RESEARCH ARTICLE

Medellín's *Biblioteca España*: Progress in Unlikely Places

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The *Biblioteca España*, designed by Giancarlo Mazzanti, is a library park built to serve two traditionally marginalized *comunas* (neighborhoods) of Medellín. As such, it is a prime example of a public policy intervention that focuses on social inclusion, the provision of services, and quality of life. In this paper, we ask whether improvements in state capacity and infrastructure at the local level can have a broad impact in poor and violent communities. The survey results reveal that citizens of *comunas* Popular and Santa Cruz perceive their situation to be improving at a faster rate than those of the city in general. The broader lesson for other countries and cities facing similar challenges is that leadership and reforms do have the potential to improve the quality of life, even in the most troubled areas.

Introduction: Colombia and Medellín

Colombia is often described as a violent country with an uneven government presence. After a bloody civil war in the mid-twentieth century, guerrilla conflict emerged in the 1960s, paramilitary groups formed to fight the guerrilla groups, and drug related violence boomed in the 1980s and 1990s. Meanwhile, as many of the violent groups targeted the state and the judiciary in particular, common violent crime increased, making Colombia infamous for its violence. In the last decade, however, Colombia has made great progress in taming these sources of violence.

This paper focuses on a public works project in Medellín. Medellín is the capital of the department of Antioquia, which is the birthplace of many paramilitary groups and home to about a third of the demobilized para-militaries in the country. The city witnessed extensive drug violence in the 1980s and early 1990s, as well as clashes between urban guerrillas and paramilitaries in the 1990s. Medellín has also suffered from the influence of other violent groups and clientelism in general, making the challenge of improving quality of life and security here substantial. Over the last twenty years, Medellín was more violent than Colombia overall, which had one of the highest national homicide rates in the region. In 1991, Medellín had the highest homicide rate of any city in the world (Instituto Nacional de Medicina Legal; United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime).

Medellín is also home to many Colombians internally displaced by political violence (IDPs). Frequently, cities do not have the infrastructure to provide security and basic services such as health care, education, and water/sanitation (IDMC 2007; Ferris 2010) for the new arrivals or their existing poor residents. Alzate (2008 134) finds that 'life in Colombian urban centres, where more than 70 per cent of the population resides,

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has worsened due to the en masse arrival of IDPs since 2000.' According to *Acción Social* (2012), almost 190,000 displaced persons settled in Medellín from 1998 to 2011. Many of them settle into the poor wards of the city, such as Popular and Santa Cruz (Municipio de Medellin 2006). DANE (2005; 2005a; 2005b) records that 7.9 per cent of the new residents of Popular had relocated due to threats, compared to six per cent in Santa Cruz. Thus, we turn to broader efforts by municipal authorities to improve quality of life for all in a neighborhood instead of by group.

Despite its history of conflict, Medellín also has been recognized for its proactive efforts to improve quality of life for all its residents. Medellín has been at the forefront of efforts to use public spaces to help confront violence, as opposed to more traditional responses of gated communities, private security, increasing boundaries and the loss of public spaces, as described in the Argentine case by Dammert (2001). In 2005, the city established 'Medellín Award for Best Practice Transfer, LAC – 2005' to promote the exchange of best practices for cities confronting similar community development and housing challenges. This is an especially welcome development for a country that previously was known for a 'lack of institutional efforts to disseminate information on best practices and alternatives to municipal problems' (Fiszbein 1997: 1031). In 2009, the foundation that runs the Medellín library system, the EPM Foundation, received a US$ 1,000,000 Access to Learning Award from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. In 2010, three programs were recognized as best practices by UN Habitat: *Medellín Solidaria*, which improved the quality of life for 45,000 of the most poor households (in terms of income, education, health, nutrition, housing, access to credit, justice etc.); *Programa Buen Comienzo*, which provides comprehensive development services to children from birth to age five beginning in 2006; and the city's quality of life survey (*Encuesta de Calidad de Vida*). In January 2012, the city was awarded the Sustainable Transport Award from the Institute for Transportation and Development Policy (ITDP) for the *Metrocable*, which links some of the peripheral parts of the city to the subway.

Medellín is safer than in the past, although challenges remain. **Table 1** shows a significant improvement in the city's security situation. Murder rates dropped two-thirds from 2002 to 2004, with levels far lower than its peak of 381 per 100,000 in 1991. Evidence of urban guerrilla violence is now much lower, and many credit the demobilization of paramilitary forces for the overall decline in violence in the city (Spagat 2007). At the same time, however, the 2009 spike in homicides has been attributed to power vacuum left by the extradition of the powerful paramilitary leader Don Berna (*Colombia Report* 2012). Medellín's mayor, Alonso Salazar, has spoken of new groups forming from the 'demobilized' militants. Additionally, Antioquia has been plagued by the 'parapolitics' scandal, in which many politicians have been accused and or convicted of collusion with illegal groups (Romero 2008; *El Tiempo* 2011).

Local Planning Efforts, Coordination, and Innovation

The Colombian government and people have recognized the importance of state capacity to both discourage violence and to mitigate the effects of violence through the creation of a stronger public sector (Holmes and Gutierrez de Piñeres 2013). To that end, major, long-term efforts to decentralize authority and resources have been underway since the mid-1980s. The 1991 Constitution mandated for the first time that department and local governments be popularly elected (O'Neill 2003: 1072). Decentralization was designed to increase local autonomy, citizen participation, resources, and capacity (Olivera, Pachón, and Perry 2010: 2). Carlos Holmes Trujillo, a delegate to the 1991 constitutional assembly, stated, 'Our duty was to fortify participatory democracy. Planning should have its origin in the municipality'

	Murder rate (per 100,000)	Guerrilla h.r. violations	Paramilitary h.r. violations	Public Forces h.r. violations
1999	161	22	9	4
2000	167	18	14	4
2001	168	17	24	1
2002	177	22	34	17
2003	107	2	35	1
2004	56	1	13	6
2005	34	0	5	3
2006	36	0	20	10
2007	35	0	18	6
2008	47	0	26	5
2009	94	0	41	4
2010	86	0	14	4
2011	70	1	6	1

Table 1: Medellín Violence.

Sources: Homicide rate: Instituto Nacional de Medicina Legal. All others: CINEP's *base de datos*, September 2010 vintage for 1999–2009. These estimates are the annual number of politically motivated human rights violations (total, leftist guerrilla, paramilitary and public forces). The category is '*total de hechos en DIH según presunto presonsible.*' These statistics do not include force-on-force violence, but range from acts against civilians such as threats to murder. The acts have been identified as politically motivated and have a responsible actor identified. 2010 and 2011 are from CINEP's *Banco de Datos de Derechos Humanos y Violencia Política del CINEP*, available online, accessed August 2012.

(*Gaceta Constitutional* 1991: 11; cited in Kline 2009: 168). In 1997, Law 388 required all Colombian cities to create an overall land use plan called *Plan de Ordenamiento Territorial* (POT) to transform public spaces. A positive externality of the POT is that it 'demands a strong public sector, with great initiative and able to run urban development, in order to be made operational and to be executed (managed)' (Salazar Ferro 2009, 19). These and other institutional changes have provided greater opportunities for municipalities like Medellín to innovate and to improve public services and security.

Medellín, in particular, has developed a reputation for the excellence of its planning projects. Garcia Bocanegra (2010: 137) notes the excellence of the 1951 *Plan Regulador*

de Wiener y Sert, the *Plan Regulador* (from the 1985 *Plan de Desarrollo Metropolitano*), and the 1999 POT (Acuerdo 62/99), which serve as a baseline for any proposed plan of action. The 1999 POT plan aimed for controlled growth, recovery of public spaces, the creation of new successful urban centers by means of projects like library parks, and improvements in the informal sector. To achieve these goals, the plan explicitly called for both private and public efforts and co-responsibility. The POT also provided instruments such as partial plans including public, private, and mixed efforts, special plans for certain areas, tools for land management, macro projects, projects to improve neighborhoods, management tools, and PUIs (*proyecto urbano integral*) (Garcia Bocanegra

2010: 144–5). There have also been efforts to coordinate efforts in metropolitan region Área *Metropolitana del Valle de Aburrá* (that includes nine municipalities). In sum, from the original POT in 1999 to its revision in 2006, the goals of Medellín's projects have been characterized by the participation of the municipal government, which prioritizes investment in the most vulnerable sectors.

The proactive mayors of Medellin had a solid planning foundation to guide their actions. Luis Perez, mayor of Medellín from 2001–2004, left many partial plans to guide the incoming administration of Sergio Fajardo Valderrama (2004–2007). Sergio Fajardo was elected mayor in 2003 and served from 2004 to 2007. Fajardo took advantage of planning opportunities to promote 'urban mobility and urban refurbishment in schools, public libraries and poor neighborhoods' (Gutiérrez Sanín et al 2009: 12). The new development plan recognized a governability crisis (including parts of the city controlled by non-state actors, violent confrontation among criminal groups, clientelism that reduced legitimacy, and the closing of spaces of public debate), high poverty, growing inequality, an obsolete economic and social structure, and insufficient integration to the nation and the world (Alcaldia de Medellín 2004: 6–8). Since 2004 development plan, more resources have been allocated to the parts of the city with low levels of human development and quality of life (Rojas and Vicente 2010: 20).

Fajardo's plan lists five strategic goals for the city: first, to become a governable and participatory city, in which individual and group responsibilities are clear so that governability and compromise can be achieved; second, to achieve priorities of inclusiveness and provision of services, especially to extend the reach to the most vulnerable, such as young children and the displaced, so that all citizens can have a life with dignity; third, to create a city with meeting spaces for citizens and a city that promotes quality of life; fourth, to promote an economy that is competitive, productive and solidarity based, and; fifth, to increase the integration with

the region and world (Alcaldia de Medellín 2004: 10). This plan also included comprehensive efforts to provide indicators to promote transparency and co-responsibility, such as the index of human development (IDH) and quality of life (ICV) for the city and its *comunas* (Alcaldia de Medellín 2004: 16). Fajardo and his team aimed to improve employment opportunities, decrease poverty and inequality, improve security and educational opportunities, and reduce the social isolation of the residents in these areas through these projects. In Fajardo's words, 'the concept was 'the most beautiful for the most humble.' It implied a rupture from the idea that anything you give to the poor is a plus' (Fajardo and Mazzanti 2010).

Within these comprehensive plans, more focused interventions were developed. Fajardo succeeded in building partnerships with other institutions, such as the *Empresa de Desarrollo Urbano de Medellín* (EDU), to implement public infrastructure plans (Garcia Bocanegra 2010: 164). The EDU is comprised of government, industrial, and business groups within the Mayor's office that are charged with urban development and citizen well-being. It works closely with the EPM, which is a non-profit organization of public utilities, cultural and educational programs (Fundacion EPM). In Medellín, EDU directs the development and implementation of the PUIs, which are comprehensive development plans to improve quality of life. The goal of a PUI is to incorporate all aspects of development in a defined area. 'These Plans: 1) organize all local spending on displacement, including funds from local, national, and international donors; 2) integrate all institutional responses to a local displacement; and 3) establish comprehensive displacement responses that cover everything from protection and prevention to contingency planning, humanitarian assistance, and socioeconomic reestablishment' (UNHCR 2008: 5). This comprehensive response includes attention to housing, citizen participation, environmental concerns, public spaces and collective goods, and increased social integra-

tion. The advantage of the PUI is that it coordinates different levels of government action, while empowering local committees to initiate their own interventions. The UNHCR has recognized PUIs as the kind of multi-faceted planning model that can be successful to aid IDPs, in addition to the historically poor, that should be emulated by other countries with IDPs. Currently, the Ministry of Interior monitors these plans. However, Ferris (2010) notes that not all municipalities prioritized such plans, as Medellín has done.

Medellín's first PUI focused on Popular and Santa Cruz, in the northeastern zone of the city, where the indices of human development were among the lowest in the city (Alcadia de Medellín 2007). Medellín began the process by building the Metrocable, which connected previously isolated poor neighborhoods in the hills with the city and its public subway system. The Metrocable is a gondola system that connects residents in the hillside communities with the city's subway system. With its completion in 2004, travel times were reduced from hours to minutes, greatly increasing economic opportunities and social integration. As noted by the United Nations Human Settlements Program, 'the physical and social distance between poor and rich neighborhoods represents a spatial poverty trap marked by six distinct challenges': severely limited job opportunities, gender disparities, poor living conditions, social exclusion and marginalization, lack of social interaction, and high crime (UN Habitat 2008: 83–4). The Metrocable, as part of this overall effort, has even been credited with helping to lower the murder rate in these two areas from 2003 to 2008 (Cerdá et al 2009). The PUI incorporated the Metrocable in addition to new pedestrian bridges, a new school, renovations of existing schools, a development zone (*Cedezo*), and other infrastructure improvements.

Subsequent mayors of Medellín have continued aggressive efforts to increase quality of life, education, and inclusion. Alonso Salazar, who succeeded Fajardo as mayor, serving from 2008–2011, had a plan that prioritized

quality education through the secondary level. Another program, *Buen Comienzo* (good beginning), covers children from birth to six, followed by programs to keep youth in school through age fifteen through grants and loans for students to pursue advanced education. The city has also constructed housing (15,000 units), in addition to an extensive expansion of cultural and recreational programs, and the establishment of parks and other public spaces. There are PUIs for other parts of the city (three PUIs in 2010 including *Comuna* 13, *Centroriental*, and *Noroccidental*, consisting of 103 works), with similar goals of improving public spaces, mobility, and the environment, physical transformation, and strengthening community participation (Alcaldia de Medellín 2010: 21; Alcaldia de Medellín 2008). Currently, the new mayor, Aníbal Gaviria, who will serve from 2012–2015, pledges to continue working toward the reduction of corruption, exclusion, and inequality, and the improvement of integration, inclusion, and the improvement of infrastructure and competitiveness.

Plans have been complemented with money. At the local level in Medellín, the resources available to the municipal government increased significantly from 2000 to 2010, as did spending. In this period, both total and per capital spending increased fourfold in Medellin. By 2010, per capita spending was approximately US$720 compared to US$189 in 2000. (Based on a March 31, 2008 exchange rate of 0.00055, DNP 2012)

The Design of Biblioteca España

Biblioteca Espana was initiated as part of the mayor's social inclusion program that targeted some of the poorest and most isolated parts of the city. Bogotá architect Giancarlo Mazzanti designed the *Biblioteca España* complex to fundamentally transform the Santo Domingo Savio neighborhood of Popular, which is also close to the Santa Cruz neighborhood. Both are *zona de ladera* (shanty or unplanned) and were some of the most affected by the narco violence of the 1980s (Blanco and Hidetsugu 2009).

These communities also fare poorly on most socio-economic indicators. *Sisbén* classifies household standard of living, from a low of one to a high of six. This classification is used to assign social services and subsidies. This measure clearly indicates the low standard of living for these two *comunas*. In the 2010 profile of Popular, 48 per cent of the residents are in the lowest category of one, 50 per cent are in category two, and two per cent are in category three (Municipio de Medellín 2010). Santa Cruz is similar, with 27 per cent in level one, 70 per cent in level two and only three per cent in level three (Municipio de Medellín 2010a).

Both *comunas* are densely populated and the overall quality of housing is low. Almost all of the housing in these *comunas* is classified as 'low,' 'very low,' or 'slum' (99.8 per cent in Popular and 99.9 per cent in Santa Cruz). Education levels are lower in these *comunas* than in Medellín overall. In Popular, 61.1 per cent of residents have a primary or lower level of educational attainment. In Santa Cruz, 56.6 per cent do, compared to 41.5 per cent in Medellín overall. The percent of the population attending school, by age group, is also lower in every category than in the city overall. Not surprisingly, the low rates of educational attainment correspond with high unemployment in these communities. In Popular, unemployment rates are around 40 per cent and average monthly income is 147,000 pesos (US$70) (Municipio de Medellín 2010; Municipio de Medellín 2010a).

In order to visit the site and draw up the architectural plans, Mazzanti had to gain the confidence and the cooperation of the local paramilitary groups (Interview, Medellín May 2010). The *Biblioteca* was completed in 2007, and won the Iberoamerican Architecture Biennial award in 2008. Currently, the library serves the needs of nearby residents, although it draws visitors from throughout the city and the world. The library is heavily used, with more than 1,200 visiting it each day (Caracol 2012). Moreover, the events held at the library go beyond traditional cultural activities and literacy. For example, in September 2012, the *Biblioteca* hosted *Tejido Social*, a political leadership workshop for residents, especially women.

Library parks such as the *Biblioteca España* are much more than just a building with books. The complex provides broader infrastructure improvements, such as a community center, an auditorium, art galleries, play/child care areas, computer labs, and outside space. All are designed to improve the economic prospects of nearby residents, increase their integration to the city at large, and promote social capital. This library was designed with social inclusion as a main goal. According to Mazzanti (2010), this particular library was designed with the three goals of the architecture of social inclusion in mind. First, the project should promote the creation of employment and economic prosperity. Second, the project should promote social integration and the revitalization of depressed urban areas. Specifically, he tried to increase the community's pride in the library complex and in their neighborhood. Finally, the goal was to protect and improve the urban environment. For example, the structures are energy efficient thanks to passive air conditioning, and include public spaces (Mazzanti 2010).

Evidence of Impact

A previous study by Valencia Agudelo et al (2008) investigated the impact of the implementation of the 2004–2007 city planning documents, which explicitly prioritized the creation of social capital and strengthening the bonds between residents and the state through increased citizen participation. They utilized a 2007 survey of residents to evaluate two programs: *Planeación y Presupuesto Particpativo* (Planning and Participatory Budgeting) and *Administración Transparente y Control Social* (Transparent Management and Social Control). They found that Medellín's citywide investments in human capital, such as libraries, security,

	Very unsatisfied	2	Neither	4	Very satisfied	Year
Medellín	0.73	0.79	5.8	23.02	69.66	2008
Medellín	0.8	2.13	12.07	33.33	51.67	2009
Medellín	0.93	2.38	17.94	30.77	47.98	2010
Medellín	0.39	1.51	11.95	42.94	43.40	2011
Popular/Santa Cruz	0.87	0.87	7.83	11.30	79.13	2008
Popular/Santa Cruz	0	2.61	18.26	29.57	49.57	2009
Popular/Santa Cruz	0.88	1.75	13.16	39.47	44.74	2010
Popular/Santa Cruz	0	1.74	10.43	33.91	53.91	2011

Table 2: How satisfied are you with Medellín as a city to live in?
Medellín Cómo Vamos p4 2009, CV1 2010/11 '¿Qué tan insatisfecho(a) o satisfecho(a) se siente Usted con Medellín como una ciudad para vivir, en una escala de 1 a 5, donde 1 es muy insatisfech(a) y 5 es muy satifecho(a)? Puede utilizar cualquier número de la escala.'

and parks, increased social capital and the well-being of residents.

We follow up on this study to see if this optimism continues in later years, using *Medellín Cómo Vamos* surveys to provide subjective evidence of impact. The overall sample size for each survey is approximately 1500, of which sixty participants reside in Popular and fifty-five reside in Santa Cruz. It is also important to note that although the survey is representative at the municipal level overall, it is not at the level of the *comuna.* Despite scoring lower on most socioeconomic indicators than the city as a whole in 2008, more residents of Popular and Santa Cruz responded with 'Very satisfied' than the city average (**Table 2**).

The responses of residents in Popular and Santa Cruz in the satisfied categories declined in 2009. Most likely this is due to the citywide doubling of homicides from 2008 to 2009. By 2011, residents again were more enthusiastic about Medellín than the citywide population. Given the low socioeconomic status of the residents of Popular and Santa Cruz, this suggests that despite continuing problems in the community, residents still are satisfied with the city.

Other questions, presented in **Table 3**, relate to public spaces and general civility.

Library parks create an inclusive environment of leisure and learning. In Medellín, the new library parks are located in the poorest areas, giving local residents access to resources they never thought possible, such as computers and the Internet. Although these public spaces are generally held in high esteem throughout the city, there was an even higher perception of civic responsibility toward public spaces such as libraries and parks in Popular and Santa Cruz.

Residents' enthusiasm peaked in 2007 when the Biblioteca España opened, although citywide ratings of civic responsibility fell in 2008 and 2009.

Interestingly, **Table 4** indicates that residents of Popular and Santa Cruz also report higher compliance and respect for the basic rules of civility than general residents of Medellín in the year that the library opened. Similarly, in **Table 5**, residents report a higher respect for life in 2007 in Popular and Santa Cruz than in Medellín.

The 2009 decline in perceived respect for life is likely due to the violence from resurgent paramilitary groups, as well as a broader increase in violent crime during this time period. However, by 2011, as the violence abated, the residents of Popular and Santa Cruz again report higher respect for life than

	Very bad	2	3	4	Very good	Year
Medellín	7.60	17.71	34.77	30.34	9.32	2006
Medellín	7.02	15.24	36.98	33.93	6.30	2007
Medellín	5.61	12.01	35.95	33.71	12.73	2008
Medellín	8.47	20.93	33.33	30.13	7	2009
Medellín	4.17	11.32	47.85	30.31	6.35	2010
Medellín	3.87	13.99	45.57	30.86	5.71	2011
Popular/Santa Cruz	10.08	13.45	35.29	34.45	5.88	2006
Popular/Santa Cruz	4.31	5.17	25.86	51.72	9.48	2007
Popular/Santa Cruz	4.35	8.70	49.57	31.30	6.09	2008
Popular/Santa Cruz	9.57	28.70	29.57	31.30	0.87	2009
Popular/Santa Cruz	0.88	10.53	57.89	24.56	6.14	2010
Popular/Santa Cruz	6.09	20.87	43.48	22.61	6.96	2011

Table 3: How would you rate civic responsibility toward public spaces?
Medellín Cómo Vamos (p53_1 2006 and 2007, p70a in 2008, 80a_a 2009, RC3_1 2010/2011)
'Ahora le voy a mencionar algunos aspectos referentes a la responsabilidad ciudadana. Cómo calificaría usted cada uno de ellos en una escala de 1 a 5 donde 1es muy malo y 5 es muy bueno: Cuidado y respeto de los espacios públicos (parques, andenes, teatros)'

	Very bad	2	3	4	Very good	Year
Medellín	3.70	12.43	41.44	32.39	9.52	2006
Medellín	3.18	11.27	46.92	32.80	5.04	2007
Medellín	4.49	11.61	37.01	36.74	10.16	2008
Medellín	16.81	25.35	35.01	18.46	4.37	2010
Medellín	3.61	19.70	49.05	24.36	3.28	2011
Popular/Santa Cruz	2.52	9.24	44.54	36.13	7.56	2006
Popular/Santa Cruz	2.59	1.72	45.69	34.48	11.21	2007
Popular/Santa Cruz	5.22	7.83	43.48	34.78	8.70	2008
Popular/Santa Cruz	8.77	25.44	42.98	18.42	4.39	2010
Popular/Santa Cruz	0.87	12.17	51.30	33.04	2.61	2011

Table 4: How would you rate respect of basic rules of civility?
Medellín Cómo Vamos 'Respeto de las normas básicas de convivencia en Medellín' (p53_3 . 70c in 2008, RC4_1 2010)

the city average. Finally, the survey asked about respect for the displaced. Results are represented in **Table 6**. With the exception of 2008, residents of Popular and Santa Cruz report higher respect for the displaced than residents of the city in general. The 2009 increase in homicides notwithstanding, these surveys portray optimism and level of satisfaction with civic life that may be surprising to some, given the community's

	Very bad	2	3	4	Very good	Year
Medellín	8.13	16.13	35.03	31.33	9.19	2006
Medellín	7.69	19.88	37.51	28.50	6.16	2007
Medellín	6.93	16.09	32.32	32.59	12.07	2008
Medellín	16.93	28.47	31.27	18.73	4.6	2009
Medellín	5.69	15.49	40.90	30.51	7.41	2010
Medellín	16.61	26.76	36.18	17.07	3.35	2011
Popular/Santa Cruz	5.88	10.92	38.66	36.13	8.40	2006
Popular/Santa Cruz	5.17	6.03	31.03	43.10	12.93	2007
Popular/Santa Cruz	4.35	16.52	40.87	33.04	5.22	2008
Popular/Santa Cruz	20.00	38.26	23.48	17.39	0.87	2009
Popular/Santa Cruz	2.63	12.28	54.39	23.68	7.02	2010
Popular/Santa Cruz	3.48	26.09	42.61	21.74	6.09	2011

Table 5: How would you rate respect for life?
Medellín Cómo Vamos (p53_13 p70m in 2008, p80bb_a 2009, RC4_2 in 2010/11)) El respeto a la vida

	Very bad	2	3	4	Very good	Year
Medellín	9.19	20.29	36.75	22.14	9.45	2006
Medellín	8.28	21.87	39.70	23.53	5.10	2007
Medellín	7.45	15.5	31.99	33.38	11.68	2008
Medellín	14	29.07	35.07	17.93	3.73	2009
Medellín	7.15	18.00	48.64	21.71	4.50	2010
Medellín	7.09	20.16	45.70	24.03	3.02	2011
Popular/Santa Cruz	6.72	14.29	40.34	27.73	10.92	2006
Popular/Santa Cruz	5.17	8.62	36.21	37.07	10.34	2007
Popular/Santa Cruz	2.61	11.30	45.22	30.43	10.43	2008
Popular/Santa Cruz	17.39	28.70	33.04	18.26	1.74	2009
Popular/Santa Cruz	1.75	14.91	63.16	17.54	2.63	2010
Popular/Santa Cruz	4.35	16.52	47.83	26.96	4.35	2011

Table 6: How would you rate respect for the displaced?
Medellín Cómo Vamos (p53_16 p70p, 80bb_d 2009, RC4_6 2010/11). 'Respeto por los desplazados'

violent past and relative poverty. Another set of questions in **Table 7** addresses crime and security. Once again, despite recent increases in violence, citizens of Popular and Santa Cruz report a level of perceived security that is higher than the city overall, with the exception of 2010.

Table 8 presents victimization rates. When asked if people have been actually victimized, there appears to be little crime in Popular and

	Nada	2	3	4	Mucho	Year
Medellín	1.92%	4.03%	17.91%	45.47%	30.67%	2006
Medellín	1.86	3.91	21.74	46.92	25.45	2007
Medellín	3.43	4.02	18.27	34.43	39.84	2008
Medellín	5.33	8	24.93	34.93	26.80	2009
Medellín	7.08	9.86	28.19	32.63	22.24	2010
Medellín	3.55	7.22	22.98	42.98	23.31	2011
Popular/Santa Cruz	0	1.68	12.61	42.02	43.70	2006
Popular/Santa Cruz	0	2.59	16.38	51.72	29.31	2007
Popular/Santa Cruz	2.61	2.61	13.91	33.04	47.83	2008
Popular/Santa Cruz	3.48	2.61	13.91	44.35	35.65	2009
Popular/Santa Cruz	4.39	7.89	37.72	33.33	16.67	2010
Popular/Santa Cruz	2.61	3.48	13.91	33.91	46.09	2011

Table 7: How secure is your neighborhood?
Medellín Cómo Vamos 'De 1 a 5, donde 1 es nada y 5 es mucho, ¿qué tan seguro diría Ud. que es su barrio?' (Q49 p67 in 2008/9, VS8 in 2010/2011)

	Yes	No	Year
Medellín	9.25	90.75	2006
Medellín	10.67	89.33	2007
Medellín	8.77	91.23	2008
Medellín	11.67	88.33	2009
Medellín	11.78	88.22	2010
Medellín	10.11	89.89	2011
Popular/Santa Cruz	3.36	96.65	2006
Popular/Santa Cruz	8.62	91.38	2007
Popular/Santa Cruz	0.87	99.13	2008
Popular/Santa Cruz	11.30	88.70	2009
Popular/Santa Cruz	8.77	91.23	2010
Popular/Santa Cruz	11.30	88.70	2011

Table 8: Have you been a victim of crime during the last year?
Medellín Cómo Vamos (P 52d p 142 in 2008/9, VS11 in 2010/11) '¿Durante el último año ¿usted ha sido víctima de algún delito?'

Santa Cruz. In fact, in May 2010, the authors were able to walk, without escort or concern, throughout the neighborhood. The plazas and parks were filled with children playing and others enjoying the spaces. Although reports of personal victimization increased in 2009, reported crime has remained lower than the city average most years. When asked about general security trends, again we see more optimism in these communities in **Table 9**.

Interestingly, the 2006 survey also shows evidence of confidence in the police. Of those who said the security presence had improved, 71 per cent credited increased institutional presence. Similarly, when asked what would increase their confidence in security, more people responded with a request to increase the police presence (48 per cent) than any other response.

In terms of service provision for the city of Medellín, the rhetoric of inclusion and equality appears to have translated into improvements evident in objective indicators. For example, in Popular, 100 per cent of its homes have power, water, and trash collection. 98.84 per cent of them have sewer service. Santa Cruz has 100 per cent of coverage in its homes of these four essential services. This is impressive especially given the rela-

	Increased	Same	Decreased	Year
Medellín	16.59	24.72	58.69	2006
Medellín	13.92	32.21	53.28	2007
Popular/Santa Cruz	5.88	31.09	63.03	2006
Popular/Santa Cruz	11.21	28.45	57.76	2007

Table 9: In the past year has insecurity...
Medellín Cómo Vamos P52h – 'Con respecto a la ciudad ¿Usted cree que la inseguridad durante el último año'

tive poverty of the neighborhoods (all homes are in either the low or very low socioeconomic *estrato*).

In 2004, Medellín has a quality of life index score of 82.2, compared to 73.5 in Popular and 75.9 in Santa Cruz. By 2011, the city's score had increased to 83.5. The scores of Popular and Santa Cruz had increased to 76 and 79.2, respectively. In other words, even while the city's index has improved in the last seven years, these two poor *comunas* are catching up. Given the improvement in services, increased city spending, and inclusive policies, it is not surprising that citizens regard their community and the local government more positively than one would expect given their low socioeconomic status. The increased resources and outreach to these historically marginalized neighborhoods has had a clear impact on the community.

Conclusion

Can state capacity and comprehensive infrastructure improvements at the local level have a broad impact in poor and violent communities? Efforts to extend progress to the most historically marginalized communities are exemplified by the construction of Biblioteca España in Medellín. The survey results reveal that citizens of *comunas* Popular and Santa Cruz perceive their situation to be improving at a faster rate than those of the city in general. Additionally, the perceived improvements coincide with the opening of the library park, suggesting that it had a direct and positive impact on the *comunas*. The library park's impact is likely to have

been augmented by other city-wide improvements. Although local trends must be examined within a broader context, Medellín has been the site of innovative local plans that have improved the lives of some of its poorest citizens. Previously, Holmes, Gutierrez de Piñeres and Curtin (2008) stressed the importance of comprehensive progress that simultaneously pursues military dominance, improved state capacity, a strong political community, and economic growth. The city of Medellín has taken advantage of the opportunities created by both decentralization and the improved security situation to create and implement bold plans for improved quality of life even in some of the most troubled parts of the city. As Fiszbein (1997: 1039) concluded after an early assessment of Colombian decentralization, 'A successful effort to build local capacity requires *municipios* to have the autonomy and security needed to make long-term commitments.' The imperfect progress in marginalized urban areas such as these two *comunas* bodes well for the consolidation of security, improved quality of life, and the promotion of long-term development in Colombia. The broader lesson for other countries and cities facing similar challenges is that leadership and reforms do have the potential to improve the quality of life, even in the most humble and previously troubled areas.

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