, the collaboration of universities, businesses and community organizations, e.g. in participatory budgeting, as well as the reduction of homicide rates (Cities Today, 2016; Garcia Ferrari, Smith, Coupe et al., 2018, p. 362).

In conclusion, the city's transformation is widely attributed to the physical, socio-economic and political change, which was achieved by restoring ill-functioning city institutions, which had been facilitating social exclusion. During the 1990s, decentralization efforts at the national level delegated powers and responsibilities to Medellín's local administration. Along with improvements in national security and positive economic developments in Colombia, participatory approaches involving citizens sought to diminish social exclusion, reestablish trust and a feeling of citizenship. Recently, however, academic and civic actors have raised concerns that the improvements achieved during the Social Urbanism era are about to be undermined.

4.4 Voices at the Margin

In the interest of painting a comprehensive picture of the different opinions on Medellín's transformation, this sub-chapter provides an overview of the critical voices in literature, which public public discourse treats marginally. These critical voices serve as the basis of the assessment of the interviewees' viewpoints in chapter 6.4.

Social Urbanism as City Marketing to Outsiders?

As stated in previous research, Medellín's transformation from the world's murder capital into the world's most innovative city is no miracle but has been strategically pursued by an alliance of private, public and paramilitary actors in order to increase the

³² E.g. in 2013: World's Most Innovative City Award by City Bank/Wall Street Journal/Urban Land Institute (BBC News (2013)); 2016: Lee Kuan Yew World City Prize by Center for Livable Cities Singapore (Cities Today (2016)); Most Transformational City – Bravo Award by Council of the Americas (Kendall (2016)); 2017: World's Innovation Hub by 2ThinkNow (El Tiempo (2017))

competitiveness of Medellín and its economy on a global scale (see e.g. Garcia Ferrari, Smith, Coupe et al., 2018; Humphrey & Valverde, 2017; Moncada, 2016).

The municipal administrations have strategically communicated its ‘makeover’ and the respectively received prizes, e.g., through the *Agencia de Cooperación e Inversión de Medellín* (Agency for Cooperation and Investment of Medellín).³³ Doyle (2018b) argues that the public policy of Social Urbanism eventually became the branding of Medellín. Brand (2016) argues that Social Urbanism, as a marketing strategy for the purpose of attracting foreign investments and becoming a globally competitive city, is externally oriented and deviates from its political intent of inclusion of the poor:

In the case of Medellín, Social Urbanism has been an important component in the restructuring of the city’s image as a progressive, enlightened and innovative city and its repositioning in the global city market. This external success is in danger of perverting the political underpinnings of Social Urbanism. As the goals of Social Urbanism become increasingly external, its commodification and marketing weakens ties with the poor sectors of the city and erodes trust and confidence. (P. Brand, 2016, p. 14)

Likewise, Doyle criticizes that a political elite is shaping the representation of Medellín to outsiders, but “while outsiders may perceive Social Urbanism to be the brand of Medellín, this particular image is generally not perceived, and accepted, by insiders” (Doyle, 2018b, p. 333). Indeed, as the case of *Agencia de Cooperación e Inversión de Medellín* (ACI – Agency for Cooperation and Investment) shows, several delegations from other Latin American cities have come to the city in order to learn from the Medellín model (ACI Medellín, 2018).

As it has already been argued in the introduction, using Medellín as a model for other Latin American cities has some important implications. Therefore, the next paragraphs will examine some critical voices beyond those communicating the successful transformation of the city.

Questionable Transformative Impact of Policies

Despite its progressive, democratic facade, the new order is antidemocratic to the core, and not only accepts appalling levels of inequality, injustice, impunity, and political murder, but clouds the issues with endless public relations offensives. [...] Although Don Berna no longer

³³ <https://www.acimedellin.org/>

runs organized crime in Medellín, neither his sudden departure from the local scene nor the Fajardo-Salazar demobilization program has cast enough light to wipe out the long narcoparamilitary shadow cast over the city's working-class majority in the *comunas*, and its valuable real estate in the city center and suburbs. (Hylton, 2010, p. 361)

This vivid analysis of the real impact of the transformation policies and projects in Medellín by Hylton summarizes the recent focus of scholarly scrutiny: the politically communicated success of Medellín's transformation.

No Evidence for Decreasing Inequality and Poverty Levels

Firstly, scholars question the reduction of poverty and inequality through municipal policies. According to Brand and Dávila (2011), the positive impact of Medellín's transformation efforts remains unclear, especially with respect to the sustainability of the economy and the social improvement of the poor *comuna* inhabitants. According to their estimations, less than 10% of the inhabitants of the poor *comunas* use the newly built infrastructure, public buildings and open spaces. Nor has the iconic metro cable transportation project produced any notable improvement, as it rather attracts tourism (see Brand & Dávila, 2011; Garcia Ferrari et al., 2018, p. 362). In addition, both the quality of life index and the human development index have increased by the same percentage as the entire city (Brand & Dávila 2011, pp. 656 – 658). It should be higher in the poorer *comunas* if the projects had an impact on these factors. Brand and Dávila also point out that the participatory practices have diminished or, as Samper Escobar (2010) argues, only been implemented in a top-down approach:

The political discourse of Sergio Fajardo in the media, official mayoral office reports, and dozens of conference presentations around the world, is filled with references to how improvement of the aesthetic conditions of physical space will provide the necessary dignity to bridge Medellín's the social gap. This discourse, even as inclusive as it tries to be, is basically unidirectional. The venues of community participation in the planning process were defined with a strong top-down approach. "Education" becomes a way to provide larger opportunities and the way to pay for the social debt that the city owes to its poorest communities. This approach was not part of a community consensus- Mayor Fajardo did not ask the community their input on this. (Samper Escobar, 2010, p. 89)

Thus, Brand and Dávila conclude that the projects aimed at upgrading public space were “a quick-fix approach motivated by short-term political impact and publicity-conscious gain are unlikely to be successful” (2011, p. 659).

Unrelated Violence Reduction and Spatial-Political Dependency

Secondly, there is no clear evidence that violence levels have diminished due to public policies (Doyle, 2018a; Humphrey & Valverde, 2017). Scholars studying this relation also identify the political-economic power structures and interests that have finally led to Medellín's transformation. Moncada (2016) argues that the governance of security, along with other policy fields, was characterized by a collaboration of economic and political elites:

Yet by the early 1990s, historically close public-private sector linkages had weakened as a result of broader changes in the political landscape introduced by decentralization and party system deinstitutionalization. The resulting disengagement challenged efforts to stem and prevent urban violence. In contrast, similar efforts to confront violence in the 2000s were bolstered and sustained in part by close public-private sector collaboration. (Moncada, 2016, p. 229)

In her analysis of alternative explanations of Medellín's reduction in homicide rates, Caroline Doyle (2018a) indeed criticizes the fact that there has been no real sustained reduction of violence. The graph in figure 5 depicts Medellín's homicide numbers by sex and reveals that nearly all victims were male adolescents. From 2012 until 2018, homicides overall have declined, but there has been a clear increase from 2015 onwards.

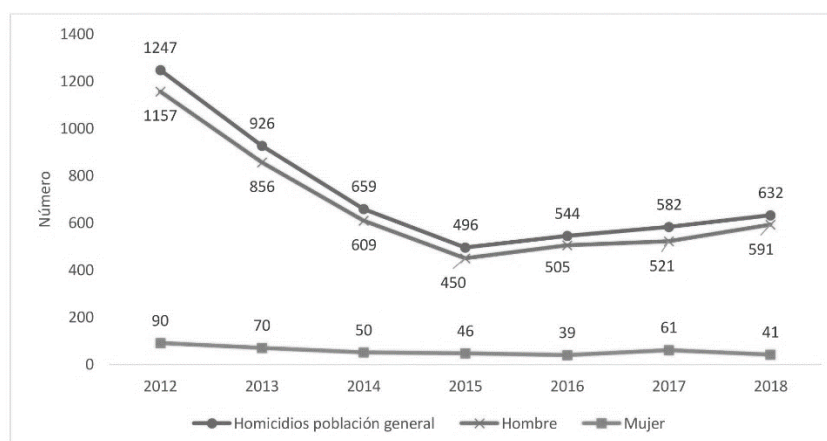


Figure 5: Homicide numbers in Medellín from 2012-2018 (Veeduría Medellín al Plan de Desarrollo, 2019a, p. 2)

Moncada and others (e.g. Doyle, 2018a, 2018b; Gutierrez et al., 2013) caution against using the Medellín model as a blueprint for combatting similar conditions of violence in other Latin American cities, as “complex configurations of political, economic, and criminal actors with both individual and shared interests were behind the Medellín miracle” (Moncada, 2016, p. 243). Furthermore, Doyle (2018a) concludes that policy-

makers should not only implement urban spatial interventions but also consider processes of non-state armed group formation and the dynamics of non-state inter-group relations.

Continued Deprivation and Exclusion of the Poor

Thirdly, academic scholarship criticizes the continued deprivation of poorer inhabitants and their exclusion from public places. Garcia Ferrari et al. criticize the fact that poorer inhabitants have restricted access to urban interventions as they are limited to land titling (Garcia Ferrari et al., 2018, p. 363). In addition, they state that urban development is undertaken with little regard for topography and without any ecological considerations, thus risking environmental disasters such as landslides, to which poorer neighborhoods at the hillsides are particularly vulnerable.

Exclusionary Right to the City and Gentrification Processes

At this point, looking at Rachel Berney's (2013) political-economic analysis of Bogotá's public space transformation may provide important insights into similar impacts of such public space policies in Medellín. Comparing Bogotá to Medellín makes sense, as both cities have been affected by the national armed conflict and show high violence levels and both their mayors were progressive.³⁴ Berney argues that Bogotá's state-building projects initiated by its mayors were based on dual and conflicting goals: The objective of promoting the right to the city (see Lefebvre, 1968) for all through the creation of public space conflicted with the neoliberal, capitalist city development agenda, which was aimed at attracting foreign investments in order to gain a world city status (see Sassen, 2001). According to Berney, this led to an exclusionary right to the city, as it was only accorded to citizens whose behavior was in line with the investment-heavy, neoliberal agenda for a stable city. She further criticizes the superficial reshaping of the city without tackling structural inequalities. This has precluded the possibility of real change. In her conclusion, she suggests that neoliberal capital have reshaped public space in an undemocratic way and increased the invisibility and complexity of class and social fragmentation.

The exclusionary nature of public spaces created through similar public policies in Bogotá, in combination with Brand and Dávila's (2011) assumption that new

³⁴ Antanas Mockus was the mayor of Bogotá in 1995-1997 and 2001-2003 and known for his progressive citizenship-enhancing public policies.

infrastructure is not used by poorer inhabitants, lends credence to the assumption that gentrification processes (see Smith, 1996, 2002) are also taking place in Medellín.

With respect to the research question regarding the role of social innovation and transformation in Medellín, Brand (2016) has already warned that Social Urbanism and its policies are currently at risk of being reduced to a city marketing tool with no transformative character. His concern is mirrored in recent surveys on citizens' perception of Medellín's current transformation progress. In general, citizens seem to be less optimistic about Medellín's prospective transformation process. In 2008, 88% of the surveyed citizens believed that the situation in the city had improved, but ten years later only 67% felt this way (Medellín Cómo Vamos, 2018).

In line with political-economic reasoning, the presented criticism of the urban policies highlights that Medellín changed not only due to infrastructural changes, but also because power structures were reconfigured. Medellín's participatory Social Urbanism did not provide its citizens with the right to the city in Lefebvre's sense; structural inequalities persist. Moreover, the achievements in the city's development are strategically communicated and create an "innovative city"-*imaginario* in line with a neoliberal urban governance model. Relying on foreign investments for city development for the purpose of growth and capital accumulation will create new dependencies, as Latin American critique suggests.

Current Focus on Large-Scale Urban Development and Internationalization

In line with such neoliberal development dynamics, the city has increasingly departed from the Social Urbanism model of small-scale community interventions and instead implemented large-scale urban development projects. For instance, the creation of the *Parques del Río* (River Parks) has followed a conventional restructuring and modernization strategy. Their social transformation potential is limited, as one interview partner suggests:

The River Parks are not a priority. They are an oversized investment with a marginal effect. They are building roads beneath a parkland green, that's fine. But in terms of innovation, I do not think that this will lead to a transformation.³⁵ (I-18)

³⁵ Own translation, original quote in Spanish: *Los parques del río no son prioritarios. Es una inversión demasiado grande con un efecto marginal. Están construyendo rutas abajo de un parque verde, eso está bien. Pero en términos de innovación, yo no creo que eso lleva una transformación.*

To reiterate, marginalized actors voice concerns about the new direction that Medellín's development has taken, as they identify a rupture with the strategies and priorities of the administrative era of the *Compromiso Ciudadana* (Civic Commitment) and the following administrations of Mayor Aníbal Gaviria Correa (2012-2015) and the current administration of Mayor Federico Gutiérrez (2016-2019).

Currently, the core aim appears to be the establishment of Medellín as a 'knowledge economy', building on service industry and branding the city as an innovation hub in order to attract Colombia's largest enterprises and numerous headquarters of foreign enterprises, holding great conferences and generating over \$ 836 million in investment deals (ACI Medellín, 2019).

For this master's thesis, a more detailed investigation of the stakeholders of the transformation of Medellín and their views can reveal how the current city development might actually be the logical and intended outcome of Social Urbanism. This requires a broadening of the historical and political analysis drawn from literature research. A critical stance on Social Urbanism is required; one that recognizes its transformative aspects at the local scale but also perceives it as an iconic project on a global scale, changing the city's violent reputation. This critical stance also necessitates the inclusion of the perspective of the main actors in Medellín's transformation and examining some of their projects so as to understand the intention and direction of the city's current and future development.

In summary, framing Medellín's urban development as the product of a much longer transformation process reveals how it has been conditioned by historically evolved power distributions and elite interests in connection to the dynamics of the national armed conflict. It was outlined which socio-political as well as economic and cultural conditions shaped the institutional arrangements and public policies that have initiated the social transformation process of the city. This chapter has laid the ground for the analysis of the specific actors, institutions and sectors linked to social innovation in the next chapters. Chapter 5 provides case examples for the projects implemented by different organizations and chapter 6 discusses the results of the interviews with various actors.

5 Discussing Case Examples

In this chapter, the empirical material collected at Ruta N and in the course of the participant observations at the time of my research stay in Medellín are viewed through the theoretical lenses developed in the analytical framework in chapter 3. To this end, the CUEE and Ruta N's Laboratory of Innovation are described as the key institutions that enforce the public economic development policies and thus shape the discourses on innovation and the ecosystem of innovation in Medellín. Moreover, two renowned grassroots organizations that have shaped the city's transformation process are presented. These key organizations in Medellín's transformation are analyzed in order to conduct a comprehensive case study comprised of various case examples.

5.1 CUEE's Network

This sub-chapter examines the origin and role of the *Comité Universidad Empresa Estado* (Committee of University Enterprise State – CUEE) for the purpose of understanding how Medellín's ecosystem of innovation emerged. According to the website of the CUEE, its overall objective is to foster the socio-economic growth of the Antioquian region through science, technology and innovation (Comité Universidad Empresa Estado, 2019). The CUEE was initiated in 2003 within the framework of the Vice Presidency for Technology Management of the Extension of the University of Antioquia (*Programa Gestión Tecnológica de la Vicerrectoría de Extensión de la Universidad de Antioquia*) as an initiative that sought to develop relations with the social and productive sectors of the region. Through these alliances, the university intended to expand its knowledge base and directly connect itself to society and its socio-economic demands (Universidad de Antioquia, 2019).

From 2001 until 2017, CUEE's main goal was to facilitate the interaction between universities and the private and public sector in order to generate innovative approaches to increased productivity and competitiveness for the region's development. The CUEE 2.0 has been active since 2017, and its structure was reoriented when the CEO of the *Grupo Banco Colombia* (Bank of Colombia Group) joined the advisory board in order to implement financial matters into CUEE's scope of action (Comité Universidad Empresa Estado, 2018). In addition, CUEE's ecosystem welcomed a more diverse range of actors across different sectors through the inclusion of higher educational institutions and entrepreneurs as figure 6 illustrates below.

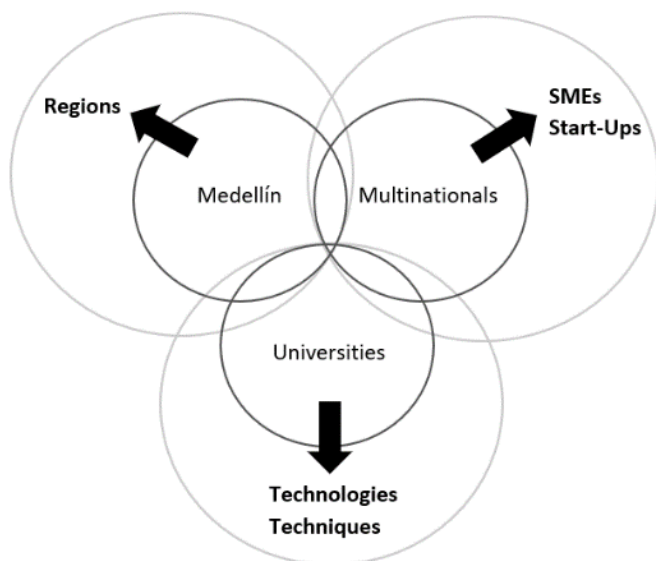


Figure 6: CUEE 2.0, own illustration based on Comité Universidad Empresa Estado (2018, p. 36)

The CUEE 2.0 operates through three ‘*mesas de trabajo*’ (working groups): *mesa de talento humano* (human talent group), *mesa de financiación* (finance group) and *mesa de plataformas* (platform group) (Universidad de Antioquia, 2019). According to its coordinator, Juan Felipe Valencia: “The CUEE built trust in different actors of the ecosystem, earning international recognition for the impact it has generated” ³⁶ (I-4).

CUEE’s Triple Helix Structure and Ecosystem

In this citation, CUEE’s coordinator discusses the actors within the ecosystem. As stated in chapter 3.2.2, the CUEE’s structure follows the triple helix of university, public and private sector. Incidentally, the CUEE was the first initiative to formally establish an ecosystem of different actors in Medellín in order to improve the productivity and competitiveness of local enterprises. This suggests that the CUEE understands innovation as ‘capitalocentric’ (see Thompson, 2018). Yet the CUEE 2.0 has recently demonstrated tendencies to avoid restricting innovation to institutional actors and showed interest in opening its doors to civil society actors, namely entrepreneurs with high impact:

As high impact enterprises started to get included in the ecosystem, discussion arose as to whether to add the word ‘social’ in the name of the CUEE. Aside from that, however, it is

³⁶ Own translation, original quote in Spanish: *El CUEE ha generado confianza en diferentes actores del ecosistema que ha permitido de reconocer el impacto que ha sido internacionalmente reconocido.*

important to think about how we are going to start working together and create opportunities for these actors.³⁷ (I-4)

To illustrate how the CUEE works in practical settings, the content of one of its monthly meetings, which are open to the public, is evaluated. As part of my participant observations, I attended in the 179th meeting on June 7, 2019 at Ruta N. Fernando Vargas from the Interamerican Development Bank (IDB) was invited for a discussion on ‘*Sistemas y Ecosistemas de Innovación y Emprendimiento*’ (‘Systems and Ecosystems of Innovation and Entrepreneurship’).

Figure 7 depicts the IDB's conceptualization of national innovation systems. In line with innovation system literature, this model focuses on the political, research, industrial and infrastructure aspects of innovation. Accordingly, the model reveals a capitalocentric understanding of innovation, as its focus lies on the development and diffusion of technologies.

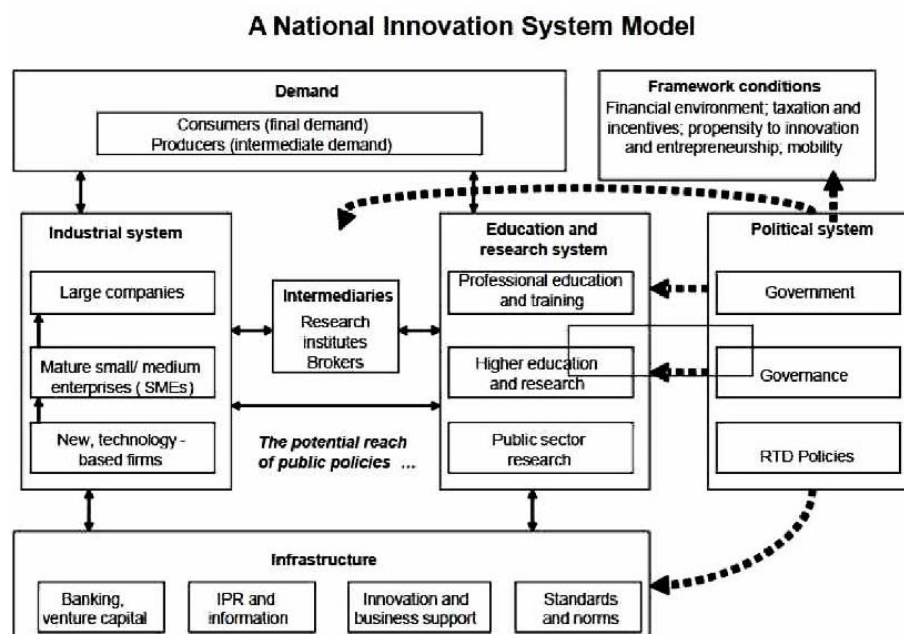


Figure 7: Innovation system (Vargas, 2019, p. 5), based on Lundvall, 1992 and OECD, 1999.

This model is based on the IDB's definition of an ecosystem, understood as “a business community supported by a public framework of laws and practices, containing

³⁷ Own translation, original quote in Spanish: *Se empezaron de incluir emprendimientos de alto impacto en el ecosistema, por eso la discusión era de incluir lo social en el nombre del CUEE. Pero además de esa nomenclatura, es importante de pensar sobre cómo vamos a empezar a trabajar en conjunto y generar posibilidades para esos actores.*

associations of interconnected individuals who produce and combine business ideas, skills, financial and non-financial resources, resulting in dynamic enterprises”³⁸ (Vargas, 2019).

The CUEE is an important actor in Medellín’s transformation due to its function as a coordinating entity that shapes how the city and its institutions, and consequently society, talk about innovation and the city’s development. Indeed, it was the CUEE that initiated the creation of another central actor in the city – Ruta N, a public joint-venture that promotes public policies for innovation.

5.2 Ruta N and its Laboratory of Innovation’s Work

In November 2009, Ruta N was created at the initiative of mayor Alonso Salazar and funded by the city of Medellín and EPM. The *Grupo Empresarial Antioqueño* (Group of Antioquian Entrepreneurs – GEA), a conglomerate of Antioquian companies with cross-ownerships, played a fundamental role in the foundation of Ruta N. GEA’s unofficial philanthropic foundation *Proantioquia* has been particularly active in shaping Ruta N’s mission and model. Ruta N’s aim is to lead the economic development of the city and make innovation the main driving force of the economy and welfare of the city (Ruta N, 2019b). For the sake of symbolism, Ruta N was built in the Northern part of Medellín instead of the business center in *El Poblado* in the South, in the style of Social Urbanism’s architectural design buildings, see figure 8.

‘Gran Pacto por la Innovación’

This public organization oversees the implementation of the Science, Technology and Innovation Plan (STI) of 2011-2021. The STI plan was initiated in 2010 by more than 250 entrepreneurs, business leaders, policymakers and academics for the purpose of transforming the region’s economic development from manufacturing to knowledge-based growth and fostering Medellín’s transition from an industrial to a knowledge city (Morisson, 2019b). The STI plan was adopted by the city of Medellín in 2012 in a municipal agreement that allocates 7% of EPM’s profits to Ruta N’s promotion and implementation of the plan (Morisson, 2019b).

³⁸ Own translation, original quote in Spanish: *una comunidad de negocios, apoyada por un contexto público de leyes y prácticas, formada por una base de organizaciones de individuos interactuantes que producen y asocian ideas de negocios, habilidades, recursos financieros y no financieros que resultan en empresas dinámicas.*



Figure 8: Ruta N's building in the innovation district (own picture, April, 2019)

Since 2014, Ruta N has been implementing the '*Gran Pacto por la Innovación*' ('Great Innovation Pact'), by which the City Hall seeks to foster innovation in companies. To this day, approximately 4,200 organizations have signed the Innovation Pact in Medellín and its *Valle de Aburrá* as a symbolic act of commitment to innovation (Ruta N, 2019a). As internal documents of Ruta N show, 50% of the region's organizations are engaged in innovation and 33% of the new jobs are created through innovation projects.

According to Ruta N's Leader of the 'Great Innovation Pact', Jorge Santos, 'social influence' is discernible in the sensitization of signing entities to foster innovation, ultimately generating a 'domino effect' on society (I-3). He also explained that Ruta N is dedicated to improving the citizens' quality of life, an aim they intend to achieve by creating more and better paid jobs, as they consider a focus on innovation the key to reaching this goal.

Ruta N's director, Alejandro Franco, commented in a personal interview:

As a city we have to change from a traditional economy to a knowledge economy. Because of its idiosyncrasy, Medellín needs to focus on three pillars: unlimited talent, unlimited capital, modern infrastructure. To help the city grow, we need to face the challenge of turning Medellín into a hub for companies around the world. As a dynamic and modern city, it has a lot of talent to offer.³⁹ (I-1)

³⁹ Own translation, original quote in Spanish: *Como ciudad tenemos que transformar de la economía tradicional a la del conocimiento. Medellín por su idiosincrasia tiene que enfocar en tres pilares: talento*

His quote outlines Ruta N's goal to turn Medellín into a global innovation hub that follows a growth and modernity discourse within the city, hinting at its aspiration to participate in the 'global city competition' (Robinson, 2002; Sassen, 2001). Abello and Pearce remark respectively: "Local elites focused on improving the city's competitiveness and pursued the reorientation of the city's economy towards clusters and sectors with possibilities of competing in the global markets and attracting capital" (2015, p. 203).

Similarly, Garcia Ferrari et al. state in their review of the government's POTs (1999, 2006, 2014) that "participation and innovation become key words to justify the revision, which highlights the aim of increasing the city's productive and competitive capacity" (Garcia Ferrari et al., 2018, p. 361).

Structural Change of the Laboratory of Innovation

Working for the Laboratory of Innovation at Ruta N from March until June 2019 helped me to gain detailed insights into the organization's implementation of its strategy linked to the municipal development plans.

When I started my internship, the Laboratory of Innovation was active in three focus areas: promoting public innovation, fostering innovative processes in private enterprises, and initiating innovation in education. This particular focus on 'innovation in education' built on the premise that the city's development and the transformation of its violent reality and reputation depend on its people. Therefore, quality education was considered key to increasing capacities for youth employment possibilities. A big part of the laboratory's work consisted of creating a network of innovating organizations and fostering connections via events. As part of the team, I accompanied workshops hosted with private companies, educational as well as government entities. Their objective was to expand the organizations' innovative capacities and bring together *retadores y solucionadores* (challengers and solvers) for the purpose of finding innovative solutions to problems.

Since July 2019, after my research stay, the Laboratory of Innovation's strategic orientation has been reduced to the support of innovation in the private sector. Its current objective is "to stimulate the economy through the identification of the needs within those

ilimitado, capital ilimitado, infraestructura moderna. Si queremos que la ciudad crezca, los retos son que sea un hub para que las empresas del mundo quieran instalarse. Si es una ciudad dinámica y moderno, lo que tiene que ofrecer es talento.

companies that have the potential to become new businesses by strengthening their skills and creating interactive spaces to mobilize the city's ecosystem”⁴⁰ (Laboratorio de Innovación, 2019b). This restructuring of the Laboratory of Innovation goes hand in hand with the neoliberal alignment of Ruta N and reflects the claim in literature that Medellín's aim is to become part of the global city elite.

Medellín's 'Ecosystem of Innovation'

From the beginning of my research stay at Ruta N, I was confronted with the term 'ecosystem', which was used not only in internal documents and presentations, but also in discourses, as illustrated in the quotes by Ruta N's director and representatives above. For this reason, I started looking for the origin of this term and for visualizations of this 'ecosystem' in Medellín in order to understand what it represented.

According to internal documents, the Laboratory of Innovation relies on the following working definition of innovation: “We understand innovation based on biology and as the ability of a population of individuals to generate change in order to be successful and to keep up with the times”⁴¹ (Laboratorio de Innovación, 2019a). Moreover, the laboratory relies on the definition of the *Real Academia de la Lengua Española* (Real Academy of the Spanish Language) of an ecosystem, according to which it is a “community of living organisms whose vital processes are interconnected and dependent on the physical factors of their shared environment”⁴² (Laboratorio de Innovación, 2019a).

On basis of these understandings, the Laboratory of Innovation created a representation of the ecosystem in figure 9 – including the three sectors of enterprise, government and education. This represents the 'triple helix' structure defined by literature (see Etzkowitz, 2008, p. 11).

⁴⁰ Own translation, original quote in Spanish: *la movilización de la economía a través de la identificación de necesidades dentro de las empresas que tengan el potencial de convertirse en nuevos negocios a través del fortalecimiento de sus habilidades y la generación de espacios de conexión que movilicen el ecosistema de la ciudad.*

⁴¹ Own translation, original quote in Spanish: *Entendamos la innovación desde la biología como la capacidad que tiene una población de individuos de generar cambios para ser exitosos y permanecer en el tiempo.*

⁴² Own translation, original quote in Spanish: *comunidad de los seres vivos cuyos procesos vitales se relacionan entre sí y se desarrollan en función de los factores físicos de un mismo ambiente.*

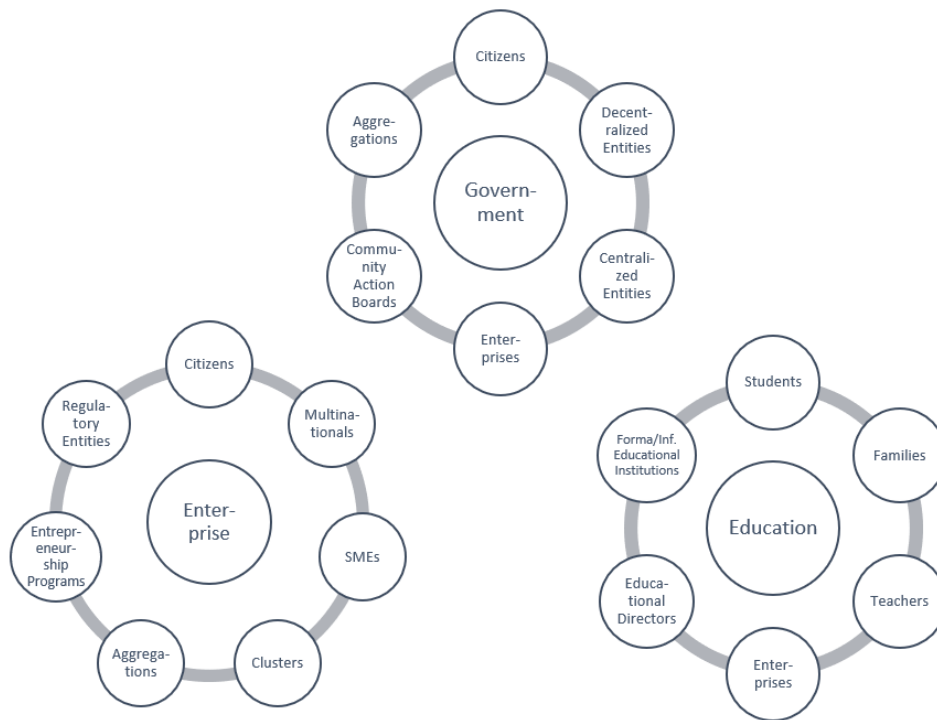


Figure 9: Ruta N's ecosystem, own illustration based on internal document as of April, 2019 (Laboratorio de Innovación, 2019a)

In his work on Ruta N's role as a 'regional innovation agency', Morisson (2019b) analyzes the public organization within Medellín's innovation system. For this endeavor, he created an illustration of this system, shown in figure 10 below.

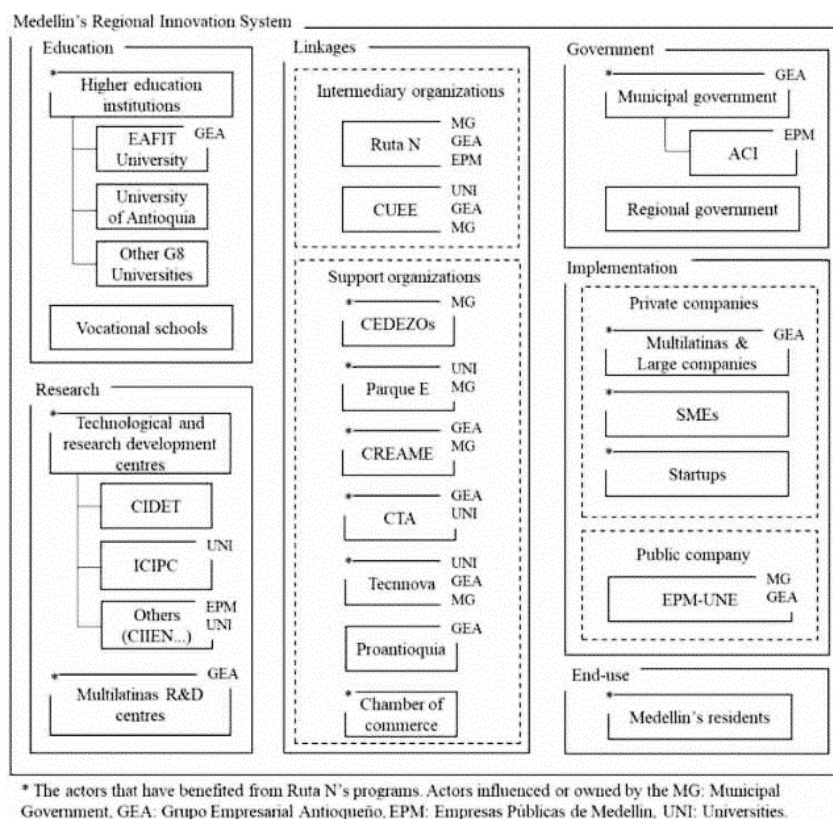


Figure 10: Medellín's innovation system (Morisson, 2019b, p. 105)

Morisson's illustration of the innovation system of Medellín resembles the model previously described by the IDB. He explains:

Since the 2000s, the city of Medellín has supported the creation and the operations of support organizations, such as CEDEZOs in 2005 for the promotion of entrepreneurship, Parque E in 2006 for start-up incubation, and the ACI in 2002 for investment promotion. G8 universities have participated with large companies in the creation of technological and research development centres, such as CIDET in 1995 to conduct energy research, ICIPC in 1987 to conduct plastic- and rubber-related research, and CIEN in 2006 to conduct energy research. (Morisson, 2019b, p. 104)

It is noteworthy that both the Laboratory of Innovation's illustration of their 'working ecosystem' as well as the illustration of 'Medellín's innovation system' by Morrison (2019) include '*ciudadanos*' ('citizens') or 'Medellín's residents' – either as end-users of innovation or actors in the enterprise or within the government sector.⁴³ However, it appears that citizens are not viewed as 'creators of innovation' in these conceptualizations. The CUEE's understanding of innovation reflects capitalocentric visions of technological improvement. The same holds true for Ruta N's general definition of innovation, which is based on the one provided by the CUEE. Nonetheless, the personal interview with Alejandro Roldán, the leader of the Laboratory of Innovation, demonstrates that he understands innovation as going beyond Ruta N's STI-orientation:

Innovation is the effort to avoid repetition. Normally, we are culturally inclined to stay in our comfort zone, which makes us repeat cycles of violence and poverty. The decision to innovate means to try to break out of those cycles of violence and poverty through creativity, genius, and abundant thinking. To me, innovation is abundant thinking. It is the ability to fill yourself with ideas, to recognize the connections within the world, to have a broader vision and to try to identify challenges. Innovation is also a contact sport. It rests in the collective spirit that innovation requires.⁴⁴ (I-2)

⁴³ This conceptualization has some flaws which are analyzed later on the basis of the perspectives of involved stakeholders in chapter 6.3.

⁴⁴ Own translation, original quote in Spanish: *Innovación es un esfuerzo por no repetir. Normalmente, culturalmente tendemos estar en nuestra zona de confort que nos hace repetir ciclos de violencia y pobreza. La decisión para la innovación es tratar de romper esos ciclos de violencia y pobreza hacia otros lugares con creatividad, con genio, con pensamiento de abundancia. Para mí, la innovación es pensamiento de abundancia. Es la capacidad de llenarse con ideas, de reconocer un mundo conectado, de tener una visión más amplia y tratar de definir retos. Innovación también es un deporte de contactos. Está en el espíritu colectivo que requieren las innovaciones.*

By stating that innovation is about overcoming poverty as well as violence cycles and requires a ‘collective spirit’, Roldán addresses both the ‘satisfaction of human needs’ and ‘collective empowerment’ dimension of social innovation theory (see Moulaert and MacCallum, 2019).

Institutionalization of Innovation

The difference in the understanding of innovation at the individual and institutional level can be explained by what Thompson (2018, p. 22) identified as the dialectical process of trying to institutionalize innovation while losing its innovative spirit. When I commented on the marginal role that social innovation seemed to play at Ruta N, Roldán acknowledged some fallacies in the organization’s approach to innovation:

More the people have focused on innovation in education and social issues who are passionate about these topics, which is why we are trying to push it forward – aware of the risks a shift in roles might bring and so on. This is difficult because it’s not yet a systemic phenomenon and rather depends on the leadership person. Us leaders with a passion for innovation, we still need to communicate more forcefully and disruptively. On the other hand, the company also needs to gain a better understanding of the medium and long-term implications thereof: education and social innovation.⁴⁵ (I-2)

Thompson (2018) would agree with Roldán’s point of view, as he argues that the issue of scale is fundamental for transformative social innovations that require a transformation of anchor institutions such as Ruta N. This means that if a more social understanding of innovation is only present at an individual level, it will lead to isomorphism rather than a transformational change of regulatory and institutional norms (see Thompson, 2018, p. 22). Pel and Bauler argue in the same way as “institutionalization could also be a forebode of transformative impulses being channelled, encapsulated, domesticated and eventually stifled by the very institutional structures they were to change” (2014, p. 5).

⁴⁵ Own translation, original quote in Spanish: *Los focos en innovación en educación y lo social han sido más personas que les apasionan los temas y tratamos de sacarlos adelante – a riesgo también y con las consecuencias que trae cambiarse de roles etc. Eso es difícil porque no se ha vuelto una cosa sistémica, sino que es algo más de una u otra persona de liderazgo. Todavía nos falta, a nosotros los líderes que nos apasionamos por ello, comunicarlo con más fuerza y que sea más disruptivo. Por otro lado, a la corporación también le hace falta entenderlo mejor que implicaciones tiene esto en el mediano y largo plazo: la educación y la innovación social.*

Focus on ‘*Economía Naranja*’ and Creation of a Center for the 4th Industrial Revolution

During my research stay, two important events occurred that exemplify Medellín’s strategy to enter the innovative global city league. Firstly, Ruta N’s projects have increasingly emphasized the ‘*economía naranja*’ (‘orange economy’), i.e. the creative sector. In his presidential campaign, Colombia’s president, Ivan Duque, declared the orange economy as a strategic focus area for economic development. According to Thompson, local economic development has foregrounded entrepreneurial capacities of the private sector by installing ‘enterprise zones’ and more recently by focusing on the creative industry (Thompson 2018, p. 5). He argues that this development is a result of the neoliberal urban policies directed at entrepreneurialism which Peck (2017) conceptualized under the term ‘entrepreneurial city’.

Secondly, the inauguration of a Center for the 4th Industrial Revolution took place on the 30th of April 2019 at Ruta N. As part of my participant observation, I attended Ivan Duque’s inaugural speech. He highlighted the importance of such a center in Medellín as a future reference point for the whole Latin American region. He sees the Center as an opportunity to attract foreign investment and to elevate Colombia to the level of New York City or Japan. In addition to this neoliberal viewpoint, Duque, as well as other speakers such as Medellín’s Mayor Gutiérrez, recognized new opportunities to enhance social transformation, e.g., in solving problems in rural areas or supporting persons with disabilities. Contrarily, the social transformation this Center could foster were always framed by the speakers as a desirable ‘side-effect’, but never as one of the primary goals.

These two examples of recent projects supported by Ruta N illustrate its focus on STI. From a political economy point of view, this development can be analyzed thusly:

Elites with minimal technological capabilities and interests in promoting the advancement of transnational capitalism have successfully secured access to sources of power. These conditions (re)produce neoliberal logics of local governance that focus on economic growth in sectors with perceived global comparative advantages and on sustaining the particular power balances in Medellín’s political settlement. (Franz, 2018a, p. 85)

This quote summarizes this sub-chapter by highlighting elite interests in positioning Medellín as an ‘innovative city’ – a forerunner in technological progress that can compete with other global cities. This has implications on how innovation is perceived by society

and what role is attributed to transformative instead of capitalocentric orientations of innovation (see chapter 3.1).

5.3 Social Organizations' Projects

For the purpose of analyzing the transformation of Medellín, it is important to evaluate the role of grassroots organizations for the city's development. Therefore, this sub-chapter provides an insight into the work of two important social organizations: *Corporación Región* and *Fundación Mi Sangre*. Their experiences exemplify how, in case of the former, grassroots organizations have significantly shaped the city's governance model towards more inclusive practices and how, in case of the former, they have guided public policy-making towards the importance of violence prevention strategies for vulnerable youth.

Corporación Región

Marta Villa, the leader of *Corporación Región* (Region Corporation),⁴⁶ one of the oldest grassroots organizations in Medellín, comments on the importance of social organizations in fostering participation in policy-making:

We have existed since the 90's and we've been involved in the transformation of the city: in the participation in local development plans, in the issue of participatory budgeting and in the municipal youth councils. Many participation scenarios were made possible by the constitution, which the Presidential Council facilitated. What these social organizations did was to encourage participation.⁴⁷ (I-26)

She also points out that, in contrast to other social organizations that clearly distance themselves from the state, *Corporación Región* cooperates with it because "it is impossible to build citizenship or democracy without the state"⁴⁸ (I-26). Interestingly, Alonso Salazar, Fajardo's successor, was working as a social researcher and founded *Corporación Región* in the 1980s. Marta Villa comments on this period: "It was the time of the biggest crisis in the city. Not only was it a time of violence, but there was also an

⁴⁶ <https://www.region.org.co/>

⁴⁷ Own translation, original quote in Spanish: *Nosotros, que ya existimos desde los 90, tuvimos que ver con esa transformación de la ciudad: en la participación de los planes de desarrollo locales, en el tema del presupuesto participativo y en los concejos municipales de la juventud. Hubo muchos escenarios de participación que abrió la constitución, que la Consejería Presidencial facilitó. Digamos lo que esas organizaciones sociales hicieron fue incentivar la participación.*

⁴⁸ Own translation, original quote in Spanish: *no es posible de construir ni ciudadanía ni democracia sin el estado.*

economic crisis, a crisis of the city project, a crisis of sociability”⁴⁹ (I-26).

At that time, Salazar wrote his emblematic book “*No nacimos p’a semilla: La cultura de las bandas juveniles en Medellín*” (‘We weren’t born to seed: The culture of youth gangs in Medellín’) (1991). His book was a result of his research on the root causes of the social problems in the city. Thus, *Corporación Región* was part of the project ‘*Arriba mi barrio*’ (‘Elevate my neighborhood’) that was launched in cooperation with the *Consejería Presidencial*, out of which the strategic plan for Medellín arose. Moreover, this grassroots organization strongly promoted the formulation of various public policies on civic participation, displaced populations, right to the city and reconstruction of memory by closely working with the civil society and victim organizations linked to the armed conflict (I-26).

In general, *Corporación Región* also monitors the government’s actions. For instance, their assessment of Medellín’s transformation is available in an article on their website. Therein, *Corporación Región* recognizes the achievements of Medellín’s transformation process, such as the improved quality of life and the reduction of homicide rates as well as the inclusion of vulnerable residents with the help of Social Urbanism projects. Moreover, the grassroots organization highlights “the leading role of its inhabitants, civil society organizations and a business sector that also made a commitment to innovation and economic dynamization”⁵⁰ (Corporación Región, 2019).

With respect to this thesis’s research question, this citation points at the importance of the civil society and its social and cultural efforts towards the city’s transformation process. In the same article, the grassroots organization further comments on the innovation prizes with which Medellín has been awarded in recognition of its transformation:

The good practices of some administrations, efficient in terms of public management, transparent, respecting institutionalism and citizenship, have been recognized at local, national and international levels with high rates of acceptance and valuation. This is beneficial to the city and its inhabitants, since one of the axes of a healthy democracy is trust in institutions and governors. However, when this acceptance becomes an unthinking practice that feeds into the

⁴⁹ Own translation, original quote in Spanish: *Era la época de la mayor crisis de la ciudad. No solamente de violencia, pero también era una crisis económica, una crisis de proyecto de ciudad, una crisis de sociabilidad.*

⁵⁰ Own translation, original quote in Spanish: *el papel protagónico de sus habitantes, de las organizaciones de la sociedad civil y de un sector del empresariado que le apostó también, a la innovación y a la dinamización económica.*

hideous pride and superiority that seeks at all costs, to function as the first and best, it ceases to be a positive sign and becomes an obstacle that does not allow us to actually see, recognize and change.⁵¹ (Corporación Región, 2019)

This statement illustrates *Corporación Región*'s critical posture. It cautions against regarding the afore mentioned achievements in Medellín's transformation in an irreflexive and conceited manner, thus prohibiting further improvements.

Fundación Mi Sangre

The *Fundación Mi Sangre* (Foundation My Blood)⁵² was created by the singer Juanes in 2006 in order to guide victims of landmines and youth work towards the construction of a peaceful society. Ursula Baigorria, the organization's Planning and Development Leader, elaborates on the foundation's focus on and methodology for peace education:

We believe in systemic change. Supporting the young people of the country to: first, get to know themselves; second, understand their context; third, so that they are able to comprehend their community's difficulties; fourth, so that they can solve those problems. We are supporting the construction of peace not only in Medellín but in all of Colombia.⁵³ (I-22)

Social organizations, along with the municipality, which directs a range of programs directed at Medellín's youth,⁵⁴ have identified the new generation, which was born after the city's violent period, as 'change agents' who will lead the future development of society as well as the city. Ursula Baigorria supports this idea by commenting: "If you want to change society, you have to start with the young because they are the new generation that are able to make important transformations"⁵⁵ (I-22). She adds that

⁵¹ Own translation, original quote in Spanish: *Las buenas prácticas de algunas administraciones, eficientes en términos de gestión pública, transparentes, respetuosas de la institucionalidad y de la ciudadanía, han sido reconocidas a nivel local, nacional e internacional con altos porcentajes de aceptación y valoración. Esto es bueno para la ciudad y sus habitantes pues un eje de una democracia saludable, es la confianza en las instituciones y en los gobernantes. No obstante, cuando esta aceptación se convierte en una práctica irreflexiva que, alimenta el manido orgullo y superioridad que busca a toda costa, fungir como los primeros y los mejores, deja de ser un signo positivo para convertirse en un obstáculo que no permite ver, reconocer y cambiar.*

⁵² <http://fundacionmisangre.org/>

⁵³ Own translation, original quote in Spanish: *Creemos en el cambio sistémico. Que apoyando los jóvenes del país para: uno, conocer a sí mismos; dos, para conozcan su entorno; tres, para que entiendan sus problemáticas; cuatro para que puedan resolver esos problemas; vamos a apoyar a la construcción de paz no sólo en Medellín, pero en todo Colombia.*

⁵⁴ See e.g. the program 'El Líder Sos Vos' ('You Are the Leader'), whose sessions with young leaders I was able to partially accompany during my participant observations: <https://medellin.edu.co/ellidersosvos>.

⁵⁵ Own translation, original quote in Spanish: *Si tú quieres cambiar la sociedad, tienes que empezar con los jóvenes porque ellos son la nueva generación que pueda transformar algo.*

‘transformation’ and ‘peace’ are strongly linked which is reflected in the *Fundación Mi Sangre*’s strategy. This strategy is based on a systemic approach that aims at inducing social changes at the individual, community, societal and system level (I-22). Baigorria explains these levels: At the individual level, the foundation works with youth at risk in schools, discussing topics such as critical thinking, conflict resolution and life skill capabilities. At the community level, the focus lies on fostering leadership skills amongst youth for the construction of peace. At the society level, the foundation seeks to support those children and youth who are already involved in initiatives by connecting them with other leaders, building networks and providing support for social enterprises. Finally, the foundation engages in various activities which traversing the different levels for the purpose of inducing systemic changes.

This approach is reminiscent of the multi-level perspective of transformative change (see Avelino et al., 2017) (chapter 3.1.3). Accordingly, it fits Lederach’s ‘multi-track diplomacy’ approach (1997), as the foundation engages in advocacy efforts on different levels.

Furthermore, *Fundación Mi Sangre* describes itself as a ‘web-weaver’ with reference to Lederach’s (2005, p. 80) concept of ‘peacebuilding as web-making’, as it enhances connections between different actors within an ecosystem to create systemic change:

We talk about stimulating ecosystems in order to achieve sustainable changes. That’s why we take the systemic approach. We are basically web-weavers, bringing different actors to the table. We give you the tools, but you tell us how to build peace in your territory. No one is telling you what the solutions are for your community.⁵⁶ (I-22)

This statement illustrates that the *Fundación Mi Sangre* follows the premise of elicitive conflict transformation since it supports the idea that people in conflict situations know best how to solve the problem. Instead of providing a prescribed solution, the foundation teaches a method that “draws out, highlights, and catalyzes existing or communally held knowledge related to transforming conflicts between individuals, groups, and communities” (Unesco Chair for Peace Studies, 2014).

⁵⁶ Own translation, original quote in Spanish: *Nosotros hablamos de activar ecosistemas para poder activar cambios sostenibles. Por eso, el enfoque sistémico es algo de nosotros. Somos como tejedores, trayendo diferentes actores en la mesa. Nosotros te damos las herramientas, pero tú nos dices cómo se construye la paz en tu territorio. Nadie le está diciendo cuáles son las soluciones para su comunidad.*

Baigorria gives one example of a successful program that has been adopted and institutionalized as a municipal program. The *Secretaria de la Juventud* (Secretary of Youth) has developed *Jóvenes R* ('R Youth')⁵⁷ together with *Fundación Mi Sangre* for vulnerable youth in the *comunas*. On basis of *Fundación Mi Sangre*'s methodology, youth is taught life skills and the capacities for non-violent behavior. Currently, they are implementing this program in cooperation with the municipal administration.

Literature's Overall Contribution

In conclusion, this sub-chapter argues that social organizations have already started imagining a different, non-violent society in the 1980s, when there was no institutionalized support for a civil society. Therefore, grassroots organizations crucially contributed "to a shift in thinking among political and business elites towards support for Fajardo's civic pacts and associated vision for the city" (Simmons et al., 2018, p. 246) and imagining peace in a violent situation (see Lederach, 2005, p. 59).

Taking urban development and governance scholarship into consideration, Leyva (2010) emphasizes, in reference to Lefebvre's claims that city and space are a social product (see Lefebvre, 1998), that the state is just one of the many actors involved in the shaping of the urban space of Medellín. Leyva affirms the validity of the question as to who is involved therein, as public institutions are becoming increasingly decentralized and question their obligation to share or even delegate their powers to tertiary actors (Leyva, 2010, p. 288). Elicitive conflict transformation theory supports this call for the inclusion of the directly affected individuals in the solution process (see Unesco Chair for Peace Studies, 2014).

This chapter has provided case examples from the participant observations. The evaluation of the CUEE and Ruta N demonstrated how public entities shape the innovation discourse primarily following capitalocentric conceptualizations. In contrast, the examination of two grassroots organizations illustrated their rather transformative conceptualizations of social innovation. This was exemplified by the importance they place on influencing public-policy making and shifting the focus of the public administration to the most pressing social problems. The next chapter complements the

⁵⁷ <https://www.medellinjovent.com/jovenes-r>

analysis of the empirical material by presenting and discussing the findings from the qualitative interviews.

6 Stakeholders' Perspectives on Medellín's Transformation

This chapter discusses the research topic from the perspective of the 34 interviewed stakeholders (appendix 9.2), all of whom have played an important role in Medellín's transformation. The analysis of the interviews follows the order of the interview questions presented in the interview guide (appendix 9.1). Their opinions and visions are discussed in relation to the key analytical concepts from chapter 3 and contrasted with the views on the topic drawn from literature as presented in chapter 4.

Contextualizing the Interview Period

Before the interview results are provided, it is important to briefly outline the situation in Medellín at the time, when these interviews were conducted (from March until June 2019). This provides explanatory context to the stakeholders' viewpoints.

At the beginning of 2019, the debates on the reconstruction of the memories of the victims of narcotrafficking shaped societal discussions. In February 2019, under the municipality's strategy of '*Medellín Abraza Su Historia*' ('Medellín Embraces its History'), the 'Monaco building', a former residency of Pablo Escobar, was demolished in order to construct a memorial for the victims. Critical voices opposed this action due to the lack of transparency and the municipality's strategy regarding the victims in general, as it disguised the impact of the national armed conflict.⁵⁸ The focus of the public security policies on criminal persecution under the current mayor Federico Gutiérrez was another widely criticized issue.

The issues described above illustrate that the social transformation of Medellín is not a topic which finds resonance in current discussions. This may be owed to the fact that the transformation of Medellín is regarded as terminated and has been attributed to the period of Social Urbanism, as argued in the previous chapter. However, discussing social transformation is still relevant to the situation in Medellín due to current issues of rising inequality and insecurity levels as well as ecological crises, such as the pollution problem in the city.

⁵⁸ See e.g. the evaluation of the program by the Overseeing Office for Medellín's Development Plan (*Veeduría Medellín al Plan de Desarrollo*) (2019b) or *Corporación Región*'s comment on '*Medellín abraza su historia*': <https://www.region.org.co/index.php/opinamos/item/378-medellin-abraza-su-historia>.

The qualitative interviews are therefore intended to draw a connection between the beginnings of Medellín's transformation and the current city development. In addition, they are intended to illustrate how the role of social innovation is evaluated by the actors involved and how they view innovation and transformation in Medellín. Additionally, the interviews sought to capture their perspectives on the ecosystem of innovation of Medellín's transformation in order to investigate in what ways they would be linked to the current concepts of 'transformative social innovation' and 'innovation systems' from literature; in regard to the purpose of this research's overarching interest in the contribution of social innovation to Medellín's transformation.

6.1 Assessing the Transformation Process

Collective Effort and Continuity of Political Agendas

At the beginning of every interview, the interviewees were asked to provide their opinion on how Medellín could transform from the world's most dangerous city in the 1990s to the world's most innovative city two decades later. All interview partners, regardless of their sector, agreed that the city's transformation has been achieved through a common effort and continued support of political programs and projects by local authorities across different administrations. Overall, the interviewees confirmed what can be found in literature on Medellín's transformation. Every interview partner mentioned an aspect of Social Urbanism in Medellín and that it had a positive impact on the inclusion of poorer inhabitants. Occasionally, the interview partners also talked about some aspects of the city's transformation beyond those that literature or city marketing efforts mention. The interviewees agreed that Medellín was able to transform due to a variety of factors.

These additional aspects and factors are explained in the following paragraphs by allocating them to the respective four dimensions of social innovation as identified by Moulaert and MacCallum: (1) 'satisfaction of human needs', (2) 'changing social relations', (3) 'collective empowerment' and (4) socio-political transformation (2019, pp. 50–52) (see chapter 3.1).

(1) Satisfaction of Human Needs

Realization of the desperate situation of violence and the lack of prospects

Corporación Región's leader, Marta Villa, states that the situation in Medellín in the 1980s was not only a crisis of violence, but also one of economic decline and social crisis

(I-26). Accordingly, Restrepo adds that “Medellín was a city that appeared to have no future”⁵⁹ (I-7). This is the reason why some interviewees note that Medellín’s citizens were tired of the daily confrontations with violence and that the residents developed a strong posture of ‘resistance’.

The Laboratory of Innovation’s leader, Alejandro Roldán, also mentions that Medellín’s residents developed a strong wish and hope for ‘not repeating’ – for breaking out of the vicious cycle:

There is a commitment of the citizens and those who lived in the 80s our childhood - not to repeat. We experienced a facet of our city that we do not want to experience again, and that makes those of us who are working in the public sector commit to the purpose of continuing to grow and improving the quality of life.⁶⁰ (I-2)

The role of culture

His opinion highlights the importance of the cultural aspect of Medellín’s transformation. Jorge Melguizo worked in the division for citizen culture at *Corporación Región* and was appointed Secretary of Citizen Culture in the administrations of Fajardo and Salazar. He now is responsible for the education and culture department at Comfama. In his interview, he identifies two key events for Medellín’s transformation: Víctor Gaviria’s movie “*Rodrigo D.: No Futuro*” (“Rodrigo D.: No Future”) (1990) and Alonso Salazar’s book (1991) mentioned above.

Those two cultural events, a book and a film, have placed us in front of a mirror. They showed us the harsh city we lived in, that we refused to see. We had been having the highest death rates in the world for years. Well, those two artworks did something monumental to us - they got us talking across different sectors of the city.⁶¹ (I-10)

Melguizo considers these two cultural works decisive in the realization of the desperate situation in which the city was caught and regards these events as the catalysts for Medellín’s transformation process. Comparing the interview answers with the

⁵⁹ Own translation, original quote in Spanish: *Medellín era una ciudad que se plantaba sin futuro.*

⁶⁰ Own translation, original quote in Spanish: *Hay un compromiso de la ciudadanía y aquellos que vivimos en los 80s nuestra infancia - de no repetir. Vivimos en una cara de nuestra ciudad que no queremos volver a ver y eso hace que los que estamos trabajando en el sector público, le apostemos al propósito de continuar creciendo y mejorando la calidad de vida.*

⁶¹ Own translation, original quote in Spanish: *Esos dos hechos culturales, un libro y una película, nos pusieron frente a un espejo. Nos mostraron la dura ciudad en la que vivíamos, que nos negábamos a ver. Ya llevábamos años teniendo las mayores tasas de muerte en el mundo. Pues, esas dos obras nos hicieron algo que fue fundamental – nos pusieron a conversar entre sectores distintos de la ciudad.*

propositions in literature on Medellín's transformation, the role of culture in inducing the city's change process is a new factor absent from mainstream narratives.

Private sector involvement and financial support

Federico Restrepo and María Ramos, representing public entities, argue in line with literature's position that the investments by EPM enabled the city's transformation projects. Moreover, one third of the interview partners believed that the private sector played an important role as well, as it began to care about the social developments and took responsibility for effects of the economic downturn resulting in youth unemployment. In line with Morisson (2019b), *ProAntioquia* and the GEA were also mentioned by María Ramos, ex-Secretary for the Municipal Planning Office, as the driving forces behind the private sector's involvement in the city's development.

Initiatives and infrastructure aimed at improving the situation of the poor

Initiatives and projects of Social Urbanism sought to improve the situation of Medellín's poorer population. The credo of Social Urbanism was to give 'the best to the poorest', as Ramos states, in order to make these persons feel relevant and included. According to Restrepo, it was important to show them that they were "not part of the problem, but part of the solution"⁶² (I-7).

By contrast, Escobar's criticism of planning rejects the idea that social change can be produced at will (Escobar, 2010 [1992], p. 145). Illich (2010 [1992]) would criticize the assumption that providing architectonically beautiful buildings would solve 'needs', as giving the 'best to the poor' implies an interpretation of their 'needs' through a lens of market logic.

(2) Change of Social Relations

With respect to the social innovation dimension of changing social relations, the interviewees contest that social dialogue, resistance and cultural transformation facilitated Medellín's change process.

Metro's Social Management Director, Juan Correa, remarks that the sense of belonging to the city, the reconstruction of the social net and newly built trust were important factors, changing the way society interrelated:

⁶² Own translation, original quote in Spanish: *no parte del problema, pero parte de la solución.*

Thanks to this continued commitment, programs were created to rebuild the social net, which had been damaged by violence; the needs of the most vulnerable territories were met, education reached forgotten territories and infrastructure projects allowed for development in these areas. New opportunities for encountering each other allowed people to build trust in each other and to appropriate public space.⁶³ (I-6)

Role of the Consejería Presidencial

As proposed in literature (see chapter 4.1), numerous interviewees regarded the *Consejería Presidencial* as key to drawing the government's attention to the problems in Medellín. The following extract from the interview with María Ramos exemplifies several interview partners' acknowledgement of the important work of Ana María Mejía, who went to the most violent neighborhoods: "She sat down with people in the most violent neighborhoods to ask them what could be done to transform this society: expand the opportunities for employment training and education for poorer youth in order to try closing the inequality gaps"⁶⁴ (I-14).

The *Consejería Presidencial* prioritized the city's youth in order to reduce the high violence levels by initiating dialogue between different actors. It was an act of imagining what a more peaceful society would look like. In Lederach's (2005) terms, this means that Mejía, in her function as an advisor to the national government, paved the way for imagining a more peaceful society while still in a situation of conflict. On basis of the insights gained from conversations with different communities, Mejía developed a strategy for the local administration to deal with the most prevalent problems. Thus, Mejía functioned as a 'web-weaver' (see Lederach, 2005) by initiating dialogue between an array of different actors, ranging from inhabitants of the *comunas* to high-level politicians.

⁶³ Own translation, original quote in Spanish: *Gracias a esta apuesta continuada, se crearon programas que reconstruyeran el tejido social que se vio deteriorado a causa de la violencia; las necesidades de los territorios más vulnerables fueron atendidas, la educación llegó a territorios olvidados y obras de infraestructura permitieron que el desarrollo entrara a estos. Nuevos escenarios de encuentro permitieron la confianza hacia el otro y la apropiación del espacio público.*

⁶⁴ Own translation, original quote in Spanish: *Ella se sentaba con la gente en los barrios más violentos para preguntarles que se podría hacer para transformar esa sociedad: ampliar la oportunidad para ingresar a la formación, educación para jóvenes más pobres como intentos de cerrar las brechas de inequidad.*

Importance of international actors and collaboration

Juan Carlos Tabares from the grassroots organization *Picacho con Futuro* (Picacho with Future) refers to these dialogues as an act of ‘web-making’: “This is where an essential action for the transformation of Medellín took place, which was to come together, create trust and build bridges that still exist today in some cases”⁶⁵ (I-23).

International stakeholders such as the German GTZ, KfW and USAID, who helped to establish programs for youth at risk, also participated in these dialogues. According to Maclean (2015), an important factor in establishing the legitimacy of these radically new governance platforms, was the support of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP). This view is shared by Makaia’s Co-Founder, Catalina Escobar: “The international development sector has been also very good at drawing attention to what has been happening in Medellín and at promoting South-South cooperation as well as implementing some of the good practices” (I-27).

In addition to the importance of international stakeholders, another factor that has contributed to changing social relations becomes apparent – different sectors were now collaborating:

Foros Comunes (community fora) and Compromiso Ciudadano (citizen engagement) during the 1990s helped in drawing together citizens, business leaders, city authorities and other relevant stakeholders as part of a process of socio-economic change. This was supported formally by national initiatives to devolve power to the city level led by President Gaviria in 1990. (Simmons et al., 2018, p. 249)

In fact, the *Compromiso Ciudadano* was led by a circle of friends who believed in the change project. Fajardo was active in this movement, along with his successor Salazar who worked as a Secretary in his government. Jorge Melguizo and Fajardo’s right-hand architect, Alejandro Echeverri, had gained an insight into the Barcelona model which had inspired Medellín’s socio-economic development.

⁶⁵ Own translation, original quote in Spanish: *Aquí pasó para mí una acción que era importante para la transformación de Medellín que era juntar, crear confianzas, construir puentes que hoy todavía existen en algunos casos.*

(3) Collective Empowerment

Citizen participation

Concerning the social innovation dimension of ‘collective empowerment’, every interview partner mentions the citizen participation as one key characteristic of the city’s transformation process. Their assessment follows scholar’s idea of fostering participatory democracy through community participation (Simmons et al., 2018; Urán Arenas, 2010) and thus ascribe social innovation aspects to Medellín’s transformation process.

Public space appropriation

María Ramos, also former CEO of EDU, calls attention to the strengthened feeling of citizenship by saying that “we have experienced a process of empowerment and appropriation of citizenship by the city” ⁶⁶ (I-14). In a similar vein, Correa, the representative of Metro, argues that this creation of citizenship has primarily taken place in the form of residents appropriating public space as “new scenarios of encounter facilitated the trust-building towards other people and the appropriation of public space” ⁶⁷ (I-6).

Occasionally, there are also critical voices among the interviewees, particularly those from civil society or social organizations, who oppose the positive view by public officials or those interviewees who had worked for the municipality. For instance, one interview partner criticizes the exclusionary nature of public spaces which Berney (2013) has identified as a problem in Bogotá’s case in chapter 4.4: “Medellín’s transformation is targeted at a specific group, but not at all of society” ⁶⁸ (I-24). This interviewee upholds Brand’s and Dávila’s (2011) assumption that the new infrastructure is not used by *comuna* inhabitants, but that, in his view, those projects have been implemented to attract tourism:

I feel that this city has been transformed to receive foreigners rather than for its own people, despite the fact that there was much progress, especially with regard to social improvements

⁶⁶ Own translation, original quote in Spanish: *hemos vivido un proceso de empoderamiento y de apropiación de la ciudadanía por la ciudad.*

⁶⁷ Own translation, original quote in Spanish: *nuevos escenarios de encuentro permitieron la confianza hacia el otro y la apropiación del espacio público.*

⁶⁸ Own translation, original quote in Spanish: *La transformación de Medellín está orientada para un grupo específico, pero no para la sociedad completa.*

in the communities. But more and more projects are emerging for the purpose of receiving tourists, instead of being a city that responds to the needs of its inhabitants.⁶⁹ (I-24)

The same interviewee uses the escalators in his community, *San Javier in comuna 13*, as an example, see in figure 11:

The escalators have had a positive side effect, namely allowing many people here in the neighborhood to create their business. But this didn't really happen with the objective of building escalators, because if they're only operated between eight o'clock and six o'clock at night – then they are no solution intended for the large part of the community that works or studies.⁷⁰ (I-24)



Figure 11: Escalators in comuna 13, San Javier (own picture, March, 2019)

⁶⁹ Own translation, original quote in Spanish: *Yo siento que esta ciudad se transforma más para recibir extranjeros que para su gente misma, sin desconocer que había muchos avances, sobre todo avances sociales en las comunas. Pero cada vez surgen más proyectos que son para recibir turistas en vez de ser una ciudad que obedece a las necesidades de sus habitantes.*

⁷⁰ Own translation, original quote in Spanish: *El efecto colateral que han generado las escaleras eléctricas es muy positivo, porque ha permitido que mucha gente aquí en el barrio cree su emprendimiento. Pero realmente con el objetivo de que hacen unas escaleras no, porque si las abren a las ocho y las cierran a las 6 de la noche – para gran parte de la comunidad que trabajen o van a estudiar – no es una solución.*

Unrecognized Effort of Civil Society – Rather an Elitist Project

Juan Carlos Tabares from a grassroots organization in the *barrio Picacho* shares a critical view as he observes that people always highlight the participative character of the public policies while giving the impression that solely the state was responsible for them (I-23). Nonetheless, he argues that the innovative ideas have come from the population itself, which really knows the best way to solve problems within their territory. He illustrates his view by giving the example of the participatory budgeting process, which was inspired by the precedents set in Brazil (mentioned in chapter 3.2.1) and first introduced under Fajardo in the district *12 de octubre* in *comuna* 6 in 2004. According to this interviewee, the implementation of the project was so successful that it was adopted in the entire *comuna* 6, a process for which the grassroots organization *Picacho con Futuro* was responsible. *Picacho con Futuro*'s representative criticizes Salazar's decision to implement participatory budgeting processes in every *comuna* and *corregimiento* of the city:

In that moment, it lost a bit its meaning because there were communities that didn't feel the need to do it. When the mayor's office arrived and declared that they were doing that, it became a municipal initiative. It wasn't met with the same enthusiasm there as it was here.⁷¹ (I-23)

He further asserts that the local *comuna* residents were not taken as seriously as academics and scholars and that there was no 'empowerment' or 'appropriation' for *comuna* residents:

We must realize that the people in the neighborhoods produce more strategic solutions than the city. But as we've heard, the planning model calls for architects and people with master's degrees or doctorates to analyze the problems and propose solutions. Many political leaders have been educated in the best universities but do not know the city from within. That leaves them with an incomplete vision of the city. Therefore, their programs are very well intentioned but are not necessarily the most effective for the transformation of reality.

⁷¹ Own translation, original quote in Spanish: *Ahí perdió un poquito el sentido porque había comunidades que no sentían la necesidad que había que hacerlo. Cuando llega la alcaldía y define que se hace eso ya es una iniciativa municipal. Ahí no hay tanta emoción como aquí lo pasó.*

Let's say that [the planning model] did not generate citizenship, empowerment, appropriation, nor did it recognize the capacities that exist in the citizens and in the community organizations.⁷² (I-23)

His critical view on Social Urbanism as an elitist project is opposed to the prevalent discourses in literature, which generally highlight the participatory, democratic, empowering and inclusive aspects of Medellín's transformation. Tabares concurs with Esteva's (2019) criticism of participatory democracy as an elite endeavor. He also follows an elicitive approach to conflict transformation, as he emphasizes the personal capacities of residents, who are able to address their challenges more successfully than the solutions prescribed by the municipality could (see Unesco Chair for Peace Studies, 2014). This also reflects the conclusion of Eslava's (2017) work on Medellín's Social Urbanism. He believes that the local administration needs to recognize the local community's capacities, which it tends to depreciate, and it needs to refrain from paternalism and invasiveness; but it should establish dialogue.

Moreover, *Picacho con Futuro*'s representative criticizes that the merit owed to the initiatives of social organizations is seldom highlighted in discourses, although they have been actively working for the city's transformation, long before Fajardo's administration:

Since 2004, the transformation of the city has been much more visible because two mayors who were able to visualize these good initiatives have arrived. But look, we've been working on it since the 1980s. What happens is that until 2003, nobody really took notice of the processes.⁷³ (I-23)

⁷² Own translation, original quote in Spanish: *Tenemos que reconocer que la gente en los barrios tiene las soluciones más estratégicas que la ciudad. Pero como lo hemos escuchado o como existía un modelo de planeación que era que unos arquitectos, magister, unos doctorados llegaban para analizar los problemas y proponer soluciones. Hay muchos líderes políticos formados en las mejores universidades pero que no conocen la ciudad desde sus entrañas. Eso hace que ellos tienen una visión parcial de la ciudad. Por lo tanto, sus programas son muy bien intencionados, pero no necesariamente lo que lo más potente para la transformación de la realidad. Digamos que eso [el modelo de planeación] no generaba ciudadanía, empoderamiento, apropiación y además no reconocía las capacidades que hay en la ciudadanía y en las organizaciones comunitarias.*

⁷³ Own translation, original quote in Spanish: *Desde 2004 es mucho más visible la transformación de la ciudad porque llegan dos alcaldías que lograron de visualizar esas buenas iniciativas. Pero mira, nosotros trabajamos en eso desde los 80. Lo que pasa es que hasta el 2003 nadie escuchaba realmente los procesos.*

(4) Socio-Political Transformation

Changed governance model opening ‘windows of opportunity’

As outlined in chapter 3.2, TRANSIT conceptualizes social innovation as a process that may also be transformative if institutions are challenged, altered or replaced. In the case of Medellín, the interview partners referred to such re-configurations of the municipality and public policies as a ‘process’ taking place over a larger time span.

For instance, Melguizo, like Tabares above, clarifies that the transformation of Medellín was not initiated by Fajardo but had started much earlier: “One of the ‘hows’ of what has happened in Medellín has been going on for 30 years. That hasn’t started with the people in the mayor’s office, nor with Fajardo. We were an important part of that process” ⁷⁴ (I-10).

As already noted in 4.2, Leyva (2010) argues in the same vein by saying that Fajardo and his successor Salazar revalued the ties established with the social sector during the 1990s, which the preceding Mayor Perez had abandoned. However, literature commonly regards Social Urbanism as the starting point of the city’s transformation even though it is more accurate to locate its origins earlier, in 1991 (see argumentation in chapter 4.1). Still, this revaluation of the social sector was effected through different channels and processes based on a vision of co-responsibility, which included citizens and other actors in the fulfillment of the development plan (Leyva, 2010, p. 284).

Applying transition terminology, the institutionalization of the propositions of the social and other actors brought forward was achieved, as they utilized these ‘windows of opportunity’ (Avelino et al., 2017, p. 199) to inscribe their demands into the city’s development and investment plan. Accordingly, the public policy landscape functioned as a catalyst for citizen participation. Melguizo explains how this strategy of co-responsibility was understood by the municipality: “Medellín was a collective failure. Everyone’s responsibility. We turned that into a collective challenge” ⁷⁵ (I-10).

⁷⁴ Own translation, original quote in Spanish: *Uno de los ‘cómos’ de lo que ha pasado en Medellín viene pasando hace 30 años. Eso no arranca con los en la alcaldía, ni con Fajardo. Nosotros fuimos una parte importante en ese proceso.*

⁷⁵ Own translation, original quote in Spanish: *Medellín era un fracaso colectivo. Una responsabilidad de todos. Convertimos eso en un desafío colectivo.*

Furthermore, Restrepo explains that the different governance model, developed by their *Compromiso Ciudadano* movement, broke with the traditional clientelist way due to its clear vision and planning strategy of investing in the most deprived areas of the city:

All this was possible thanks to a new model of governance that broke with the clientelist pattern of the government. This is very important because the interventions were not taking place where the ones who elected us were, but where the problems were.⁷⁶ (I-7)

This perception is in line with Leyva's observation that the previous construction of governability of the city happened through a governance model, that prioritized political pacts which implied the payment of political favors, rather than the citizens' interest (2010, p. 279). Restrepo highlighted in his quote above that there was a political will not to rely on clientelist favors in order to secure votes but solely on the motive of changing the city for the better. Literature affirms the importance of political commitment:

The success of these initiatives and actions depends strongly on the willingness and ability of the actors to correct or reduce power asymmetries across social groups within planning processes, both when changing governance arrangements and when giving power to alternative development trajectories in the reinvention of places. (Nyseth & Hamdouch, 2019, p. 4)

Continuity of programs and projects

Restrepo also stresses the importance of the continuity of the development plans across different governments. In the same vein, the director of the *Universidad de Antioquia*, John Jairo Arboleda Céspedes, comments on the continuity of programs and projects across different administrations: "We are fortunate to have governments that share the same intentions. Because I believe that our country's political problem is that every time there is a change of government, there are changes in priorities and objectives"⁷⁷ (I-30).

⁷⁶ Own translation, original quote in Spanish: *Todo eso fue posible gracias a un nuevo modelo de gestión de lo público que rompía con el modelo clientelista del poder. Eso es muy importante porque las intervenciones no se estaban dando donde estaban los que eligieran a nosotros, sino donde estaban los problemas.*

⁷⁷ Own translation, original quote in Spanish: *Nosotros tenemos una fortuna de contar con gobiernos de la misma intencionalidad. Porque creo que el problema político de nuestro país es que, cada vez que hay cambio de gobierno, hay cambios de énfasis y cambios de objetivos.*

Multi-level changes

Chapter 3.1.3 has established the analytical framework for this thesis, which includes the multi-level aspect of transformative social change (Avelino et al., 2017). This view is shared by one interview participant:

I am convinced that knowledge and transformation is achieved at various levels. If you don't transform yourself, if you don't transform your life, you can't help others to transform, and you can't make a city undergo a transformation.⁷⁸ (I-24)

Simmons et al. comment on the importance of changes taking place simultaneously at multiple levels by using citizen participation as an example:

Notwithstanding, in governance terms the principle of participation was informally established at a micro level among actors in the city traditionally outside of the political and economic elite and with the backing of formal macro and meso level initiatives such as the Presidential Programme and the Strategic Plan for Medellín. (Simmons et al., 2018, p. 246)

As argued above with regard to the 'windows of opportunity', the state and its public policies function as a catalyst for systemic changes: on a micro level, civil society had started to find its voice in urban planning, and on a meso level the governance model was reinvented, which in turn altered the municipality as an institution. According to TRANSIT, this can then be considered a transformative change.

Furthermore, as argued with regard to the 'changing social relations' dimension before, webs were woven between the communal forums, *Juntas de Acción Communal* (Community Action Boards) and City Hall representatives so as to engage in cooperative dialogues, which elicitive conflict transformation theory considers similar to a 'multi-track diplomacy' approach (see Lederach, 1997).

On the Transferability of the Medellín Model

As mentioned in the introductory chapter, after experiencing the failure of projects such as the metro cable or the public libraries in Rio de Janeiro, I wanted to understand how they differed to the projects that functioned in Medellín. Restrepo comments that this failure is owed to the following factors:

⁷⁸ Own translation, original quote in Spanish: *Estoy convencido que el conocimiento y la transformación se hace a varias escalas. Si tu no transformas a ti mismo, si tu no transformas tu vida, no puedes lograr que otros tengan una transformación y por ende que una ciudad tiene una transformación.*

First, because it was an isolated system. You have to involve the people in the solution so that they appropriate it. Second, because I think the tariffs were too expensive. Third, it was more like a tourism project because Rio is a city that defines itself as inherently touristic. They also didn't change their clientelist political model.⁷⁹ (I-7)

He further remarks on the transferability of the 'Medellín model' in general:

The solutions are not so transferable because they depend very much on the culture of the people and on the idiosyncrasy and the environment. That's why you have to be very creative. That's not transferable to any city in Latin America. Let's say transferring the philosophy – yes, but you need to have enough knowledge to extrapolate the Medellín experience.⁸⁰ (I-7)

His views reflect the opinions of critical scholars (such as P. Brand & Dávila, 2011) who emphasize the fact that the Medellín model is not a concept to be 'copy/pasted' into other contexts or cities. Solutions to problems have to be developed with the people involved and vary from case to case due to different cultural contexts. The projects must be implemented across different political administrations. According to Restrepo the only thing you can copy is the ideology and vision behind Medellín's transformation.

His argumentation is reflected in Moulaert's et al.:

SI as part of 'rolling out strategies of neoliberalism' spreading out across the globe -However, there is no one-fit concept of SI which is universally applicable as conditions and institutional embedding are different, as well as 'taking to scale', which are essential aspects for innovative policies and collective strategies if they are to succeed (Peck, 2013, pp. 18-19). (Moulaert et al., 2013, p. 18)

The application of a 'blue-print' of social innovation to other cities is opposed to the context and path dependency of social innovation (Moulaert, 2013; Novy & Leubolt, 2005, p. 2023). Furthermore, regarding Latin American critique, the idea of a hegemonic application of social innovation in a 'one concept fits all cases' kind of way would be strongly rejected. Approaches such as 'best practices' have been criticized by authors of the "Pluriverse"-Dictionary, as their "aim is to stress that in the absence of fundamental

⁷⁹ Own translation, original quote in Spanish: *Primero, porque era un sistema aislado. Hay que involucrar la gente en la solución para que se apropien de ella. Segundo, porque creo que las tarifas eran demasiado costosas. Tercero, porque ha sido más como un proyecto turístico porque Rio es una ciudad que se define inherentemente turística. También no cambiaron su modelo político, clientelista.*

⁸⁰ Own translation, original quote in Spanish: *Las soluciones no son tan extrapolables porque dependen mucho de la cultura de la gente y de la idiosincrasia y del entorno. Por eso hay que ser muy creativo. Eso no es transportable a cualquier ciudad de América Latina. Digamos que la filosofía – sí, pero se tiene que tener suficiente conocimiento para extrapolar la experiencia de Medellín.*

socio-cultural transformation, technological and managerial innovation will not lead us out of the crises” (Kothari et al., 2019).

For the purpose of providing an answer to the sub-question of this thesis asking “*What role stakeholders attribute to social innovation in Medellín’s transformation process?*”, this chapter has sought to understand how actors involved in the transformation of Medellín assess the contribution of social innovation to the city’s transformation process and to evaluate whether this process was of a transformative nature. To this end, the analytically developed four dimensions of social innovation have been applied to the interviewees’ viewpoints. This analysis concludes that social innovation has played an important role in Medellín’s transformation process, as all four dimensions of social innovation were addressed. Although the process was initiated with a transformative potential, it could not be sustained, as chapter 6.4 later demonstrates.

6.2 Conceptions of Innovation and Transformation

The second guiding question required the interview partners to discuss in which respect they considered Medellín to be innovative and their understanding of ‘innovation’. The question deliberately eschewed the term ‘social innovation’ on purpose, in order to avoid biased answers and to ascertain whether the interviewees’ understandings would be oriented towards ‘capitalocentric’ or ‘transformative social’ conceptualizations, as differentiated by Thompson (2018) in chapter 3.1.2.

For each sector group, some general tendencies can be identified. The public sector, comprising the CUEE, Ruta N and the City Hall’s secretaries, demonstrates a rather capitalocentric notion of innovation whereas the civil society sector considers innovation to be socially motivated. The social entrepreneurs regard innovation as linked to profit interest, and the universities and the educational sector show a mixed understanding of innovation, depending on whether representatives of the innovation or social department were asked.

In the following, the most remarkable interview quotes are presented. Generally, innovation is perceived by the actors of Medellín’s transformation as ‘something new’ (I-29) or ‘something old in new ways’ (I-28) or something that ‘adds value’ (I-33) or something that has a ‘social impact’ (I-24).

Interestingly, Federico Restrepo was advocating participation and inclusion during his interview, even though his understanding of innovation is strongly linked to the capitalocentric competitiveness discourse: “Innovation generates new business opportunities. This generates educational processes, which is why it [innovation] must be very closely linked to academia. [...] To be competitive, I have to innovate.”⁸¹ (I-7).

Corporación Región’s leader, Marta Villa, explains her views as to how such ambivalent conceptualizations can occur and why innovation is frequently understood in a rather capitalocentric way:

Innovation is associated with entrepreneurship, the search for technological solutions, the quest for economic alternatives; which is closely related to Ruta N and ProAntioquia, to the business incentive, which is very good. Yet, in the 2000s with Fajardo and Alonso, there were significant attempts to bring about innovation with regard to social and cultural issues. Innovation in terms of how the situation in the city corresponds to public policy practices.⁸² (I-26)

Her statement exemplifies the overall impression I gained from the other interviews when I asked which aspects of Medellín’s transformation were considered to be innovative.

Innovative Aspects of Medellín’s Transformation

Some interviewees named the ‘transformation of public space’ as one example of innovation occurring in Medellín. Others identified a link between social innovation and mobility infrastructure, such as the escalators or the metro cable, as well as education extended from schools also to parks and libraries. Most frequently, they first mentioned the tangible or physical aspects of Medellín’s transformation. María Ramos declares: “When people call Medellín an innovative city, it’s because they have found distinct ways of doing things that go beyond developments in technology or science”⁸³ (I-14).

⁸¹ Own translation, original quote in Spanish: *La innovación genera oportunidades de nuevo negocios. Eso genera procesos de formación, por eso tiene que estar muy bien vinculado a la academia. [...] Para yo ser competitivo, tengo que innovar.*

⁸² Own translation, original quote in Spanish: *La innovación es asociada al emprendimiento empresarial, a la búsqueda de soluciones tecnológicas, a la búsqueda de alternativas económicas; que está muy relacionado a Ruta N y ProAntioquia, al incentivo empresarial, que eso está muy bien. Pero también se hicieron intentos muy importantes en la década de 2000 con Fajardo y Alonso que fue innovación en temas sociales y culturales. La innovación en temas de cómo se correspondiera una situación en la ciudad con unas prácticas de política pública.*

⁸³ Own translation, original quote in Spanish: *Cuando se habla de Medellín como una ciudad innovadora es porque ha encontrado formas distintas de hacer las cosas, más allá que los desarrollos en tecnología o en ciencia.*

During the interview with Restrepo, he said that the objective should not be to win an innovation prize, but rather to achieve actual results. His viewpoint is also evident in the way he described how innovation was perceived by those working in the city's administration with him:

On many occasions, we had to be innovative. How to solve a problem? [...] For example, metro cables were intended for tourist use, but they have never been thought of as a public mass transport system - the same holds true for escalators.⁸⁴ (I-7)

In vein of Restrepo's understanding of innovation as the implementation of old ideas in new, unusual new contexts, Melguizo defines the process of innovation as finding different answers to the questions of always and posing different questions altogether – thinking outside the box:

We were looking for different answers to the same old problems. But we were also looking for other questions. What were we not asking ourselves? To be innovative you not only have to change the answer but also the question.⁸⁵ (I-10)

The magazine “*Semana*” and the City Hall hosted a forum when Medellín won an award for being the world's most innovative city in 2013.⁸⁶ Melguizo was invited to present the five reasons for Medellín's success - talking about the cultural innovation centers, Ruta N, EPM, Metro and the reduction of homicides. During the presentation, he had a revelation:

In the middle of the presentation I said I didn't believe that the prize was deserved. I didn't believe that Medellín was the most innovative city in the world. I thought we'd only got the award for marketing reasons. I didn't believe in the award but winning it could help us promote innovation. I also said that if they were going to give us the prize, those five reasons were very important, but they were not actually the reasons why Medellín had won the innovation prize, because innovation is not about what you do but how you do it.⁸⁷ (I-10)

⁸⁴ Own translation, original quote in Spanish: *En muchos de las ocasiones teníamos que ser innovadores. ¿Cómo resolver el problema? [...] Por ejemplo, los metro cables eran para el uso turístico, pero nunca han sido pensados como sistema de transporte público masivo – lo mismo pasa con las escaleras eléctricas.*

⁸⁵ Own translation, original quote in Spanish: *Nosotros buscamos respuestas distintas a los problemas de siempre. Pero también nos buscábamos otras preguntas. ¿Cuáles no nos estábamos haciendo? Para ser innovador no solamente tienes que cambiar la respuesta, pero sino la pregunta.*

⁸⁶ World's Most Innovative City Award by City Bank/Wall Street Journal/Urban Land Institute (BBC News (2013))

⁸⁷ Own translation, original quote in Spanish: *En la mitad de la presentación yo dije que no creía que ese premio fuera cierto. Que yo no creía que Medellín sea la ciudad más innovadora del mundo. Yo pensaba que se lo han dado por una razón de marketing de ciudad. No creía en el premio pero que nos venía bien*

In reference to Melguizo's perception of innovation as being tied to the 'how' rather than the 'what', Alejandro Franco, Ruta N's director, believes that the city's ecosystem and the fact that financial resources of EPM were being directed towards city projects are the reason why the city is considered innovative.

Based on this analysis, it can be concluded that the CUEE and Ruta N, the coordinating entities of innovation policies in the city, are shaping the public discourse which is subsequently adopted by institutional actors.⁸⁸ Yet some representatives of these institutions have a more ambivalent understanding of innovation. Sometimes, their personal conviction might not necessarily reflect their institution's point of view.

Despite the potential bias in the answers, I contend that hearing both viewpoints is important, as individuals are acting within their organizational capacity might have an impact on the scope and orientation of their actions which are shaped by their convictions (in line with the multi-level approach of social change and transformation, see chapter 3.1.3).

The EU's document on social innovation (Moulaert et al., 2017, p. 11) states that economic and technological understandings of innovation still shape popular conceptualizations of innovation. Therefore, concerns raised in literature seem to be justified when considered in relation to the interview findings, as it "warns of a reduction of the meaning of social innovation to social enterprise and business and, based on its historical analysis, makes a plea to recognise a variety of forms of social innovation" (Moulaert et al., 2017, p. 6). By infusing social innovation with the neoliberal logic of 'development-as-growth' (Kothari et al., 2019, xiii), its transformative potential is suffocated. Growth paradigms based on the idea of 'progress' (Escobar, 1995; Esteva, 2010 [1992]) exacerbate the resulting 'natural capital depletion' (U. Brand & Lang, 2019, p. 56).

de haberlo ganado para potenciar la innovación. También dije que, si nos iban a dar el premio, esas cinco razones eran muy importantes, pero no eran las razones para un premio de innovación, porque lo innovador no está en que se hace, pero en cómo se hace.

⁸⁸ In case of the public university *Universidad de Antioquia*, its innovation unit was inaugurated under Fajardo in 2002 in order to foster entrepreneurship at universities. At that time, innovation was not thought to include social sciences, but only with a focus on technological innovations. It was only in 2014 that social innovation was included. Through my research stay at EAFIT, I could note the difference of its extension sector who sees innovation as a highly entrepreneurial oriented. Although both universities differentiate between social and technology or knowledge-based innovation and have a special department section for it, EAFIT Social is a totally disconnected part from the EAFIT innovation center. This certainly reflects how they are approaching the theme of social entrepreneurship in theory as well as in praxis.

Contrarily to the discourse and development strategy of presenting Medellín as an international city that is globally connected, Jorge Melguizo further explains that Medellín does not intend to be a Smart City:

In the middle of seminars with Smart City experts, I was holding a presentation of Medellín's transformation processes. And I said that all of that leads me to a conclusion: Medellín is not a Smart City. I do not know why they've invited us, but they know that we don't want to be one either. Medellín is trying to be a Smart Society or a Smart Citizen. We want intelligent social citizens, not intelligent cities. I think that, at least in comparison with other contexts in Latin America, we have managed to turn Medellín into a more active, responsible city. A city that speaks to you of horror and pain, does not hide it from you, but it speaks to you of transformation almost in the first person. I think that social appropriation is the innovative step of this transformation.⁸⁹ (I-10)

Relation of Innovation and Social Transformation

With this in mind, the interviewees were asked whether they could identify a relation between innovation and social transformation for the purpose of determining the transformative potential of social innovation, particularly in the context of Medellín's development. The interviewees were asked about their personal viewpoints in order to find out whether their understandings reflect the propositions drawn from literature, as outlined in chapter 3.1.3.

Several answers show that for innovation to lead to social transformation, it has to address socially relevant problems, as it should "articulate with its environment"⁹⁰ (I-24). And for innovation to be effective, it has to be appropriated by the people whose problems it aims to solve. This implies that a familiarization with the local problems and needs is required, since "one who does not know his territory is not capable of transforming it"⁹¹ (I-28).

⁸⁹ Own translation, original quote in Spanish: *En medio de seminarios con expertos de Smart Cities yo hacía una presentación de Medellín de los procesos de transformación. Y decía que todo eso me lleva a una conclusión: Medellín no es una Smart City. No sé porque nos invitaron, pero saben que es que tampoco queremos serlo. Medellín está intentando de ser un Smart Society o un Smart Citizen. Queremos ciudadanos sociales inteligentes, no ciudades inteligentes. Yo creo que, al menos en comparación con otros contextos en Latinoamérica, que hemos logrado de hacer de Medellín una ciudad más activa, responsable. Una ciudadanía que te habla del horror y del dolor, no te lo esconde, pero te habla de la transformación casi que en primera persona. Creo que esa apropiación social es ese paso innovador de esa transformación.*

⁹⁰ Own translation, original quote in Spanish: *articular con su entorno.*

⁹¹ Own translation, original quote in Spanish: *uno que no conoce su territorio no es capaz de transformarlo.*

Metro's representative Correa considers social transformation to be interconnected with innovation:

To innovate is to apply a differentiating factor to a situation or idea based on the context, knowledge and imagination. It is exploring alternatives that can be used creatively to solve, create or combine ideas. A process of social transformation must be accompanied by innovative elements, context analysis, inclusion of citizenship, creative ideas, etc.⁹² (I-6)

These conceptualizations demonstrate that for innovation to lead to transformation, it has to be conceptualized as 'social innovation'. Catalina Escobar gets it to the point: "I think social innovation is a driver of social transformation. Generally, if you want to transform a society, you have to do something different. The status quo will just lead you to where the city is going anyway" (I-27).

Innovation in social entrepreneurship

It is appropriate to talk about the conceptualizations of innovation by social entrepreneurs at this point, as literature considers social entrepreneurship as a central theme when discussing innovation. For instance, Moulaert et al. (2017, p. 6) identify the 'practical organizational stream', in which social entrepreneurship is seen as a driver of innovation and value creation.

The social entrepreneurs I interviewed in Medellín display diverging opinions on social innovation and its transformative potential. One social entrepreneur says that social innovation has to be linked to business interests: "Every social innovator does it because it generates value! The ones who are successful are those who find a factor that enables them to make their entrepreneurship more effective"⁹³ (I-15). His perception follows the common management conception of 'innovation for efficiency gains' (Thompson, 2018) and denies social entrepreneurs their aspiration for achieving social impact. Another social entrepreneur shares his view: "Innovation is always linked to social transformation. Entrepreneurship of the 21st century without transformation as an end goal can't

⁹² Own translation, original quote in Spanish: *Innovar es aplicar un diferenciador a una situación o idea basándose en el entorno, el conocimiento y la imaginación. Es explorar las alternativas que pueden usarse, de manera creativa, para resolver, crear o combinar ideas. Un proceso de transformación social debe estar acompañado de elementos innovadores, de análisis de contexto, de inclusión de la ciudadanía, de ideas creativas.*

⁹³ Own translation, original quote in Spanish: *¡Todo innovador social lo hace porque le genera valor! Los que tienen éxito son aquellos que encuentran un factor que les posibilita hacer su emprendimiento con más eficaz.*

succeed!”⁹⁴ (I-16). These views contrast with the conviction held by one interviewee who works at a social foundation: “Social innovation is not a return on investment!”⁹⁵ (I-21).

The scope of this thesis does not allow for detailing what social entrepreneurship comprises.⁹⁶ Notwithstanding, this statement clarifies the afore mentioned diverging opinions: “Social innovation and social entrepreneurship differ from social grassroots organizations because social grassroots organizations do not necessarily create innovative products or services that generate a profit”⁹⁷ (I-34).

TransformationS of Medellín

Medellín’s transformation actors often talk about different kinds of transformation as the following interview extract from Makaia’s co-founder, Catalina Escobar, illustrates:

We think that the transformation of Medellín has been presented to the world primarily as an economic transformation. But economic transformation cannot stand alone. It has to be driven by other transformations. Of course, the urban transformation is super important, but there is also a social transformation behind all of this. The transformation of Medellín has been mostly a social transformation. It has been a grassroots transformation thanks to social innovation. Sometimes those are the things that are never mentioned in the news. (I-27)

Narratives on Medellín’s transformation would therefore be more accurate if they referred to the ‘transformationS’ of Medellín, because the changes were not limited to only one factor. One interviewee accordingly reflects: “Undoubtedly, institutional discourse differs greatly from community or social discourse as directed by grassroots organizations”⁹⁸ (I-24). The fact that these discourses differ can be ascribed to the city branding activities (P. Brand, 2016; Doyle, 2018b). Literature further provides the following insight into elite interests expressed in such discourses: “The local governance model that perpetuates productivity and inequality problems of the city is adopted as an

⁹⁴ Own translation, original quote in Spanish: *La innovación está siempre vinculado a transformación social. ¡El emprendedorismo del siglo 21 sin fin de transformación no tiene éxito!*

⁹⁵ Own translation, original quote in Spanish: *¡La innovación social no es rendimiento de dinero!*

⁹⁶ If financial benefits are put before the social benefits, Sharma (2016) describes this as ‘neoliberal social entrepreneurship’. Sharma questions the popular idea that “social enterprises are self-sustained and scalable” although “they rather need charity funding or a connection to government programs in order to be sustainable”.

⁹⁷ Own translation, original quote in Spanish: *La innovación social y el emprendedorismo social son distintas a las organizaciones de base sociales, porque las organizaciones de base sociales no crean necesariamente productos o servicios innovadores que generen un lucro.*

⁹⁸ Own translation, original quote in Spanish: *Sin duda, se diferencia mucho el discurso institucional al discurso comunitario, social que manejan las organizaciones de base.*

opportunistic discourse of Medellín's transnationalised capitalist elite in the larger neoliberal context of Colombia's polity and economic policy agenda" (Franz, 2018a, p. 85).

As this statement suggests, differentiating the various kinds of transformation referred to in discourses about Medellín would draw a more accurate picture of the socio-economic or political changes that have taken place. Being more precise would counter the otherwise disguised power asymmetries arising from the usage of a generalizing framing. This means that by talking about the 'urban transformation' of Medellín, it is clear that it is referred to the architectural projects. By naming it the 'social transformation' of Medellín, the role of social movements is addressed. By talking about the 'economic transformation' of Medellín, the discourse is about the change of the economic development model towards a knowledge economy.

In summary, this sub-chapter has answered the second research sub-question of this thesis on how stakeholders, in comparison to scholars, conceptualize (social) innovation and understand its relation to transformation. This was important to reveal in order to understand stakeholders' evaluation of the ecosystem of innovation in the following.

6.3 Medellín's Ecosystem of Transformation

Feedback on the Illustration of the Ecosystem of Innovation

Before the interview partners were asked for their assessment of the illustration of the ecosystem of innovation by Ruta N (see figure 9 in chapter 5.2), another main question from the interview guide was posed first: "Who are the main actors in Medellín's transformation process?"

Their answers to this question varied greatly. In general, actors from the sectors of the 'triple helix' were mentioned: the municipality, private enterprises and academia. Occasionally, new actors were mentioned, such as the church (I-23), unorganized youth groups (I-25), community organizations (I-21), teachers and families (I-29).

When evaluating Ruta N's ecosystem of innovation, almost every interview partner noted that the civil society sector and social organizations were underrepresented, as this statement by Makaia's co-founder Escobar, exemplifies: "This map proves that nobody thinks that the social sector is an actor of society. They always think there's just the private sector, government, academia" (I-27). Several interview partners proposed that

‘civil society’ should form another autonomous circle such as ‘enterprises’, ‘education’ and ‘government’. The interviewees’ perception of the current ecosystem of innovation reflects the ‘triple helix’ structure of ecosystems commonly cited in literature and scholars’ calls for basing this helix on civil society (see Etzkowitz, 2008, p. 11) or for including it in a ‘mutli-helix’ also incorporating civil society and entrepreneurs (see Ricci & Concha Mathiesen, 2018).

Moreover, many interviewees identified the misconception of assigning the category of ‘citizens’ as part of the ‘government’ and ‘enterprise’ sector. The representative of Metro, Juan Correa, also noted the importance of minorities, who may not have the legal status of ‘citizens’ according to the definition of ‘civil society’ but still play an important role in mobilizing efforts for the purpose of claiming their rights, as they

have had a strong impact on the enactment of policies that expand their rights; their work and social mobilization have been effective. The same applies to the migrant population and youth groups. They are part of our society and require targeted and effective policies.⁹⁹ (I-6)

One comment demonstrates that the public discourse is perceived as exclusionary, especially towards actors not covered in the media:

I think there are a lot of anonymous actors. I think there are many actors in the neighborhoods who are not in the news because they are not mayors, secretaries, etc., but they are doing a quiet job day by day in their neighborhoods. They are working like ants to make our city a better place. One proof that they are doing something important is that many of them are murdered. Because they are somehow considered an obstacle by armed groups, illegal groups that have a monopoly in that neighborhood. What are they doing wrong? Organizing the community so that they suddenly gather and demand their rights, that they put pressure.¹⁰⁰ (I-9)

Several interviewed actors also noted that the links between the different sectors are not depicted and that the illustration seems to present the sectorial ecosystems as systems

⁹⁹ Own translation, original quote in Spanish: *han tenido alto impacto para la inclusión de políticas que abarquen sus derechos; ha sido efectivo su trabajo y movilización social. Así mismo la población migrante y colectivos juveniles. Hacen parte de nuestra sociedad y requieren políticas dirigidas y efectivas.*

¹⁰⁰ Own translation, original quote in Spanish: *Yo creo que hay muchos actores anónimos. Creo que hay muchos actores en los barrios que no salen en las noticias porque no son alcaldes, secretarios etc., pero están haciendo un trabajo callado día a día en sus barrios. Están trabajando como hormigas para hacer de nuestra ciudad una mejor. Una prueba de que ellos están haciendo algo importante es que muchos de ellos lo asesinan. Porque ellos de alguna manera son un obstáculo para grupos armados, ilegales que tienen el monopolio en ese barrio. ¿Qué están haciendo ellos de malo? Organizando la comunidad que de pronto se juntan y exigen sus derechos, que presionen.*

isolated within themselves. Furthermore, the different categorial terms and levels were considered to be intermixed. Finally, the conversations revealed that there are also important transversal categories such as culture and communication media, which have had a significant impact on the transformation of Medellín.

Co-Creation of the Ecosystem of Medellín's Transformation

On the basis of the interviewees' feedback on Ruta N's illustration, the decision was made to collaborate with them on a map that shows the 'ecosystem of transformation', i.e. an ecosystem of the actors in the transformation of Medellín from the perspective of those involved instead of representations of 'innovation systems' or 'entrepreneurial ecosystems' that highlight only one contributing element of the city's development process. In addition, only a small number of interviewees were familiar with the term 'ecosystem' and if they were, they often struggled to see themselves represented in it. One interviewee remarked that "the culture of innovation is indeed something that the city has achieved, but to speak of an ecosystem is too much!" ¹⁰¹ (I-16).

For this reason, I asked the interviewees to co-create an ecosystem in which they were asked to include the actors mentioned to have contributed to the transformation of Medellín. In addition, I asked them to represent themselves on the map as well by posing the following question: "Where would you locate your organization within the (co-created) ecosystem of the transformation of Medellín?"

The result of this co-creation process can be seen in appendix 9.3. The comparison between this 'ecosystem of transformation' with the 'ecosystem of innovation' shows that the categories have been renamed to logically represent the same level of aggregation: the education, private and public sector as well as the social sector which has been added. In addition, the interrelations between the four sectors and its actors are now depicted. Moreover, the ecosystem's embeddedness into cultural conditions as well as the media landscape now becomes evident.

Furthermore, this comparison allows to draw the conclusion that the 'ecosystem of innovation' is representing propositions of 'systems of innovation', as described in literature (e.g. Morisson, 2019b). Therefore, it was necessary to name the alternative map

¹⁰¹ Own translation, original quote in Spanish: *la cultura de innovación es algo que logró la ciudad, pero para hablar de un ecosistema es demasiado.*

of actors in Medellín's transformation process the 'ecosystem of transformation'. This denomination allowed for the inclusion of the actors not represented in mainstream illustrations, thus helping to overcome the 'triple helix paradigm' (Fernandes et al., 2013, p. 394). Broadening and reorienting the ecosystem in Medellín towards social innovation additionally 're-ethicized'(Jessop et al., 2013, p.120) the ecosystem concept. Additionally, such a plurally constructed ecosystem allows for the consideration of the multi-levels of aggregation, which Avelino and Wittmayer (see in figure 1), described as important for analyzing powershifts (2016, p. 644).

This sub-chapter has summarized the answers to the third and fourth research question of this thesis: "*Whom do stakeholders identify as the most important actors in this process? What is their opinion on the ecosystem of innovation in the city?*" This analysis allowed a deeper understanding of the overall aim of this study to assess the contribution of social innovation to transformation.

6.4 Critique and Visions for Future City Development

For the purpose of providing a comprehensive answer to the research question on the stakeholders' assessment of Medellín's transformation process, the following question was posed at the end of each interview: "Which shortfalls do you identify in Medellín's development to this day, and what should be emphasized to ensure future positive transformation?"

Persisting Inequalities

The answers varied greatly, depending on the sector and position of the interview partners. However, almost everyone began by identifying the high inequality levels as Medellín's biggest challenge. This reflects some critical scholars' recent analysis, outlined in chapter 4.4. It also reflects the fact that in 2018, the Gini coefficient exceeded the value measured during the peak of violence in 1991 (0.52 vs. 0.51 according to DANE (2018)).

With regard to the innovation prizes that Medellín received, Marta Villa from *Corporación Región* mentions the various transformations the city underwent, as described above. She believes that closing the inequality gap is a pending responsibility of the local government, which it has not yet assumed:

I think it's good to acknowledge the effort and to be frequently reminded of the fact that there has been a transformation. But I think that the recognition is insufficient. Then again, I believe that above all, political actors have hidden very deep-running problems that the city has and that have not been touched behind these recognitions. For example, the issue of inequity and inequality.

Throughout the period that we have named the transformation of Medellín, there was an urban transformation, a cultural transformation, a transformation of participation, but the rates of inequality and inequity in the city keep increasing. It is an issue that the governors have not addressed in a serious manner because they have claimed that the national government bears this responsibility, but that is not true. There are ways to address inequality and reduce inequality gaps with systematic interventions on part of the state. I think that became a presentational card that pictures one part of reality but hides another. ¹⁰² (I-26)

This criticism relates to Brand and Dávila (2011), who claim that the positive impact of Medellín's transformation efforts remains unclear, especially with respect to the sustainable economic and social improvement of the poor *comuna* inhabitants. Villa also questions the city marketing, which Doyle (2018) labeled 'city branding'. The extract from *Corporación Región*'s website below summarizes the additional critical issues that interviewees identified as shortfalls of the city's development:

If we also consider critical issues such as the loss of spaces for dialogue between institutions and civil society, the pollution crisis, the deterioration of infrastructure such as parks and libraries, the poor results in terms of important public buildings, the weak stimulus to citizens' participation, the symptoms of exhaustion of public transport, the decrease in resources for the care of victims and women, the controversial management of institutional communication, then the list of problems is greater. ¹⁰³ (Corporación Región, 2019)

¹⁰² Own translation, original quote in Spanish: *Creo que está bien el reconocimiento del esfuerzo y constatando repetitivamente que hay una transformación. Pero yo creo que es insuficiente el reconocimiento. Por otro, creo que también sobre todo actores políticos han ocultado tras esos reconocimientos, problemas muy profundos que tiene la ciudad y que no se han tocado. Por ejemplo, el tema de la inequidad y desigualdad. En todo este periodo que hemos llamado la transformación de Medellín, había una transformación urbanística, una transformación cultural, una transformación de la participación, pero los índices de la desigualdad y de inequidad de la ciudad siguen aumentando. Es un tema que los gobernantes no lo han abordado de manera seria porque lo que han planteado que eso es un tema del gobierno nacional, pero eso no es cierto. Hay formas de atacar la inequidad y reducir las brechas de desigualdad con intervenciones sistemáticas desde el estado. Pienso que eso se convirtió en una carta de presentación que dice una parte de la realidad, pero oculta otra.*

¹⁰³ Own translation, original quote in Spanish: *Si a esto le sumamos asuntos críticos como la pérdida de espacios de diálogo entre la institucionalidad y la sociedad civil, la crisis en la calidad del aire, el deterioro de infraestructuras como los parques biblioteca, los pobres resultados en términos de obras públicas significativas, el débil estímulo a la participación ciudadana, los síntomas de agotamiento del transporte*

Juan Correa from Metro also hints at new challenges to which Medellín is required to respond to:

A city is in constant motion and therefore never ceases to be built. The State must adapt to new conditions such as population growth, the arrival of migrant populations, environmental risks, intra-urban displacement, insecurity, social difficulties that hinder access to education and a lack of job opportunities. These conditions, versatile by numerous factors, are the reason why development can never be completed.¹⁰⁴ (I-6)

No Deeper Structural Changes Achieved

The persisting inequalities are certainly a result of the missing structural changes. Several interviewees mirrored Berney's (2013) criticism of structural inequalities, which have not been tackled and thus prelude the possibility of real change. A considerable number of interviewees attributed this issue to the high violence levels, which is considered a cultural phenomenon. The following interview extract by Juan Correa illustrates this view:

There are still factors of violence and inequity that the city must address, especially by way of including young people in state, income, education and employment programs. Inequity persists and factors of violence that continue to affect the good course of the city, I consider them to be structural flaws that remain.¹⁰⁵ (I-6)

Persisting Culture of Violence

Although numerous interviewees talked about the problem of violence in the city, the connection between Medellín's transformation and the dynamics of the armed conflict in Medellín was mentioned only once. This missing link has been criticized by Moncada (2016), who argues that urban political economies of armed urban territorial control are essential to include in analyses of the Medellín case.

público, la disminución de recursos para la atención a las víctimas y a las mujeres, el polémico manejo de la comunicación institucional, entonces la lista de los problemas es mayor.

¹⁰⁴ Own translation, original quote in Spanish: *Una ciudad está en constante movimiento y por ende, nunca termina de construirse. El Estado debe adaptarse a las nuevas situaciones que se van presentando como el crecimiento poblacional, a la llegada de población migrante, a los riesgos ambientales, al desplazamiento intra urbano, a la inseguridad, a las dificultades sociales que dificultan el acceso a la educación y la falta de oportunidad laboral. Estas condiciones, versátiles por muchos factores, afectan un desarrollo completo.*

¹⁰⁵ Own translation, original quote in Spanish: *Aún persisten factores de violencia e inequidad que la ciudad debe resolver especialmente con la inclusión de los jóvenes a programas estatales, de ingresos, educativos y de empleo. Persiste la inequidad y factores de violencia que siguen afectando el buen curso de la ciudad, considero que son fallas estructurales que permanecen.*

Many interview partners are convinced that a culture of violence is still shaping Colombian society. *Universidad de Antioquia*'s director, John Arboleda, notes on this: "It is necessary to add other actors, increase awareness in our society so that we can resolve our conflicts without violence or resorting to arms. There is still a seed of violence that characterizes us"¹⁰⁶ (I-30).

These statements reflect the criticism presented by scholars in chapter 4.4 and suggest that the transformation process of Medellín has not achieved the premise of being systemic in a long-term sustainable way. In one case, social innovation was presented as a possible solution to the social problems mentioned before: "Inequity and inequality would require innovative proposals on how to close the social gap"¹⁰⁷ (I-32). Viewing social innovation as being able to transform structural fallacies follows the propositions of TRANSIT.

Criticism of the Current Administration's Focus

When answering the question regarding the shortfalls of Medellín's transformation process, several interviewees criticized the focus of the current administration set by Mayor Gutiérrez. For instance, Restrepo and Melguizo lament that Gutiérrez, a former member of the *Compromiso Ciudadano* movement, has been deviating from its principles:

He has actually strayed a little bit of that course. The current mayor was one of our councilors who did not really know how to maintain that course.¹⁰⁸ (I-7)

This mayor has interrupted many of those processes of transformation and improvement of neighborhoods that had been carried out for years. He has changed the focus, turning his back on the social, educational and cultural elements and the construction of coexistence. He introduced a clear and strict security policy.¹⁰⁹ (I-10)

¹⁰⁶ Own translation, original quote in Spanish: *Es necesario de sumar otros actores, generar una mayor conciencia en la sociedad de resolver nuestros conflictos sin la violencia y recorrer a las armas. Todavía hay una semilla de violencia que nos caracteriza.*

¹⁰⁷ Own translation, original quote in Spanish: *La inequidad y desigualdad requeriría innovar propuestas sobre que se cierra la brecha social.*

¹⁰⁸ Own translation, original quote in Spanish: *Actualmente ha perdido un poquito ese rumbo. El alcalde actual fue uno de los concejales de nuestros que no ha sabido realmente mantener ese rumbo.*

¹⁰⁹ Own translation, original quote in Spanish: *Este alcalde ha roto muchos de esos procesos de transformación y de mejoramiento de barrios que se venía haciendo desde hace años. Cambiando del enfoque, dejando de convertir tanto en lo social, en lo educativo, en lo cultural y en la construcción de la convivencia. Se centró en una política de seguridad pura y dura.*

In the vein of the afore mentioned importance of the continuity of political programs independent of changing administrations, Marta Villa states that “it has been difficult to give continuity to the political movements on which that transformation was based” ¹¹⁰ (I-26).

Importance of Dialogue with Civil Society

The problematic of discontinuity in political programs is also reflected in the interviewees’ opinions on the future development of the city. The common tenor was a reminder for coming administration not to eschew the dialogue with civil society. Juan Carlos Tabares, from *Picacho con Futuro*, demonstrates his clear position on this matter: “I believe that social dialogue is a central theme. The dialogue between the state and civil society has gradually been disrupted by the administrations – it has been decaying” ¹¹¹ (I-23). He draws on his experience during the period of Social Urbanism when the communities’ needs were prioritized to a larger extend than they are today in public policies:

What is happening today is that the municipality, which is a key actor, does not value that dialogue and cooperation because it says that it has already been done, we have to move forward. It assumes that to move forward is to not continue having these dialogues. Well, they sit down with the business community to think about technological innovation. They sit down with the universities to think about the innovations that need to be achieved in science, technology and what they are doing at Ruta N. Of course, this is important too, but there is a series of problems that can only be solved if all actors are brought to the table.¹¹² (I-23)

Tabares demands to relinquish from the primary focus on technological innovation based on the progress discourse. His opinion echoes the Latin American critique to capitalocentric-oriented conceptions of innovation (see chapter 3.1.2).

¹¹⁰ Own translation, original quote in Spanish: *ha sido difícil de dar continuidad a movimientos políticos en que se fundamentó esa transformación.*

¹¹¹ Own translation, original quote in Spanish: *Creo que hay un tema que es central que es el diálogo social. El diálogo entre el estado y la sociedad civil que se ha ido rompiendo en las administraciones – eso ha ido decayendo.*

¹¹² Own translation, original quote in Spanish: *Hoy lo que pasa es que la municipalidad, que es un actor clave, no reconoce ese dialogo y la cooperación porque dice que eso ya se hizo, tenemos que avanzar. Supone que avanzar no es seguir teniendo esos diálogos. Pues se sienta con el empresariado para pensar en la innovación tecnológica. Se sienta con las universidades para pensar en las innovaciones que hay que hacer en ciencia, tecnología y lo que están haciendo en Ruta N. Claro hay que hacerlo, pero hay un conjunto de problemas que requiere que el conjunto de los actores está sentado en la mesa.*

Moreover, Tabares clarifies that: “We should also be aware that we are just at the beginning of the journey and that sometimes we may feel that we are being divided by very simple things, such as not sitting at the table to talk. This is the challenge” ¹¹³ (I-23). The importance of re-initiating dialogue between different actors in order to overcome pressing social challenges, reflects Lederach’s proposition:

[To] paint a different canvas of social change, which depends on the practices of accessibility, reconnecting people in actual relationships, and local responsibility. These practices assume that the capacity of people to heal and ‘restory’ their identities and relationships requires more than the rule of law expressed as a remote bureaucratic concern. (Lederach, 2005, pp. 144–145)

Elicitive conflict transformation argumentation supports the interviewee’s opinion that transformation is initiated by locally involved actors. By understanding them as individual agents that can initiate change, the importance of the creation of settings that enable such dialogues becomes evident. It can be argued that the state or municipal actors assume the role of catalysts or ‘web-weavers’ as Lederach would term it. The following quote puts the future challenges for Medellín’s positive development in a nutshell:

The day Medellín says that we have succeeded in being innovative is the day we lose our humility. And we realize that if we say that we have achieved it, we are stagnating. Having a problem is a good thing. When you think that all issues have been solved, you remain trapped in the status quo.¹¹⁴ (I-31)

In summary, chapter 6 has presented the findings from the qualitative interviews to the main research and sub-questions of this thesis. Medellín’s transformation process is outlined has been outlined as a plural one, induced by social innovations driven by collective efforts undertaken by actors from the public, social, private and educational sector. Despite the prominence of capitalocentric conceptions of innovation, the majority of the interviewees has recognized the importance of social innovation for Medellín’s transformation process. An alternative co-created map comprising the actors in the ecosystem of Medellín has illustrated the interlinkages between multiple actors. Finally,

¹¹³ Own translation, original quote in Spanish: *También nos deberíamos demostrar que el camino apenas lo comenzamos y que a veces sentimos que nos estamos desatancando por cosas muy simples de no sentarnos todos a la mesa a conversar. Ahí tenemos el reto.*

¹¹⁴ Own translation, original quote in Spanish: *El día que Medellín diga que ya logramos de ser innovadores, eso es el día en que perdimos la humildad. Y nos damos cuenta que así que decimos que lo logramos, ahí nos desestancamos. Lo bueno es tener un problema. Cuando sientes que todo está solucionado, estás en estatus quo.*

the current administration's deviation from socially transformative processes during the 1990s and 2000s has been criticized, and the importance of dialogue highlighted.

The final chapter discusses these findings and outlines this study's contribution to existing literature. Finally, policy-recommendations and an outlook for future research are provided.

7 Conclusion

7.1 Key Findings

Summarized Results for the Research Questions

Medellín's transformation from the world's most violent city during the 1990s into an innovation hub two decades later is principally attributed to the urban governance model of Social Urbanism and its urban upgrading projects for fostering inclusion. In light of an institutionally led discourse, I wanted to ascertain the contribution of social innovation to the city's development from the perspective of the stakeholders involved in the transformation process. To this end, I asked: *How do selected stakeholders assess Medellín's transformation process from 1991 to the summer of 2019?*

Within the framework of a transdisciplinary case study, the analysis of the empirical findings from the lead question interviews and the participant observations, in combination with the discussion of theoretical concepts in the literature review, show that Medellín's transformation process has been recognized as a collective effort undertaken by a range of actors who can be subsumed under the public, private, education and social sector. A frequently neglected factor is the role of culture as a catalyst for the city's transformation, as there was a strong wish for peace and reinstatement of trust in society. The city's transformation was induced by a change in the governance model, known as Social Urbanism, which consists of participatory elements and dimensions of social innovation. The interviews indicate that general discussions about the transformation of Medellín display a strong tendency to omit the precedents of social mobilizations before the Social Urbanism era, even though they were key to inducing the city's social transformation. The stakeholders recognize the positive outcomes of the transformation process such as citizen participation, educational facilities, mobility infrastructure and an the (inter-)national reevaluation of the once highly violent city, suggesting a plurality of transformations, namely urban, cultural, social and economic transformations. At the same time, they also express criticism about the neglect of structural problems. The field research reveals that the recent public policies for urban development have been focusing on large-scale urban renovation projects, generating gentrification processes rather than upholding the socially inclusionary aspects of the Social Urbanism period. This deviation from socially transformative ends impedes solutions to the most pressing structural problems such as the issue of rising inequality levels.

In the following, the additional major findings for the sub-questions of my research topic are presented. They contribute to a more nuanced understanding of the stakeholders' views on the role of social innovation in the transformation process of Medellín.

1. What role do stakeholders attribute to social innovation in Medellín's transformation process?

As for the role of social innovation in the city's transformation, research findings suggest that it is social innovation based on the satisfaction of community needs and collective empowerment rather than capitalocentric innovation based on technological developments aiming at economic growth that has led to transformations in Medellín.

On the basis of transformative social innovation literature (TRANSIT) (see Moulaert et al., 2017), it is a process with varying intensity, i.e., Medellín's transformation has been socially innovative at certain times, and the transformative potential was present in the beginning, but could not be sustained. Following a socio-territorial approach to social innovation adapted to urban development processes (see Hamdouch & Galvan, 2019; Nyseth & Hamdouch, 2019), transformative social innovation in Medellín can be described on the basis of the four dimensions of social innovation (see Moulaert & MacCallum, 2019):

- (1) *satisfaction of social needs*: violence reduction, opportunities for youth
- (2) *changing social relations*: inclusion of disadvantaged city areas, building trust and citizenship, networks
- (3) *collective empowerment*: participatory budgeting, inclusion of social movements
- (4) *changing dominant institutions*: local administration of non-politicians changing the governance style, but not sustainably

Concerning the transformative potential of social innovation in Medellín, no transformative social innovation as described by TRANSIT has occurred, since no sustained, systemic change has been achieved. Institutions have only been partly altered through the different approach to governance under Social Urbanism during a certain period; thereafter, this process has become co-opted by subsequent city administrations.

2. *How do stakeholders and scholars conceptualize social innovation and understand its relation to transformation?*

In answering this sub-question, the public sector, comprising the CUEE, Ruta N and the City Hall's secretaries, demonstrates a rather capitalocentric notion of innovation, based on technological development, whereas the civil society sector understands innovation as a phenomenon that is socially motivated and developed by the community as a solution to social problems. The social entrepreneurs regard innovation as linked to profits interest, and universities and the education sector show a mixed understanding of innovation. Furthermore, this analysis finds that the CUEE and Ruta N, as the coordinating entities of innovation policies in the city, are shaping the public discourse, which is then adopted by institutional actors. Concerning the relation of innovation to transformation, several interview partners argued in line with TRANSIT and ascribe a transformative impact to social innovation.

3. *Whom do stakeholders identify as the most important actors in this process?*

Concerning the sub-question as to who the most important actors in Medellín's transformation process are, the actors of the 'triple helix' are mentioned: the municipality, private enterprises and academia. Particular relevance is attributed to the role of the *Consejería Presidencial* in initiating multi-actor dialogues and to the social movements and the GEA for their efforts in inducing changes.

4. *What is their opinion on the ecosystem of innovation in the city?*

While evaluating an existing illustration of the ecosystem of innovation in Medellín, stakeholders criticize the missing social sector. Therefore, one of the outcomes of this research is the co-constructed map of actors in Medellín's 'ecosystem of transformation' (see appendix 6.3), in which the social sector is now represented. It resembles a spider web (see Lederach, 2005) so as to depict the interlinkages between the actors as well as the cultural environment and the media landscape in which it is embedded.

7.2 Discussion of the Research Outcome and Policy Recommendations

The main goal for this thesis is to contribute to a transdisciplinary understanding of how social innovation can lead to transformation based on the case study of Medellín.

This research demonstrates that social innovation is context-dependent, embedded in historical as well as territorial circumstances, suggesting that a replication of the ‘Medellín model’ is only possible with respect to its underlying philosophy; it does not constitute a ‘best practice blue print’.

One key result of this research is the helpful application of the four dimensions of social innovation as an analytical categorization to determine the transformative potential of social innovation. This finding may be useful for future case studies.

This study’s focus lies on the perspectives of relevant stakeholders in Medellín’s transformation process, revealing their opinions on current issues and thus making those marginalized voices visible. One major finding of this investigation is that the narratives of Medellín’s transformation would be more accurate if they referred to the ‘transformationS’ of Medellín, as it was not only one single factor that changed.

Another major finding is the usefulness of combining social innovation theory with conflict transformation theory, as the latter seeks to provide no pre-defined solutions but rather views the individual as the agent of change (see Lederach, 2005). Both theories advocate systemic change through dialogue across different levels and sectors.

Moreover, the empirical findings uphold the assertions found in critical literature on the Medellín model with regard to its limited capability to induce structural changes. Therefore, one major conclusion of this thesis is that the inclusion of concepts developed in peace and conflict transformation studies is necessary for overcoming persisting inequalities.

Contribution to Development Studies and Existing Literature

Concerning the contribution of this thesis to the discipline of Development Studies, it can be concluded that this thesis shines a new light on the importance of social innovation with respect to its transformative character for community-based solutions within the realm of urban development.

The contribution of this thesis to existing research on social innovation for transformation theory lies in its transdisciplinary integration of different disciplinary perspectives, thus enriching contemporary literature on urban development and social innovation theory (such as Hamdouch & Galvan, 2019). The respective outcomes complement the results of Thompson’s study (2018) on social innovation with regard to local economic

development policies, applied and adapted to the case study of Medellín as well as to literature on transformative social innovation (such as Moulaert et al., 2017; Moulaert & MacCallum, 2019). This thesis has also expanded the literature on social innovation mainly from Europe and the global North by including critical scholarship from Latin America and Colombia. Additionally, existing literature on innovation systems, such as Morisson (2019b), has been expanded by including a focus on social capital. Moreover, functionalist approaches have been broadened through the exploration of exploring ecosystems of social innovation and transformation.

Policy Recommendations

The findings of this study provide local policy-makers with policy recommendations for the purpose of a social re-orientation of Medellín's transformation process.

Firstly, this thesis concurs with scholarship (e.g. Moulaert, 2013) that it is important to avoid depriving innovation of its transformative potential by participating in the global city competition. In line with the Latin American critique of growth paradigms entwined with the idea of progress promoted by capitalocentric conceptualizations of innovation (see Escobar, 2012; Esteva, 2010 [1992]), this thesis highlights the significance of social innovation in the urban context.

Secondly, the local administration should challenge the assumption that architectural projects automatically lead to a reduction of violence. It is more likely that profound structural changes are behind such developments, e.g., power reconfigurations of involved actors. For this reason, more attention should be paid to structural problems, such as a lack of opportunities for vulnerable youth.

Thirdly, with respect to the declining transformative impact of Medellín's current development process, the identified dimensions of transformative social innovation may serve as reference points for the reactivation of the 'transformative' potential of Medellín's development. The continuity of such programs needs to be recognized as vital for their success.

Fourthly, this thesis highlights the importance of listening to the voices of involved actors, a matter that has long been neglected. In particular, civil society actors have been undermined in discourses on the city's transformation. Therefore, policy makers are encouraged to engage in elicitive conflict transformation in order to become 'web-

weavers'. The participation in cross-sector and cross-level dialogue, the recognition of the efforts of civil society and the availability of spaces of encounter and settings that truly permit citizens' participation can be enhanced by public policies that function as catalysts for socially innovative projects.

7.3 Outlook

The findings of this thesis may contribute to future research on the ecosystem of actors in Medellín's ongoing transformation process. A social network analysis, following the example of Alcaide Lozano et al. (2019), who tried "[u]nderstanding the effects of social capital on social innovation ecosystems in Latin America through the lens of Social Network Approach", may allow for a quantitative assessment of the ties connecting the actors involved. Equally importantly, I propose a qualitative evaluation of those connections, realized in collaboration with stakeholders following a participatory research approach as promoted by social innovation research.

Furthermore, I encourage an extension of the research scope to how transformative social innovation emerging in Medellín is articulated and connected to the development of Antioquia, Colombia and on an international level. This thesis focuses on the local scale of social innovation; gaining a multi-level governance perspective would also require a focus on the regional, national and international scale. Such investigations are relevant in light of the upcoming municipal election in October 2019, President Duque's discourse on innovation and Medellín's positioning as an internationally connected city. One departure point could be the territorially expanding network of the CUEE in combination with theory on transnational network building.

In conclusion, the question raised in this master's thesis as to whether social innovation contributes to social transformation is one that, ultimately, depends on the continued efforts of a range of actors on different levels and their success in establishing a dialogue in order to jointly create a socially just future. Hopefully, this thesis has contributed to the discussion on the potential of social innovation to generate transformative changes that can be sustained in the long-run.

8 References

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9 Appendix

9.1 Interview Guide

Role in organization, personal data

Introductory Question

1. How did Medellín manage to transform from the world's most violent city in the 1990s into the world's most innovative city two decades later – as public discourse suggests?

Innovation and Social Transformation

2. In which ways do you consider Medellín to be innovative? How do you define innovation?
3. From your point of view: what is the relation between innovation and social transformation?

Actors in the Ecosystem of Innovation

4. Who are the main actors in Medellín's transformation process?
5. What is your opinion on this illustration of the ecosystem of innovation by Ruta N – would you like to change or add anything?
6. Where would you locate your organization within the (co-created) ecosystem of Medellín's transformation?

Medellín's Development

7. Which shortfalls do you identify in Medellín's development to this day, and what should be emphasized to ensure future positive transformation?

9.2 List of Interviews

Code	Name	(Former) Position	Organization	Actor in Ecosystem	Date/ Duration of Interview
I-1	Alejandro Franco	Director	Ruta N	Public Entity	June 12, 2019 18 min
I-2	Alejandro Roldán	Leader Laboratory of Innovation	Ruta N	Public Entity	June 06, 2019 22 min
I-3	Jorge E. Santos	Leader Great Innovation Pact	Ruta N	Public Entity	June 11, 2019 15 min
I-4	Juan F. Valencia	Coordinator	CUEE	Public Entity	June 7, 2019 47 min
I-5	Anonymous	Program Manager	-	Public Entity	- 38 min
I-6	Juan Correa	Director Social Management	Metro	Public Enterprise	June 18, 2019 written
I-7	Federico Restrepo	Ex-Secretary	Secretaría de Planeación Municipal	Mayor's Office	May 21, 2019 1h 25 min
I-8	Luis G. Patiño	Secretary	Secretaría de Educación	Mayor's Office	June 6, 2019 9 min
I-9	Anonymous	Secretary	-	Mayor's Office	- 50 min
I-10	Jorge Melguizo	Director Education and Culture Section, Ex-Secretary	Comfama, Secretaría de Cultura Ciudadana	Mayor's Office	June 5, 2019 33 min
I-11	Pablo H. Vélez	Secretary	Subsecretaría de Turismo (Secretaría de Desarrollo Económico)	Mayor's Office	June 4, 2019 1h 03 min
I-12	Anonymous	Program Leader	-	Mayor's Office	- 34 min
I-13	Anonymous	Ex-Legal Advisor	-	Mayor's Office	- 59 min
I-14	María E. Ramos	Ex-Secretary, Ex-CEO	Secretaría de Planeación Municipal, EDU	Mayor's Office, Public Enterprise	May 31, 2019 23 min
I-15	Anonymous	CEO	-	Social SME	- 30 min

I-16	Juan Manuel Lopera	CEO	Aulas Amigas	Social SME	April 30, 2019 36 min
I-17	Adriana Villa	CEO	Tejido de Sueños	Social Start-Up	May 17, 2019 28 min
I-18	Anonymous	CEO	-	Social Start-Up	- 18 min
I-19	Anonymous	CEO	-	Social Start-Up	- 40 min
I-20	Anonymous	CEO	-	International Enterprise	- 1h
I-21	Anonymous	Founder	-	Social Foundation	- 20 min
I-22	Ursula Baigorria	Planning and Development Leader	Fundación Mi Sangre	Social Foundation	June 13, 2019 1h
I-23	Juan Carlos Tabares	Community Leader	Picacho con Futuro	Grassroots Organization	May 27, 2019 1h 15 min
I-24	Anonymous	Musician and Social Leader	-	Grassroots Organization	- 23 min
I-25	Anonymous	Program Manager	-	Grassroots Organization	- 52 min
I-26	Marta I. Villa	Director	Corporación Region	NGO	June 14, 2019 28 min
I-27	Catalina Escobar	Co-Founder	Makaia	NGO	June 11, 2019 28 min
I-28	Samuel Fernández	Young Community Leader	-	Civil Society	May 22, 2019 17 min
I-29	Anonymous	Teacher	-	School	- 15 min
I-30	John J. Arboleda	Director	Universidad de Antioquia	University	June 7, 2019 6 min
I-31	Anonymous	Innovation Department Representative	-	University	- 27 min
I-32	Anonymous	Social Innovation Director	-	University	- 30 min
I-33	Anonymous	Co-Director Innovation Department	-	University	- 28 min
I-34	Anonymous	Program Manager	-	University	- 30 min

9.3 Ecosystem of Actors in Medellín's Transformation

