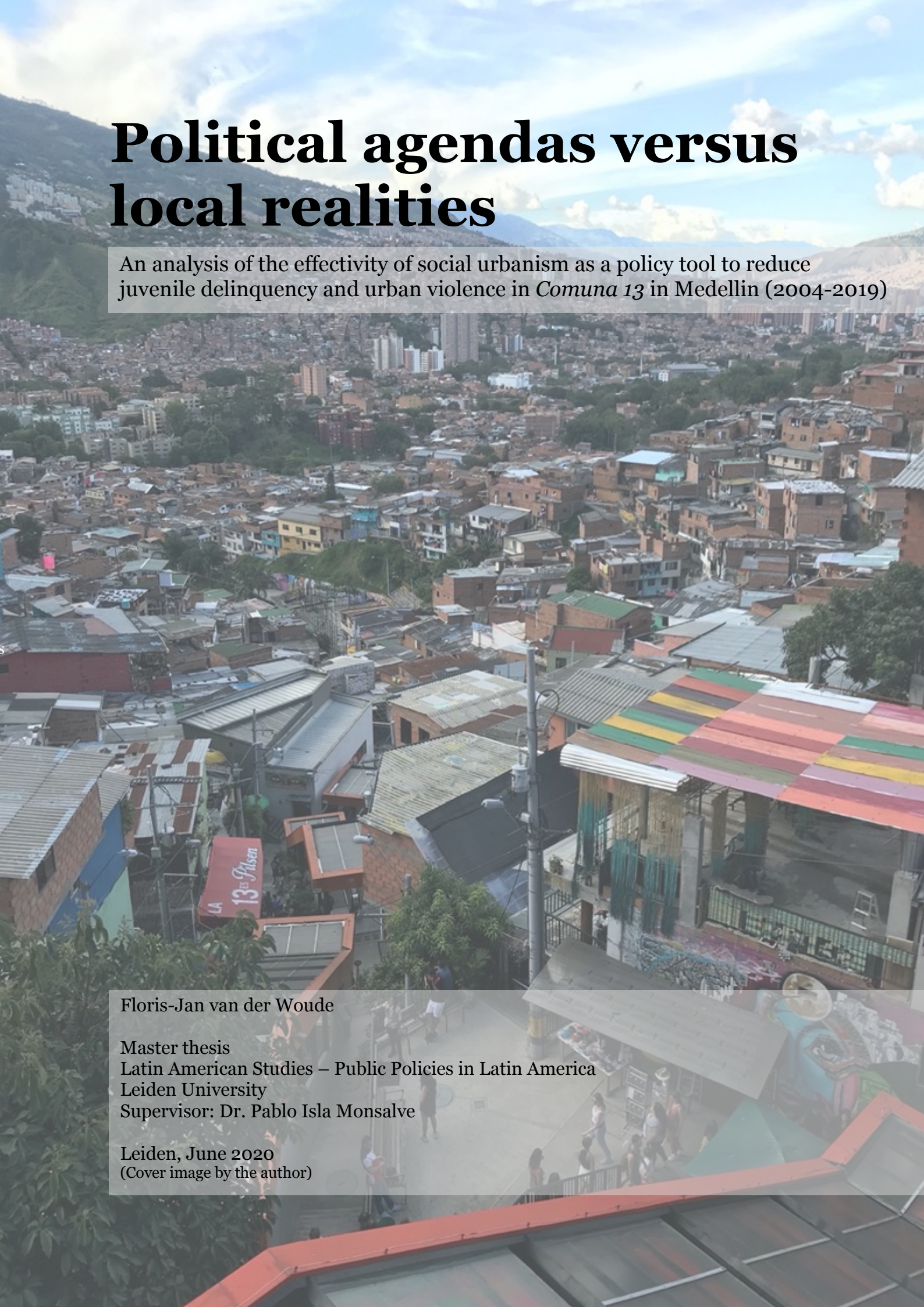
Political agendas versus local realities

An analysis of the effectivity of social urbanism as a policy tool to reduce juvenile delinquency and urban violence in *Comuna 13* in Medellin (2004-2019)



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Introduction

With almost eighty percent of the Latin-American population living in cities, it is the world's most urbanized area, often characterized by great social inequality and exclusion. Many of those Latin-American cities are confronted with prevalent urban violence and organized crime, which continuously confronts policymakers with new security issues and demands continuous innovation and responsive policy concerning public safety. Many Latin-American policy responses have proven to be insufficient to address the issues of prevalent urban violence and the growing social divide.

Colombia's second biggest city of Medellin however, once infamous for being the most dangerous city in the world, has been internationally praised as a miraculous example of successful urban intervention to reduce social inequality and curb urban violence, through connectivity and the recapturing of public spaces in a city that had lost its public life. Medellin was the first Colombian city with its own metro line and attracted international attention with the construction of six outdoor escalators in 2011, connecting the impoverished city district of *Comuna 13* with the city centre. The urban interventions, or *Proyectos Urbanos Integrales* (PUI's), became known as social urbanism, an urban policy ideology initiated by two consecutive mayors of Medellin between 2004 and 2011, Sergio Fajardo and Alonso Salazar.

A growing body of literature explores the capabilities of social urban interventions and infrastructural renewal as a policy tool to bridge the social divide, reduce inequality and alleviate poverty. However, the context of Medellin raises the question to what extent social urbanism contributed to the city's reduction in homicides and whether it poses a policy solution to other urban areas dealing with prevalent violence and delinquency. Therefore, this research tends to analyse to what extent the urban interventions under the banner of social urbanism have contributed to bridging the social divide and the apparent reduction of violence and delinquency in *Comuna 13* and what other factors have played a role in the transformation of the area. The hypothesis of this research claims that though the urban interventions did improve the quality of life in some areas of *Comuna 13*, it has had a marginal impact on the reduction of violence and social inequality and rather contributed to the transformation of Medellin's and *Comuna 13's* image

In order to answer those questions qualitative fieldwork has been conducted in Medellin in June, July and August of 2019. The qualitative data is derived from thirteen semi-structured interviews with people related to the topics of public policy, youth, education and violence in Medellin, such as a former mayor of the city, the secretary of youth, researchers and social

workers as well as inhabitants of *Comuna 13*. The aim of the interviews was to obtain a better understanding of the underlying dynamics of present-day violence in the area, as well as the perceptions of violence of inhabitants of *Comuna 13* and the extent to which they consider the local urban interventions a success. The qualitative data also attempted to analyse the extent to which there exists dissonance between the narrative of Medellin as a success story and the local reality in *Comuna 13*.

This research is structured into three chapters, of which the first one provides the theoretical framework. In order to answer the main research question, to what extent the social urban intervention programs in *Comuna 13* have contributed to reducing violence and delinquency in the area, the theoretical framework is constructed around four concepts, which are urban violence and juvenile delinquency in order to understand what causes the alleged problem that social urbanism attempts to tackle, and the concepts of *mano dura* and social urbanism, as two possible policy responses.

The second chapter discusses the Colombian context and provides a comprehensive explanation of the country's history with violence, the armed conflict and how that translates to contemporary violence in the country. Supported with quantitative data, the course of violence in Colombia's urbanized areas will be analysed, before the context of Medellin and the local dynamics of urban violence and delinquency will be discussed.

The third and final chapter of this research offers a structured presentation of the quantitative and qualitative research results, based on a thematic analysis of the material. After a short introduction into the socio-economic geography of *Comuna 13*, the drivers of urban violence and delinquency in *Comuna 13* will be presented. Subsequently, the policy objectives of the four consecutive mayors of Medellin between 2004 and 2019 are determined and explained, before answering the main question of this research: to what extent has social urbanism in *Comuna 13* contributed to reducing violence and juvenile delinquency in the area.

Finally, this part of the introduction serves to acknowledge all interviewees and everyone else who contributed to the creation of this research. Firstly, a special thanks to Dr Pablo Isla Monsalve from Leiden University, who was a source of support and help, throughout the at times turbulent process, from research proposal to processing the results. Adriaan Alsema from Colombia Reports was a great help in getting the fieldwork started in Medellin, just as social worker Alexandra Gómez Marulanda, the connecting link to several community leaders in *Comuna 13*. Ultimately, a special thanks to Catalina Patiño Bustamante and Diana Patiño for their support as a translator during many of the interviews.

Chapter 1

Urban violence, juvenile delinquency and social urbanism: a conceptual and theoretical approach

A growing urban population worldwide poses new threats and challenges to policy makers, concerning the topics of urban violence and the safety and security of citizens. The increasing number of people living in urban areas has also aroused the attention of scholars, concerning public safety and security (Moncada, 2016). For instance, Rodgers and Jones (2009) stress the fact that especially young people living in developing countries are often linked to delinquency and high levels of violence in urbanized areas. In order to better understand the implications of the phenomena of urban violence and juvenile delinquency, this first chapter assesses these concepts in greater depth and presents the key academic theories and debates concerning those concepts. It also shows how each one of the concepts are interrelated, and related to the phenomenon of social urbanism, which according to some scholars represents key ideas on how to reverse urban violence and juvenile delinquency (Colomer Bea, 2016).

1.1 A theoretical approach to the concept of urban violence

To explain the concept of urban violence, the phenomenon of violence in general should be defined first. There are several ideas and explanations about the nature, the causes and the sources of violence in the academic world and the concept cannot be explained in an unambiguous way. A manifestation of violence can vary widely among different societies and cultures. However, according to Rodgers and Jones (2009) social scientists and policymakers tend to rely on certain characteristics that have the tendency to divide the concept of violence in the categories of homicide and assault but thereby ignoring the idea that violence can also be an action or a side effect of a development or event. Heinrich Popitz (1986) defines violence as “an act of power that leads to the intentional bodily injury of others” (43). Rotker and Goldman (2002) describe violence as “an intentional use of force or power with a predetermined end by which one or more persons produce physical, mental (psychological), or sexual injury, injure the freedom of movement, or cause the death of another person or persons (including him or herself)” (44). In Heinz-Gerhard Haupt’s (2015) comparative study about the use of the term violence among academic historians, he first distinguishes collective and individual violence, legitimate and illegitimate, concrete and structural, physical and

psychological and manifest and symbolic violence. The author then defines the term as "injury to people's physical integrity, caused by various historical actors in various contexts" (116).

Concha-Eastman (2002) first proposes the interrelated concepts of structural, institutional and situational or direct violence, which are all connected and form a strong 'chain' which makes the violence occurring from it very difficult to control. The structural factors consist of social and economic inequality, poverty, loss of ethics and moral values, corruption, a lack of governability, weak democracies and human rights violations. The institutional factors consist of a lack of social responsibility, a lack of faith in the police and/or justice, a distrust in institutions, impunity, exposure to violence and a decomposition of the family. Ultimately, the direct or facilitating factors are possession of firearms, alcohol and drug abuse, free time without free space, role imitation and the promotion of violence in the media. The author then specifies several personal motivations for violence and argues that different forms of violence come from different victimizers and are usually aimed at specific groups within a society. Concha-Eastman (2002) specifies the motivation of interpersonal or social purposes, for example in the case of domestic violence against women, economic purposes when a robber is being violent during a robbery for economic gain and political purposes, when for instance a political opponent is being assassinated.

Briceño-León and Zubillaga (2002) define a so-called 'structural violence' as well, rooting from social inequality, poverty and the exclusion of disadvantaged groups within a society. In the context of developing countries, a substantial part of society lives under such disadvantaged circumstances. Therefore, the authors argue that violence is inflicted by such persisting societal conditions, like no access to basic services and housing, healthcare, education or employment. This routinely kind of violence affects daily life to a large extent and can eventually lead to a constraint of people's chances in life. The authors distinguish two other forms of violence: psychological violence, which can be explained as interpersonal violence without causing physical injury but causing emotional harm, and symbolic violence, which is mainly exercised by powerful social groups, trying to stigmatize groups that are more marginal by not granting them any recognition. An example of the latter explanation can be the discrimination and maltreatment of an ethnic group within a given society. In the context of the Latin America and Caribbean region Briceño-León and Zubillaga define the concept of violence as:

> The use or credible threat to make use of physical force with the intention of taking or damaging the property of, or of injuring and or killing, another person or oneself. That is, we include in the concept both the violent act itself and its possibility, since a large part of the violence occurring in the region is related to theft or extortion by criminals or the police, not necessarily involving physical injury to the victim but carried out under threat of such injury (2002: 21).

Violence among non-related persons, so violence that doesn't occur in the domestic sphere, could be defined as social violence. This definition of violence, unlike symbolic and psychological violence, focuses primarily on exercising physical force (Buvinic *et al.*, 1999). The authors distinguish instrumental violence and emotional violence, where the former is usually practiced by the state or criminals to obtain a certain objective by intimidation, the latter form of violence is a goal in itself, not meant to pursue anything else than intimidation or obedience.

Urban violence is described by Moncada (2016) as a phenomenon that is caused by several armed actors, including: vigilant groups and gangs who pose serious threats to democracy and development and the author stresses the link between urban violence and societal inequality. According to Kruijt & Koonings (2007), the existence of local government voids and the absence of true institutional authorities, like the police in disadvantaged urban areas, also plays a big role in the proliferation of urban violence caused by armed actors in urban areas. The authors argue that the occurrence of urban violence is in big part the responsibility of the state, because it is not able to guarantee citizens' safety nor isn't it able to guarantee the rule of law in certain urban areas. Loïc Wacquant (2007) concluded from his fieldwork, in one of the most disadvantaged neighbourhoods of Chicago, that the explanation of the concept of urban violence is just as unambiguous as the explanation of violence in general. In his research he makes a comparison between urban violence in disadvantaged neighbourhoods in France and in Chicago and concludes that the rates of violence in its most brutal forms is of such an extend in Chicago that it has completely disrupted activities of daily life and differs strongly from his findings in French cities. However, what the two places do have in common with regard to the concept of urban violence are the forms in which urban violence manifests itself, which Wacquant (2007) defines as: extortion, aggression, homicides, rapes and execution. In the case of Brazil, Alba Zaluar (2004) affirms that Kruijt and Kooning's theory, as mentioned above, is also applicable to the biggest country in Latin America. In Zaluar's analysis of drug-related urban violence in Brazil the author argues that the Brazilian society has always been characterized by a gap between the rule of law of formal institutions, and the domain that is characterized by social processes, outside the legal reach of those institutions, resulting in emerging new forms of urban violence. Zaluar links the increase of urban violence to the growing global drug trade and argues that there is a causality between the increase in violence in urban areas and the growing worldwide trafficking of illicit drugs, which will be explained in more detail in the next section of this chapter. As mentioned earlier, Kruijt & Koonings (2007) argue that one of the major causes of urban violence is the absence of the rule of law in certain urban areas. However, research in Brazil's biggest city Rio de Janeiro claims that criminal organizations more than once collaborate with state actors such as policy makers and

politicians to establish urban systems of local order in certain neighbourhoods, which maintains criminal power in place and undermines the efforts carried out by the state to ban such violence (Arias, 2013). The author argues that this phenomenon has its origins in the will of state actors to regulate or benefit from an illegal market.

Another explanation for the continued existence of urban violence is the process in which politicians, with the help of criminal organizations, try to strengthen their own position in a democratic process. The concept of urban violence in the academic debate is perceived as a public health issue and scholars have argued that it should be fought from the perspective of a public health issue. The three general strategies used to fight violence are repression, prevention and recuperation (Concha-Eastman, 2002).

Within the concept of urban violence, Toni Pfanner (2010) distinguishes gang violence as one of the main ways in which urban violence manifests itself. He describes the concept as "illegal and non-political acts of violence perpetrated against property, ordinary people or members of other gangs" (Pfanner, 2010: 310). The nature of gang violence is similar to that of urban violence, as mentioned earlier, and has its roots in social inequality, high levels of poverty, economic disparity and drug abuse. The age of the majority of people getting involved in gangs ranges from 9 to 25 years old and the author argues that the most commonly used tactic of gang violence to achieve its goals are coercion and corruption, which corresponds to what Concha-Eastman (2002) made clear earlier on the basis of his research into urban violence in Brazil. The following section of this chapter will dive deeper into the concept of juvenile delinquency and its relation to urban violence. As Pfanner explained, there exists an evident relation between urban (gang) violence and the young urban population getting involved in delinquency.

1.2 A theoretical approach to the concepts of juvenile delinquency and youth violence

Juvenile delinquency, just as urban violence, is rather hard to define in an unambiguous way. However, Rutter *et al.* (1998) defined the concept by arguing that each country sets their own lower age limit for criminal responsibility and that the upper limit is set by the age on which a criminal court for adult offenders can deal with the delinquent, in other words, when someone is no longer considered a young delinquent. The academic debate concerning juvenile delinquency is also rather ambiguous while the concept is often being used alternately with the concept of youth crime (Adorno, 2002). Before any further explanation of the concept will be given, it is important to first understand and define the term youth, as used in this research.

The United Nations has used different delimitations when speaking of the term 'youth', ranging somewhere between 15 to 29 years of age. However, in the United Nations' fact sheet 'definition of youth' (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, n.d.) the organization has defined the term 'youth' as persons ranging from 15 to 24 years of age and the UN maintains this delimitation when it comes to statistical matters, without any prejudice to other definitions of member states. All persons under the age of 15 years old are considered 'children' by the UN (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2019). However, Shoemaker (2010) argues that all illegal acts, which are committed by youth under the age of 18, are defined as delinquent behaviours and the term of juvenile delinquent is applicable to all youth committing such illegal acts. The author adds that that a distinction must also be made between criminal behaviour and so-called 'status' offenses, illegal acts that only apply to persons who have the 'youth' status. In the research the UN's definition of 'youth' will be maintained, with people ranging from 15 to 24 years of age considered 'youth'.

The difference between the concepts of 'youth' and 'adult' is almost impossible to define in two clear terms and is strongly variable and rather based on one's individual behaviour patterns and activities and not on one's age, therefore, individuals are not considered fully 'adult' until they are able to take on adult responsibilities and behaviours (Jones & Rodgers, 2009). The latest numbers indicate that 1.2 billion people worldwide are between the age of 15 and 24 years old, which equals 16 percent of the world's population (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2019).

Because the concepts of 'youth' and 'violence' are such ambiguous concepts it has obtained significant scrutiny among social researchers over the last century (Jones & Rodgers, 2009). Binder (1988), concerning the concept of juvenile delinquency, argues that:

> If an adult has violated a criminal code according to the judgement of a criminal court following highly structured procedures, he or she is thought of as a criminal. Similarly, if a youth has violated a criminal code according to the judgment of a juvenile court, he or she is thought of as a juvenile delinquent (254).

The crucial difference between youth violence and juvenile delinquency is that an act of violence by someone considered youth, as defined above, does not necessarily have to be delinquent (Binder, 1988). The author argues that the concept of youth violence can be defined based on observations of people interacting with each other, while the concept of juvenile delinquency is subject to the evaluation of behaviour in terms of law and/or legal processes.

However, it is worthwhile mentioning that there exists a dissonance between the definition of juvenile delinquency based on legal processes and judicial instances and a definition of the same concept, based on social perception and public opinion. The first, legal, explanation is primarily based on one's age while the definition of juvenile delinquency in the social context, as proposed by Ghetti and Redlich (2001), is not primarily based on age. The authors argue: "victims, their families, and society want retribution, regardless of defendant age" (35). Yonas *et al.* (2010) argue that juvenile delinquency is perceived as a high priority issue among inhabitants of neighbourhoods affected by it and that it imposes a strong sense or fear, anger and isolation among residents. Therefore, the public often demands harsher sanctions against juvenile delinquents (Ghetti and Redlich, 2001).

1.2.1 The concept of 'youth gangs' defined and explained

According to Jones and Rodgers (2009), violence involving youth and juvenile delinquency can manifest itself in the form of domestic abuse or street attacks. However, the authors argue that juvenile delinquency primarily occurs in the form of youth gang violence and, therefore it is important to define the concept of youth gang violence in relation to the concept of juvenile delinquency. One of the early scholars to define the concept 'gang' was Frederic Thrasher, with his acclaimed work *The Gang: A Study of 1,313 gangs in Chicago* (Esbensen *et al.*, 2001). Thrashers definition of a 'gang' was constructed on a number of points based on its natural history, namely; the gang should have an unplanned and organic origin, gang members, among each other, should have intimate face-to-face relations, there should be some sense of organization, a gang should have the tendency to meet a hostile element like a planned conflict, which in its turn boosts the morale within the gang, the creation or existence of a shared tradition or shared memories and the defence of a geographic area or territory, if necessary through violence (Thrasher, 1963[1927]). Klein (1971) adds to debate by describing the concept of gang as:

> Any denotable adolescent group of youngsters who (a) are generally perceived as a distinct aggregation by others in their neighbourhood, (b) recognize themselves as a denotable group (almost invariably with a group name), and (c) have been involved in a sufficient number of delinquent incidents to call forth a consistent negative response from neighbourhood residents and/or law enforcement agencies (428).

However, Esbensen *et al.* (2001) add that the first two definitions as suggested by Klein can also relate to other social groups, such as for instance the boy scouts and fraternities. Esbensen *et al.* (2001) dedicated an entire study to the definition of the concept of youth gangs within social sciences, by asking themselves 'when is a gang a gang?' The authors first tend to answer

that question by assessing the definitions of the concept of 'youth gang' as defined before by a significant number of social scientists. They argue that:

> When describing their conceptual and operational definitions, many contemporary gang researchers note the absence of definitional consensus. They subsequently identify two widely used benchmarks for assessing whether a given social group is a gang: (1) youth status, defined as an age classification ranging between 10 and the early 20s or even older, and (2) the engagement by group members in law-violating behaviour or, at a minimum, "imprudent" behaviour (106).

Esbensen *et al.* (2001) then conclude that the definition of the concept 'gang' has, in past research, relied on 'self-nomination', and argue that someone who claims he or she is a gang member is a reliable and adequate basis to identify someone as a gang member. Furthermore, the authors claim that demographic characteristics play an important role in defining and predicting gang membership and argue that especially minority youth and older males are more likely to be linked to gang membership.[1]

This theory is supported by Thornberry's research (1993), seeking to explain whether youth gangs cause an increase in negative or delinquent behaviour amongst youth. Thornberry uses three models to explain why gang members are more likely to get involved in violent delinquency. The first model is based on 'selection' or 'kind of person', which predicts that delinquent youth seek out gangs and that delinquency increases the probability of getting involved in a gang, rather than gang membership causing delinquency. The second model looks at social facilitation and is called the 'kind of group' model and argues that gang membership is a major cause of delinquency. The third one is the enhancement model and combines the two as mentioned above and claims that gang members were delinquent before joining but membership enhanced delinquent behaviour. The research indicates that gang members, once they become members of a gang, show substantially increased delinquency rates compared to delinquent non-gang members (Thornberry *et al.*, 1993).

Zhang, Welte and Wieczorek (1999) further studied and specified the three models as proposed by Thornberry and conclude that their findings are partly inconsistent with Thornberry's 'selection' model, which predicts that prior delinquency causes gang membership and subsequent high levels of delinquency. The authors argue that it is gang membership that has an influence on subsequent high rates delinquency, not if one has been delinquent before. The

[1] In the case study into youth gangs in El Salvador, conducted by Savenije and Van der Borgh (2004), the authors argue that there exists a symbiotic relationship between the existence of perverse social, violent organizations such as youth gangs and social exclusion. The frustration caused by social exclusion generates a certain degree of normalization of violence and eventually leads to the continued existence of youth gangs.

authors therefore conclude that gang members, before entering a gang, aren't any different from non-gang members in terms of delinquency. These results are confirmed by Baird (2018) who, in his research into the motivation of youth gang members to join such groups, states that young people do not join such groups to be more violent.

The explanations by the above-mentioned scholars of youth gang violence within the context of juvenile delinquency need further explanation to gain a better understanding of why youngsters join such social organizations that encourage delinquency and violence. Baird (2018) states that a big part of the motivation for young people, mainly young men, to join a youth gang, roots from the desire of belonging and the desire to reproduce 'successful' local, male identities. Another argument for young people to join a youth gang is put forward by Drummond, Dizgun and Keeling (2019) and involves the protection of local territory or overcoming or preventing social exclusion. According to the authors, a declining level of social services and growing up in marginalized communities, could increases the likelihood of young males to join a gang.

1.2.2 The relationship between the trade and use of illicit drugs and juvenile delinquency

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, Zaluar (2004) argues that there exists a causality between the growing global trade in illicit drugs, its consumption and the increase of urban violence and in respect to this research it is worthwhile considering in what way this observation relates to the concept of juvenile delinquency. It is known that the consumption of illicit drugs has an association with the transition from juvenile delinquency into adult crime (Bigelow, 2000) and Brunelle, Cousineau and Brochu (2005) add to the debate, with their research on youths' accounts on their trajectories of drug use and delinquency, that juvenile delinquency is a result of drug use among adolescents. These findings are confirmed by Brook *et al.* (1996), who state as well that drug use has an adverse impact on delinquent behaviour among adolescents. One of the possible explanations for this phenomenon is the fact that the growing illicit drug market is one of enormous, short-term profits, which can result in corrupting institutions such as the police and government. Zaluar (2004) argues that such corruption and eventually dysfunction of justice systems goes hand in hand with an increase in violence and delinquency.

As Drummond *et al.* (2019) have pointed out above, growing up in a marginalized area and the aspect of exclusion play a significant role in the process of getting involved in youth gangs and the development of delinquent behaviour. In particular, the role of social exclusion in marginalized neighbourhoods in the process of youth becoming violent shows that there is also a geographical aspect to the concept of juvenile delinquency. Therefore, the next section of this chapter will take a closer look into the concepts of social urbanism and the right to the city,

concepts heralded as possible policy tools to counter juvenile delinquency and gang membership and gang violence.

1.3 Responses to urban violence and juvenile delinquency: *mano dura* versus social urbanism

When considering sections 1.1 and 1.2 of this chapter it becomes clear that the academic debate around the concepts of urban violence and juvenile delinquency have been subjected to significant scrutiny. However, past and current research raises the question, from a public policy point of view, what possible concepts could play a role in reducing urban violence and juvenile delinquency and have done so in the past. In this last part of the first chapter, therefore, the relatively young concept of social urbanism will be assessed, and it will be discussed in more detail how the concept could contribute to a better understanding of the concepts of urban violence and juvenile delinquency in the urban context and how those three concepts are interrelated. Before the concept of social urbanism will be explained in greater depth, it is relevant to also look at the contrary of social policy strategies and assess how strategies of repression and zero tolerance or *mano dura* in the urban context have affected urban violence and crime in the past.

1.3.1 Zero tolerance or *mano dura*

The concept of zero tolerance policing in the urban context came to rise in the early 1990's in the city of New York, which is often still heralded as the miraculous city that drastically brought down crime through its zero-tolerance policy (Punch, 2007). The author argues that zero tolerance: "conveyed a new policy of tough enforcement of all offences, constant police pressure with high visibility and minimal discretion for officers on the street" (20). Davis (2013) adds that the policy also implied the criminalization of certain public behaviour. The zero-tolerance policy implemented in New York was in its turn based on the 'broken windows' theory as proposed by Wilson and Kelling (1982) and suggests that serious urban violence and crime is a consequence of social disorder and therefore argues that disorder should be resolved first in order to bring down crime. The broken windows theory also states that neighbourhoods dealing with high levels of disorder cause its residents to withdraw from public spaces, which weakens social control and at the same time boosts disorder and lets crime, take its course. Therefore, the authors advocate for more visible police attendance on the streets, fine minor offences and ensuring consistent and persistent enforcement of the law. According to Swanson (2013), the policy of zero tolerance posed a seemingly easy and suitable solution to politicians, to counter urban violence and crime. However, critics of the theory argue that the maintenance

of order has no effective impact on the reduction of crime (Caudill *et al.,* 2013). Furthermore, Swanson (2013) argues that zero-tolerance policing in practice can lead to an increase in racial disparities and warns for the imminent danger of criminalizing marginalized groups within society.

1.3.2 Social urbanism

Unlike the zero-tolerance strategy, social urbanism offers a more cooperative response to violence rather than a repressive one. Social urbanism could be explained as the process of reducing social inequality, creating prosperity, security and social progress through infrastructural renewal and social projects, boosting connectivity and socio-economic opportunities (Colomer Bea, 2016). The author argues that social urbanism has its roots in a series of urban development policies, introduced in the Colombian city of Medellin. The concept of social urbanism first appeared in 2004, when Sergio Fajardo, a former academic, was elected mayor of Medellin in that same year (Sotomayor, 2017). Franz (2017) points out that the planning policy of social urbanism is based on the ideology that investing in the physical improvement of disadvantaged neighbourhoods will dissolve inequality and other socio-economic issues.

Maclean (2015) argues that the concept of social urbanism has its roots in a set of public policies, dating back to the mid-1990. The author argues that the policies were intended to tackle the problem of geographical marginalization, reinforced by the idea that "the root cause of the violence was a historical social debt, owed to marginalized areas of the city by ruling elites" (55). Furthermore, Maclean states that the resulting interventions were aimed at improving the mobility of the marginalized population, improve infrastructure and provide people with public spaces such as parks that, simultaneously, have to boost a common sense of responsibility for the city, and promote political participation and socio-economic development. The concept of Social Urbanism is described in Medellin's *Plan de Desarrollo 2008-2011,* municipal development plan, as a:

> Social planning approach that simultaneously includes physical transformation, social intervention, institutional management and community participation. Social Urbanism has led to the inclusion of large areas of the city that, up until now, have been marginalized from development and has dignified the spaces and places that inhabit the poorest (Alcaldía de Medellin, 2008: 6).[2]

[2] Translation by the author of the original in Spanish.

Montoya Restrepo (2014) claims that another characteristic of the concept of social urbanism is its specific strategy of territorial intervention. The author argues that social urbanism no longer perceives the city as one homogenous entity, but rather approaches it as an entity consisting of smaller fractions, with different needs. In order for such interventions to have a positive effect on the decrease of inequality and social exclusion, Mercier *et al.* (2015) argue that similar urban policy approaches need a continuous character if they want to achieve and maintain long-term positive effects.

The practice of using infrastructural renewal as a policy tool to counter social inequality and bridge the socio-economic gap in urbanized areas, has been previously observed (Reimerink, 2018). The author argues that many big cities around the world have experimented with the implementation of metro networks, cable cars and bus transit systems to address social inequality issues, all with varying outcomes concerning the socio-economic gap. The author also stresses that such urban interventions often poorly address the local needs of residents and are in big part driven by policy-makers' desires to contribute to an image of modernity. Concerning violence, Cerdá *et al.* (2011) claim that the implementation of the social urban intervention of the *metrocable,* cable car in Medellin, did cause homicide rates to drop. The researchers compared homicide rates in the intervention neighbourhood with homicide rates in a non-intervention control neighbourhood and claim that the project had an inhibitory effect on violence.

1.3.3 'The right to the city' and urban intervention

Complementary to Reimerink's definition of social urbanism, with its tendency to be in part driven by policy-makers' personal desires, is Centner's theory on the right to the city. Lefebvre (1968) was the first scholar to propose and describe the concept of the right to the city in his eponymous work from 1968, *Le droit à la ville,* and argues that the right to the city is more than just the simple right to enter or visit a city but is rather defined as the right to urban life. The author explains this urban life as the right to freedom, the right to individualization and the right to habitat and inhabit the city. It should provide its inhabitants with the liberty to access urban resources, such as spaces, services and infrastructure and with the ability to exercise a collective power in the process of reshaping the outcomes of the processes of urbanization. The concept of the right to the city has gained a growing interest among sociologists, architects and policy-makers over the past years (Domaradzka, 2018), leading to a more specific definition and extension of the concept. Harvey (2003) defines the concept as "not merely a right of access to what already exists, but a right to change it after our heart's desire. We need to be sure we can live with our own creations (a problem for every planner,

architect and utopian thinker). But the right to remake ourselves by creating a qualitatively different kind of urban sociality is one of the most precious of all human rights" (939).

Centner (2013) claims that there exists a paradox between the right to the city and the idea that the concept is able to grant all its inhabitants a right to shape urban life, by guaranteeing "a right to change it after our heart's desire", as proposed by Harvey (2003: 939). While the concept has been interpreted as a means to achieve such rights to social, urban facilities such as welfare, education and employment (Costes, 2014), Centner (2013) argues that, in practice, specific social groups, mainly from the urban middle-class, are solely to benefit from the right to the city. According to the author, this eventually leads to controversial middle class, claiming exclusive visions of the right kind of city and:

> Different groups that invoke middle-class labels attempt to distinguish and mobilize around visions of what they see as the right kind of city, often with very specific discourses of liveability, morality and citizenship (248).

Costes (2014) gives two main interpretations of the right to the city in the present urban context. The first one the author describes as bottom-up mobilization, where a unified group of citizens fight for the same cause. It is built primarily on "the resistance on the part of inhabitants through autonomous practices opposed to this ascendancy of capital-driven planning, while also endeavouring to bring out the potentialities already contained in the urban" (7). In the second interpretation of the right to the city, the author explains the concept as a political tool to facilitate urban management. In contrary of the former explanation, it is built around negotiation with public authorities instead of a bottom-up approach.

To conclude the first chapter, when taking all the concepts discussed above into consideration, links between some of them can be established. The most important ones concerning this research are (1) the relationship between urban violence, juvenile delinquency and social inequality and (2) the relationship between the concepts of social urbanism and the right to the city as possible social policy responses to bridge the social divide. However, issues that such social interventions try to tackle are often poorly addressed and don't always meet local needs. Some scholars stress the need for continuity in order for social urban policies to have long-term positive effects. The next chapter will take a closer look at responses to conflict, urban violence and juvenile delinquency within the Colombian context, and later will assess the case of Medellin.

Chapter 2

Urban violence, conflict and juvenile delinquency in Colombia. The case of Medellin

Before diving deeper into the specific transformation that Medellin's *Comuna 13* has gone through concerning juvenile delinquency and urban violence, which represents the heart of this research, the Colombian context and its history with conflict, violence and juvenile delinquency will be assessed first. This chapter attempts to address the 'why' and 'how' of delinquency and violence inherent to Colombia and discusses which key factors have caused these forms of violence to persevere. Furthermore, this chapter takes a closer look at the policies that have had an influence on reducing and countering certain acts of violence in Medellin and it explains significant historical events, which demonstrate why urban violence in Colombia occurs in the form it does today, supplemented with statistics.

2.1 The roots of violence and homicide in Colombia: actors in the armed conflict

Colombia has had a dubious reputation for being one of the most violent countries in Latin America, with homicide rates surpassing those of Mexico and Brazil in the heyday of violence. Especially the 1970's and 1980's were characterized by brutal violence and are being perceived as the bloodiest period in the history of the country (Moser & McIlwaine, 2004). The latest figures on homicide rates in Colombia show that 2019 has seen a slight reduction in homicides with 12,825 killings in that year, which equals 25.4 deaths per 100.000 people, compared to 12,923 killings in 2018, now positioning Colombia just under Mexico with 27 deaths per 100.000 people (Asman & O'Reilly, 2020). Regardless of all human factors, Colombia's geography is another aspect that needs to be mentioned when it comes to explaining the perseverance of violence in the country (Coatsworth, 2003). Its sheer size and the poor infrastructure leave some areas almost untouched and far from government control (LeGrand, 2003). The author argues that the National government has almost completely lost its legitimacy and their monopoly on force and control in remote areas of the country. The majority of crimes never come to trial and even Colombia's army is accused of violating human rights. Echavarría Alvarez (2010) attempts to explain the origins of violence in Colombia and argues that, among scholars, the origin and persistence of Colombian violence is perceived in different ways. The author points out that violence in Colombia can be perceived as a situation

fed by criminals who pursue profit, but also as a situation in which society is at war, one where the state is absent and incapable of guaranteeing peace and maintain order or as a situation of continuous internal armed conflict. Below, a series of crucial, historical events in Colombian history will be assessed, that will concretize the aforementioned scholarly approaches and will provide a better understanding of why the country is so inextricably linked to violence.

According to Cragin and Hoffman (2003), Colombia's violence can be traced all the way back to its political conflict that started in the late 1940's, referred to as *La Violencia*. Kline (2018) describes *La Violencia* as a bloody war between the Conservative Party and the Liberal Party and argues that:

> As a result of this system of violence, other cleavages, such as social class and region, became secondary to the party one. Third parties were notably unsuccessful until the early 1990's. Violence became the normal way to handle things (176).

The term of *La Violencia* was initially used to characterize the period in which social, political revolution took place in Colombia, between 1948 and 1974, but some scholars argue that *La Violencia* also translates one-on-one to contemporary violence in the country (Cragin and Hoffman, 2003). Concerning this research, the 1970's, with the advancing *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia* (FARC, 1964) and other guerrilla groups [Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN, 1964), *Movimiento 19 de abril* (M19, 1970-90)] and the rise of the paramilitary forces and the cartels, will be taken as a starting point in history. Events from that period onwards have had a great impact on urban violence in Colombia as it occurs today.

2.1.1 *Guerrilleros, paramilitares* and the Colombian army*:* rural displacement and urbanization in the 1970's

When the National Front, an agreement in which the Conservative and the Liberal Party agreed upon sharing power equally and rotating presidencies over a period of sixteen years, came to an end in 1974, Colombia plummeted into a new era of violence (Kline, 2018). The author claims that this complex period is best characterized by the phrase: "the enemy of the enemy is my friend" (177). This new era of violence was ushered in with the serious armament and expansion of the FARC, the left-wing, Marxist guerrilla movement that was founded in 1964 and that existed alongside other guerrilla movements such as the *Ejército de Liberación*

Nacional (ELN) and the *Movimiento 19 de Abril* (M-19).[3] Before the creation of such left-wing guerrilla groups in the mid-sixties, communism-oriented peasant defence groups were already active in Colombia (Kline, 2018). The guerrilla movements started a bloody war against the, in their eyes corrupt, Colombian state and demanded a more equal distribution of wealth and land, with the FARC being one of the most well-known and simultaneously one of the most violent armed non-state actors in the conflict (LeGrand, 2003). The war tactics consist of kidnappings, bombing and extortion and, according to Reardon (2018); this has led to at least 260.000 deaths in Colombia. A large part of the organization's finances where covered with the profits from the FARC's involvement in the illegal drug trade and coca production, which usually happens in remote, FARC controlled, areas far from government surveillance (LeGrand, 2003).

At the end of the twentieth century, alongside the guerrilla groups, the paramilitary front *Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia* (AUC) sprouted from smaller right-wing private defence forces, which in their turn arose for the decree issued by president Guillermo León Valencia that granted private armed groups a legal status in 1968 (Kline, 2018). The author argues that the idea behind the decree was to reinforce the power of the rather weak Colombian state and restore order in the country with the help of such paramilitary groups. Rich landowners and ranchers, who could afford it to pay for protection, adopted these privatized army structures of the paramilitary groups to protect themselves and their property against guerrilla violence. Scholars and human rights activists claim that the Colombian national army has often collaborated with the paramilitaries and frequently committed violations of human rights (Gutiérrez Sanín, 2019). One of the most relevant examples of such collaboration, concerning this research, is the execution of *Operación Orión* in Medellin's *Comuna 13*, a military operation in which the Colombian army, in cooperation with the paramilitaries, killed innocent residents of the neighbourhood while ridding the area of left-wing guerrilla fighters and drug gangs (Rozema, 2008; Demarest, 2011). The next chapter will elaborate on *Operación Orión* and its implications for *Comuna 13*.

More than fifty years of armed conflict, as briefly addressed above, has had a major impact on civilians and caused countless civilian casualties, as it has also contributed to a process of forced displacement. Estimates suggest that almost five million Colombians have been displaced because of the internal, armed conflict (Cantor, 2011). Holmes and Gutiérrez de Piñeres (2011) even claim that for every forty Colombians at least one person has been

[3] Other smaller guerrilla movements have emerged over the years in Colombia such as the Ejército Popular de Liberación (EPL) (1967), an armed organization linked to the Maoist wing of the Colombian communist party. The Guevarista Revolutionary Army (1992-2008) was formed as an offshoot of the ELN (Kline, 2018).

forcefully displaced due to violence, and Reardon (2008) even speaks of seven million displaced Colombians because of the conflict. Despite all authors arguing that these numbers are just estimates and that there are no precise statistics on forced displacement in Colombia, such estimates show that the extent of forced displacement due to the internal conflict is rather extensive and has had, and still has, a huge impact on daily lives of Colombians.

The internal conflict, triggering an enormous new flow of domestic migrants moving from the rural areas to the urban areas in the 1970's, after the first phase of urbanization in the 1950's (Sánchez Steiner, 2008), had a clear effect on the urban environment. Roberts (2015) argues that the influx of people from rural areas to cities has had a strong negative impact on social cohesion, creating an urban social disorganization and boosting organized crime and violence in the urban areas of Colombia. The majority of people migrating from rural areas to cities, ended up in the periphery of such cites, not in the city centres, in which the housing options were limited (Sánchez Steiner, 2008). The author claims that many people settled in so-called *barrios piratas* or pirate neighbourhoods.[4]

2.1.2 Violence and the trade in illicit drugs in the *1980's* and *1990's*

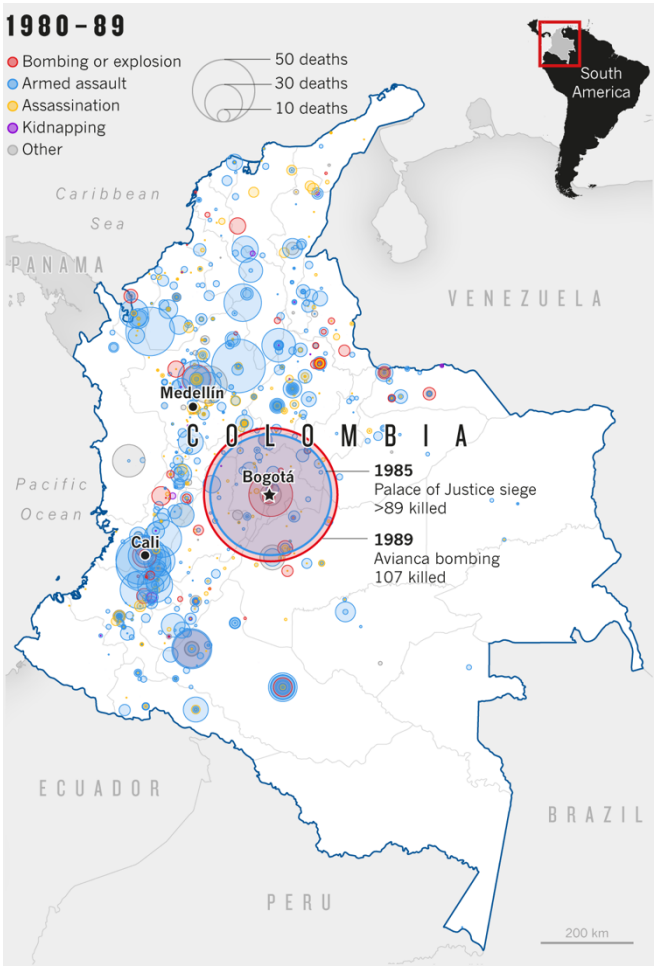
To complicate matters, at the beginning of the 1980's Colombia found itself in the heyday of the country's cocaine trade, in which drugs cartels such as the Medellin cartel led by Pablo Escobar and the Cali cartel led by the Rodríguez Orejuela brothers, gave way to a new chapter in Colombia's history with violence, with gangs violently fighting over trade and territory and infesting public, urban spaces with bombings and shootings, leading to many fatal civilian casualties (Gootenberg, 2012). This new age of violence eventually even led to the deliberate downing of Avianca flight 203 in 1989, killing all the 107 passengers on board (McFadden, 1994).[5] Ibáñez and Vélez (2008) put forward that the emergence of the Colombian drug trade had consequences for the existing power structures within the country. The authors claim that drug traffickers started financially support armed actors on either sides of the conflict and began to establish their own paramilitary groups, to protect their property and the economic interests of their drug trade, fuelling the conflict and resulting in violence against the civil population. Efforts by the Colombian state to dismantle the cartels only worsened the violence since the cartels sought protection from the armed groups, fighting the government (Moncada,

[4] Pirate neighborhoods are perceived as illegal settlements, developed by a landowner who sells lots to individuals, looking for a place to settle. Such lots usually lack basic infrastructural services and the areas have an increased risk of flooding and landslides. The majority of such areas eventually are recognized and legalized and are being included in the official city limits (Sánchez Steiner, 2008).

[5] Avianca flight 203 was a Colombian domestic flight headed for the city of Cali but was bombed by order of Pablo Escobar. The attack was aimed at presidential candidate César Gaviria Trujillo, who wasn't on the aircraft (McFadden, 1994).

2016). Ibáñez and Vélez (2008) claim that the impact of such violence in rural areas was not the same as in urban areas and therefore argue: "while urban areas mostly suffer from soaring homicide rates, the rural population endures armed confrontations, massacres, and forced displacements" (661). With the intensity of the violence increasing in Colombia at the time, civilians were simultaneously confronted with violence to a higher degree. Ibáñez and Vélez (2008) claim that escalating violence and crime caused by the conflict, which simultaneously caused many innocent civilian casualties, became an easy and effective strategy for illegal armed groups to rid certain territories of its inhabitants and to make it a suitable transit port for drugs and arms, develop illegal activities and strengthen their control in such areas. Figure 1 gives an impression of the extent of violence resulting in death, in Colombia in the 1980's.

Figure 1. Overview of violent attacks by type in Colombia between 1980 and 1989.



Source: Reardon (2018: 21)

However, the adoption of the new Colombian constitution in 1991 had paved the way for the state to deal with violence in the country in new legal ways and the implementation of military reforms, Leal Buitrago (2004) argues that the government of Gaviria (1990-1994) failed to take advantage of this opportunity. What was achieved however was the appointment of a presidential secretary for defence and security, which eventually resulted in the implementation of the 'National Strategy against Violence'. This strategy was mainly aimed at ridding the country of the illegal bearing of arms and at creating legal incentives to bring actors in the armed conflict, such as drug dealers, guerrillas or paramilitaries, to trial as delinquents and eventually punish them. Since the 1991 constitution also prohibited the extradition of Colombian citizens to the United States, the biggest success of the 'National Strategy against Violence' was the surrender of Pablo Escobar in 1991, who together with other delinquents of the Medellin-cartel turned himself in to the authorities. However, Escobar's escape from his 'maximum security prison' in 1992 was a hard blow to the credibility of the Gaviria government and the functioning of the policy (Leal Buitrago, 2004).

2.1.3 The road to *Plan Colombia* and the peace efforts in the late *1990's* and the early *2000's*

The atrocities committed by the paramilitaries, such as the killings of journalists, farmers and judges started to become increasingly worse, just before the turn of the millennium, due to the increasing interests and conflicts sparked by the illegal drug trade. A sharp increase of 350% in coca bush cultivation between 1994 and 1999 not only boosted the exports of cocaine to the U.S., it also strengthened the illegal armed groups and the conflict, since their wars were paid for with drug harvesting and trafficking profits mainly (Pérez, 2014). From that moment onwards, the United States classified the AUC as a terrorist organization and the administration of Bill Clinton decided to support the Colombian state with *Plan Colombia*, an aid program aimed at combatting drug trafficking and the violence resulting from it (Leal Buitrago, 2004; Gutiérrez Sanín, 2019). Where Plan Colombia originally was built around the pillars of humanitarian and defensive aid, it evolved more into a military support program, aimed at defending the United States' interests in their war on drugs, therefore mainly focusing on obstructing the transport of cocaine to the United States (Pérez, 2014). The Colombian state, whilst dealing with the drug trade and the trail of violence it left behind in the country, at the same time still fought a bloody war against the guerrilla groups and was in no way capable of guaranteeing the security of its citizens. The escalation of violence made the role of the state and the army in settling the conflict debatable. In addition, some army officers maintained good and strong ties with paramilitary leaders (Leal Buitrago, 2004).

By 2003 president Álvaro Uribe initiated the demobilization of the paramilitary movement *Auto Defensas Unidas de Colombia* (AUC) (Kline, 2018). Uribe portrayed himself as the 'military' president, trying to regain state control and protecting the population by increasing state presence with the army in remote areas under his Democratic Security Policy (Hernández, 2013). By 2006, approximately 31.617 former paramilitaries had returned to civilian life. However, ties of the former Colombian president with the paramilitaries are still under investigation of the Colombian Supreme Court and the former director of Colombia's previous intelligence agency in the government of Uribe, Jorge Noguera, is convicted for using this state institution to serve paramilitaries and drug traffickers with information. Moreover, lists were kept with names of politicians, human rights defenders and left-wing militants, which were passed on to the paramilitary groups (Hernández, 2013).

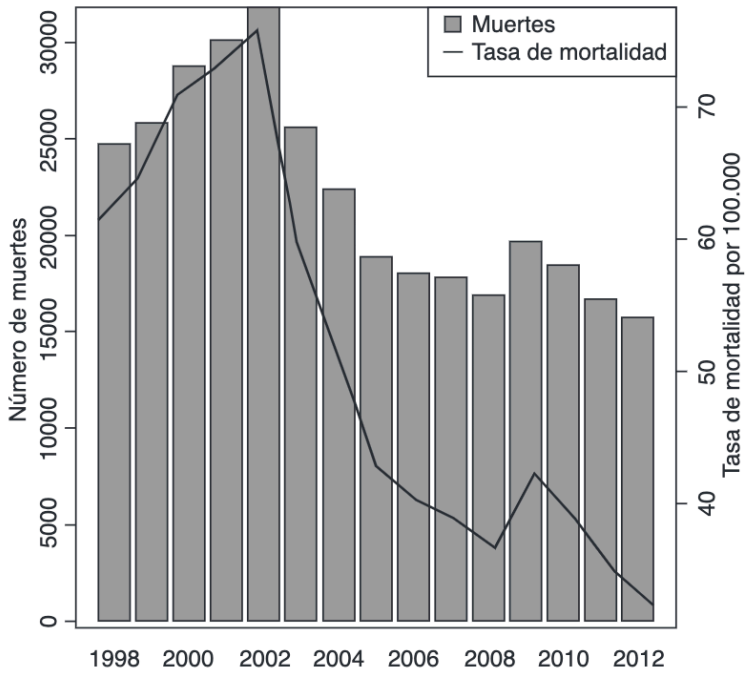
Despite the earlier efforts by the Colombian government to conclude peace with the FARC, the first successful attempt took place in 2016, when president Santos, together with the FARC, managed to sign the peace agreement in Havana, in early December 2016. The agreement seemed to have put an end to more than fifty years of conflict in Colombia, however, today renegade FARC politicians claim that the Colombian state is not correctly living up to the agreements recorded in the treaty and are claiming to re-arm themselves (Gamboa, 2018; Soloway, 2019). Since the 2016 peace deal violence has not disappeared from Colombia, actually, Gamboa (2018) argues that new-armed groups, drug traffickers and groups that focus on the illegal mining of resources, jumped into the vacuum that was left behind when the guerrilla groups disarmed. Estimates suggest that in 2017 alone, already 167 social leaders and former FARC members got killed, either in the urban or in the rural areas, by one of the aforementioned groups.

2.2 The dimensions, geography and demography of urban violence in contemporary Colombia

As explained in section 2.1 *supra*, Colombia's geography, guerrilla, paramilitary and army activity, terror of the drug cartels and the absence of state control play a significant role in the perseverance of violence, both in the rural context and in the urban context of Colombia. This particular segment of the chapter attempts to provide a statistical understanding of contemporary urban violence and delinquency that has been and is currently afflicting the country and which factors today have an influence on violence and delinquency in the urban areas. With statistics on contemporary homicide rates and delinquency rates, the course of violence in Colombia over the last two decades will be assessed.

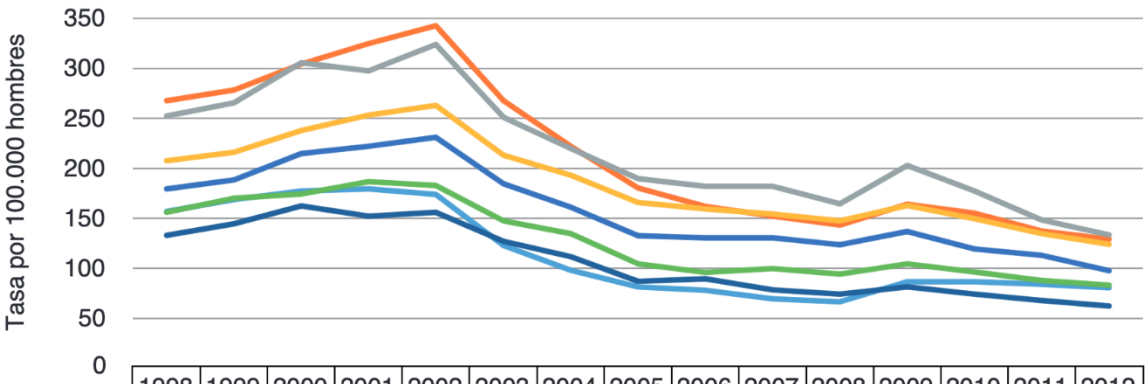
Chaparro-Narváez *et al.* (2016) argue that homicide is Colombia's biggest public health concern and the most important indicator of violence in the country. In their study into the homicide, rates in Colombia between 1998 and 2012 the authors demonstrate a significant decrease in the number of murders in the country, after 2002. Their research indicates that homicide rates in Colombia, over that fourteen-year period, were the highest in 2002, with 77 deaths per 100.000 people, see figure 2. Demographically, more than 90 percent of the people who was killed in this period, were males between the age of 20 and 29 years old, see figure 3. The research conducted by Chaparro-Narváez *et al.* (2016), only assesses homicide rates in Colombia between 1998 and 2012. Therefore, to further analyse on the course of violence in the country between 2012 and 2019, the numbers on homicide tracked by the national police in combination with homicide rates tracked by the National Institute of Legal Medicine and Forensic Sciences Colombia provide a more complete picture and show that the decreasing trend in homicide rates continues in 2013. Where the number in 2012 was 15.747, it drops to 14.970 in 2013, see figure 4.

Figure 2. Amount of deaths and homicide rates in Colombia between 1998 and 2012.



Source: Chaparro-Narváez *et al.* (2016: 574)

Figure 3. Homicide rates among males between 1998 and 2012 in Colombia.



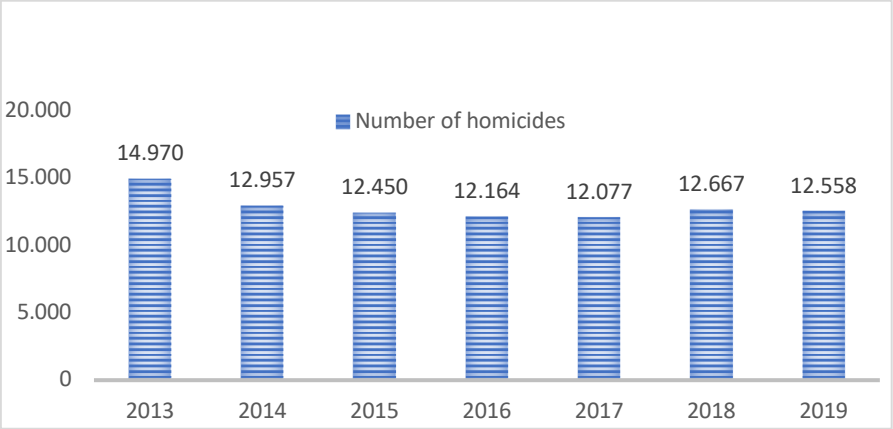
	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
15-19	157	169	177	179	174	123	98	81	78	69	66	86	86	84	80
20-24	268	278	304	324	343	268	222	180	162	152	143	164	155	137	129
25-29	252	266	306	298	324	251	220	189	182	182	165	203	177	148	134
30-34	208	216	238	253	263	213	193	166	160	154	147	163	150	135	124
35-39	179	188	215	222	231	184	161	133	130	130	123	137	119	113	98
40-44	156	170	174	186	183	147	134	104	96	100	94	104	96	88	83
45-49	133	144	162	152	156	127	112	87	89	78	74	81	74	68	62

Source: Chaparro-Narváez *et al.* (2016: 578)

According to Chaparro-Narváez *et al.* (2016), the increasing homicides in Colombia until 2002 can be attributed to the augmentation of violent actions as a result of the internal conflict. Reardon (2018) puts forward that paramilitary forces and guerrilla movements contributed largely to the increase in homicides in Colombia, with the *Bojayá* massacre,[6] killing 119 people in 2002, as one of the biggest killings. An explanation for the decrease in homicides after 2002 is attributed to the implementation of *Plan Colombia,* the implementation of the democratic security policy, aimed at destroying the illegal drug trade and regaining state legitimacy and control over areas where the state had been unable to protect its citizens (Hernández, 2013) and the adoption of new policies that prohibited the consumption of alcoholic beverages and the carrying of firearms in the cities of Bogotá, Medellin and Cali (Villaveces *et al.,* 2000; Sánchez *et al.,* 2011). Another process that might have contributed to the reduction in violence in the country is the disarmament of the paramilitary forces, as explained in section 2.1.3 *supra*. Chaparro-Narváez *et al.* (2016) stress however that besides the aforementioned factors, other factors and other actors may have occurred that also have had an impact on the decrease of violence in Colombia over the given period, between 2002 and 2012.

[6] The Bojayá massacre occurred on May 2, 2002 in the town of Bojayá in the Chocó department. The FARC operation left 119 people death in an attempt to seize the town and take control of the Atrato river area, which was controlled by the *Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia* (AUC) (Reardon, 2018).

Figure 4. Amount of homicides in Colombia between 2013 and 2019.



Source: Own elaboration based on numbers provided by the Policía Nacional de Colombia (2013-2019)

However, Chaparro-Narváez *et al.*, the figures of the national police and the National Institute of Legal Medicine and Forensic Sciences all very well demonstrate the course of homicide rates in Colombia between 1998 and 2019 on a national level; no clear distinction is made between homicide in rural areas and homicide in urban areas. However, Chaparro-Narváez *et al.* put forward that the municipality with the highest homicide rate over this period is Medellin, followed closely by Cali and Bogotá, indicating that the majority of homicides between 1998 and 2012 took place in urban areas. When assessing the homicide figures for 2013 to 2019, provided by Colombia's national police and the National Institute of Legal Medicine and Forensic Sciences it also appears that the aforementioned three cities, nationally, show the highest murder rates over the given period.

To understand homicide and violence on a municipal level it is necessary first understand how the country is structured. Colombia is composed of thirty-two departments, *departamentos* in Spanish, and one capital district, with Bogotá D.C., Antioquia and Valle del Cauca being the biggest ones in terms of population. Those three departments also contain the three largest cities of the country in terms of population, namely: Bogotá, Medellin and Cali (Departamento Nacional de Planeación, 2018). Those three cities will be taken as examples of Colombia's biggest urbanized areas to demonstrate in which numbers urban violence occurs today in the country, based on homicide rates. When taking a look at the homicide rates of the aforementioned municipalities, recent numbers show that the national trend of a decline in homicide rates continued from 2015 to 2018 in the cities of Bogotá and Cali, but not in Medellin, see figure 5. The red boxes indicate the increase in homicides, which only appears in Medellin between 2015 and 2018 and not in the other two cities.

Figure 5. Homicide rates in Colombia's three largest cities, from 2015 to 2019.

City	Year	Homicides	Rate per 100.000 persons	Males between the age of 20-29
Medellín	2019	586	23,17	224
Bogotá	2019	1.055	12,78	356
Cali	2019	1.073	43,78	414
Medellín	2018	634	25,07	241
Bogotá	2018	1.098	13,31	374
Cali	2018	1.200	49,07	450
Medellín	2017	587	23,40	199
Bogotá	2017	1.150	14,23	429
Cali	2017	1.247	51,53	468
Medellín	2016	545	21,92	197
Bogotá	2016	1.302	16,32	478
Cali	2016	1.335	55,74	476
Medellín	2015	497	20,17	179
Bogotá	2015	1.372	17,41	492
Cali	2015	1.424	60,09	513

Source: Own elaboration based on numbers provided by the Policía Nacional de Colombia (2015-2019)

2.2.1 The dimensions of juvenile delinquency in urban areas and criminal responsibility in Colombia

Although the statistics as presented above demonstrate high rates of homicide in either Medellin, Bogotá and Cali, the numbers don't show any of the underlying causes for such high rates and therefore, to better understand why such high rates of violence occur in these urban areas, the role of criminal gangs – in Spanish *bandas criminales* (bacrim) –, extortion and the illegal drug trade need to be assessed within the Colombian context. Bacrim is a term that the Colombian government started to use to distinguish between organized crime in the form of these criminal bands and paramilitaries in Colombia, since the disarmament of the paramilitaries caused the resurgence of violent branches (Doyle, 2016). Prieto (2012) argues that bacrim are one of the major perpetrators of urban violence in Colombia today and are responsible for a large number of the country's homicides, extortion and the forced recruitment of minors to participate in such criminal activities leading to juvenile delinquency. Céspedes and Peñalosa Otero (2016) add that the practice of extortion is inextricably linked to organized crime and put forward that between 2000 and 2014 32.209 people were reported as victims of extortion in Colombia. According to Ramírez Nárdiz (2015), juvenile delinquency is one of the biggest threats to Colombia's present civil security and stresses that especially Colombian minors are the most vulnerable to becoming a victim of criminal groups and having to carry out all sorts of violent, delinquent and criminal acts against their will. The author argues that Colombian society still is characterized by great social divide and that especially minors from the most disadvantaged areas are most likely to be recruited or forced to join in such delinquent activities.

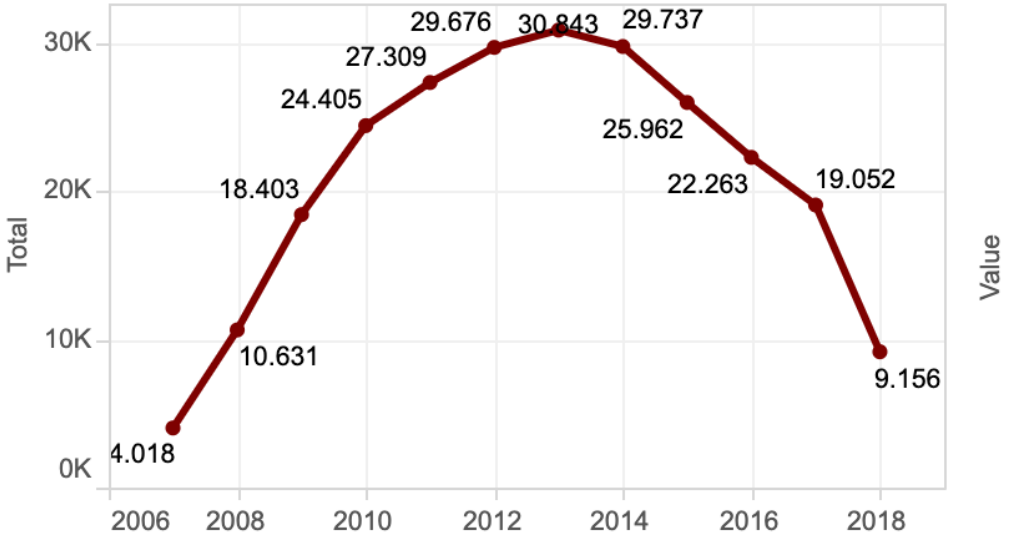
As proposed in the first chapter, the definition of the concept of juvenile delinquency states that each nationwide legal, judicial system sets its own lower age limit for criminal responsibility. In the case of Colombia, legal criminal responsibility starts from the age of 14 years old (Ríos-Peñuela & Ríos Chávez, 2018). The authors put forward that law 1098, entitled *Sistema de Responsabilidad Penal para Adolescentes* (SRPA), which was adopted in 2006 in Colombia and implemented one year later, made it possible to also impose measures on delinquents between the age of 14 and 18 years old. However, the character of measures imposed on minor delinquents differ from those imposed on adults and are focused on restorative justice and rehabilitation and have an educational approach rather than a punitive one. In addition, every country imposing punitive measures on minors and submitting them to the criminal system in accordance with the law have to consider that they act within the requirements set out in Article 40 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (United Nations,

1989), adopted on November 20, 1989 by the United Nations General Assembly, which states, among other, that:

> States Parties recognize the right of every child alleged as, accused of, or recognized as having infringed the penal law to be treated in a manner consistent with the promotion of the child's sense of dignity and worth, which reinforces the child's respect for the human rights and fundamental freedoms of others and which takes into account the child's age and the desirability of promoting the child's reintegration and the child's assuming a constructive role in society (11).

The statistics as presented by Colombia's Family Welfare Institute concerning juvenile delinquency in the country, based on figures showing the number of arrests of minor delinquents under the SRPA, demonstrate that between 2007 and 2018 251.455 minors have been trialled for different types of crimes. The majority of those crimes, 36,32 percent, were judged as theft, second comes the trafficking, fabrication or carrying of narcotics with 26,81 percent, followed by personal injury with 8,51 percent. See figure 6 for an elaboration of the number of SRPA trials in Colombia from 2007 and 2018.

Figure 6. Cases related to minors from 14 to 17 years old in Colombia, between 2007 and 2018



Source: Instituto Colombiano de Bienestar Familiar (2007-2018)

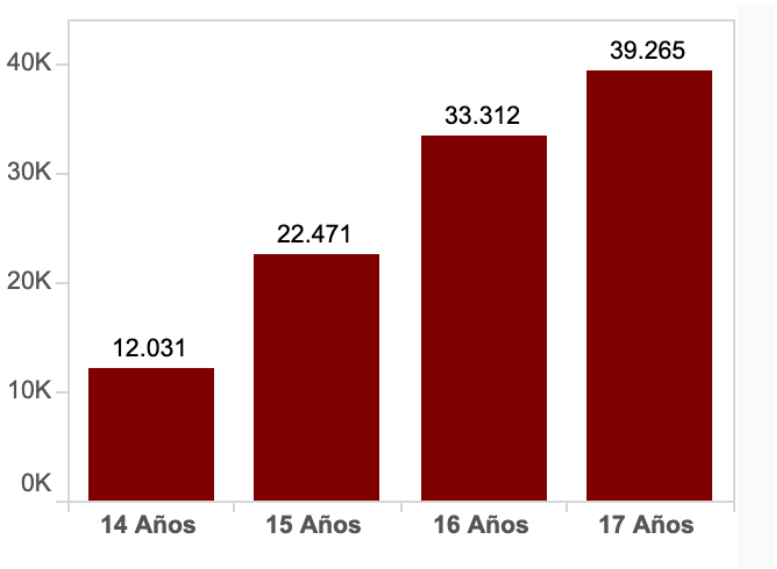
The statistic above demonstrates a peak of cases under the SRPA in 2013 with 30.843 cases. When considering Colombia's urbanized areas, with its three largest cities of Bogotá, Medellin and Cali, the numbers show that the three judicial districts in which those cities are located, show the highest number of trials under the SRPA with 110.626 cases combined, see figure 7. The number of trials increases exponentially with the increasing age of minor delinquents, starting at 14 years old with 25.322 cases, up to 17 years old with 92.736 cases, see figure 8.

Figure 7. SRPA cases, divided per judicial district, between 2007 and 2018

(Pink: Medellin, purple: Bogotá and grey: Cali)

Source: Instituto Colombiano de Bienestar Familiar (2007-2018)

Figure 8. SRPA cases, divided per age, between 2007 and 2018



Source: Instituto Colombiano de Bienestar Familiar (2007-2018)

In addition to scholars claiming juvenile delinquency to be a threat to security in Colombian cities (Ramírez Nárdiz, 2015; Ríos-Peñuela & Ríos Chávez, 2018), the statistics as demonstrated above, confirm this claim and show that especially the judicial district in which Medellin is located has seen a high rate of SRPA cases over the years, in relations to the number of inhabitants of the city. Therefore, the last section of this chapter will provide a detailed explanation of the Medellin case and its course in homicide rates over the recent years and the issue of juvenile delinquency the city is dealing with. In addition, the section takes a closer look at political response to the issues of urban violence and juvenile delinquency.

2.3 Violence, delinquency and urban transformation in Medellin

Medellin had to deal with 375 homicides per 100.000 people in 1991, which is considered the most violent year in the history of the city (Franz, 2017). Moncada (2016) claims that this number was even higher and argues that the homicide rate was at 381 homicides per 100.000 people in 1991, which is equivalent to 19 homicides per day. Regardless of the difference, both authors argue that Medellin was Colombia's most violent city at that time. Over the last thirty years however, Medellin has been able to drastically reduce its number of killings, to 25 homicides per 100,000 people in 2018 (Policía Nacional de Colombia, 2018). Nevertheless, while the rest of Colombia, as discussed in the previous sections, saw a steady decrease in homicide rates over the period between 1998 and 2019 (apart from small fluctuations), Medellin has seen two striking deviations from the national pattern. The first deviation in homicide rates was seen in 2008, to decrease again in 2012. In 2016, the most recent rise in murder rates was seen, until 2019, when the city saw a small decrease in homicide rates again (Policía Nacional de Colombia, 2016). Further, on in this chapter several explanations for the aforementioned deviations in Medellin's homicide rate will be proposed. Despite the statistics showing that Medellin has been a very violent city and has had a turbulent past with falling and rising homicide rates, its policy makers and their implemented policies have been heralded as miraculous injections to reduce violence and delinquency in the city over the last three decades and some scholars even describe the phenomenon of the city's falling murder rates as an "urban miracle" (Franz, 2017: 52) or the "Medellin Miracle" (Maclean, 2015: 1). Below, the city's history with violence will be assessed and the current challenges of the city concerning security will be outlined, to better understand why violence and delinquency still occurs today in Medellin in the way it does.

2.3.1 A brief history of urban violence, delinquency and drug trafficking in Medellin

Due to Colombia's internal conflict, more than 5.7 million people have been displaced, causing a rapid growth of Colombia's urban areas (Doyle, 2016). Medellin's population has almost tripled, from 358.000 in 1951 to 1.071.000 in 1973, with a large part of those people ending up in the disadvantaged neighbourhoods on the hillsides surrounding the city (Drummond *et al.,* 2012). By no means was the local government prepared to deal with such a demographic change, nor was it able to provide all residents with adequate development resources (Doyle, 2016), resulting in a great divide in social classes, which Drummond *et al.* (2012) describe as Medellin's development into: "a city of haves and have nots, segregated by social class and geographic boundaries" (148). Chapter 1 has shown that there exists a causal link between social inequality and the development of youth gangs, which directly translates to the case of Medellin, as Ceballos Melguizo (2001) puts forward that the city has seen an emergence of such youth gangs due to a rise in social inequality and argues:

> They did not start out as criminal organizations; instead, they began as models of socialization and responses to fairly critical situations of unemployment, overcrowded housing, social exclusion, the obsolescence of the school system, and consumer culture. Given the growth of the drug-dealing business, however, they turned into small armies at the service of the drug dealers and breeding grounds for hit men or more or less professional criminal consortia (117).

When the influx of migration to Medellin decreased in the 1980's, a simultaneous escalation of the country's internal armed conflict presented itself, with the emergence of criminal gangs, paramilitary groups, left-wing militias and drug cartels (Ceballos Melguizo, 2001). The author argues that from that moment on in Medellin: "the boundaries between political, social, and criminal motives blurred" (115). According to Ceballos Melguizo (2001), the emergence of the aforementioned groups has contributed to the origins and the increase of violence in Colombia's second biggest city. First, the author argues that criminal gangs have existed in Medellin since the 1960's, mainly concerned with criminal activities such as smuggling, and it is arguable that homicide was more associated with individuals than with such organized gangs. The violence perpetrated by the later emerging violent criminal gangs, cartels and militias of the 1980's was from a completely different order, all contributing to a certain degree of violence in Medellin. From that moment on a distinction was made between the gangs affiliated with the drug cartels and the so-called *chichipato* gangs, of which the latter weren't necessarily violent with advanced weaponry, but instead caused violence by robbing stores or stealing vehicles in the poorest neighbourhoods to feed their drug addiction (Ceballos Melguizo, 2001). According to the author, these *chichipato* gangs often used a drug called

bazuco, causing addicted youngsters to team up in gangs and spread violence through the poorest neighbourhoods. The violence perpetrated by the aforementioned gang members was often subjected to 'cleansings' by left-wing militias, paramilitaries or the cartel to maintain moral order in certain neighbourhoods of Medellin (Maclean, 2014). The author puts forward that the *chichipato* gangs were in two ways perpetrators of urban violence in Medellin; primarily, because of their own delinquent and violent actions; and secondly because their actions justified violent actions of left-wing militias, paramilitaries or the cartel to 'clean' the neighbourhood and to maintain order.

The Medellin cartel

Pablo Escobar's Medellin cartel has been one of the biggest perpetrators of violence in Medellin, starting at the beginning of the 1980's by hiring criminal gangs to conduct killings and other crimes. Violence was the main strategy of the cartel to maintain and exercise its power while engaging in a war against the Colombian state. However, Escobar enjoyed the support of several neighbourhoods in Medellin since he provided housing and some sort of security (Maclean, 2015). Escobar's death in 1993, demonstrated that the violence that sprouted from the cartel's way of handling things wasn't over with the extermination of its leader, in fact, the number of criminal bands increased (Ceballos Melguizo, 2001).

Left-wing militias

The criminal atmosphere in the disadvantaged neighbourhoods of Medellin, especially in the northern areas of the city was, in part, a catalyst for the emergence of left-wing militia groups, which where a combination of armed leftists, guerrillas and criminals affiliated with gang crime (Ceballos Melguizo, 2001). The national guerrilla's (FARC, ELN), who were mainly operating in rural areas, decided to transport their war to the bigger cities of Colombia at the beginning of the 1980's for geographical benefits for drug trafficking (Gutiérrez-Sanín, 2015). The author argues that the existence of the militia groups, alongside the existence of the drug cartels, enforced a situation of continuous violence and threats to security in the city.

Paramilitary groups

Paramilitary forces started to emerge halfway the 1990's in Medellin and the initial support for such groups was big because of the need for security in the city (Maclean, 2015). A unit called *Bloque Metro*, part of the AUC, started fighting left-wing militias in Medellin, while co-opting criminal gangs. Diego Fernando Murillo Bejarano, alias 'Don Berna', the later leader of *La Oficina de Envigado* which was the successor of the Medellin cartel, replaced *Bloque Metro* with a new paramilitary block in the city called *Bloque Cacique Nutibara* (BCN) in 2000 and continued fighting the militias, also contributing to the violence (Doyle, 2016).

2.3.2 Contemporary perpetrators of urban violence and delinquency in Medellin

Just before the turn of the century, Medellin's homicide rates dropped from 381 per 100.000 people in the city's most violent year of 1991, to 167 per 100.000 people in 1999. However, gang crime was still present, especially in Medellin's most disadvantaged neighbourhoods, with approximately 8.000 active gang members participating in one of the aforementioned-armed groups (Doyle, 2016). The author argues that, though Medellin enjoyed some relatively calm years following 1999, with a decrease in homicide rates to 34 per 100.000 people in 2007, 2008 all of a sudden confronted the city with a strong increase in homicides again with 45.6 homicides per 100.000 people in that year and 94.4 per 100.000 in 2009. Up until then, because of an equilibrium between left-wing militias and criminal bands (*bacrim*), in large part disciplined by the paramilitary group *Bloque Cacique Nutibara*, a sort of 'security balance' was maintained in certain areas of the city but the 2008 extradition of BCN leader and drug trafficker Don Berna to the United States on charges of drug smuggling caused unrest in the criminal world (Rozema, 2008). The power vacuum left behind by the extradition created a situation of restructuring within the criminal world of Medellin, with criminals violently fighting to take over control of the *Oficina de Envigado*. Simultaneously, a new drug trafficking organization linked to the AUC, *Los Urabeños,* also used it as an opportunity to expand their power and tried to take over the *Oficina de Envigado, which* also resulted in an increase of violence (Doyle, 2016). According to the author, estimates suggest that by 2011, some 100 to 300 gangs related to either the *Oficina de Envigado* or *Los Urabeños* (later named *Clan del Golfo*) were active in Medellin, mainly consisting of males up to 35 years old who were hired to carry out tasks such as theft, drug dealing or extortion. After Don Berna's extradition to the United States, the power over the *Oficina de Envigado* was split among alias 'Valenciano' and alias 'Sebastián', who together spurred violence in the city until 2012, when they got arrested (Cruz & Durán Martínez, 2016). The authors argue that a *pacto de fusil* – rifle pact –, a truce, between the *Oficina de Envigado* and the *Clan del Golfo* in 2013, dividing the city's territory in which each organization can individually practice their criminal activities, led to a decrease in homicide rates again. However, with the capturing of one of the leaders of the *Oficina de Envigado* in 2017, a similar process occurred as in 2008 with Don Berna's extradition, where the criminal organization was restructured, resulting in violence. Tobón Orozco and Valencia Agudelo (2016) argue that all the aforementioned-armed actors in Medellin have left a structure of violence and crime in the city, closely tied to economic interests, which is still present today.

2.3.3 Responses to violence and urban security policy in Medellin

As a response to urban violence in Colombian cities, the national government launched a decentralization project to transfer certain powers and responsibilities to local governments in the late 1980's, among which citizen security was the most important one in the context of Medellin (Moncada, 2013). The author claims that the administration of Medellin focused on progressive reform, emphasizing a reduction in the city's social divide and the incorporation of lower social classes in politics, taking away the socio-economic and political drivers of violence in the city. By 1991 the national government also initiated the creation of the *Consejería Presidencial para Medellín* (Presidential Council for Medellin) aimed at cutting the ties between youth gangs in the disadvantaged areas of Medellin and the largest criminal organizations in the city by creating parks, courts, community halls and social programs (Moncada, 2016).

Social program PRIMED, *Programa Integral de Mejoramiento de Barrios Subnormales en Medellín,* started in 1992 with the intention to incorporate the disadvantaged, most violent areas of the city with the rest of the city, socially and physically. The project ranked the different intervention neighborhoods with levels, ranging from 1 to 3.[7] After the first phase in 1992, aimed at improving the intervention neighborhoods from levels 3 to 2 and 2 to 1, the second phase initiated in 1998. However, PRIMED was discontinued in 2001 when the new city administration dismantled it. The project emphasized to tackle the marginalization and low quality of life in certain areas, reflected in high rates of violence and a lack of public services and infrastructure but due to its discontinuous character the program has had marginal effects on eradicating the root causes of violence (Betancur, 2017).

In October 2002 Uribe's national government, together with Medellin's mayor, Luis Pérez Gutiérrez, launched a military operation in *Comuna 13*, one of the most violent and disadvantaged areas of Medellin, located in the Western part of the city, to rid the area of left-wing militias. The operation was successful in doing so but also resulted in numerous civilian casualties and left a void in the area, which was later filled with the BCN, who had provided the government with intelligence and assistance in the operation (Doyle, 2016). By 2003, the national government launched a pilot-project in Medellin to demobilize the remaining paramilitary fractions of the *Bloque Cacique Nutibara* prior to a nationwide demobilization of the paramilitaries in exchange for judicial benefits (Rozema, 2008; Cruz & Durán Martínez,

[7] Level one *barrios* have a sustained level of government intervention and come close to meeting the basic standards of normalization, where the *barrios* that don't meet those requirements are considered subnormal, without the basic standards of living. level 2 *barrios* were characterized by discontinuous government intervention and level 3 *barrios* were deprived from any government intervention and have a novice to no infrastructure and inventory (Betancur, 2007).

2016). Though homicide rates dropped in the city, violence continued in other, less visible and measurable ways with knives or machetes, burying the bodies in mass graves. Non-lethal forms of violence such as displacement or sexual violence actually increased (Cruz & Durán Martínez, 2016). In that same year, independent candidate Sergio Fajardo was elected as the new mayor of Medellin. As a former academic Fajardo broke with traditional politics and his political movement, *Movimiento Compromiso Ciudadano* (MCC), ushered in a new era of social policy with a focus on solving social inequality and tackling urban violence with Integral Urban Projects, *Proyectos Urbanos Integrales* (PUI's), and the adoption of participatory budgeting, through which local residents could have a say and could vote upon the distribution of investment projects (Moncada, 2016; Doyle, 2016). Moncada (2016) argues that by 2013 some 60.000 people in Medellin voted on projects with a total worth of $750.000. Participatory budgeting is one of numerous urban development policies, which were aimed at repaying the historical social debt owed to the marginalized neighbourhoods, which became known as social urbanism. The next and final chapter analyses and assesses the effects of such municipal policies in *Comuna 13,* an area located in the west of the city, which has long been ravaged by violence and crime.

Chapter 3

The impact of social urbanism on violence and delinquency in Medellin's *Comuna 13*

This third and final chapter offers an extensive analysis of the effects that specific municipal urban policies, which became widely known as social urbanism, have had on the extent of urban violence and delinquency in Medellin's *Comuna 13*, between 2004 and 2019. In June, July and August of 2019 fieldwork has been conducted in Medellin and in *Comuna 13*, which resulted in a wide range of interviewees, related to the topics of urban policy, education, youth, violence and delinquency. By conducting semi-structured interviews with various actors and people that have been, or still are involved in *Comuna 13*, the objective was to obtain a better understanding of the effects of local policy on violence and delinquency in *Comuna 13*, by looking beyond homicide and delinquency rates and drawing on personal experiences. Among the interviewees are policymakers, social workers, a former mayor of Medellin, analysts and academics, as well as journalists, residents of *Comuna 13* and social leaders.

The transcripts of the interviews were coded and thematically analysed, identifying and reporting important themes in the testimonials of the interviewees. This chapter seeks to answer the central question of this research; what the effect of social urbanism on violence and juvenile delinquency in Medellin's *Comuna 13* has been*,* over a period of fifteen years. In addition to the qualitative, empirical evidence, the analysis will be supported with quantitative, statistical evidence provided by SISC.[8] Furthermore, legal documents such as local policy proposals and municipal development plans were consulted to analyse and assess the different policy approaches and their subsequent outcomes in Medellin's *Comuna 13*.

After a short introduction into the socio-economic and geographical characteristics of the area and its actors, the remainder of this chapter offers three more sections, of which each section corresponds with one of the elected variables for this research, which are; the incentives for young people to engage in crime and violence in *Comuna 13,* what were the intended goals of local policy responses and what has been the effect of the implemented local, social policies on violence and delinquency, between 2004 and 2019 in *Comuna 13*.

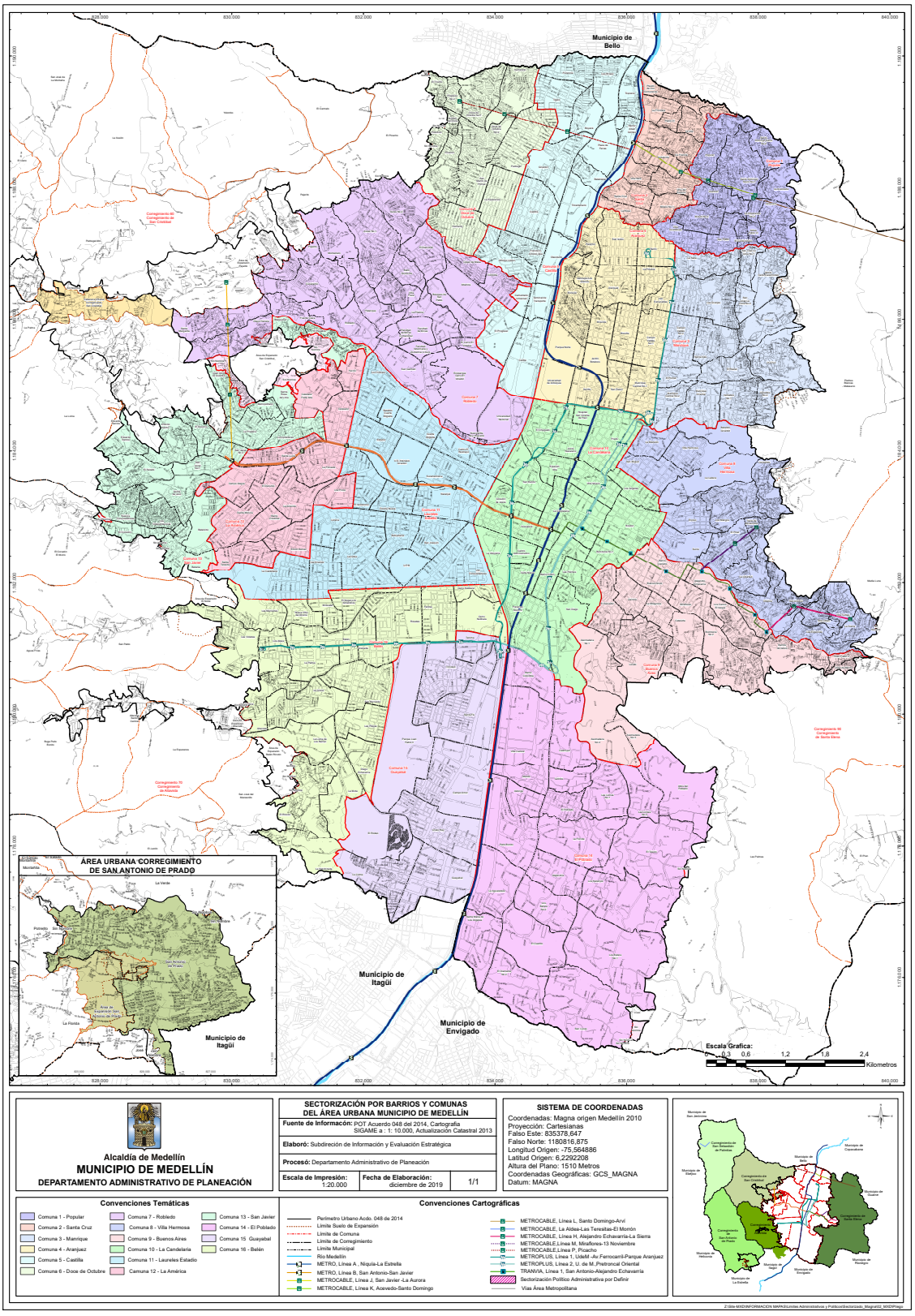
[8] *Sistema de Información para la Seguridad y la Convivencia* (SISC) is the investigative branch of Medellín's *Secretaría de Seguridad y Convivencia*, which carries out research on topics such as homicide, extortion, women's rights and security infrastructure among others.

3.1 The socio-economic geography of *Comuna 13* and its actors

The city of Medellin is divided into sixteen political, administrative divisions called *comunas,* which are in their turn subdivided into different neighbourhoods, *barrios*. Besides the administrative partition of the city, the municipality of Medellin also maintains a socio-environmental *estrato* system called *estratificación,* which grades each individual neighbourhood from 1, lowest, to 6, highest, based on socio-economic pillars of the *barrio*. The *estrato* rate determines the amount of taxes that need to be paid in a given neighbourhood, in this way households with more economic capacity pay more for public services and thus reduce the burden on the economically weaker strata of the city. Besides being a legislative tool, the system of stratification provides an insight into the distribution of wealth in the city and exposes social inequality. Concerning *Comuna 13,* the majority of households are *estrato* two. Of almost fifty thousand households 17,458 are *estrato* one, 18,721 are *estrato* two, 11,018 are *estrato* three and 2,536 households are *estrato* four, with no households in either *estrato* five or six (Alcaldía de Medellín, 2012).

Comuna 13 is located on the Western slopes of the *Valle de Aburrá,* the Aburrá valley, in which the city of Medellin is located, see the green shaded area west on the map in figure 9, and is home to an estimated 140.243 inhabitants, distributed over nineteen neighbourhoods (Gobierno de Colombia, 2019). Unlike the other two neighbouring *comunas La América* (12) and *Laureles-Estadio* (11), which were part of the city's urban planning strategy dating back to the 1930's, *Comuna 13's* urban development started in the 1970's due to the increasing amount of rural migrants (see 2.1.1 *supra*), resulting in 5000 new households built in the area over a period of five years. Parts of the area for long haven't been recognized as a part of the administrative jurisdiction of the city, therefore governments were forbidden to provide basic services (Sotomayor, 2017). The author argues that the majority of new settlements located in *Comuna 13* were declared "non-recoverable high-risk zones" by Medellin's city council, due to the areas high risk of landslides and flooding, therefore making it unsuitable for human settlement. As a result, *Comuna 13* developed mainly outside of the legal boundaries and planning regulations as set by the city council and it was constructed on a process of peripheralization, with poor access to public services and a lack of opportunities for its inhabitants, which has resulted in a deeply rooted socio-spatial injustice in *Comuna 13*. However, when considering Medellin's Human Development Index, the North-Eastern *comunas Popular* (1) and *Santa Cruz* (2) are statistically poorer than *Comuna 13,* Sotomayor (2017), argues that local interventions in *Comuna 13* have, sometimes inadvertently, contributed to the construction of the image of the area as a dangerous, violent space and relegated it to the socio-economically worst part of the city.

Figure 9. Map of Medellin's urban administrative political divisions in *comunas*



Source: *Alcaldía de Medellín – Departamento Administrativo de Planeación* (2019a)

As explained in section 2.3.1 *supra*, Medellin's poorest areas have been subjected to violence perpetrated by left-wing militias in the form of social cleansings, as well as right-wing paramilitary violence against the left-wing militias and gang crime. *Comuna 13* forms no exception, with the *Comandos Armados del Pueblo* (United Commandos of the People - CAP), rooting from the ELN, arriving in the area between 1986 and 1998. The organization primarily gained control over the upper neighbourhoods of the *Comuna,* such as *Las Independencias,* see figure 10 (Sotomayor, 2017). Despite efforts by the local government to conclude peace pacts with the militias in the early 1990's, which were fairly successful in *comunas* 1 and 2, the demobilization of the CAP in *Comuna 13* was less successful. María del Socorro Mosquera Londoño, human rights defender and community leader of *Comuna 13*, that moved to the *comuna* in 1980 and lives in *La Independencia III* says:

> From 1980 to 2019, not much has changed in *Comuna 13*. The only thing that has changed over time are the different armed actors that have vilely attacked the *comuna*; *Las FARC, 2 de enero, América libre, los CAP*, the police, the army and *las bandas criminales*. What is different now is that they don't steal anymore; instead, there is extortion in the form of *vacunas*.[9] The armed groups charge the *vacunas* at houses and from small business owners (Interview with the author, July 11, 2019).[10]

Figure 10. Looking down over neighbourhood

La Independencia III* in *Comuna 13

Source: Image by the author

[9] *Vacunas*, which literally translates as vaccines, is a term that is being used for a weekly or monthly payment which must be met to criminal groups in exchange for some degree of protection (Sotomayor, 2017).
[10] Translation by the author of the original interview in Spanish.

3.1.1 *Operación Orión*

Because of the unsuccessful disarmament of the militias in *Comuna 13,* Luis Pérez, the then mayor of Medellin, launched a military operation, *Operación Orión,* in collaboration with newly elected president Álvaro Uribe and the armed forces in October 2002, to remove left-wing militias from the *comuna* (Reimerink, 2018). A new decree adopted by president Uribe, who was inaugurated two months earlier, created so-called zones of rehabilitation and consolidation, which gave Pérez free rein to forcefully fight the insurgent groups in *Comuna 13*. Within these zones, civil rights were restricted and the public armed forces were granted increased powers such as the use of private property without a warrant. In addition, citizens were required to cooperate with any request from the armed forces to provide professional or technical assistance as needed (Sotomayor, 2017).

On the 16th of October 1.500 military men entered *Comuna 13* to forcefully take over the area from left-wing militias and establish a new, authoritative power in the *comuna*. During the four-day operation an estimated 50 people were killed and more than 150 people disappeared (Sotomayor, 2017). According to the author, the aftermath of *Operación Orión* resulted in the control of public life by the armed forces in *Comuna 13*, with residents being treated as suspected criminals, which deepened the stigmatization of the area. The operation did not restore the legitimacy of the state as an authoritative power, nor did it end the violence. Instead, it replaced the militias with paramilitary *bloques* that had supported the government during the operation, until their nationwide demobilization in 2003, see 2.3.3 *supra*. Although the largest armed actors were for the most part demobilized and disarmed by 2006, smaller criminal bands remained, often allied to one of the former armed groups (Reimerink, 2018).

Today, the main perpetrators of violence in *Comuna 13* consist of these criminal bands (*bacrim*), who fight over territory in the area. The geographically lower parts of the *comuna* are controlled by groups called *El Coco* and *La Agonía* and the geographically higher parts of the *comuna* are controlled by criminal structures called *La Torre* and *Betania* (Mercado Pérez, 2019). Concerning *bacrim,* local journalist Juan Pablo Sepúlveda argues that:

> Those criminal bands (*bacrim*) are rooted in time for many years and they generate a dynamic of armed conflict on a small scale in *La Comuna 13*. Those gangs create this dynamic by micro trafficking, which is small-scale drug trafficking, and the practice of extortion. This creates an economy for these gangs, giving them access to money and weapons, causing and maintaining the conflict (Interview with the author, July 19, 2019).[11]

[11] Translation by the author of the original interview in Spanish.

The two quotes above illustrate that neither *Operación Orión*, which can be considered a *mano dura* or zero tolerance intervention, nor the social interventions under social urbanism have been able to eradicate the underlying structures that perpetuate conflict, violence and delinquency in *Comuna 13*.

The following sections of this chapter will present further analysis derived from the empirical evidence from *Comuna 13*, combined with legal, statistical evidence. It assesses why youth in *Comuna 13* becomes delinquent and violent, it analyses the objectives of the main projects (PUI's)[12] and policies implemented in *Comuna 13*, between 2004 and 2019 and evaluates the effectivity of implemented policy by various administrations to eradicate violence.

3.2 The incentives for young people to engage in delinquency and violence in *Comuna 13*

As proposed in the first chapter, social inequality is one of the major drivers of urban violence and delinquency. Cities or areas that are struggling with high unemployment rates, poor access to education and, in general, a lack of opportunities tend to have higher rates of violence and delinquency. On a more local scale Medellin's *Comuna 13*, as one of the most deprived areas of the city, forms no exception to that, as the area still has to deal with high unemployment rates and poor access to government resources. The city, historically, has to deal with high unemployment rates among young people and for 2018 the youth unemployment rate was 19.8 percent, compared to 8.3 percent among the rest of Medellin's residents (Medellín cómo vamos, 2018a). Alejandro de Bedout, secretary of youth in Medellin from 2016 to 2019, argues:

> That is the biggest challenge for us right now in Medellin as policy makers, the entrepreneurship and employment. Today we have a situation in the city that is called *bono poblacional*[13] but we don't have real opportunities for these young guys (Interview with the author, August 16, 2019).[14]

Especially young males who are left with no education nor a job are the most vulnerable to being recruited for a youth gang and, in that way, get involved in delinquency and become violent. Besides a socio-economical explanation for high rates of violence in *Comuna 13*, Alexandra Restrepo, an epidemiology researcher involved in various public health researches

[12] *Proyectos Urbanos Integrales,* Integral Urban Projects, see 2.3.3 *supra*.
[13] *Bono poblacional* or population bonus is a situation in which the working population is larger than the economically dependent population such as children and elderly people.
[14] Translation by the author of the original interview in Spanish.

in *Comuna 13*, proposes another explanation for the high rates of violence and delinquent youth in the area. In an interview with the author on July 27, 2019, she argues that:

> There are a lot of things that happen early on in their lives, like physical punishment at home or domestic violence. They come from very poor families and grow up in poverty without basic needs. The education is not that good where they grow up and it is not providing them a better future. When they enter adolescence, they are exposed to inequality and youth-gangs. When they see the people in the gangs who have everything they want; pretty women, motorcycles, money, drugs, this balance makes them choose to obtain those things as well through illegal ways. The other world that the gangs provide seems perfect because they have all the things that these young boys want.

Concerning the drivers of juvenile delinquency and violence in *Comuna* 13, Andrés Villaveces, an epidemiologist specialized in crimes against children and crime prevention in urban areas, adds:

> As they are growing up, they are offered no alternatives and opportunities. Both from an educational as from a work perspective. In Medellin, you have youth who are in the top of the demographical pyramid, with very few opportunities for work and education. The lack of education and work opportunities are a huge driver for people to participate in crime and become violent (Interview with the author, July 10, 2019).

As Briceño-León and Zubillaga (2002) have proposed concerning the topic of urban violence, the quotes above illustrate that Medellin's *Comuna 13,* today is an area that is characterized by the main conditions that contribute to juvenile delinquency and the prevalence of violence. In addition to the drivers of violence and delinquency as put forward in the literature, Alexandra Restrepo shows that the incentive to acquire material or financial wealth through illegal means is also strongly present in *Comuna 13*. Therefore, not only social exclusion and inequality can be held accountable for the prevalence of violence and juvenile delinquency in the area, also the temptation of quick material gains can be an incentive to become delinquent or violent. In *Comuna 13*, mechanisms of crime provide young people with a more likely and easy way to socially integrate through consumption and consumerism rather than through the formal education system or the formal labour market. The gangs pose an alternative protection system to the state, as it were a state within a state.

3.2.1 Extortion, drug trafficking and sexual exploitation in *Comuna 13*

Nowadays, such drivers of violence and delinquent behaviour among young people are just as present as about ten years ago in *Comuna 13*. When looking at Medellin's Gini-coefficient,[15] the number is stagnant over the years, with 0.55 in 2010 compared to 0.52 in 2017, which indicates institutional failure in the equal distribution of income and wealth in Medellin and *Comuna 13* (Medellín cómo vamos, 2018b). When considering the youth gangs, or *bandas criminales,* in *Comuna 13*, the number rose from four groups in 2002 to thirty-four groups in 2014 (Alcaldía de Medellín, 2016b). Young people growing up in the area, as proposed above by Alexandra Restrepo and Andres Villaveces, are vulnerable to being recruited by one of such groups. Esteban Palacio, a data-analyst at SISC, explains which risks they encounter:

> They are sexually and commercially exploited or used for the sale of narcotics and drugs and the collection of *vacunas*. Kids and adolescents are also used as bell-ringers, the ones who count and watch who enters the neighbourhood and warn the leader of the gang. Furthermore, they are used as *carritos*, to transport weapons or drugs from one neighbourhood to another, they are called carts. They carry it in their school bag and take it from one house to the other house. This way they go unnoticed by both the police and gangs from other neighbourhoods (Interview with the author, August 21, 2019).[16]

The present situation in *Comuna 13* demonstrates that the *Proyectos Urbanos Integrales* (PUI's), implemented under the banner of social urbanism, such as the outdoor escalators, the *metrocable,* see figure 11, and the construction of the *Parque Biblioteca San Javier,* haven't been able to completely eradicate the root causes and drivers of violence and delinquent behaviour among young people in *Comuna 13*, over the last fifteen years. Instead, as the quote above illustrates, criminal groups have expanded their delinquent activities in *Comuna 13*. Esteban Palacio argues:

> *La Comuna 13* has gone through big changes, physically. Violence rates are also lower today compared to twenty years ago; let's say you don't see as much violence on the streets in *La 13* anymore. But the violent order and the control of armed acts that is entrenched, that is rooted in the society of Medellin, hasn't disappeared (Interview with the author, August 21, 2019).[17]

The advocates of social urban interventions or social urbanism presume that one of the root causes of urban violence is structural social inequality, exclusion and marginalization

[15] The Gini-coefficient is a measure from 0 (equal) to 1 (unequal) to demonstrate the distribution of wealth and income among residents of a given state or area.
[16] Translation by the author of the original interview in Spanish.
[17] Translation by the author of the original interview in Spanish.

(Maclean, 2015). The associated projects therefore tried to improve inhabitants' mobility and upgrade public spaces. However, this approach doesn't take current realities of *Comuna 13's* inhabitants, as demonstrated in the quote above, into account and doesn't address the true security issues people are facing. In the case of the outdoor escalators, the project was aimed at solving a mobility issue, rather than the security issue inhabitants are confronted with (Reimerink, 2018). Moreover, Sotomayor (2017) argues that organized crime in *Comuna 13* has adjusted itself to Medellin's participatory governance. By founding their own NGO's, which enables them to gain state contracts, the criminal organizations seek to expand their social and political influence in the area.

The next paragraph will elaborate on the main reforms implemented by the different city administrations between 2004 and 2019. Paragraph 3.4 *infra* then analyses the extent to which the various reforms have achieved their intended objectives and the extent to which they have been able to reduce violence and juvenile delinquency in *Comuna 13*.

Figure 11. Line 'J' of the *metrocable* just outside the *San Javier* metro station

Source: Image by the author

3.3 Local policy responses to inequality, juvenile delinquency and violence in *Comuna 13*, between 2004 and 2019

The aim of this study is to analyse the extent to which the *Proyectos Urbanos Integrales* (PUI's) and social programs, under the banner of social urbanism, have contributed to the reduction of violence and juvenile delinquency in *Comuna 13*. Local projects such as line 'J' of the *metrocable,* constructed in 2008, and the outdoor escalators built in 2011 represent the physical manifestations of social urbanism in *Comuna 13*, initiated by two consecutive mayors of Medellin: Sergio Fajardo (2004-2007) and Alonso Salazar (2008-2011), united in the political movement *Movimiento Compromiso Ciudadano* (MCC). However, the projects that became known as the benchmarks of social urbanism were accompanied by several other local interventions on a smaller scale, aimed at reducing social inequality. These various policy approaches and their intentions, between 2004 and 2019, will be assessed below, before the effect on violence and delinquency will be analysed in the last paragraph of this chapter.

3.3.1 Social urbanism by Sergio Fajardo and Alonso Salazar – 2004-2011

In the *Plan de Desarrollo 2004-2007,*[18] Sergio Fajardo's administration clearly focuses on bridging Medellin's social gap through infrastructural innovation, connectivity and improving education with the construction of a network of libraries throughout the city (Alcaldía de Medellín, 2004). The two main pillars of the plan were *Medellin, social e incluyente* – a social and inclusive Medellin – and *Medellín, un espacio para el encuentro ciudadano* – Medellin, a place for citizen encounter–. The main associated program concerning *Comuna 13* was the strengthening of libraries as integral centres of cultural and social development, see figure 12, resulting in the opening of *Parque Biblioteca San Javier* in *Comuna 13* by 2006. Fajardo's successor, Alonso Salazar, argues:

> In *La Comuna 13*, we made a connection from the area of *Las Independencias* to the *San Javier* subway station with the outdoor escalators; we built a whole boulevard, the *Viaducto Media Ladera,*[19] and constructed parks and sports fields. We also built the House of Justice in *el 20 de Julio*, the *Colegio de Las Independencias* and the *Parque Biblioteca de San Javier*. All of this was part of our social urbanism project (Interview with the author, August 21, 2019).[20]

[18] Every newly elected mayor has to present a policy proposal containing all intended plans for the coming term of the city council (Alonso Salazar, interview with the author, August 21, 2019).
[19] The boardwalk called *Viaducto Media Ladera* was built in different phases in *Comuna 13* and expanded over the years by various city administrations, see figure 13.
[20] Translation by the author of the original interview in Spanish.

As Reimerink (2018) has proposed earlier, social urban interventions tend to poorly address inhabitants needs. This shows similarity with Fajardo's approach, which emphasized the improvement of the physical environment in *Comuna 13*, mainly concerned with mobility and education to bridge the social gap rather than with eradicating the drivers of violence. In addition to a focus on improving the physical living environment and connectivity of citizens, Fajardo's administration did however focus on enhancing the access to education and reducing manifestations of violence. Concerning education, the *Plan de Desarrollo (*Alcaldía de Medellín, 2004) states that the administration aims to: "offer opportunities for training for all, guaranteeing the right to education of quality and relevance, through a policy of inclusion and school retention, which increases the level of school going youth" (68). Concerning violence, the plan aims to "reduce violence by influencing the reduction of aggressive behaviour through models of comprehensive intervention aimed at offenders and population in social risk" (43). Concrete objectives were to roll out a campaign to discourage violence and illegal possession of weapons, an annual quota of 200 for the seizure of illegal firearms and to raise awareness among young people between the ages of 12 and 25 in the field of youth violence and addiction. Fajardo's administration was fairly successful in increasing the numbers of school attendance, particularly in primary education and post-secondary education. However, the quality of education didn't particularly improve during his administration (Medellín cómo vamos, 2012).

Figure 12. Objectives of the program to create public libraries

COMPONENTE: Proyectos Estratégicos de Ciudad			
PROGRAMAS	**PROYECTOS**	**METAS DEL PROGRAMA**	**TODOS Y TODAS PONEMOS**
Fortalecimiento de las bibliotecas como centros integrales de desarrollo cultural y social. Convertir las bibliotecas de nivel barrial y zonal, en centros culturales y comunitarios, cuya localización se hará en centralidades, que complementadas con equipamientos de menor escala, servirán como dinamizadores de las actividades barriales, a partir de proyectos estratégicos territoriales.	• Construcción y desarrollo de nuevas bibliotecas; y adecuación de existentes. • Implementación, manejo y recuperación de edificios culturales.	• Diseñar y construir hasta 5 bibliotecas públicas urbanas (Santo Domingo Savio, Temática, Parque Explora, una en el occidente de la ciudad y otra más por definir en las zonas centro-oriental o sur-centro occidental) .	**Responsables:** Planeación EDÚCAME Cultura Ciudadana Obras Públicas **Corresponsables:** INDER EDU EPM Ministerio de Cultura Organismos Internacionales Organizaciones culturales Comunidad

Source: Alcaldía de Medellín (2004)

When Fajardo's tenure ended in late 2007, Alonso Salazar was elected the new Mayor of Medellin in 2008 and he continued the social policies and construction works, initiated by Fajardo four years earlier. Whereas the construction of the *San Javier* library and the opening of line 'J' of the *metrocable* were the biggest works of construction concerning *Comuna 13* during Fajardo's term, the opening of the outdoor escalators in 2011 was Salazar's greatest merit in the area. However, the social urban interventions started to gain foreign interest and

media coverage stressing Medellin's transformation, Salazar was confronted with rising murder rates shortly after he took office. In an interview with the author, he states:

> We arrested many gang leaders but as long as drug trafficking persists it is very difficult to fundamentally change the issue of violence. Colombia at this time had extradited at least five thousand Colombians to the United States[21] on charges of drug trafficking but the phenomenon itself does not change, in fact, it continues to fuel the crisis in Medellin still today (Interview with the author, August 21, 2019).[22]

Zaluar (2004) proposes in chapter one *supra*, that the practice of drug trafficking is a phenomenon that is inextricably linked to urban violence. In addition, section 2.3.1 *supra*, has shown that violence and delinquency in Medellin and *Comuna 13* are in part the result of drug trafficking. However, the quote above illustrates that policy makers fought the symptoms of the underlying problem of drug trafficking, instead of tackling drug trafficking itself.

3.3.2 *Mano dura* and the abandonment of social urbanism – 2012-2019

Gaviria, who was not a member of the *Movimiento Compromiso Ciudadano,* took office in 2012. Although the ideology of social urbanism was not completely abandoned during his administration, a deviation in approach was noticeable with a shift towards civic-pedagogical urbanism, with less emphasis on investment in public works (Sotomaytor, 2017). When looking at Gaviria's *Plan de Desarrollo* (Alcaldía de Medellín, 2012) a policy was formulated that aimed at improving the physical environment of Medellin but was rather focused on creating public spaces such as river parks in the centre of the city and not in marginalized areas such as *Comuna 13*. Gaviria's head of planning, Jorge Pérez Jaramillo, states:

> We proposed new public spaces, new parks and a new museum, *el Museo de Arte Moderno*. After the first step of research and proposal, the mayor asked us to design the projects as well. Those projects marked a turning point in history, between the past and now, so we showed how public spaces could be, in a city that had lost public life (Interview with the author, August 8, 2019).

The corresponding programs to curb violence as proposed by the Gaviria administration were more aimed at fighting violence from a policing, *mano dura* perspective, with the creation of an elite corps, focused on dismantling criminal structures, where Fajardo and Salazar tried to curb the problem of violence by promoting citizenship (Alcaldía de Medellín, 2004; Alcaldía de Medellín; 2012). Other projects, initiated by Salazar in the heydays of social urbanism, were

[21] Though the 1991 constitution prohibited the extradition of Colombians to the U.S., this was repealed in 1996.
[22] Translation by the author of the original interview in Spanish.

partially dismantled by the Gaviria administration (Reimerink, 2018). Andres Villaveces argues that:

> There is ample evidence that repressive policies don't work. We know through many policies and countries and much experience that the policy they call *mano dura* actually backfires, it worsens the situation (Interview with the author, July 10, 2019).

Caudill *et al. (*2013) have also argued before that zero tolerance or *mano dura* approaches can have a deteriorating effect on violence and delinquency. Federico Gutiérrez took office in 2016 and was immediately confronted with rising homicide rates in Medellín, see 2.3 *supra*. The development program as proposed by the Gutiérrez' administration focused on consolidating the presence of the state in *Comuna 13*. The *Plan de Desarrollo 2016-2019* (Alcaldía de Medellín, 2016a) proposes: "strengthening the presence of the State in each of the territories requires the provision of a physical infrastructure, that correctly responds to the citizen demands regarding security and coexistence, facilitating for all citizens closer access to services of security and justice" (123). In an interview with the author (July 19, 2019) journalist Juan Pablo Sepúlveda argues:

> His main security strategy concerning *Comuna 13* has been to fill the place with more police and to fill the place with more army in some cases. They have lacked good programs and different strategies or initiatives to reduce crime and violence.[23]

> They don't work on the causes of violence and crime; they are working on the symptoms. They have to solve inequality in the population, improve the education, make programs that are based on evidence and implement them continuously. The current approach is a very reactive one. You have to be more continuous and not only act when violence occurs (Alexandra Restrepo, Interview with the author, July 24, 2019).

The quotes above demonstrate that the shift away from social urbanism towards a *mano dura* approach doesn't address the underlying perpetrators of violence and crime in the area. The aim of the development plan to strengthen the SRPA,[24] in order to guarantee a more successful reintegration of young delinquents into society, with lower risk of recidivism indicates a preventive strategy. The integral urban projects in *Comuna 13* included the second phase of construction of the *Viaducto Media Ladera*, see figure 13, and the opening of the UVA[25] *San*

[23] Translation by the author of the original interview in Spanish.
[24] The *Sistema de Responsabilidad Penal para Adolescentes* is a legal tool in Colombia that makes it possible to impose measures on minors from 14 to 18 years of age, also see 2.2.1 *supra*.
[25] *Unidades de Vida Articulada* (UVA) seek to take advantage of the infrastructure surrounding water storages by creating civic centers and public spaces around them (Jorge Pérez, Interview with the author, August 2019).

Javier in 2018. Where technocrats Fajardo and Salazar were relative outsiders in Colombian politics, operating under the flag of their new political movement, Gaviria (2012-2015) tried to keep his political constituents satisfied with a tougher approach concerning violence, which is more in line with the ideology of the liberal party to which he is affiliated.

Figure 13. Plaque placed on the second section of the boardwalk *Media Ladera* in *Comuna 13*

Source: Image by the author

3.4 The ability of implemented local policies to reduce juvenile delinquency and violence in *Comuna 13*

The initial intentions of the integral urban projects and their corresponding social programs in *Comuna 13* were to bridge the social divide between the informal district of *Comuna 13* and the formal zones of the city and to reduce social inequality by offering education and mobility solutions. These interventions have in some places contributed to the subsidence of violence (Cerdá *et al.*, 2011), but haven't been able to properly address all local problems and realities in order to truly eradicate violence and delinquency in *Comuna 13*.

> If you look at homicide rates distributed over the map of Medellin, you will see that *Comuna 13* has improved. Education is more accessible and local authorities have intensified the provision of

> social services. However, there are still confrontations in the area, due to disputes between armed groups that are present there in large numbers. *Comuna 13*, like the rest of Medellin, continues to operate under the same logic of organized crime, and when the perpetrator requires it, he will intensify or decrease violence (Esteban Palacio, interview with the author, August 21, 2019).

Though homicide rates have declined over time, the quote suggests that the four successive administrations of Medellin haven't been able to eradicate organized crime, a perpetrator of violence. This last paragraph will further elaborate on the extent to which such policies have been able to reduce violence and delinquency in *Comuna 13*, based on qualitative data in the form of testimonials of the interviewees supplemented with statistics.

3.4.1 The effects of social policy and political decision-making

Considering the quality of life in *Comuna 13*, fifteen years of social policies have made significant improvements in the area, of which the main achievement is the improved access to education for inhabitants (Doyle, 2019). Jeison Alexander Castaño, who goes by the name of Jeihhco, is a rapper who grew up in *Comuna 13* and founded *Casa Kolacho*, an organization that offers free music and arts classes to children living in *Comuna 13*. In an interview with the author, he argues:

> There is much more progress today in *Comuna 13* and the living conditions have improved. I remember that I was the second one in the neighbourhood to go to college. Today the municipality gives scholarships to 30 boys, and 20 go to university, so there has absolutely been a change that undoubtedly brought progress to the neighbourhood (July 22, 2019).[26]

In 2019, 910 people from *Comuna 13* enrolled for a scholarship, of which eventually 359 were admitted to a university program (Alcaldía de Medellín, 2019b). The number above corresponds to approximately twenty students per neighbourhood in *Comuna 13* who got a scholarship. Though the opportunities improved for the inhabitants of *Comuna 13,* the primarily intended aims of the projects, to reduce social inequalities in the area, didn't succeed equally. Reimerink (2018) argues that the construction of the electric escalator didn't address the actual needs of inhabitants of *Comuna 13* but was rather driven by planners' objectives to contribute to the city's image of modernity. The author claims that the project has actually deepened social inequalities and only the people who live within a radius of two hundred meters around the outdoor escalators benefit from them. One of the inhabitants of *Independencia III*, an area higher up in the *comuna*, not accessible with the escalator argues:

[26] Translation by the author of the original interview in Spanish.

> The escalators don't support me at all. We usually bought *las paletas*, that have always been sold in *Comuna 13*, for 600 pesos. Around the escalators, they sell them for 2000 pesos now because of tourism[27] (Interview with the author, July 11, 2019).[28]

So, rather than reducing social inequality the escalators have in some areas actually had the opposite effect. Another aspect that has not been sufficiently taken into account during the construction is the criminal order in the intervention neighbourhoods. Luz Margarita Alzate, a social worker who is involved in *Comuna 13* with municipal social youth programs such as *delinquir no paga* and *inclusión social*, argues that:

> The escalators divided two neighbourhoods, *Independencia I* and *Independencia II*. There are many conflicts between gangs from both neighbourhoods and they fight over invisible borders in the area (Interview with the author, July 3, 2019).[29]

As Reimerink (2018) demonstrated earlier, the intervention projects under the banner of social urbanism poorly address local realities and inhabitants needs. Epidemiology researcher Alexandra Restrepo and SISC analyst Esteban Palacio argue:

> The municipal interventions are not based on evidence. They just intervene but they have no idea what outcome it has on violence, it may increase as well. There are many universities or other cities or countries that provide evidence on what is working and what isn't, but they just don't hear it (Alexandra Restrepo, interview with the author, July 24, 2019).[30]

> The information is there, but what happens is that when the information is not favourable to politicians or it is not what they expect, it isn't used. Information always has to be the centre of decision-making on security issues, because that is what it is for. It is useless to have super elaborate techniques for collecting information, to have all crimes mapped, to have all the criminal structures clear, if when making the decision, that information is not taken into account (Esteban Palacio, interview with the author, August 21, 2019).[31]

The quotes above illustrate that policymakers' personal ideas about a project can sometimes outweigh citizens' evidence-based needs, concerning security. This is in line with Reimerink's (2018) theory that important considerations in local decision-making are in part based on their ability to contribute to the image of the city and the personal image and interests of politicians.

[27] The outdoor escalators have drawn attention worldwide and an estimated 25.000 tourists per month visit *Comuna 13* and the escalators (Sarmiento, 2020).
[28] Translation by the author of the original interview in Spanish.
[29] Translation by the author of the original interview in Spanish.
[30] Translation by the author of the original interview in Spanish.
[31] Translation by the author of the original interview in Spanish.

3.4.2 Political culture and the lack of continuity

The success story that has emerged around Medellin's transformation and urban interventions over the past fifteen years has created an image in which the city has overcome its problems with violence and crime (Franz, 2017). Sotomayor (2017) puts forward that behind that image of modernity and improvement lies a mosaic of discontinuous policy approaches concerning the issues of violence and delinquency. Aníbal Gaviria's (Mayor of Medellin, 2012-2015) chief planner Jorge Perez argues:

> A lot of the education policies, a lot of strategic social development for the people of the communities was suspended by Gutiérrez (mayor of Medellin, 2016-2019). Gaviria for instance did plan and design the construction of three new university campuses, each of 10.000 students. Everything was prepared to build those buildings. Two of the three projects were suspended, and Gutiérrez is just finishing one, close to San Javier in *Comuna 13*.[32]

According to Andres Villaveces, this discontinuity is inherent to the interventions in *Comuna 13* and he argues:

> Politicians have short-term goals that are more oriented towards getting any media or political victory, rather than a long-term sustainable, coherent approach to issues. Sometimes you see politicians with really good views, who create entire programs that, are coherent, that are aimed at looking at the long-term effects, but they are not applied consistently (Interview with the author, July 10, 2019).

Urban policy interventions that are generally considered successful concerning social impact tend to have a more continuous character (Betancur, 2007; Mercier *et al.*, 2015). Therefore, the discontinuous approaches in Medellin are less capable of guaranteeing long-term social improvements.

Also, as Reimerink (2018) proposed earlier, the aspect of branding Medellin as a modern, innovative city with an attractive investment climate played a role in the way in which interventions were carried out. Local journalist Juan Pablo Sepúlveda shows that the image of the city plays an important role in political decision making in Medellin:

[32] *La Ciudadela Universitaria de Occidente* is a university campus close to the *San Javier* metro station, to be completed by the end of the summer in 2020.

> In 2019, a contract by the administration of Gutiérrez paid 1.400 million pesos to the Discovery Channel for Medellin to be exposed as the "city of Discovery". Therefore, this makes the city look very good from the outside; it's an image, a façade (Interview with the author, July 19, 2019).[33]

> Projects like the escalators or the *parques bibliotecas* are simply very large sales campaigns for the city. The government spends much more money in *Comuna 13* on changing the image of the area instead of changing reality (Jeihhco, Interview with the author, July 22, 2019).[34]

This especially becomes clear from one of the testimonials of Alonso Salazar, concerning the *Biblioteca de España*. The library situated on the hillsides of *Comuna 1*, was opened in 2007 but had to close its doors due to issues with its construction in 2015. The former mayor argues:

> The *Biblioteca de España* became a very important symbol, because we brought the King of Spain to Medellin to inaugurate it. Not because they had donated money to build the library but because we needed to bring international figures to the city, because nobody came here (Interview with the author, August 21, 2019).[35]

The technocratic model of government and social urbanism, introduced by Fajardo in 2004, was also largely funded by local business elites. Traditionally, the private and the public sector have been closely tied in Medellin and for business to thrive the private sector benefited from social stability (Sotomayor, 2017). In this context, business elites have had a significant impact on decision making and changing the image of Medellin, also illustrated by the quotes above. This statement is supported by Harvey's (2003) theory on the right to the city, which the author claims to be solely favourable to certain segments of urban middle-class and elites rather than marginalized parts of the population.

3.4.3 Alternative explanations for the decrease of violence in *Comuna 13*

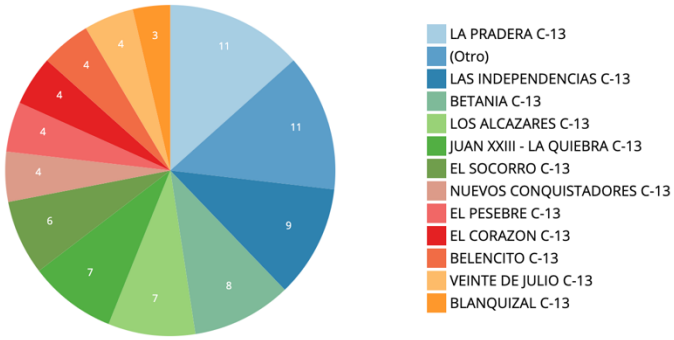
The last paragraph of this chapter will propose an alternative explanation for Medellin's decrease in homicides over the past 15 years and argues that factors other than the urban interventions have played a role in the reduction of violence in *Comuna 13*.

When looking at violence and delinquency in *Comuna 13* from a statistical point of view, one could argue that some local interventions might have contributed to a decrease in violence. In 2011, just before the implementation of one of the benchmarks of social urbanism, the outdoor

[33] Translation by the author of the original interview in Spanish.
[34] Translation by the author of the original interview in Spanish.
[35] Translation by the author of the original interview in Spanish.

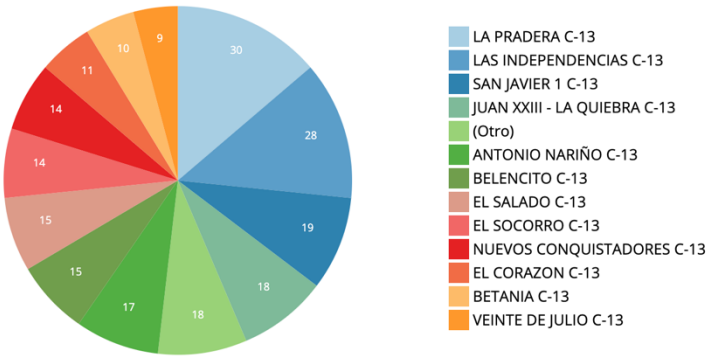
escalators, homicide rates in *Comuna 13* were significantly higher compared to homicide rates in 2018 in the *comuna*, after the project's implementation, see figure 14 and 15.

Figure 14. Number of homicides per neighbourhood in *Comuna 13* in 2018



Source: Gobierno de Colombia – Datos Abiertos 2018

Figure 15. Number of homicides per neighbourhood in *Comuna 13* in 2011



Source: Gobierno de Colombia – Datos Abiertos 2011

In *Las Independencias I* and *II*, the neighbourhoods in which the escalators are located, the number of homicides dropped from twenty-eight to eleven. Cerdá *et al.* (2011), in their research into the ability of the first *metrocable* in Medellin's *comunas* 1 and 2 to reduce homicides, argue that prevalent violence did reduce after the implementation of line 'K' in 2004, another project under the banner of social urbanism. However, analysis of the quantitative data shows that it is incorrect to solely attribute the reduction of violence in *Comuna 13* to social policies implemented by the municipality and exposes the more complex local dynamic of violence in *Comuna 13*.

As addressed earlier in section 3.1.1 *supra*, *Operación Orión* created a power vacuum in *Comuna 13,* which was filled by the paramilitary bloc AUC, led by Don Berna. Doyle (2019) argues that the restructuring of the criminal world in the area, with the elimination of the left-wing militias, took away the incentive for the paramilitary group to fight over territory, with the majority of the *bandas criminales* working for their organization. This claim contradicts the argument that the decrease in violence in the area can be completely attributed to the *Proyectos Urbanos Integrales* and social urbanism. This claim is reinforced by Adriaan Alsema, a journalist who has been working on topics of crime, violence and social inequality in Medellin for over ten years.

> Everything is based on the decrease in murder rates, which is not the result of social policies or social urbanism but of a peace process and successful police interventions. After the elimination of the Medellin cartel of Pablo Escobar, homicide rates have fallen. Then came the paramilitaries, after which the figures rose again sharply. After the demobilization of the 30,000 paramilitaries, the figures fell again. This is not a consequence of social economic policy, but of the disarmament of large violent organizations (Interview with the author, July 23, 2019).

When Don Berna was extradited to the U.S. on charges of drug smuggling in 2008, homicide rates went up again due to the unrest it left behind in the criminal world of Medellin (Doyle, 2019). Simultaneously, Alonso Salazar took office in Medellin and could not curb the rising figures with the continuation of the social urbanism that Fajardo initiated.

The ideas above pose a likely explanation for the reduction in homicides over the last fifteen years in Medellin and in *Comuna 13*. As proposed in section 2.3.2 *supra*, a rifle pact between the two biggest gangs of the city in 2013 has demonstrated as well that the gangs, one of the main perpetrators of violence and delinquency, are responsible for the cities rising or falling homicide rates. Not to say that social urbanism didn't contribute to the reduction of violence and delinquency in *Comuna 13*, but it would be unjust to solely attribute the declining homicide rates to social urbanism.

Conclusions

The predefined aim of this study was to analyse the effects that social urban interventions, widely known as social urbanism, have had on the prevalence of urban violence and juvenile delinquency in Colombia's second biggest city of Medellin. The research especially focused on the effects of the urban interventions in the western city district of *Comuna 13* and was designed around three objectives. Firstly, to determine the incentives for young people to engage in crime and violence in *Comuna 13,* secondly, to determine what were the intended goals of the social, urban interventions and were they able to address inhabitants needs and ultimately, to analyse what has been the effect of the urban interventions on violence and delinquency, between 2004 and 2019 in *Comuna 13*.

There exist an extensive body of research on the concepts of urban violence and juvenile delinquency, arguing that the main drivers of these phenomena are social inequality and exclusion. Another explanation is proposed by Koonings and Kruijt (2007), who argue that negligence of the state regarding the facilitation of basic services, the absence of a decisive security policy and the state's inability to guarantee the rule of law in certain urban areas contribute to the persistence of urban violence and juvenile delinquency.

Advocates of social urban policy responses claim that social urbanism poses an effective means to deal with social inequality and exclusion. However, Reimerink (2018) has put forward that social, infrastructural interventions have been deployed in numerous cities around the world, with varying outcomes concerning the reduction of social inequality, violence and delinquency. Such social approaches tend to create a sense of inclusion and belonging among inhabitants of the intervention area, and proponents of social urbanism consider it a crucial strategy to counter social inequality and exclusion. An aspect of social urbanism that is important in this context is participatory budgeting, which is inextricably linked to social urban policy and gives citizens a say in the distribution of urban projects in their particular neighbourhood and tends to compensate the historical social debt to marginalized areas. The main critique on social urban interventions is that the issues it seeks to resolve are often poorly defined and that the interventions are not evidence-based and don't address the inhabitants' needs. Also, in order for social interventions to have a diminishing effect on social inequality, policy interventions need to be given continuity, which is often lacking in practice.

Some of the social urban interventions deployed in Medellin under the banner of social urbanism, did however address some of the local issues that inhabitants of *Comuna 13* are facing on a daily basis. The implementation of the library parks did indeed address the

inhabitants' poor access to education and created public spaces that contributed to a sense of belonging in an area that for years has been refrained from any governmental presence or intervention. Simultaneously, a project such as the outdoor escalators, that became the figurehead of Medellin's social urban transformation, poorly addressed inhabitants needs, since the area is dealing with a security issue rather than with a mobility issue. Neither were the escalators able to improve the economic situation of the inhabitants, except for those who live within a radius of two hundred meters around them. Another aspect that weakens the actual influence of social urbanism on tackling violence and juvenile delinquency in *Comuna 13* is the discontinuous approach of the various city governments over the period from 2004 to 2019. However, there was continuity during the two subsequent administrations of Fajardo and Salazar, political alignment disappeared in the two successive city administrations, which again left residents with a sense of not being seen or heard by their local administration, in an area that has been neglected for years. Social projects such as *delinquir no paga* and *inclusión social,* which were implemented alongside the physical improvements of social urbanism in *Comuna 13*, such as the libraries, hospitals, universities and community centres, run for short periods of time, before being replaced or discontinued by a new administration.

Though the literature on urban violence and juvenile delinquency states that the main drivers of those phenomena are social inequality and social exclusion, the particular context of *Comuna 13* exposes another dynamic that perpetrates urban violence and juvenile delinquency, namely the persistence of criminal structures in the form of *bandas criminales*. The advocates of social urbanism argue that, though the policy doesn't address the underlying causes of urban violence and juvenile delinquency, the preventive character of social urbanism will make young people living in violent urban areas, which are exposed to the temptations of the quick and relatively easy profits of organized crime, *bacrim*, less likely to obtain the things they want in life through illegal means and become violent, but rather pursue a career within legality. In practice, the research results indicate high rates of unemployment among young people and equally persisting high rates of social inequality, which makes it less likely to believe that social urbanism can take away the incentive of quick material gains through illegality, when the city's economy doesn't pose a decent, legal alternative.

Social urbanism in *Comuna 13* did however contribute to city's image of modernity and progress, trying to lure in foreign investment, which simultaneously started to attract tourists. A narrative has sprung up around Medellin, emphasizing the miraculous way in which the city has managed to reduce violence and crime through social urban interventions. The quantitative findings demonstrate to be consistent with the reviewed literature, in which Reimerink (2018) argues that the urban transformation in Medellin and in *Comuna 13* was in

large part driven by neoliberal interests, aimed at attracting foreign investment and changing the image of Medellin, not its reality with violence, delinquency and high rates of inequality.

Social urbanism can be regarded as a relatively successful policy tool to physically improve urban areas and give residents a sense of recognition and pride. In addition, to some extent it improves the quality of life and increases residents' chances of education. However, social urbanism hardly addresses social inequality, which is one of the main aims of the policy. Neither does it address the underlying perpetrators of prevalent violence, which are social inequality, organized crime and drug trade.

There is a danger in thinking that social urbanism poses a solution to violence and delinquency in areas that are dealing with complex local realities of prevalent violence and the presence of criminal structures. Studies like those of Cerdá *et al.* (2011), which argue that social urban interventions did trigger a reduction in homicide rates in neighbourhoods where projects have intervened, don't take the local dynamic of organized crime and violence enough into account and suggest that this does not affect the course of violence and delinquency in a particular area. However, the research results indicate that the falling and rising homicide rates in Medellin and *Comuna 13* are, in large part, still directed by the whims of organized crime. In fact, criminal structures and organized crime seem to interfere with social urban policy and, through the creation of NGOs, seek to gain government support and attract social programs in their respective areas in order to further consolidate their prevailing power.

Another aspect that needs to be mentioned in this context is the extent of continuity, or rather, the lack of continuity. Since social urban interventions can be in part driven by planners' motivations and the idea of contributing to the image of the city or the image of politicians, planned projects are often suspended by new city administrations, because they want to execute their own landmark projects. In order for social urban interventions to be considered successful, some sort of political continuity is necessary to guarantee the consolidation of long-term effects. Such effects mainly consist of preventing young people from engaging in organized crime and becoming violent, though it will not exterminate prevalent violence.

This research has attempted to contribute to a growing body of literature on social urbanism and social urban interventions and stresses for a more thorough understanding of social urban interventions as a security policy tool in a context of urban areas that historically have to deal with prevalent violence and the existence of criminal structures and organized crime. Furthermore, it has emphasized the complexity and singularity of local urban violence and organized crime, which cannot be tackled solely with social urban interventions.

Appendices

I. List of interviews conducted

Interviewee	Role/profession	Discussed themes	Place and date
Luz Margarita Alzate V.	Sociologist for *Empresas Públicas de Medellín* (EPM).	Public policies, social urbanism, juvenile delinquency, employment	San Javier Library (Comuna 13). 03-07-2019
Raquel Arango Valencia	Teacher at the *Institución Educativa La Independencia* (Comuna 13), location *Refugio del niño*.	Education; Colombian education system, juvenile delinquency, social projects; youth, social exclusion, social inequality	*Institución Educativa La Independencia*, *Refugio del niño*, (Comuna 13). 09-07-2019
Andres Villaveces Izquierdo	Dr. in Epidemiology at the University of Washington, specialized in crimes against children and the prevention of crimes in urban areas.	Social urbanism, juvenile delinquency, urban violence, youth, public policies	Skype interview, Medellín – Washington D.C. 10-07-2019
María del Socorro Mosquera Londoño	Social leader of Comuna 13, human rights defender and leader of the Association of Women of *Las Independencias* (AMI).	Human rights, juvenile delinquency, organized crime, public policies, urban development, social urbanism, transformation	*La Independencia 3* neighborhood (Comuna 13), in Socorro's home. 11-07-2019
Geyi Léon Ocampo Fonnegra	President of the *Junta de Acción Comunal (JAC)* in the *Antonio Nariño* neighborhood in Comuna 13.	Human rights, youth, public policies, juvenile delinquency, transformation	*Antonio Nariño* Neighborhood (Comuna 13), in Geyi's home. 15-07-2019
Juan Pablo Sepúlveda	Journalist for ¡PACIFISTA!, specialized in the armed conflict and the urban conflict in Medellin.	Juvenile delinquency, organized crime, public policies, youth, human rights, social urbanism	Voicememo over WhatsApp, Medellín – Bogotá. 19-07-2019.
Jeison Alexander Castaño Hernández A.K.A. 'Jeihhco'	Founder of *Casa Kolacho* and rapper from Comuna 13.	Social projects, public policies, youth, juvenile delinquency, transformation	*San Javier* (Comuna 13) in Casa Kolacho. 22-07-2019

Adriaan Alsema	Journalist and founder of news website 'Colombia Reports'.	Juvenile delinquency, public policies, urban development, social urbanism, transformation	*Candelaría* neighborhood, Adriaan's home, Medellín. 23-07-2019
Alexandra Restrepo	Epidemiology researcher from the *Universidad de Antioquia.*	Social urbanism, social inequality, juvenile delinquency, youth, public policies, employment	Café Cliché, Laureles, Medellin. 24-07-2019
Jorge Pérez Jaramillo	Head of Medellin's planning department in Gaviria's administration (2011-2015).	Social urbanism, infrastructural renewal, urban development, public policies, employment	*Museo de Arte Moderno Medellín*, Medellin. 08-08-2019
Alejandro De Bedout Arango	Secretary of Youth in Medellin in Gutiérrez' administration (2016-2019).	Juvenile delinquency, public policies, youth, organized crime	Youth secretary, *Plaza de la Libertad, piso 10, torre A*, Medellín. 16-08-2019
Esteban Palacio	Analyst at SISC, S*istema de Información de la Secretaría de Seguridad y Convivencia.*	Public policies, security, organized crime, juvenile delinquency	EPM Library, Medellin. 21-08-2019
Alonso Salazar	Former mayor of Medellin (2008-2011).	Social urbanism, public policies, organized crime, infrastructural renewal	*Ciudad del Rio*, Medellín. 21-08-2019

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