Can local governments reduce urban poverty? The case of Medellín, Colombia

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Informality: Re-Viewing Latin American Cities
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Can local governments reduce urban poverty? The case of Medellín, Colombia

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Linea K: Paseo Urbano Andalucía Calle 107

2005
Photo: Medellín Municipality

2007
Photo: Julio D Davila

Local government in the dominant development discourse

- The State under the 'New Political Economy' (e.g. WDR 1997 & 2002)
  - State functions must be disaggregated into market-like transactions
  - 'Efficient transactions' depend on three ingredients:
    - Information (e.g. about prices)
    - Enforcement of laws & contracts
    - Competition
  - Central government bureaucracy seen as poorly-informed and anti-competitive: too distant from local realities
  - Devolution of decision making to local agents desirable - provided they 'inform, enforce and compete'
  - Informality must be restrained: no guarantee of efficient transactions

- 1980s/90s: 'De-statisation' of the central state
  - Horizontally: greater participation of the private sector and community/NGO organisations
  - Vertically: decentralisation to lower tiers of government

(Sources: World Bank WDR, Pierre, Swyngedouw, Nickson, Porter)

The rise of the entrepreneurial local government

- Local government is crucial in people's everyday life

- Local government in Northern Europe:
  - Relatively decentralised system
  - Wider range of functions & greater discretion
  - Mainly concerned with local service delivery
  - Local leaders (usually head of elected council) expected to be good managers of collective goods

Local government in Southern Europe & Latin America
  - More centralised national systems
  - Weaker local institutions
  - Limited functions (though broader in some parts of LA)
  - Leaders' main role is to lobby central government for more resources
  - Hence: high concentration of power in a singe individual
  - **'Entrepreneurial city' and emergence of mayor as city's 'CEO'**

The research project

Main aim:

To examine the links between mobility, poverty reduction, social inclusion and urban integration. It seeks to learn systematically from a critical assessment of a set of interventions fostered by the local government of Medellín, Colombia's second largest city (population 3.5 million).

Medellín: A complex social, political and topographical environment

- City economy grew rapidly in 1950s-1970s on the basis of manufacturing (textiles, garments), property speculation and financial services

- Society marked by rapid in-migration & forced displacement, poverty, and deep socio-economic inequality

- 1980s: appearance of drug cartels – highest murder rate in the world

- Rise in local gang culture (linked to drug business, urban guerrillas, paramilitary groups)

- 1990s: Poorest 'comunas' no-go areas for police or military

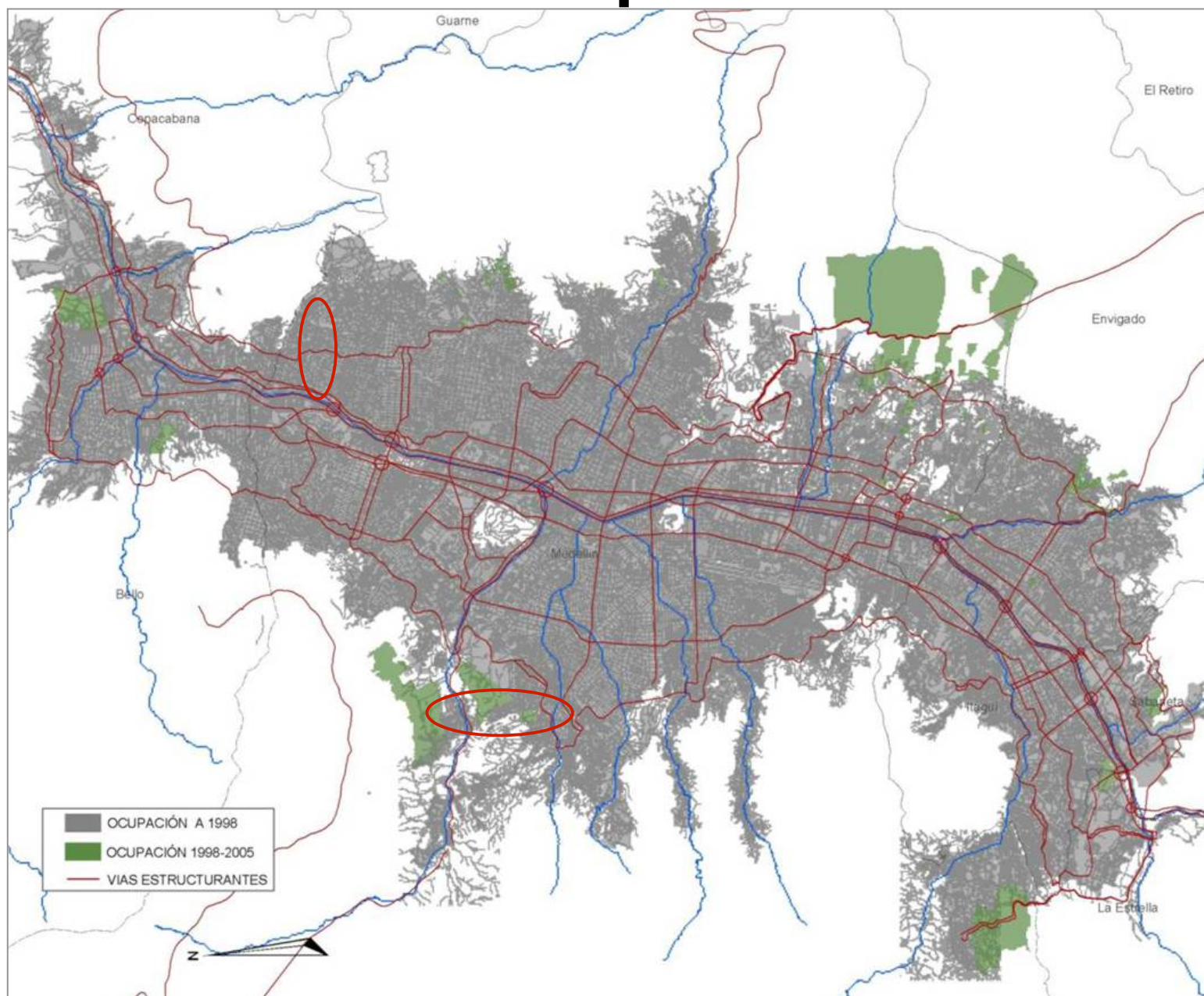- Informal settlements in unstable locations: up to mid-2000s official discourse aimed at underlining consolidation

Medellín: Urban expansion 1985-1998

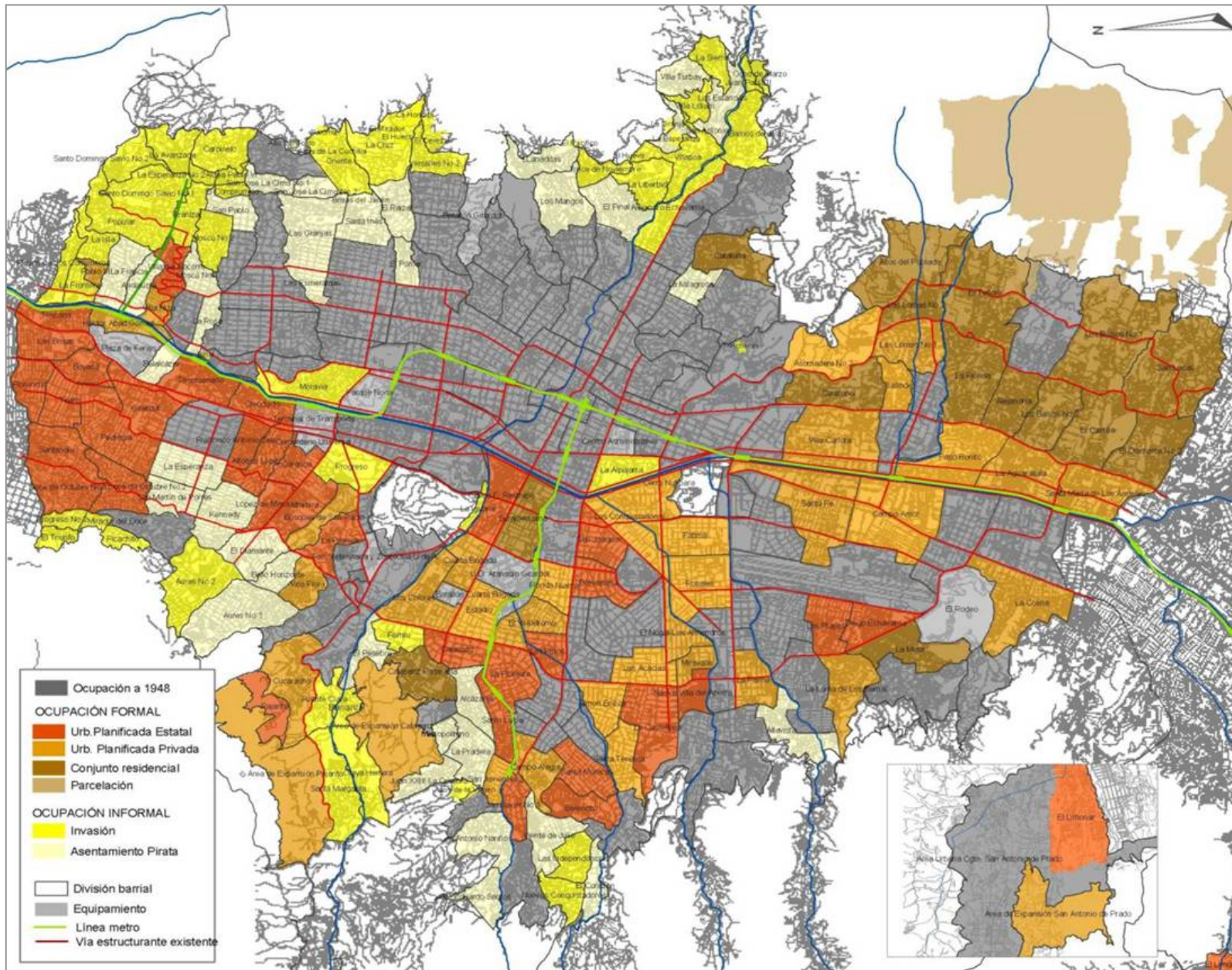OCUPACIÓN A 1985
OCUPACIÓN 1985-1998
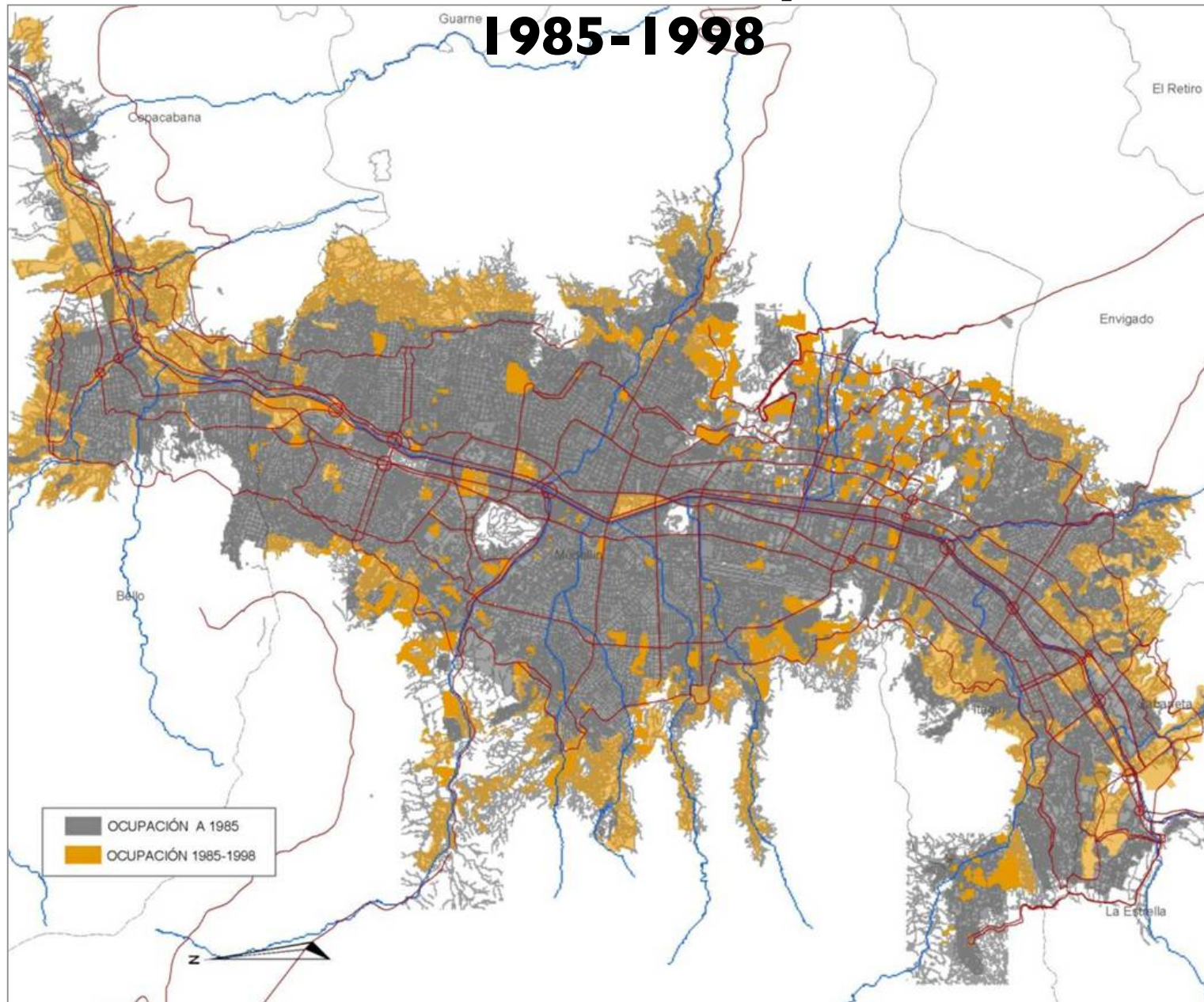
Source: Davila et al. (2006)
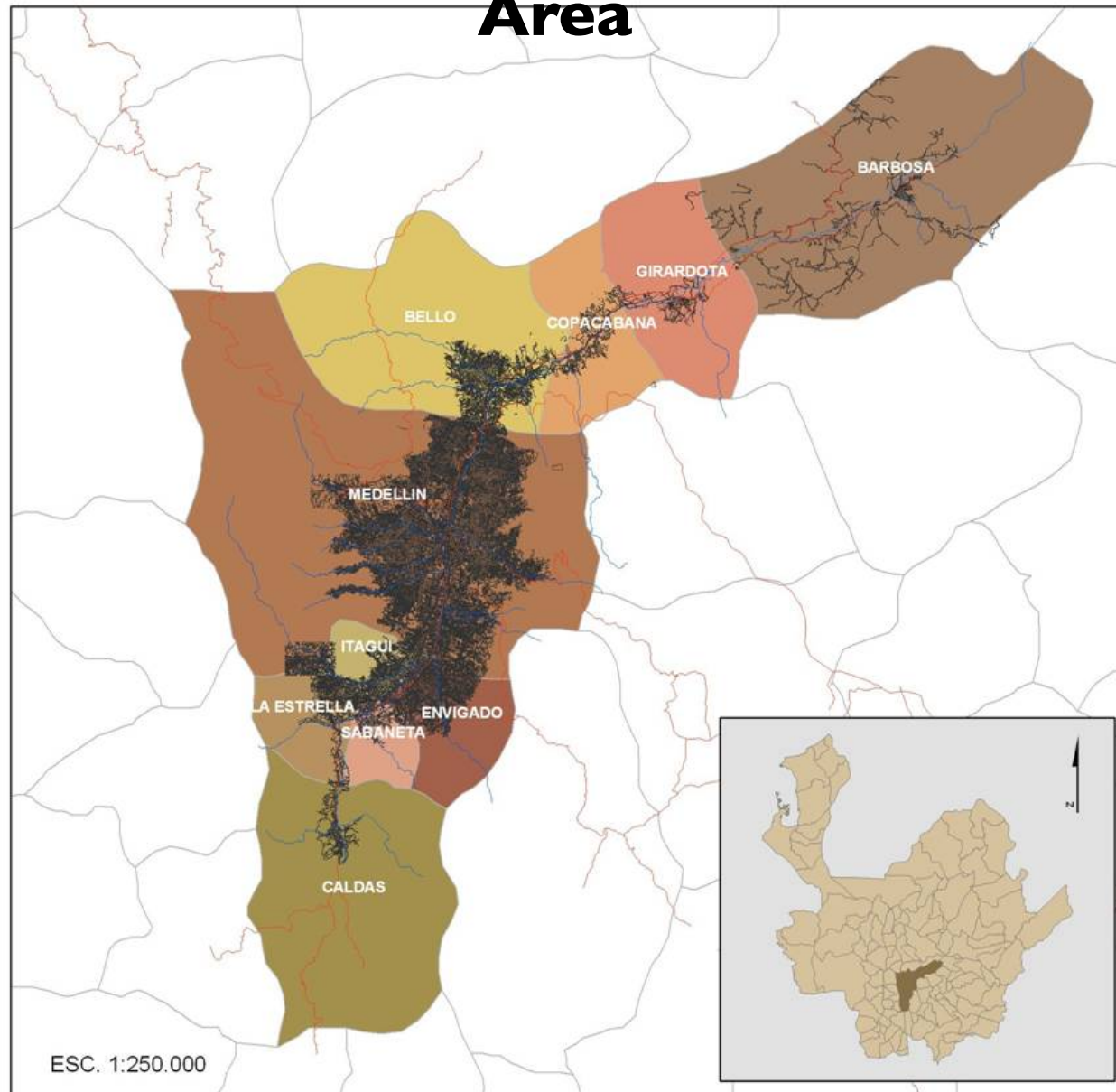
Medellín: Urban expansion 1998-2005

Source: Davila et al. (2006)

Medellín: Formal and informal land

Source: Davila et al. (2006)

Municipalities in Medellín Metropolitan Area

Source: Davila et al. (2006)

The local government in Medellín

- Long history of local corruption & clientelism
- Medellin municipality: largest and richest in metropolitan area
- Municipal mayors elected since 1988
- Powerful local institutions, not privatised – surplus (profits?) ploughed back into the city, e.g.:
  - Empresas Públicas de Medellín
  - Metro Company
- Medellín municipality: progressive or 'new corporatism' serving local interests?
- Three mayors:
  - Luis Pérez (2001-2003): maverick populist; built first Metrocable
  - Sergio Fajardo (2004-2007): city competitiveness, urban upgrading ('historical debt with the poor') & participatory budgeting
  - Alonso Salazar (2008-2011): continues Fajardo's policies

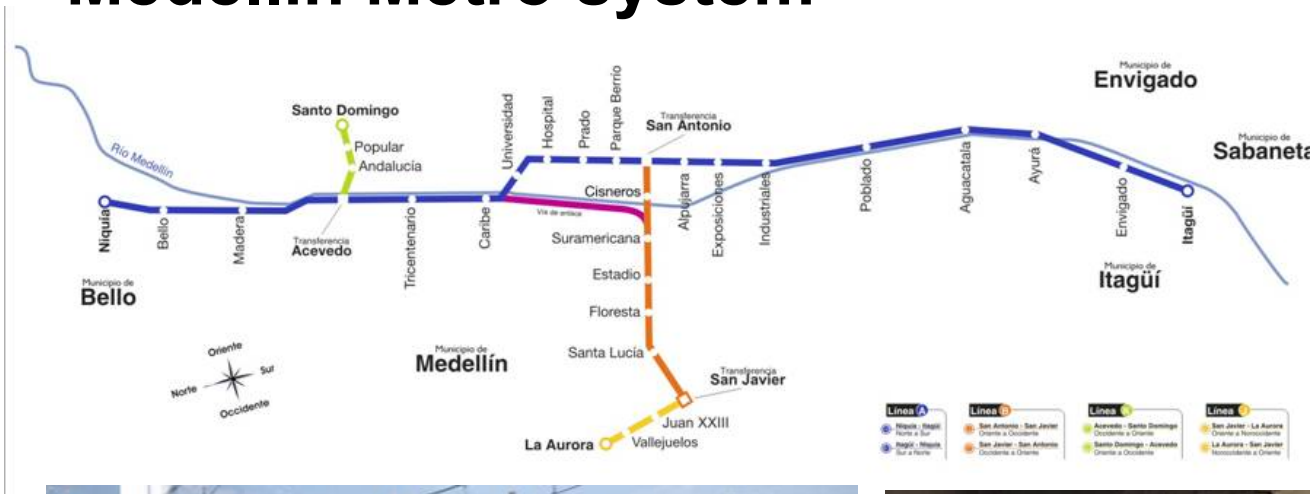# HQ Empresas Publicas de Medellín (EPM)

EPM Public Library

Global values:
Medellín as a corporate-friendly city

Medellin Metro system

Metro:
State commercial
enterprise:
- 50% municipality +
- 50% province

The *Metrocables*: Basic features

- The *comunas* served by Metrocables are among the poorest and most conflictual in the city
- 44-62% of *comuna* residents are tenants
- Two *Metrocable* lines linked to the (surface) metro system:
  - *Linea K (Santo Domingo Savio):* opened 2004
    - Comunas 1 & 2 (230,000 inh.)
    - Length: 2 km (rises 400 m from valley); 3 stations
    - 3,000 passengers/hour
    - Funding: Medellin municipality 55% + Metro 45%
  - *Linea J (San Javier):* opened 2008
    - Comunas 7 & 13 (295,000 inh.)
    - Length: 2.3 km; 3 stations
    - 3,000 passengers/hour
    - Funding: Medellin municipality 73% + Metro 27%

Monthly income of household head (US$) - 2007

Ingreso Promedio Jefe de Hogar en USD (TRM: $1800)
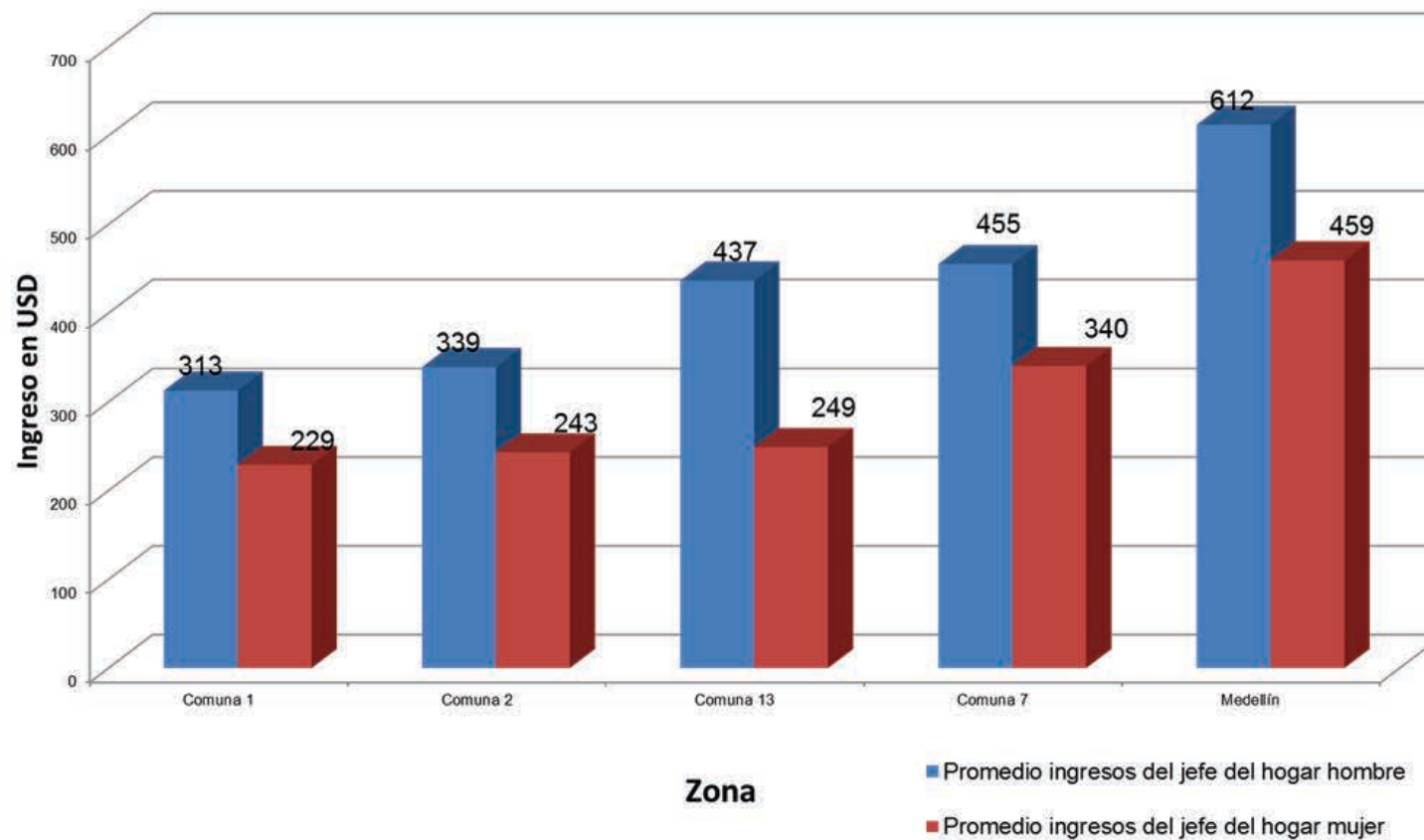
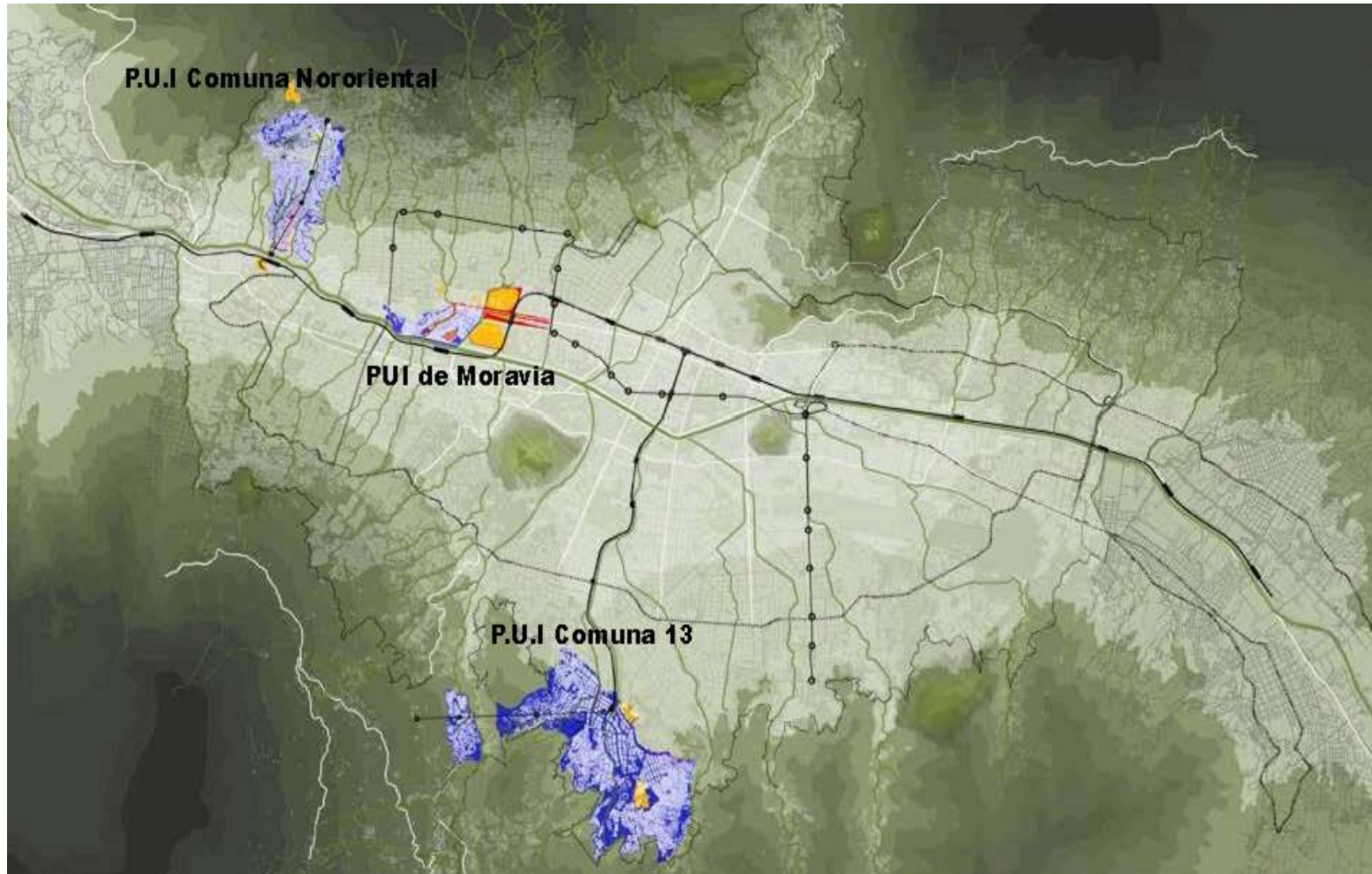Source: Departamento Administrativo de Planeación, Encuesta de Calidad de Vida Medellín 2007. (US$=COL1.800)

The *Metrocables*:
One element in a larger set of interventions

- Urban upgrading (Proyectos de estructuración urbana - PUI) in the area of Santo Doming Savio (planned for San Javier):
  - Upgrading of public spaces & new parks
  - Large new public library (donated by Spain)
  - New housing projects (with little relocation of households to other neighbourhoods)
  - Separate cable car line to Parque Arví – cloud forest park (at 2,600 m a.s.l.): growing tourist attraction

- Implies a U-turn in official discourse on settlement consolidation in unstable locations
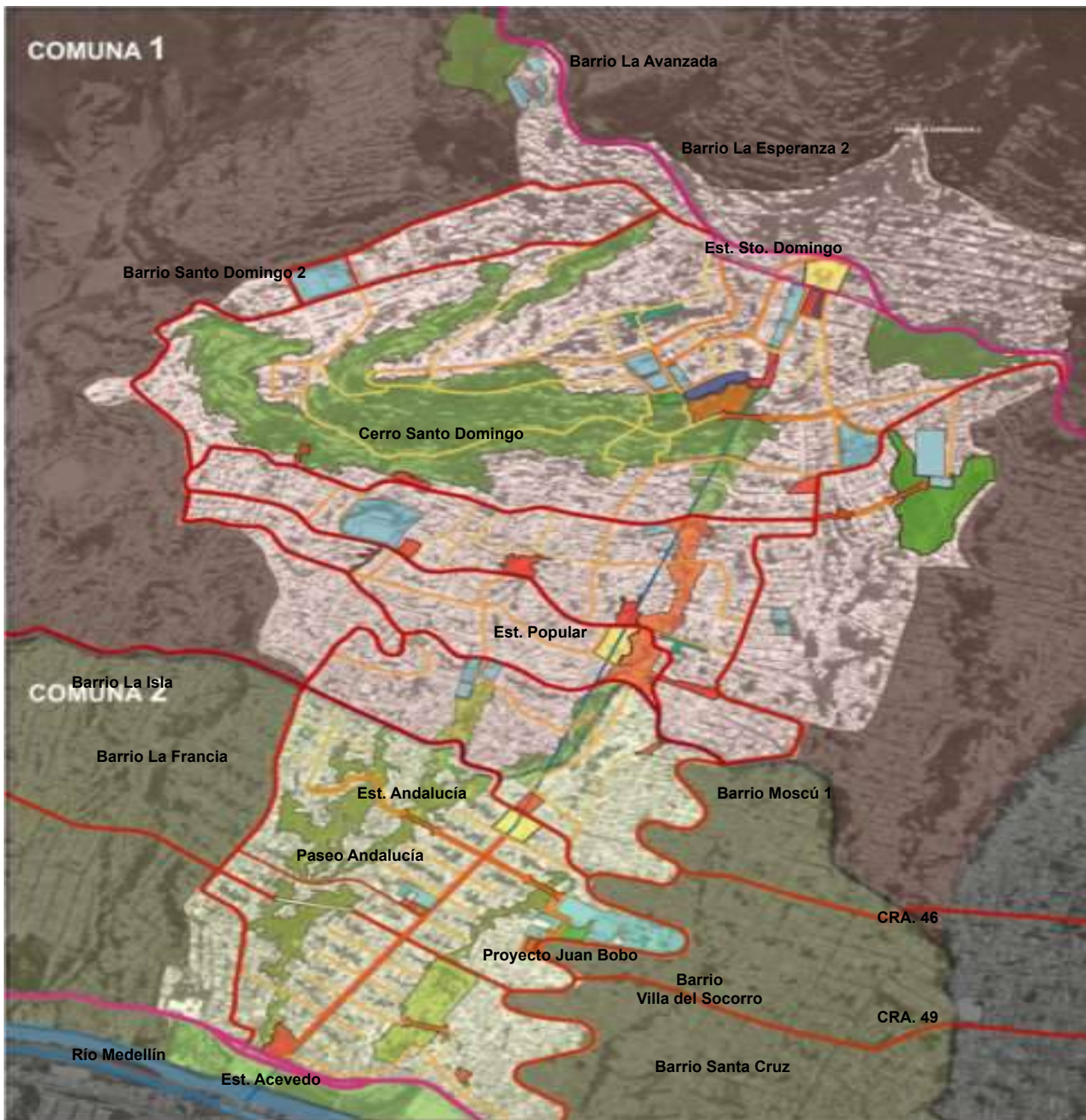
Proyectos Urbanos Integrales (PUI)

Source: Medellín Municipality 2009

COMUNA 1

Barrio La Avanzada

Barrio La Esperanza 2

Est. Sto. Domingo

Barrio Santo Domingo 2

Cerro Santo Domingo

Est. Popular

Barrio La Isla

COMUNA 2

Barrio La Francia

Est. Andalucía

Barrio Moscú 1

Paseo Andalucía

CRA. 46

Proyecto Juan Bobo

Barrio
Villa del Socorro

CRA. 49

Río Medellín

Est. Acevedo

Barrio Santa Cruz

CONVENCIONES GENERALES

SISTEMA METRO. Línea A.
SISTEMA METROCABLE. Línea K.

ESPACIO PÚBLICO Y MOVILIDAD

MEJORAMIENTO DE CALLES ARTERIAS URBANAS PRINCIPALES
MEJORAMIENTO DE CALLES ARTERIAS URBANAS SECUNDARIAS
MEJORAMIENTO DE CALLES DE CONTINUIDAD URBANA
MEJORAMIENTO DE CALLES DE CONEXIÓN BARRIAL
MEJORAMIENTO DE CALLES VECINALES
MEJORAMIENTO Y CONSTRUCCIÓN DE CAMINOS Y SENDEROS PEATONALES
PLAN DE PUENTES : PUENTES VEHICULARES
PLAN DE PUENTES : PUENTES PEATONALES
CONSTRUCCIÓN DE PARQUES ZONALES
CONSTRUCCIÓN DE PARQUES LINEALES DE QUEBRADA
CONSTRUCCIÓN DE PARQUES BARRIALES
CONSTRUCCIÓN DE PARQUES VECINALES Y MIRADORES

CONSOLIDACIÓN HABITACIONAL

PLAN DE REASENTAMIENTO
PLAN TERRAZAS
CONSTRUCCIÓN DE EDIFICIOS MIXTOS

EQUIPAMIENTOS COLECTIVOS

MEJORAMIENTO DE EQUIPAMIENTOS COLECTIVOS
CONSTRUCCIÓN DE EQUIPAMIENTOS COLECTIVOS
MEJORAMIENTO DE LAS CENTRALIDADES BARRIALES
CONSOLIDACIÓN DE NUEVAS CENTRALIDADES
OBRAS DE EXPANSIÓN

Fuente: Alcaldía de Medellín, Empresa de Desarrollo Urbano-EDU.

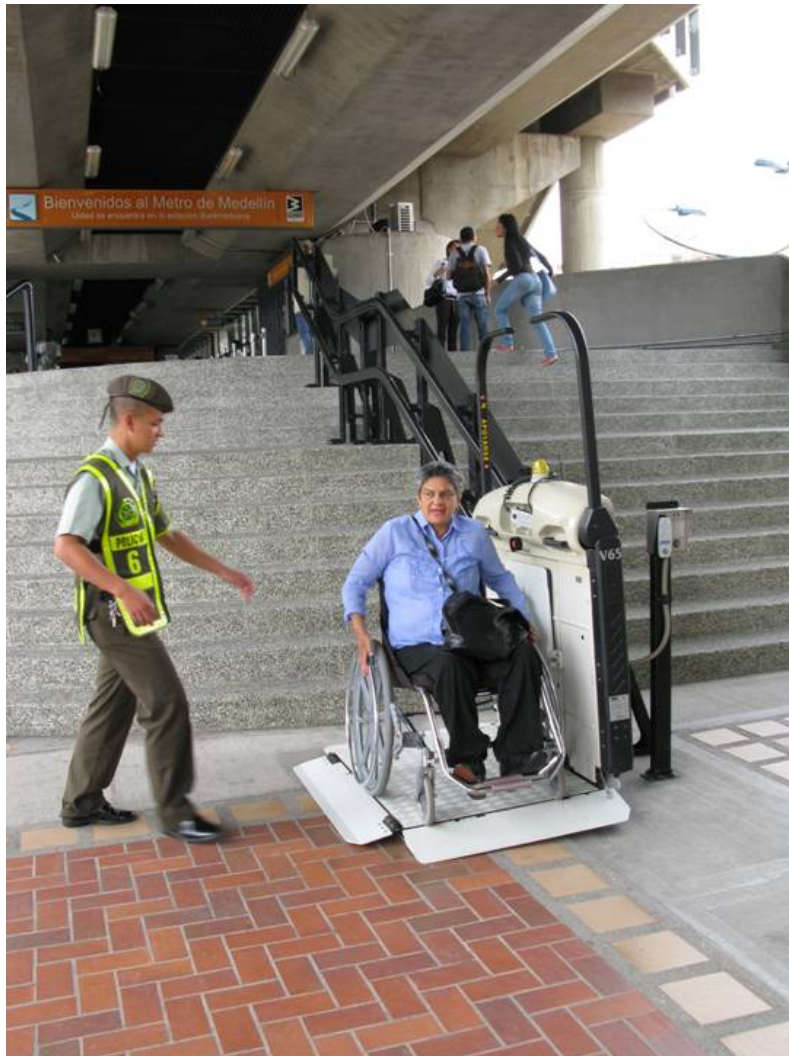# Upgrading along the *Juan Bobo* stream
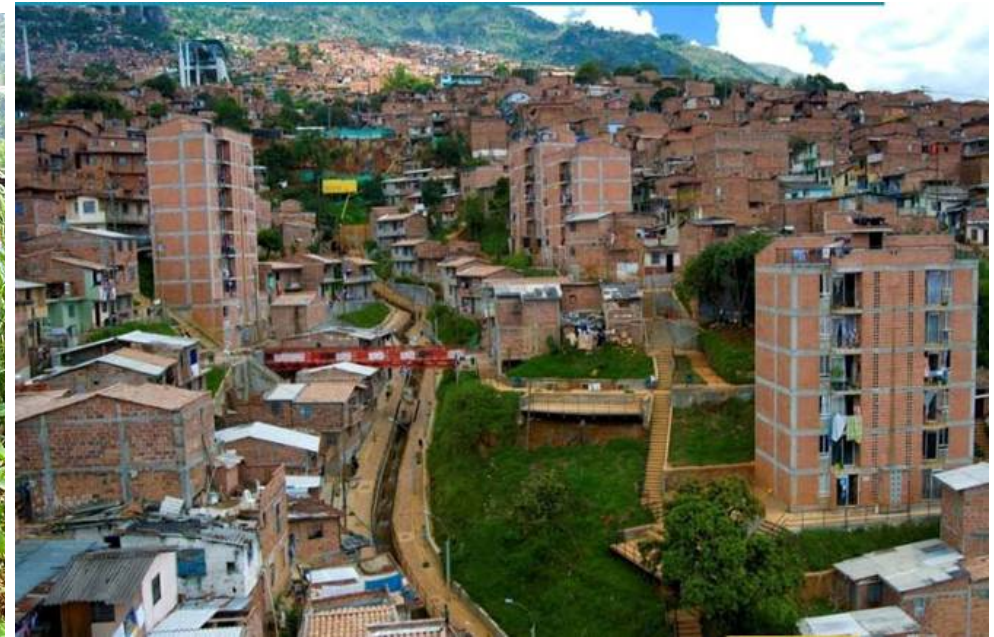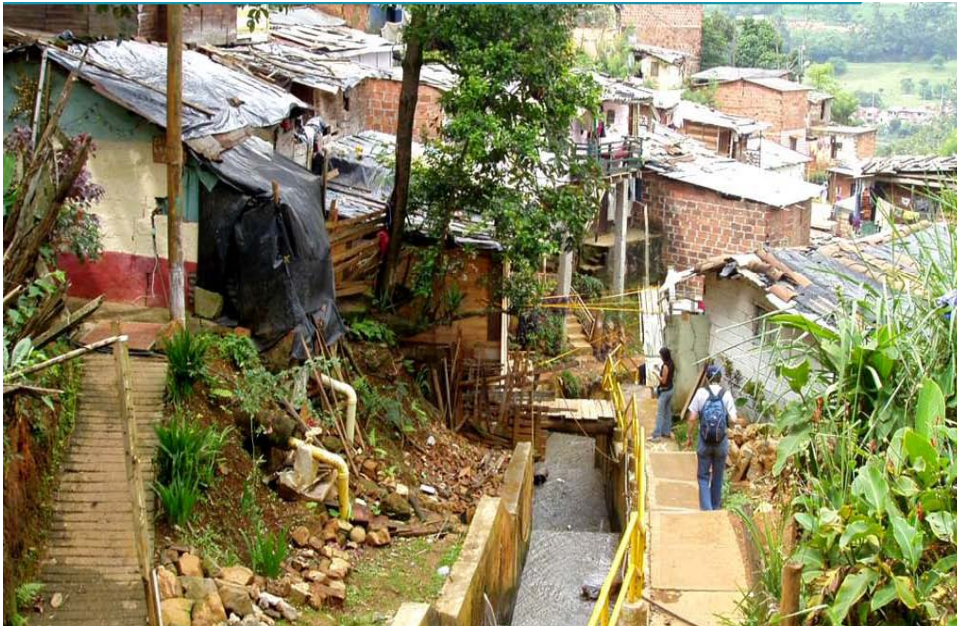
Photos: Medellín Municipality

Upgrading of public spaces
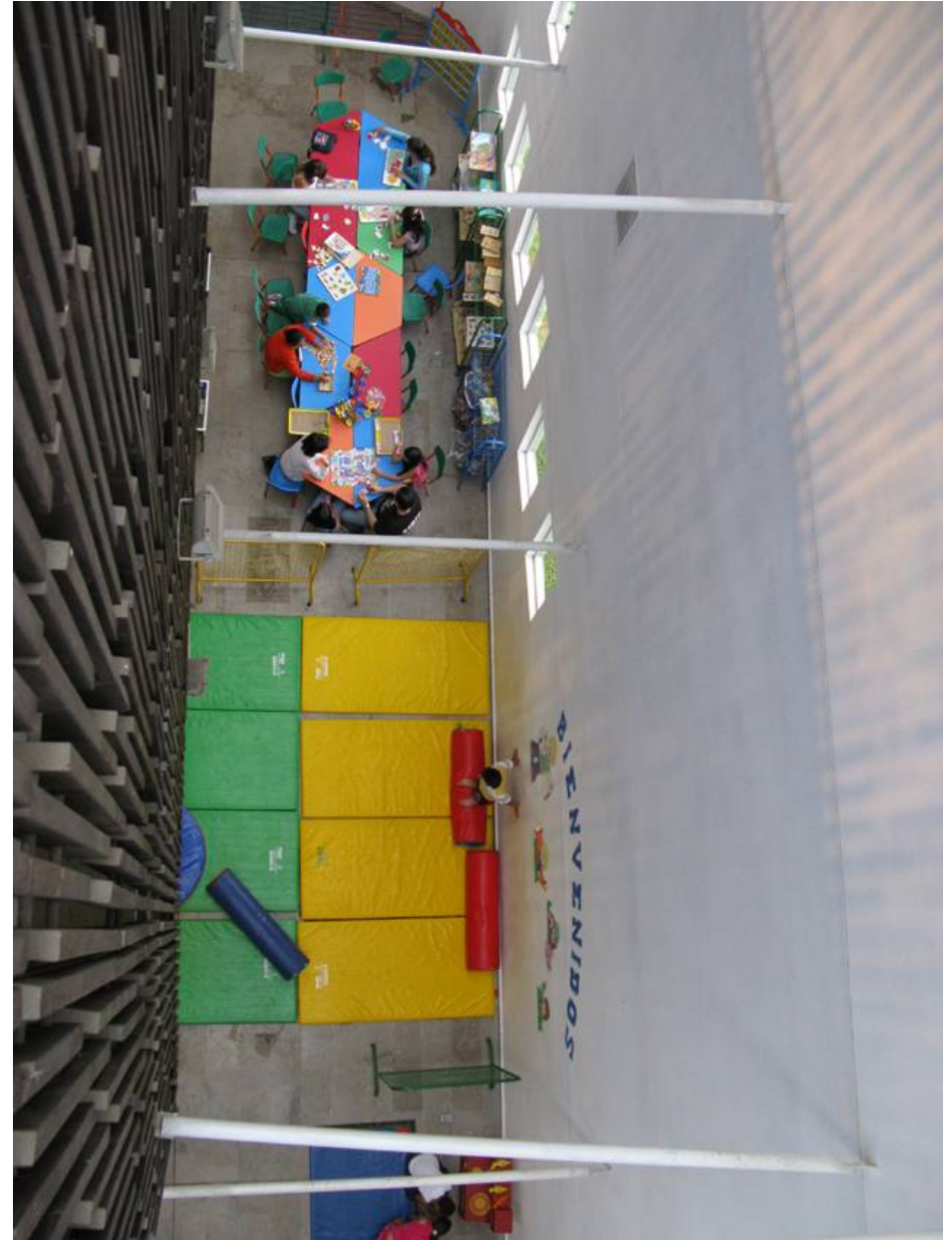
Cultura Metro

León de Greiff: A poet from Medellin
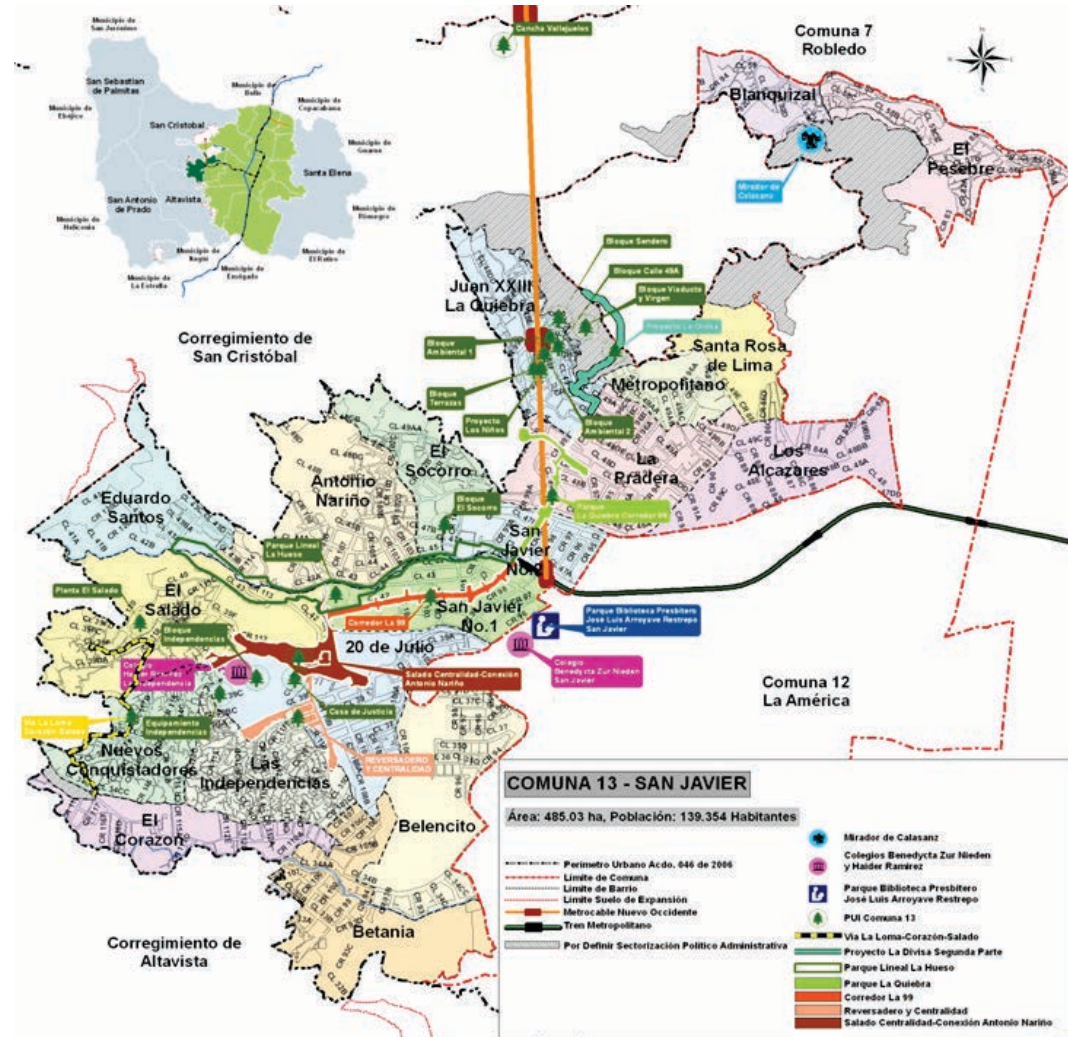
Biblioteca España

Biblioteca España

Parque Arví cable car

Parque Arví cable car

San Javier line: *Comunas* 13 & 7

San Javier to La Aurora (Línea J)

Videos: San Javier 1 & San Javier 2

Economic activity and public investment (PUI) in and around *Línea K*, 2002-2010:

- Capital investment in Metrocable: ca. US$32 million

- Investment in public space and other public facilities: ca. US$225 million

- Increased open space: from 0.65 to 1.48 m²/inhabitant

- Increase in the number of local businesses: from 700 to 1,000

- 92% of jobs in public works generated locally

- 18 new parks, 4 new pedestrian bridges

Source: Alcaldía de Medellín. La Transformación de Medellín, una acción social. Carlos Mario Rodríguez-Arquitecto-Urbanista. 2009

Has Medellin reduced poverty levels?

- Research project launched in September 2010, so evidence is limited so far (and applies largely to *Línea K*)

- Mobility improved: time to reach main metro line for residents in highest areas reduced from 1½ hours to 7 minutes

- Workers rate Metrocables more highly than young people (who rate mobile phones more highly)

- Facilities looked after by people (*Cultura Metro*): cultural imposition?

- Evidence of increased land values and rents: who captures the surplus?

- Tourism as a new source of income

Video: Ferney & Andres

What are we looking for?

- To document the process from institutional, technical and urban form angles

- Have mobility, quality of life & livelihood opportunities for residents and small businesses increased /reduced? For whom?

- How participatory are PUIs? Do they create new spaces to overcome clientelism and deepening local democracy?

- Does the change in status (from *barrio precario* to tourist attraction) lead to increased sense of belonging and 'citizenship'?

- Lessons for cities in Colombia and elsewhere

Project website: www.ucl.ac.uk/dpu/metrocables