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Hip-Hop, Medellín and Social Change

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Hip-Hop, Medellín and Social Change

A Thesis Presented to:

The Faculty of the College of Arts and Sciences

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

MASTER OF ARTS

In

INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

By

Verónica Henao Posada

December 2013

UNIVERSITY OF SAN FRANCISCO

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December 2, 2013

UNIVERSITY OF SAN FRANCISCO

Under the guidance and approval of the committee, and approval by all the members, this thesis has been accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree.

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Abstract:

This study explores the ways in which the Hip-hop movement is producing social change in Medellín, Colombia. Looking specifically at a Hip-hop school called *Cuatro Elementos Skuela*, which exists autonomously and with very little state support in the Medellín neighborhood of Aranjuez, I argue that young people are contributing to the reconstruction of the city's social, cultural and economic fabric. I start by explaining the historical context of Medellín, describing the different sets of conflicts that unleashed high levels of violence and caused the fragmentation of the social, cultural and economic fabric. Moreover, I review the role of the government and its advances in cultural policy, identifying some gaps in state action. The study then presents a brief history of the Hip-hop movement, and its transformative elements. It compares the context of Medellín in the 1990's with the Hip-hop movement in the South Bronx of New York in the 1970s, showing similarities in the conditions faced by urban youth. Finally, through different theories of social change, including theories about identity and culture, participatory communications and art, and culture and peace-making, the study shows how a group of young people are supporting themselves with creativity and entrepreneurial spirit, offering other young boys and girls in marginalized neighborhoods an alternative and healthy way to spend their free time and to acquire skills to become professional street artists; and helping to restore the city's social fabric by offering cultural and meeting spaces to the community.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

On Thursday May 17, 2001, an explosion created a mushroom cloud in *El Parque Lleras* (Lleras Park), located in the *Comuna 14*, also known as *El Poblado*, in Medellín. *El Parque Lleras* is usually a dynamic place, full of restaurants, nightclubs and artisans selling their crafts. That night, at approximately 10:02 pm, thousands of people ran desperately looking for help through the rubble-filled streets. The explosion was caused by a car full of explosives more powerful than dynamite, which was parked in one of the corners of the park.¹ Eight people died in the blast, and around a hundred were injured.² Seven of those killed were in a bar located in the same corner where the car exploded,³ and the eighth person was a street vendor who had been selling hot dogs in the same place for several years.

Local authorities said that a gang called *La Terraza* was responsible for the attack. Apparently the guerrilla group FARC, in revenge against the paramilitary leader Carlos Castaño, hired *La Terraza* to assassinate him. The bomb was not just a warning message as had occurred a few months previously in a shopping center at a less busy time; on this occasion it was intended to cause mass slaughter. More than 2,000 people, mostly young, were in *El Parque Lleras*, a place that for some had become one of the symbols of prosperity of Medellín.⁴ I happened to be one of those people that were at *El Lleras* that night in May 2001. A friend and I were driving around the park. Thirty seconds before

¹ “Conmemoran diez años del carro bomba en el Poblado, en Medellín,” *Caracol Radio*, May 20, 2011, accessed November 23, 13, <http://www.caracol.com.co/noticias/actualidad/conmemoran-diez-anos-del-carro-bomba-en-el-poblado-en-medellin/20110520/nota/1475659.aspx>

² “Conmemoran diez años del carro bomba en el Poblado, en Medellín.”

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ “Medellín muestra cómo los paisas están en medio de la Guerra entre Castaño y La Terraza,” *Semana*, June 18, 2001, accessed November 25, 2013. <http://www.semana.com/nacion/articulo/noche-horror/46350-3>

the incident, we had just passed by the corner where the bomb exploded. We were fortunate to get out alive and without physical injuries.

The violent attack in *El Parque Lleras* shows how civilians are often the major target of war and intrastate conflicts.⁵ Particularly in Medellín, different sets of conflicts, including the confrontation between gangs and armed groups, have unleashed high levels of violence. Some consequences of the war to the city's inhabitants are murders, massive attacks, kidnappings, disappearances, forced displacements and extortions. In fact, in the early 90's Medellín was considered the most violent city in Colombia and in all of Latin America.⁶

Over the years, there has been a reduction in crime, according to official statistics. However, these numbers don't indicate the deeper effects that the armed conflicts have caused in people's daily lives;⁷ how war produces collective terror and chaos with people fearing to leave their houses and interact with their neighbors.⁸ The situation described is still present in Medellín. Nevertheless, many different social actors have become concerned and are acting to reduce the levels of violence and restore the city's social fabric.

Since the 1960's, Medellín has been beset with violence, a national conflict that preceded the local confrontations of gangs and armed groups, forced the migration of many families from the countryside into the cities to escape the violence and look for employment opportunities. However, due to Medellín's physical location in a valley, and

⁵ Clemencia Rodríguez, *Lo que le vamos quitando a la guerra. Medios ciudadanos en contextos de conflicto armado en Colombia* (Bogotá: Centro de Competencia en Comunicación para América Latina, 2008), 12.

⁶ Pilar Riaño Alcalá, *Dwellers of memory: youth and violence in Medellín, Colombia* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Publishers, 2006), 2.

⁷ Alonso Salazar J., *Born to die in Medellín*, trans. Nick Caistor (London: Latin America Bureau Ltda., 1990), 1.

⁸ Rodríguez, *Lo que le vamos quitando a la Guerra*, 12-13.

the lack of available land to build, many of these families were forced to settle up on the hills in areas of high risk for landslides. Additionally, the new settlements lacked water, electricity, sewage infrastructure, schooling and employment; and it took many years for the government to provide basic facilities and public services to these new neighborhoods.⁹

It is under these circumstances that youth in poor and marginalized *barrios* began to engage in criminal activities due to economic difficulties, scarce education and job opportunities, and lack of healthy spaces to spend their free time. The various armed groups trained youth to use firearms, and taught them about war strategies.

Moreover, the drug cartels, which took hold at the end of the 1970s, also began to recruit youth as *sicarios* (hired killers). The development of the drug economy based on cocaine trafficking became one of the most powerful in the world.¹⁰ The latter was another major factor that increased the levels of violence, and contributed to the fragmentation of social relationships. The drug economy permeated all institutions of society including the government, the police, religion, entertainment, and the army.¹¹

On the other hand, a number of different cultural practices emerged among youth in Medellín parallel to the armed conflict and the growth of gangs, self-defense groups and militias. Youth engaged in cultural expressions such as poetry, graffiti art, rock, punk, rap, and metal, first as audience members in the 1960's and then as active producers in the 80s and 90's.¹² These counter-cultural or subcultural expressions are important

⁹ Riaño, *Dwellers of Memory*, 13

¹⁰ Alonso Salazar, *La Cola del Lagarto. Drogas y narcotráfico en la sociedad colombiana* (Medellín: Corporación Región, 1998) cited in Riaño, *Dwellers of Memory*, 6.

¹¹ Riaño, *Dwellers of Memory*, 45.

¹² Carlos Rincón, *Mapas y Pliegues. Ensayos de cartografía cultural y de lectura del barroco* (Santafé de Bogotá: Colcultura, 1991) and Jorge Giraldo, "Rock e ideología," in *Medellín en vivo. La Historia del Rock*. Omar Urán, ed. 12-28. Medellín: IPC, 1997) cited in: Riaño, *Dwellers of Memory*, 3.

movements and musical projects¹³ and have become a source of cultural richness for the city.¹⁴ For instance, it is less likely that youth participants in these movements will get involved in armed groups. Additionally, thanks to these artistic movements different community initiatives have arisen, which are contributing to the reconstruction of the city's social fabric. In this research, I will look at a proposal that emerged from grassroots efforts, and focuses on youth from underprivileged neighborhoods.

In 2002, *Cuatro Elementos Skuela* (Four Elements School) was born in the Neighborhood of Aranjuez in Medellín. This volunteer school is led by the members of the Hip-hop collective *Crew Peligrosos* (Dangerous Crew), who starting at 7 pm every night, convert a public school into a place full of creativity and camaraderie. They teach free classes in breakdancing, graffiti writing, MCing (Master of Ceremonies), and Deejaying, the four elements of Hip-hop. Hundreds of young boys and girls from Aranjuez and from other sectors of the city attend classes 3-4 times a week, and there are some who go every day. "This is something important in a place where there are no alternatives, and no institutional offers,"¹⁵ said a professor of the school.

Cuatro Elementos Skuela also organizes shows in parks and other public spaces throughout the city. The events have become a meeting and recreational space for people of all ages. Even grandfathers enjoy watching the youth spin on their heads and make contortions in the air. The initiative has also crossed borders. The professors organize tours around the country, which give kids and young adults enrolled at the school the opportunity to travel and gain skills in other scenarios. Moreover, some professors travel

¹³ Riaño, *Dwellers of memory*, 160.

¹⁴ Ómar Alonso Urán Arenas, "La juventud: De movimiento social a conjuntos de acción juvenil diferenciados," in: *La Ciudad en Movimiento. Movimientos Sociales, Democracia y Cultura en Medellín y el Área Metropolitana del Valle de Aburrá* (Medellín: Instituto Popular de Capacitación, 2000), 290.

¹⁵ Henry Arteaga, interview with author, May 23, 2013.

to different regions of Colombia to share their knowledge of hip-hop, especially the b-boy dance,¹⁶ and learn from other groups.

Looking specifically at the case of *Cuatro Elementos Skuela* in the *barrio* Aranjuez, I argue that youth are transforming their lives through hip-hop, and are filling the absence of state action and producing social change in their neighborhood. My research question is: how are youth involved in the hip-hop movement contributing to restore the city's social, cultural and economic fabric? Specifically, I argue that Hip-hop offers alternatives to urban youth to joining illegal armed groups or conducting delinquent activities. Instead, many youth involved in the movement follow a philosophy of respect for others and community life, thanks to its non-violent discourse; hence the movement has contributed to peace-building processes. Secondly youth are acquiring skills in the arts through hip-hop, and finding alternatives to support themselves economically as professional artists. And thirdly, the hip-hop movement opens up cultural spaces for the community, which helps restore social relationships deeply affected by the violence.

1.1 Rationale for the study

In May 2013 I traveled to Medellín to conduct research for my thesis. I was interested in learning about the artistic and cultural initiatives in the city, which involved youth in poorer neighborhoods. I wanted to explore the ways in which art empowers young boys and girls immersed in an atmosphere of violence. Moreover, Medellín is internationally renowned as a center of municipal support for citizen's projects focused

¹⁶ B-boy is a term used to describe the breakdancers; breakdance is one of the four elements of the hip-hop movement.

on cultural and artistic expression, utilizing visual art, music, theater and dance, as well as hip-hop, graffiti, and poetry.

Completely unplanned, the week I arrived, a bus called *Bus de la no Violencia* (Non Violence Bus) was traveling across Medellín bringing people together to different sites associated with violence. The initiative was aimed at utilizing memory and memorialization as a way to heal communities' pain in post-conflict spaces.¹⁷ The bus, designed by a group of artists, was led by the city and other governmental and non-governmental organizations during the month of May.¹⁸

I got on the *Bus de la no Violencia* with a notebook and camera, seeking to document the experience as an outside observer. What I ended up experiencing was my own process of remembering and making sense of the violence affecting my hometown. I met other people who were victims and survivors of the conflict; a woman decided to share her own suffering, and talked through her tears about her two sons, who she had lost as a result of the conflicts. Coincidentally, the bus' final stop that day was el *Parque Lleras* (Lleras Park) the place where a bomb had exploded twelve years before, leaving eight people dead and around a hundred injured, which I had personally witnessed. I shared my memories of that night and listened to other people's stories, who also were present the day of the attack. Today, as I write this, I feel I have released a feeling of fear deeply rooted in this past experience, thanks to having the opportunity to remember and talk about the incident. The *Bus de la No Violencia* is one example of proposals that are being carried out in Medellín to reconstruct the city's social fabric.

¹⁷ "Remembering and narrating conflict. Resources for doing historical memory work," accessed December 2, 2013, <http://reconstructinghistoricalmemory.com>

¹⁸ The bus was based on *La Piel de la Memoria* (The skin of Memory) a project led by the anthropologist Pilar Riaño and the artist Suzan Lacy, in Barrio Antioquia in Medellín, in 1999. See: Suzanne Lacy and Pilar Riaño Alcalá, "Medellín, Colombia: Reinhabiting Memory," *Art Journal* no. 4 (2006): 112.

Furthermore, I visited several other projects around the city, including: *Pasolini*, a collective that empowers groups of people through training in audiovisual production; *Casa Morada* which provides a space for the community to develop artistic, cultural, media, and other investigative projects, and offers classes in music, drawing, graffiti art, etc.; *La Fundación Barro de Medellín*, which leads a musical based on a book with the same name about two young boys in a poor *barrio* in Medellín, with a cast made up of kids from different sectors of the city; *Centro de Desarrollo Cultural Moravia*, a cultural center in one of the most underprivileged neighborhoods of Medellín, which emerged from the community and was made a reality with the support of different governmental and non-governmental organizations and the private sector; and *Centro de Desarrollo Cultural Moravia* which offers spaces of encounter as well different facilities for the promotion of arts and culture.

Finally, I visited *Cuatro Elementos Skuela* a hip-hop school in the neighborhood of Aranjuez, which I chose to be my case study. I was fascinated by all the initiatives above; however, to narrow the scope of my project I chose only the latter. Esta *escuelita* (this school) captured my heart and became a source of personal inspiration for generating social change. Moreover, I chose to focus on the school because of my curiosity about hip-hop; and the richness of my encounter with the participants and their initiative. I decided to focus on this school, one of several in Medellín, in order to deeply examine the effects of one project in a specific community or neighborhood.

I have divided the study into seven chapters: (1) Introduction, (2) Literature review, (3) Violence and the armed conflict, (4) Culture and peace building in Colombia (5) Change through Hip-hop, (6) Discussion, and (7) Conclusions and Recommendations.

The first chapter includes a basic presentation, rationale for the study, summary of the literature review, and the methodology used to gather and present the information.

In the second chapter, I review a body of social change literature. I start by highlighting the work of several authors who describe the situation of violence in Medellín and how war has caused the fragmentation of human relationships. I suggest how improving the social fabric might look, and I talk about the cultural changes brought about by globalization in relationship with youth. Second, I examine theories on culture, communications and social change, and especially identity and culture; the participatory communications for social change framework; and art and culture for peace processes. Lastly, I discuss the contemporary literature dealing with cultural entrepreneurship, creative clusters, and the public-private partnership model.

Chapter three and four present the context of Medellín in the social, economic and cultural spheres. In Chapter Three I examine the successive sets of conflicts during the past sixty years that have caused continual economic crisis and fragmentation of the social fabric. Moreover, I describe the context of the *Comuna 4*, also known as Aranjuez, which houses the initiative I will be looking at closely. Chapter Four presents some advances in cultural policy at a local and national level as a strategy to peace building. I then highlight the main plans implemented by Medellín's past municipal administrations to restore the city's social and cultural fabric.

Chapter Five presents a brief history of the Hip-hop movement, how it arrived in Colombia and a description of its four elements. Second, I explore my case study, the Hip-hop School *Cuatro Elementos Skuela* in the Comuna 4, Aranjuez. I describe the

alliances with different organizations as part of the ways to support the initiative and discuss the different themes I found during my extended interviews.

In Chapter Six, I analyze the findings; I begin by showing the intersections between Medellín at the time where hip-hop started to flourish in the city with the origins of the Hip-hop movement in the South Bronx in the 1970s. I then compare the findings with the body of literature presented in Chapter two, discussing the possible ways in which *Cuatro Elementos Skuela* may be producing social and cultural change. I discuss the changes produced by the initiative in relation to the city's social, cultural and economic fabric. Finally, in Chapter Seven I present the conclusions and recommendations for future research.

My goal with this study is to describe a process led by a group of young people at the grassroots level that is producing social change from the ground up in the neighborhood of Aranjuez in Medellín. This study could be used as reference material for cultural policy and development plans in the *Comuna 4* and other parts of the city. It will also be useful for governmental and non-governmental organizations (local and international) that work with youth in underprivileged neighborhoods with high levels of violence.

1.2 Presentation of the theoretical framework

I start by discussing the role played by young people as perpetrators and victims of violence in Medellín, and how the social fabric was torn apart. According to Alonso Salazar, Colombian journalist and writer, youth in marginalized neighborhoods face tremendous difficulties, including poor prospects for good schooling or legal employment, and continual domestic and street violence. Many youth instead join the drug cartels and

other illegal armed groups, and engage in criminal activities. Moreover although the crime statistics show high levels of violence, these do not indicate the depth of problems in the city, such as the fragmentation of human relationships.¹⁹ Populations that survive acts of armed violence, according to Colombian communications scholar Clemencia Rodríguez, experience “intense states of chaos, uncertainty and collective terror.”²⁰

However, scholars and planners have envisioned how the city’s social fabric would look if it were improved. Marta Elena Bravo, a Colombian researcher and cultural specialist has said that inhabitants of Medellín should be able to relate and communicate with others, establish ties, express culture through creating and building identity referents, and join group projects; as well as respect other people’s lifestyles.²¹ The latter, she explained is already evident in many neighborhoods where community groups and especially young leaders are working towards cultural creation, the promotion of artistic expressions, and gathering neighborhood cultural memories, as well as aesthetic expressions with enormous creative capacity.²²

I then discuss a set of relevant theories of social change. Cultural theorist and sociologist Stuart Hall said that coming into representation is the first step for any group on the margins to mobilize and resist,²³ and that cultural production is key in this process.²⁴ Similarly, Spanish/Colombian anthropologist Jesús Martín Barbero, suggests that it is necessary to recognize the role of young people as cultural producers; many youth in marginalized neighborhoods are appropriating new technologies to build cultural

¹⁹ Salazar, *Born to die in Medellín*, 1.

²⁰ Rodríguez, *Lo que le vamos quitando a la Guerra*, 12.

²¹ Marta Elena Bravo, *Itinerarios culturales 1985-2007, Voces y presencias* (Medellín, Editorial Lealín 2008), 441-442.

²² Bravo, *Itinerarios culturales 1985-2007*, 441-442.

²³ Hall, “Old and New Identities, Old and New Ethnicities,” 148-149.

²⁴ Diana Coryat, “Challenging the Silences and Omissions of Dominant Media: Youth-led Media Collectives in Columbia,” *Youth Media Reporter* 2, no. 1-6 (December 2008): 6.

communities and counter-hegemonic movements.²⁵ Additionally, Colombian anthropologist Pilar Riaño has highlighted how music is a mediating element in the formation of youth subcultures, in which urban youth find new ways to relate to the city and establish new relationships.²⁶

Clemencia Rodríguez has developed these ideas further using the framework of participatory communications. This framework was a response to the dominant paradigm of the U.S. and other western powers, in which local communities were considered the passive recipients of development programs and change was thought to be exerted top-down via western-trained change agents. Scholars and activists in Latin America and other regions of the global south instead developed a practice and theory that focused on local actors having a voice in decision-making, and focusing on the specific needs established internally by the community.²⁷ The participatory paradigm is based on horizontal communication between the group members, Riaño writes, and individual and collective empowerments are seen as fundamental goals.²⁸ Focusing on citizen's media in Colombia, Rodríguez explained that participatory communications could become a tool of cultural resistance against the negative impact of the armed conflict.

The research on music, and participatory communications parallels literature on art and culture for peace processes. American sociologist John Paul Lederach believes that to move away from cycles of violence it is important to look to creativity. "The aesthetics of social change proposes a simple idea: Building adaptive responsive

²⁵ Jesús Martín Barbero, "Comunicación y cultura mundo: nuevas dinámicas mundiales de lo cultural," *Signo y Pensamiento* 29, no. 57 (July 2010): 21.

²⁶ Pilar Riaño Alcalá. "Urban space and music in the formation of youth cultures: The case of Bogota, 1920-1980." *Studies In Latin American Popular Culture* 10, (January 1991): 87.

²⁷ Colin Sparks, *Globalization, development and the mass media* (Los Angeles, London: Sage, 2007): 22-55.

²⁸ Sparks, *Globalization, development and the mass media*, 23.

processes requires a creative act which at its core is more art than technique.”²⁹ With a similar understanding, Pilar Riaño and American Artist Suzanne Lacy led a public art-intervention project on a public bus in the neighborhood of Barrio Antioquia in Medellín; *La piel de la memoria*, or *Skin of Memory* was the precursor to the peace bus on which I travelled in May 2013. Their project demonstrated how public-art intervention is one way through which people can reconstruct memories of loss in a positive way, and address “grief, exorcising specific sorrows and (...) the possibility of forgiveness at the local level.”³⁰

The theories about art, and culture for peace processes can also be applied to Hip-hop. Clinical psychologist Don Elligan conducted a study about using rap, one of the four elements of the hip-hop movement, as psychotherapy. He concluded that rap could help urban youth facing community violence, institutional racism, poverty and other stressors,³¹ to release the stress and anxiety and deal with their frustrations, grieve and intense emotions.³²

Creativity is key to the different bodies of literature reviewed in this study. US radical cultural critic Robin Kelley examined hip-hop and other new cultural forms of urban youth as products of grassroots entrepreneurship.³³ He said, “some urban youth have turned certain forms of play into a source of income or a vocation.”³⁴ At the same time, although with very different reading than Kelley’s, an extensive literature on cultural entrepreneurship and creative clusters was popularized by urban studies theorist

²⁹ John Paul Lederach, *The Moral Imagination: The Art and Soul of Building Peace* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press 2005, 2005), 73.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Beats Rymes and Life, accessed December 2, 2013, <http://brl-inc.org>

³² Ibid.

³³ Robin D. G. Kelley, *Yo' mama's disfunkcional! Fighting the culture wars in urban America* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1997), 58.

³⁴ Kelley, *Yo' mama's disfunkcional!*, 10.

Richard Florida's idea of creative classes as a spur to economic growth through the creation of cultural organizations and cultural enterprises.³⁵ Moreover, based on the work of business management theorist Michael Porter, a creative cluster is the interconnection of different companies in a specific geographic area,³⁶ including non-profit enterprises, cultural institutions, individual artists among others; which generate different competitive advantages such as job growth, new firm formation, increased competitiveness, etc.³⁷

Municipalities around the world have begun to follow this work and lastly, I review a body of literature on the public private partnership model (PPP). According to the World Economic Forum, PPP consists in alliances between different actors that work together to reach a common goal or to fulfill a specific need.³⁸ British scholar Stephen P. Osborne explained that in the last 20 years, there has been the establishment of public-private partnerships (PPPs) as a key tool of public policy across the world.³⁹ Furthermore, some PPPs may bring opportunities to combat social exclusion by integrating the public and private components of local communities, and to reform local public services, "making them more accessible to the local community and more responsive to their needs."⁴⁰

1.3 Methodology

³⁵ Thomas H. Aageson, *Cultures and globalization*, 98.

³⁶ Michael Porter, "Clusters and the new Economic Competition," (Harvard Business Review, 2008): 76, cited in Susan Bagwell, "Creative clusters and city growth," *Creative Industries Journal* 1, no. 1 (March 2008): 32.

³⁷ Susan Bagwell, "Creative clusters and city growth," *Creative Industries Journal* 1, no. 1 (March 2008): 32-33.

³⁸ World Economic Forum, "Building on the Monterrey Consensus: The Growing Role of Public-Private Partnerships in Mobilizing Resources for Development," (Geneva: World Economic Forum, 2006) quoted in Sukhwinder Kaur, "Role of Public Private Partnerships in Education," *Indian Streams Research Journal* 3, no. 5 (June 2013): 2.

³⁹ Stephen P. Osborne, *Public-private Partnerships: Theory and Practice in International Perspective* (London: Routledge, 2000), 1.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 2.

In this section, I present the methodology used to gather the data for my research project. I chose a qualitative research approach, using primary as well as secondary sources. As my primary sources I used a combination of interviews, participant observation and the review of the groups extant cultural and social texts, including music, song lyrics, blogs and social media. Furthermore, since I grew up in Medellín, I have witnessed first hand several of the relevant events during the 1990's and the first decade of 2000. Hence, I have drawn from some of my own personal experience in describing the larger context of change in the city. Lastly, I conducted library research in San Francisco, California and Medellín, Colombia, and used other secondary sources, which I specify below.

I conducted long-form qualitative interviews with seven people, including both the leaders and members of the hip-hop initiative *Cuatro Elementos Skuela*, the hip-hop collective *Autarkia*, and the *Centro Cultural Moravia*. (Moravia Cultural Center), located in *Comuna 4* (district 4), in Medellín. All the participants were over 18 years old. To select the participants I used a snowball approach, contacting people in specific organizations and then outwards to others in their network. The interviews were conducted in the Gilberto Alzate Avendaño Educational Institution, located in the *Barrio Aranjuez*, where the initiative *Cuatro Elementos Skuela* operates, and in *Centro Cultural Moravia*, in the *Barrio Moravia*. Both *barrios*, Aranjuez and Moravia, are located in the *Comuna 4* in Medellín. The interviews were held on May 23, 27 and 29, 2013.

I used a guideline of questions organized by topics. The first three topics related to the initiative itself, and the fourth to the personal reflections on the experience of the individual participants. The topics included:

- The initiative's background information: origin, goals, audience, and strategies.
- Major achievements and challenges of the project
- Contributions to social change
- Interviewee's personal experience in the arts

Most of the questions I asked were open-ended and I then followed up with questions depending on the responses of the interviewee. I also allowed the participant to discuss any additional topic they wanted to raise. I exchanged several email messages with one of the participants after we had the interview in order to clarify and expand some data required for the study. The information received by email is specified in the footnotes.

During the interviews, I used a recorder and took notes in order to help me accurately record the conversations. I transcribed the interviews and translated them from Spanish to English. I then organized the collected data within four themes or trends that I will discuss further in Chapter 5, where I present the case study.⁴¹ I chose these themes because they were raised by several participants and relate to my research question. Furthermore, I selected quotes from the transcripts of participants to help illustrate the ideas in Chapters 1, 5 and 6. I only made minimal changes to the translated transcripts (from Spanish to English) in order to keep the original meaning, add punctuation, or better explain the meaning of certain words (in these cases I used a parenthesis). Lastly, I edited the translated transcripts for minimizing repetition or filler words.

Part of my research project involved documenting what I observed and heard when I visited the Hip-hop school *Cuatro Elementos Skuela* and the surroundings in the *Comuna 4*. The initiative operates in the building of the Gilberto Alzate Avendaño

⁴¹ See Chapter five, Interview themes. It is important to clarify that for choosing the themes I only used six of the seven interviews conducted. The reason for this is because one of the interviews is not related to my case study, but to another cultural initiative, the *Centro Cultural Moravia*, also located in the *Comuna 4* that I will refer to later in the study.

educational institution, which is a primary public school during the day and after 7:00 pm is the main location of *Cuatro Elementos Skuela*. I documented the physical space and the activities performed within the school. Furthermore, I observed the attitudes, feelings, verbal and non-verbal expressions and other behaviors of the youth and others involved in this initiative.

To help me remember the information observed I used a still photographic camera and a video camera. Moreover, every night after visiting the school, I kept field notes of everything I recalled from that day. These materials are resources from which I have drawn information for an ethnographic description as part of the data gathered and presented throughout the study.

I relied on secondary research for building my theoretical background and the historical context of my study. I used books, academic journals and Internet sources largely collected from the USF library. I also gathered information from other libraries located in Medellín, Colombia, including Universidad EAFIT, Comfama San Ignacio, Comfenalco La Playa, Biblioteca Adida and Biblioteca Pública Piloto.

I also conducted a policy review, which consisted of a comprehensive study of Colombian government and NGO reports, and information on cultural programs. The purpose of this review was to have an understanding of the national and municipal policies on culture, which affect youth cultural projects and the hip-hop movement in particular. I gathered information from the mayor of Medellín, NGOs located in the city and the National Ministry of Culture. Furthermore, I reviewed reports, and government statistics on crime and socioeconomic rates, which helped describe the historical context of Medellín.

There is no other academic literature available about my case study, the Hip-hop school *Cuatro Elementos Skuela*. I therefore relied on information gathered from primary sources. However, to supplement this information about the school, I listened to their music, looked closely at the lyrics of the songs, watched videos, and reviewed social media networks, web pages, and blogs, etc. The textual analysis of these materials allowed me to find out general information about the initiative as well as the opinions and perspectives of young boys and girls enrolled in the school who I could not interview due to time limitations. I also gathered information from local media, newspapers and magazines, which helped me to look at the reception and perception of the larger community to the Hip-hop school.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

In this research, I ask how youth involved in Hip-hop initiatives in Medellín are reconstructing the city's social, cultural and economic fabric? Looking specifically at the case of *Cuatro Elementos Skuela*, a Hip-hop school in the neighborhood of Aranjuez, I argue that the Hip-hop movement in Medellín is producing changes in the lives of the youth participants of this initiative as well as in the lives of other members of the community.

In order to explore the ways in which the Hip-hop movement is contributing to restore the city's social, cultural and economic fabrics, it is important to first understand why these fabrics were torn apart. Three Colombian researchers Salazar, Riaño, and Rodríguez illustrate the effects of the armed conflicts on the daily lives of Medellín's inhabitants, and explain the relationship of youth to the armed conflict. Moreover, Spanish scholar Martín Barbero discussed the effects of globalization on the way communications and culture is produced and transmitted. Martín Barbero argued that different actors in society, especially schools, need to stay ahead of these cultural changes, in order to communicate better with youth and provide better quality education for the future. The latter provides the foundations for understanding the main problems faced by youth and their role producing changes through the Hip-hop movement. Lastly, Marta Elena Bravo, a Colombian researcher and cultural specialist, suggested how it might look if there were improvement in these cultural and social fabrics. She described the different values that are important to build a neighborhood life and highlighted how different grassroots initiatives are working towards fulfilling these values.

Three others sets of intersecting theories provide the basis for understanding the role of the Hip-hop initiative on the social transformation of Medellín. All three -- identity and culture, participatory communications for social change, and art, culture and peace processes -- analyze the relationships of grassroots communications for social change. They all examine the ways in which local communities participate actively in social transformations and take decisions from the bottom up. Moreover, all three discuss about identity and culture; they explore the motivations of people to engage in artistic and cultural activities and how these decisions shape their lives, and the kinds of social and cultural change that results. Lastly, the three theories explain the importance of cultural initiatives in a context of violence.

Finally, I examine the growing literature on cultural entrepreneurship and creative clusters, and the public private partnership model, a parallel framework that argues for social change through the intervention of the state and market, and specifically the ways in which governmental and non governmental organizations conduct alliances to achieve better results in public policy, social and economic development, among others. This approach has developed over the last several decades, partly in response to the declining role of the state in public interventions into cultural and economic development, and the growing role of NGOs and market-oriented initiatives.

The discussion of these two approaches, the bottom-up social change framework, and the cultural entrepreneurship/public-private partnership approach, is important to this study in at least two different ways. First, the Hip-hop movement as a whole, including the case study of the *Cuatro Elementos Skuela*, fits between these two literatures; they are not only an example of grassroots social change initiatives but of entrepreneurship of

cultural producers at the community level. It is thus important, in order to understand the current and future contribution of hip-hop project to understand the larger environment regarding policy and economic development.

2.1 Colombian context, youth and globalization

Alonso Salazar conducted research in Medellín in the 1990's. His work *Born to die in Medellín* (No nacimos pa semilla) examines the life of a 20-year-old man, the leader of a gang of *sicarios* (hired killers). Salazar's work is an important reference for understanding the situation lived by many youth in Medellín, especially in marginalized neighborhoods. In his introduction, Colin Harding refers to this darker side of Medellín:

A large pool of unemployed, poorly educated young people in the *comunas* (poor neighborhoods). Without any obvious prospects for a legal job, and often with a family background of random violence, they were just what the incipient drug barons needed to develop their business. The appearance of the Medellín cartel in the mid 1970's coincided with a sharp recession in the traditional paisa economy. Crime became the only game in town.⁴²

Pilar Riaño conducted ethnographic research in the late 1990s and early 2000s about youth, violence and memory in Medellín. In her book *Dwellers of Memory*, Riaño describes the situation lived by most adolescents in Medellín's poorest neighborhoods, who are both victims and perpetrators of violence.⁴³ The book shows the complex entanglement that is present in Medellín with guerrilla, paramilitary militias, street gangs and cultural or countercultural rock and theater movements. The constant encounter with death faced by young men and women and their search for survival has propelled their creativity, in which they have used their short and long term memories to cast vital

⁴² Colin Hardin, introduction to *Born to die in Medellín*, by Alonso Salazar J., translated by Nick Caistor (London: Latin America Bureau Ltda., 1990), 7.

⁴³ Riaño, *Dwellers of Memory*, 153.

elements of perseverance and hope.⁴⁴ The book *Dwellers of Memory* is a contribution to understanding the dynamics faced by youth of the poor neighborhoods and especially their relationship to space, time and memory.

Salazar and Riaño present the life experiences of different members of the community, and the ways in which the social fabric was torn apart. Salazar writes that although statistics show high levels of violence and crime, they don't tell the whole truth about what was happening in the city, "in our daily lives, what is happening to us as we live and walk in our streets, our way of relating to our neighbors."⁴⁵ Salazar concludes that "Medellín is a hotbed of life and death (and) it is the most extreme expression of the crisis the whole of Colombia is experiencing."⁴⁶

Similar to Salazar and Riaño, Clemencia Rodríguez describes the strong negative impact of the Colombian civil war on the social and cultural fabric of the community; she writes that "the armed conflict touches everything, permeates everything, it takes over social and cultural processes, public spaces, (and) the ways people relate and interact."⁴⁷ Rodríguez explains that the intra-state conflicts increasingly make civilians their preferred target, according to many of the studies conducted in different war contexts around the world. Populations that survive acts of armed violence experience "intense states of chaos, uncertainty and collective terror."⁴⁸ She adds: "civilian communities attacked by armed conflicts are dispossessed of the languages needed to make sense of the situation."⁴⁹

⁴⁴ Ibid., xxiv.

⁴⁵ Salazar, *Born to die in Medellín*, 1.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Rodríguez, *Lo que le vamos quitando a la Guerra*, 9.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 12.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

Jesús Martín Barbero has described the cultural changes brought about by globalization in Colombia and elsewhere. Inspired by the work of Spanish sociologist Manuel Castells, who writes about the *Information Society*, Martín Barbero argues that today we are facing a revolution in the transmission modes of knowledge.⁵⁰ Adolescents come in contact with these networks allowing them to adapt to the new society.⁵¹ There is a multiplicity of networks that circulate the most valuable information, and schools are not sufficiently aware of this.⁵² These changes produce a strong de-legitimization of the characters representing the traditional institution of learning; hence, the vertical structure of knowledge promoted by the Academy has been broken.⁵³

Martín Barbero explained that the actual forms of communication include the technologies of production and diffusion of knowledge and new sensitivities; new ways to see, hear, taste, touch, and reflect.⁵⁴ “There is a new communication ecosystem that consists of a number of technologies and young people today have a special cognitive and expressive empathy.”⁵⁵ He argued that the education system should include young people as producers and transmitters of knowledge,⁵⁶ and take seriously the challenge of the new sensitivities of youth; the new ways of learning and listening.⁵⁷ Schools have not understood that the challenge is not just about technological modernization but about a cultural change.⁵⁸

⁵⁰ Jesús Martín Barbero, “Cambios culturales, desafíos y juventud,” in: *Umbrales, Cambios Culturales, Desafíos Nacionales y Juventud* (Medellín: Corporación Región, 2000), 25, accessed November 12, 2013, http://www.region.org.co/images/docs/juventud/libro_umbrales.pdf

⁵¹ Martín Barbero, “Cambios Culturales, Desafíos y Juventud,” 26.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 25.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 27.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 28.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 30.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 29.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

On the other hand, according to Marta Elena Bravo, the *barrio* (neighborhood) is the place where people live the city more intensely, “The neighborhood is the first space where we experience (...) family ties, friendship and solidarity.”⁵⁹ Bravo said that to *inhabit the city* in an enriching and signifying way, it is important to consider some *valores barriales* (neighborhood values) such as coexistence, tolerance, diversity and cultural citizenship.⁶⁰ Hence, when improving the social fabric, citizens should be able to relate and communicate with others, establish ties, express culture through creating and building identity referents, and join group projects; as well as respect other people’s lifestyles.⁶¹ Bravo explained that the latter has been evident in many neighborhoods in Medellín, where community groups and leaders are working towards cultural creation, the promotion of artistic expressions, and the gathering of neighborhood cultural memoirs, as well as youth aesthetic expressions with enormous creative capacity.⁶²

2.2 Identity and culture

Many theorists across the disciplines have discussed the relationship between identity and culture and produced studies that show their importance for understanding the processes of social change. Mexican scholar Carlos Nuñez H. argues that people communicate the way they think, feel, and resist through different cultural expressions such as dance, oral literature, myths, etc.⁶³ In fact, culture and its languages are the fundamental ingredients of the educational process.⁶⁴ These cultural expressions are the

⁵⁹ Bravo, *Itinerarios culturales 1985-2007*, 441.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 442.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 441- 442.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 439.

⁶³ Carlos Nuñez H., *Educación para transformar, transformar para educar* (Guadalajara, Jal. México: Instituto Mexicano para el Desarrollo Comunitario, 1996), 128.

⁶⁴ Nuñez, *Educación para transformar, transformar para Educar*, 128.

codes that represent and generate the identity of the popular sectors, or subaltern classes, as opposed to the identity of the dominant class.⁶⁵

A parallel perspective is discussed by Stuart Hall, who wrote, “Though they seem to invoke an origin in an historical past with which they continue to correspond, actually identities are about questions of using the resources of history, language and culture in the process of becoming rather than being.”⁶⁶ English music and cultural studies critic Simon Frith discussed this further explaining that it is important to “rethink the usual sociological approach to aesthetic expression.”⁶⁷

What I want to suggest, in other words, is not that social groups agree on values, which are then expressed in their cultural activities (the assumption of the homology models) but that they only get to know themselves as groups (as a particular organization of individual and social interests, of sameness and difference) through cultural activity, through aesthetic judgment. Making music isn't a way of expressing ideas; it is a way of living them.⁶⁸

Núñez, and Frith's approaches are critical for understanding the changes that youth have made for themselves through hip-hop.

In *Old and New Identities, Old and New Ethnicities*, Stuart Hall said that identity connotes “the process of identification, of saying that this here is the same as that, or we are the same together in this respect”.⁶⁹ Identity “is a point at which (...) a whole set of theoretical discourses intersect, and where (...) a whole new set of cultural practices emerge”.⁷⁰ Hall wrote that in the case of any group or category of people on the margins, the first step to resisting their exclusion and marginalization, and mobilizing socially,

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Hall, “Who Needs Identity,” 4.

⁶⁷ Simon Frith, “Music and Identity,” in: *Questions of cultural identity*, ed. Stuart Hall and Paul du Gay (London: Sage Publications Ltd, 1996), 110-111.

⁶⁸ Frith, “Music and Identity,” 110-111.

⁶⁹ Stuart Hall, “Old and New Identities, Old and new ethnicities,” In: *Theories of Race & Racism*, ed. Les Back, and John Solomos, (London: Taylor & Francis e-Library, 2001), 146.

⁷⁰ Hall, “Old and New Identities, Old and New Ethnicities,” 144.

culturally, and economically, etc. is to begin to come to representation.⁷¹ This is what he calls “imaginary political re-identification, re-territorialization and re-identification.”⁷² In other words people start searching for the roots of where they came from, and recover lost histories about themselves, that could not be found in books or learned at school.⁷³

Communications scholar Diana Coryat asks “what is the significance of young people’s role as cultural producers?”⁷⁴ To answer the question, she draws on Stuart Hall, who argued, “cultural production is a key domain and catalyst towards developing agency and power in marginalized communities.”⁷⁵ Coryat added that all of the most important work in popular music is coming from this new recognition of identity.⁷⁶

In a similar way, Jesús Martín Barbero, talks about identity formation in the context of the phenomenon of globalization. His focus is on the subaltern sector who have historically been marginalized by each successive dominant group, and their culture either made invisible or denigrated. He argues that the subaltern sector has increasingly appropriated the new communications technologies “enabling [for] them a real cultural revenge,”⁷⁷ in other words the construction of counter-hegemony throughout the world.⁷⁸ According to Martín Barbero, the diversity of cultures can be part of a “new public space, built from social movements, cultural communities and community media.”⁷⁹

⁷¹ Hall uses the example of the formation of the black diasporas in the period of post-war migration in the fifties and sixties, which transformed English, social, economic and political life. See: *Ibid*, 148 -149.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 149.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 148.

⁷⁴ Coryat, "Challenging the Silences and Omissions of Dominant Media," 141.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 6.

⁷⁶ Hall, “Old and New Identities, Old and New Ethnicities,” 149.

⁷⁷ Martín Barbero, "Comunicación y cultura mundo," 21.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 30.

Martín Barbero argued that what was behind youth's search for meaning is a search for identity.⁸⁰ He explained that psychologists and anthropologists believe that only kids and adults have an identity; and that adolescence is only a time of transition.⁸¹ In fact, in many cases youth does not fit as a social actor because it is not included in any of the epistemological, psychological, anthropological, or sociological frames; Drawing on Bordieu, Martín Barbero wrote that the word "youth" did not name anything.⁸² On the other hand, Martín Barbero said that when that transition screams and resists "we start to think that there is an identity"⁸³ in that stage. He refers to cultural and education critic Martin Hopenhayn, who explains that young people's capacity for aggression, is proportional to the feeling of exclusion that they experience from school, family, and the work force.⁸⁴ And in this sense, Martín Barbero thinks that the first challenge of a nation is to look at young people as citizens.⁸⁵

In the Colombian context, Corporación Región, an NGO that works with youth and other vulnerable groups, has written that youth emerged as social subjects due to their key participation in the armed conflict and their own active processes of organization, socialization and construction of identities.⁸⁶ Moreover, "Youth cultures are the most significant diaspora of the last century."⁸⁷ These are based on identities that are increasingly associated with aesthetics, sensitivity and spirituality, and not rational

⁸⁰ Jesús Martín Barbero, "Cambios culturales, desafíos y juventud," in: *Umbrales, Cambios Culturales, Desafíos Nacionales y Juventud* (Medellín: Corporación Región, 2000), 38, accessed November 12, 2013, http://www.region.org.co/images/docs/juventud/libro_umbrales.pdf

⁸¹ Martín Barbero, "Cambios Culturales, Desafíos y Juventud," 39.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Ibid., 38.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 40.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 45.

⁸⁶ Corporación Región, "Presentación. Juventud siglo XX. Diáspora al acecho," in: *Umbrales, Cambios Culturales. Desafíos Nacionales y Juventud* (Medellín: Corporación Región, 2000), 7, accessed November 12, 2013. http://www.region.org.co/images/docs/juventud/libro_umbrales.pdf

⁸⁷ Corporación Región. "Presentación. Juventud siglo XX. Diáspora al acecho," 11.

decision-making.⁸⁸ Corporación Región proposed to examine youth as the group among which great cultural changes are occurring.⁸⁹ They further argued that the cultural insurrection produced by youth has music as its main axis.⁹⁰ The derivations of rock gave rise to different popular trends, constituted as urban subcultures.⁹¹

Pilar Riaño's *Urban space and music in the formation of youth cultures* examined the history of youth cultural expression in Bogotá, the capital of Colombia, between 1920 and 1980; and the relations established between these expressions with music and the living environment of the city. "Music is a mediating element within the urban experience;"⁹² that "generates the differences of style that permits group identification."⁹³

She writes:

The experience of appropriation of the musical product is related to the vital experience of dance and to the learning of possible ways to relate to the city. Musical lyrics and expression create and form a youth symbolism and contribute to the development of cultural styles and the individual ways of communicating with one another.⁹⁴

Additionally Riaño wrote, "Youth cultural expression is also shaped through familiarity with the social space that gives the city its particular personality. The experiences of appropriation of public spaces and the perception of those spaces as an expressive space imprint cultural identity."⁹⁵ Additionally, Riaño argued, "the various social movements and cultural manifestations of Colombia's youth (...) are followed

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 13.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 8.

⁹¹ Ibid., 10.

⁹² Riaño, "Urban space and music in the formation of youth cultures," 87.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

along with the spatial, technological, and social aspects that all work together to encourage and bring about change.”⁹⁶

2.3 Participatory communications for social change

The participatory communications for social change paradigm was in part a response to the dominant paradigm imposed by western aid agencies and based on western ideas of progress directed through capitalist modernization processes as the motors of economic, cultural and social development.⁹⁷ Local communities were considered the passive recipients of development programs; knowledge gained from external experts in science, math and technology was privileged. Overall, change was thought to be exerted from outside via western-trained change agents, and in a vertical communication model.⁹⁸

In response, the participatory communications paradigm was developed, especially in Latin America.⁹⁹ According to communications scholar Colin Sparks, this framework puts the value of grassroots *participation* in the center.¹⁰⁰ Sparks argues that such development projects are expected to be sustainable, leading to a genuine and long lasting change in the lives of the population, and the establishment of structures and practices that are “able to be maintained independently once the resources mobilized for the initiative itself have been exhausted.”¹⁰¹ This model recognizes that “while everybody requires some help at certain crucial points of change, only when a population itself was determined to change its own ways of living, and found the resources within itself that

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Sparks, *Globalization, development and the mass media*, 60.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 20-55.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 56.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 58

permitted such new ways of life to continue in the longer term, could anything of substance actually be achieved”.¹⁰²

Riaño writes: “participation is seen as bringing a more people-centered rather than market-centered, perspective to development.”¹⁰³ Furthermore, the participatory paradigm focuses on local actors having a voice in decision-making, emphasizes the specific needs of the community and the local culture, and ensures that development is culturally sensitive.¹⁰⁴

In discussing the participatory communications framework in *Women in grassroots communication furthering social Change*, and based on the work of Puntel and Roncagliolo, Riaño wrote that these projects “support the creation of local group participatory processes of solidarity and identity and the active production of cultural meanings from oppressed groups.”¹⁰⁵ These projects acknowledge the very individuality of each of the participant members of a community and through those differences it builds group identities and projects of change.¹⁰⁶ This framework, according to both Sparks and Riaño, is based on horizontal communication between the group members, and individual and collective empowerment is seen as fundamental goals.¹⁰⁷

Clemencia Rodríguez further illustrates the theories of participatory communication in *Lo que le vamos quitando a la Guerra*, one of the first books ever written about the role of citizens’ media in situations of armed conflict.¹⁰⁸ Rodríguez discussed “how communication and culture can become a tool of cultural resistance

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Pilar Riaño Alcalá, *Women in Grassroots Communication: furthering social change*, edit. Pilar Riaño Alcalá (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 1994), 9.

¹⁰⁴ Sparks, *Globalization, development and the mass media*, 20-55.

¹⁰⁵ Riaño, *Women in Grassroots Communication*, 11.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 24.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 23.

¹⁰⁸ Rodríguez, *Lo que le vamos quitando a la Guerra*, 10.

against the negative impact of the armed conflict.”¹⁰⁹ Colombia, she argues is a pioneer in the world in understanding the role that citizens’ media can play in a context of armed conflict. This is in part due to Colombia’s long historical tradition of community media, one of the oldest in Latin America and the world. Colombia has an advanced (though contradictory and partial) legal framework for non-commercial media in Latin America, and there are hundreds of licensed community, university and public interest radio stations, community and regional television stations, and hundreds more unlicensed radio stations and collectives.”¹¹⁰

According to Rodríguez, citizen’s media facilitates processes whereby individuals become citizens.¹¹¹ Through communication initiatives, citizens appropriate symbolic processes; processes of reconfiguration of the environment and their own self, in other words processes of constitution of identities deeply rooted in the local, from which they propose a vision of the future.¹¹² Rodríguez writes that “citizens’ media opens a communicative space for individuals; (...) the citizens’ media offers the individual the possibility to start manipulating languages, signs, codes, and gradually learn to name the world on their own terms.”¹¹³ She says: “This appropriation of the symbolic is fundamental to make way for the transformation of individuals into citizens.”¹¹⁴ Rodríguez sets the foundation for understanding the role of Colombian citizens’ media for generating social change. She focuses on communication initiatives and invites future researches to deepen the subjects of art and cultural production.

¹⁰⁹ Rodríguez, *Lo que le vamos quitando a la Guerra*, 10

¹¹⁰ Coryat, “Challenging the Silences and Omissions of Dominant Media,” 141.

¹¹¹ Rodríguez, *Lo que le vamos quitando a la Guerra*, 12.

¹¹² *Ibid.*

¹¹³ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

In Diana Coryat's study about youth-led media collectives in Colombia she presents examples of youth challenging the silences and omissions of dominant commercial media. First, she argues, "young people are important social actors capable of intervening in social and political life and of participating in social movements."¹¹⁵ Secondly, "cultural production is a central element in processes of empowerment."¹¹⁶ Lastly, "in the context of war, community media not only provides a platform for self-representation when unavailable elsewhere, but can also represent a means to develop participatory citizenship and democracy."¹¹⁷

When reviewing the extant literature, Coryat notes the contribution of Sunaina Maira and Elisabeth Soep who argued that there is a "dearth of theorizing about youth as social actors and citizens within globalization processes, and that their lived experiences and cultural productions are not taken seriously in studies of globalization."¹¹⁸ However, Coryat writes, there are some theorists that "have begun to conceptualize young people as protagonists in the realms of culture and politics."¹¹⁹ She concludes that these approaches show that young media makers are playing an important role "democratizing the media and participating in civil society, and social movements, toward building a plural and peaceful society."¹²⁰

In *Creative Community, The Art of Cultural Development*, American scholars Don Adams and Arlene Goldbard write about community cultural development in the United States, which has similarities with the case study presented in this research.

¹¹⁵ Coryat, "Challenging the Silences and Omissions of Dominant Media," 138.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 139.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

Community cultural development “describes a range of initiatives undertaken by artists in collaboration with other community members to express identity, concerns and aspirations through the arts and communications media, while building cultural capacity and contributing to social change.”¹²¹ The term refers to “community-development practices, especially those incorporating principles of self-development rather than development imposed from above.”¹²²

Adams and Goldbard say that in Community Cultural Development work, artists place their artistic and organizing skills at the service of the emancipation and development of an identified community, for example a group of Latino teenagers in a specific neighborhood.¹²³ Moreover, “part of the community cultural development practitioners’ task is to help bring a consciousness of community- often, of multiple belonging- into being”.¹²⁴ This type of project embodies “a critical relationship to culture, through which participants come to awareness of their own power as culture makers and employ that power to solve problems and address issues of deep concern to themselves and their communities.”¹²⁵

According to Adams and Goldbard, “the Community Cultural Development work incorporates certain core beliefs about the nature of the social transformation it seeks to advance.”¹²⁶

Critical examination of cultural values can reveal ways in which oppressive messages have been internalized by members of marginalized communities. Comprehending this internalization of the oppressor is often the first step toward learning to speak one’s truth on one’s authentic voice. Live, active social

¹²¹ Don Adams and Arlene Goldbard, *Creative community: the art of cultural development* (n.p.: D. Adams and A. Goldbard, 2005), 115.

¹²² Adams and Goldbard, *Creative Community*, 5.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 64.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 64-65.

experience strengthens individuals' ability to participate in democratic discourse and community life (...) Society will always be improved by the expansion of dialogue and by the active participation of all communities and groups in exploring and resolving social issues. Self-determination is an essential requirement of the dignity and social participation of all communities. No narrow interest within society should have the power to shape social arrangements for all others. A goal of community cultural development work is to expand liberty for all, so long as no community's definition of liberty impinges on the basic human rights of others. A goal of community cultural development work is to promote equality of opportunity among groups and communities, helping to redress inequalities wherever they appear. Community cultural development work helps create conditions in which the greatest numbers (are) able to discover their potentials and use their resources to advance these aims.¹²⁷

Lastly, I highlight another aspect presented by the authors, which I believe is important to understand the phenomenon of Hip-hop in Medellín. Adams and Goldbard explain that, although these projects may yield products of great skill and power, "The process of awakening to cultural meanings and mastering cultural tools to express and communicate them is always primary."¹²⁸ In other words, to be most effective, projects must focus on the processes, not the products. Community Cultural Development work must then be "open-ended, leaving the content and focus to be determined by participants (...) Attempts to make projects conform to predetermined models removes them from the category of authentic community cultural development."¹²⁹

U.S social work scholar Robin L. Ersing also discusses the transformative power of community arts.¹³⁰ Ersing focuses on the "role that community-based arts programs play in empowering marginalized youths to become agents of community change."¹³¹

¹²⁷ Ibid., 65.

¹²⁸ Ibid., 68.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Robin L. Ersing, "Building the Capacity of Youths through Community Cultural Arts: A Positive Youth Development Perspective," *Best Practice In Mental Health: An International Journal*, 5, no. 1 (Winter2009): 26-43.

¹³¹ Ersing, "Building the Capacity of Youths through Community Cultural Arts," 26.

The author looks at an after-school program called *Prodigy*,¹³² showing how this type of initiatives provides:

An alternative outlet for creative expression and healthy self-exploration, which contributes to the building of core development assets [e.g. self-esteem, positive identity, empathy]. This is particularly critical for youths residing in resource-poor neighborhoods, where human, social and cultural capital may be limited.¹³³

Ersing also discusses the paradigm shift that has emerged; practitioners, advocates and researchers are no longer looking at youth as victims but as competent community builders. The new approach focuses on enhancing developmental assets that enable youth to become effective agents of change within local communities.¹³⁴

Popular educator and scholar Debora Barndt presents an example of Community Arts Projects called Viva, which links local community projects across borders.¹³⁵ The project was conducted in collaboration with NGO's and universities in Panamá, Nicaragua, México, the United States and Canada. The community initiatives examined throughout these countries, "challenge conventional art as elitist, individual, market driven, or focused solely on form (...) these initiatives promote the integration of art in its infinite cultural forms into daily rituals, community building, and movements for social change."¹³⁶ Brandt writes, "Art sometimes provokes, sometimes portrays or sometimes proceeds social transformation, but it is never far from the heart of struggle."¹³⁷

Whether the modes are verbal or non-verbal, art making that ignites people's creativity, recovers repressed histories, builds community and strengthens social movements is in itself a holistic form of action. The modes of expression are

¹³² Ibid., 26-43.

¹³³ Ibid., 38.

¹³⁴ Ibid., 26.

¹³⁵ Deborah Barndt, *VIVA: Community Arts And Popular Education In The Americas*, ed. Deborah Barndt, and VIVA Project Partners (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2011), vii, 139.

¹³⁶ Barndt, *VIVA: Community Arts and Popular Education*, ix, x.

¹³⁷ Deborah Barndt, *Wild Fire: Art As Activism* (Toronto, Canada: Sumach Press, 2006), 17.

endless. Most important is that they are appropriate to a particular group, time, or place.¹³⁸

Two other scholars have examined youth subcultures as producers of cultural enterprises. These authors suggest that the new cultural forms that emerge from a grassroots level are generating cultural, social, and economic alternatives to urban youth. Looking specifically at Medellín Colombian sociologist Ómar Alonso Urán Arenas recounts the history of the diverse youth movements in the 1990's in the city and the metropolitan area. During the time of intense armed conflicts and involvement of youth in criminal organizations, youth subcultures emerged and “became a source of wealth for the city.”¹³⁹ These subcultures constituted the highest level of individual creativity, characterized by the spirit of *Do it yourself* (DIY)” forcing them to imagine alternative solutions far beyond waiting for resources to arrive.¹⁴⁰ Hence, there is a good base to set little value chains and networks around small and medium cultural enterprises which at the same time might guarantee the survival of these subcultures.¹⁴¹ Although Urán Arena's work concerns the rock subcultures, and not the Hip-hop movement, it is important for understanding the context in which these cultural forms emerge, and some of their contributions to the city's social, cultural and economic fabric.

US cultural critic Robin Kelley also examined the new cultural forms that appeared with the “peculiar circumstances of post-industrial decline”¹⁴² and the emergence of new technologies; these cultural forms are a product of grassroots

¹³⁸ Barndt, *Wild Fire*, 18.

¹³⁹ Urán, “La juventud,” 290.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Kelley, *Yo' mama's disfunkional!*, 58.

entrepreneurship and urban youth's struggle over public space.¹⁴³ Kelley gives the example of the Hip-hop movement, which emerged in New York City during the 1970's, but said that these cultural forms were already manifested in the slums of Washington, D.C. with a movement called Go-Go.¹⁴⁴ According to Kelley both the Hip-hop and the Go-Go movements are a source of musical inspiration and entrepreneurial imagination.¹⁴⁵

In his book *Yo' mama's disfunkcional! Fighting the culture wars in urban America*, Kelley examined "the ways in which some urban youth have turned certain forms of play into a source of income or a vocation."¹⁴⁶ Kelley discussed how capitalism became both urban youth's greatest friend and greatest foe; responsible for "expanding poverty and shrinking the labor market,"¹⁴⁷ but also for creating "a space for young cultural workers to produce their art and market their talents."¹⁴⁸ "Performance and visual arts, in particular, powerfully dramatize how young people have turned the labor of play into a commodity, not only to escape wage work but to invest their time and energy in creative expression."¹⁴⁹ He supports this argument with the work of the ethnographer and cultural theorist Paul Willis who uses the term "symbolic creativity" to describe the processes of construction of an identity, communication with others, and achievement of pleasure, which constitute the labor of creating art in everyday life.¹⁵⁰

2.4 Art, culture and peace processes

¹⁴³ Ibid., 58.

¹⁴⁴ The Go-Go movement emerged from Washington's D.C black ghettos and was characterized by a heavy funk bass, horns, rhythm guitar, and various percussion instruments. This rhythm indirectly influenced the direction of East Coast Hip hop. See: Ibid., 58-59.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 58.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 10.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 77.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 10.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 57.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

John Paul Lederach has worked for twenty-five years in contexts of protracted conflict; specifically he has been involved in peace and reconciliation work in Colombia, the Philippines, Nepal, and other countries in East and West Africa. In his book *The Moral Imagination*, Lederach asks: “How do we transcend the cycles of violence that bewitch our human community while still living in them?”¹⁵¹ Lederach argues that it is important to take into consideration four capacities:

The capacity to imagine ourselves in a web of relationships that includes our enemies; the ability to sustain a paradoxical curiosity that embraces complexity without reliance on dualistic polarity; the fundamental belief in and pursuit of the creative act; and the acceptance of the inherent risk of stepping into the mystery of the unknown that lies beyond the far too familiar landscape of violence.¹⁵²

Lederach explains that in order to achieve these capacities, and transcend violence it is necessary to first “understand and feel the landscape of protracted violence and why it poses such deep-rooted challenges to constructive change.”¹⁵³ He says, “we must explore the creative process itself, not as a tangential inquiry, but as the wellspring that feeds the building of peace”.¹⁵⁴ The latter, he explains, means to venture into the “uncharted territory of the artist’s way as applied to social change, the canvases and poetics of human relationships, imagination and discovery, and ultimately the mystery of vocation for those who take up such a journey.”¹⁵⁵

Lederach said that it is important that we envision ourselves as artists. He discussed the work of Mills who believed that we need to return to aesthetics, “to a place of imagination in science that creates a playfulness of mind... a truly fierce drive to make

¹⁵¹ Lederach, *The Moral Imagination*, 5.

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ Ibid.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

sense of the work, which the technician as such usually lacks.”¹⁵⁶ Moreover, Lederach said that social change is behind the artist’s intuition; “the complexity of human experience captured in a simple image and in a way that moves individuals and whole societies. The true genius of the moral imagination is the ability to touch the art and soul of the matter.”¹⁵⁷

In the context of Medellín, Pilar Riaño and the artist Suzanne Lacy led a project in 1999, called *La piel de la memoria* or the *Skin of Memory*. The initiative consisted of a Bus-Museum, aimed at promoting social interaction through public art, and accompanying the construction of viable peace processes.¹⁵⁸ Placing objects temporarily donated by inhabitants of Barrio Antioquia, one of Medellín’s epicenters of drug trafficking and organized crime,¹⁵⁹ in a neutral space, different to the park or plaza, invited visitors to make sense of the violence affecting their lives.¹⁶⁰ This project showed how public-art intervention is one way through which people can reconstruct memories of loss in a positive way, and address “grief, exorcising specific sorrows and (...) the possibility of forgiveness at the local level.”¹⁶¹ According to Lacy and Riaño: “Recovering memory has cultural and political importance and is a process that can contribute to the reconstruction of the social fabric, the strengthening of local networks and the recovery of a critical view of historical processes.”¹⁶² The initiative was

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., 7.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ Suzanne Lacy and Pilar Riaño Alcalá, “Medellín, Colombia: Reinhabiting Memory,” *Art Journal* no. 4 (2006): 112.

¹⁵⁹ Mauricio Hoyos Agudelo, “La Piel de la Memoria. Barrio Antioquia: Pasado, Presente y futuro,” (Medellín, Colombia: Corporación Región, 2001), 26.

¹⁶⁰ Lacy and Riaño, “Medellín, Colombia: Reinhabiting Memory,” 112.

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² Ibid.

supported by the State and other non-governmental organizations, and it became an example of social change for other cities in Colombia.

Abby Scher's piece, *Can the arts change the world?* is a compilation of insights by a group of community activists and educators who discussed the question: How and when does art release, create, and sustain transforming power for social change?¹⁶³ This piece is related to Riaño and Lacy's work, the *Skin of Memory*, discussed above; similarly to the effects that the Bus-Museum brought to *Barrio Antioquia* in Medellín, Scher's piece indicates how art heals and sustains, records the past and points to the future.¹⁶⁴

Don Elligan has conducted a study about the value of rap as psychotherapy, one of the four elements of Hip-hop. He said that many youth and young adults have benefited from using rap music as a tool to promote a greater insight and self-awareness.¹⁶⁵ His book showed the influence of rap music on youth and the ways in which parents, educators and therapists, could utilize rap music for positive and constructive communication with young people.¹⁶⁶ An example of Elligan's approach is the work conducted by an organization called Beats Rhymes and Life (BRL), based in Oakland, California. This organization provides culturally responsive trauma-informed care for low-income youth between the ages of 11-24, using a rap therapy program.¹⁶⁷ According to BRL "The challenges that many urban youth face, including community violence, institutional racism, poverty and other stressors can undermine their mental

¹⁶³ Abby Scher. "Can the Arts Change the World? The Transformative Power of Community Arts." *New Directions For Adult And Continuing Education* no. 116 (January 1, 2007): 3-11.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 6.

¹⁶⁵ Don Elligan, *Rap Therapy: a practical guide for communicating with youth and young adults through rap music*, (New York: Kensington, 2004): ix.

¹⁶⁶ Elligan, *Rap Therapy*, vii.

¹⁶⁷ BRL's Rap Therapy program "combines therapeutic, youth development and social justice frameworks to engage marginalized youth in a meaningful experience using music production and cultural expression as tools for healing and empowerment." See: "Rap Therapy," accessed December 2, 2013, <http://brl-inc.org/programs/raptherapy/>

well-being and development making it difficult for them to become productive, healthy and well-adjusted adults.”¹⁶⁸

Furthermore, the documentary *A Lovely Day*,¹⁶⁹ produced by Bay Area filmmaker Kerri Gawryn teamed with BRL, and discussed the experiences of Oakland High School’s Fifth Element Hip-Hop Club members. The documentary explored the questions “What are youth doing to help themselves?” Many young people that participated in the documentary said that through rap they could express themselves and release stress and pressure. Furthermore, the documentary explained that most of the young people involved in this project were dealing with so much loss, grief, frustrations and intense emotions; and through rap therapy they were addressing their fears and anxiety and building new relationships.

2.5 Cultural entrepreneurship and creative clusters

Richard Florida’s thesis in *The Rise of the Creative Class* was that a city or region could attract innovators that would stimulate the local economy mainly through technological innovation using culture and creativity.¹⁷⁰ According to Thomas H. Aageson, Florida argued, “If a region offers diversity as well as cultural and creative opportunities, then there is a higher probability that the people who tend to be catalysts for innovation leading to economic development, especially in technology-based

¹⁶⁸ “Who we serve,” accessed December 2, 2013, <http://brl-inc.org/whoweserve/>

¹⁶⁹ “A lovely Day,” accessed December 2, 2013, <http://brl-inc.org/alovelyday/>

¹⁷⁰ Thomas H. Aageson, “Cultural Entrepreneurs: Producing Cultural Value and Wealth,” in: *The Cultural and Globalization series 2, The Cultural Economy*, ed. Helmut Anheir and Yudhishtir Raj Isar, 92-107. (Thousand Oaks, California: SAGE Publications Inc, 2008).

enterprise, will settle in the region's community."¹⁷¹ Florida called the group of people that attracts potential growth, the creative class.¹⁷²

Aageson defined cultural entrepreneurs as “risk takers, change agents and resourceful visionaries who generate revenue from innovative and sustainable cultural enterprises that enhance livelihoods and create cultural value for both creative producers and consumers of cultural services and products.”¹⁷³ Aageson said that usually cultural entrepreneurs are the creators of cultural organizations, which are different than cultural enterprises.¹⁷⁴

According to Aageson, cultural organizations are non-profits that earn some of their revenues but also need financial support to balance their budget each year.¹⁷⁵ They enhance the community's quality of life, preserve culture and create important educational opportunities; some examples are operas, museums, performing arts groups, educational institutions, etc.¹⁷⁶ On the other hand, Aageson explained that cultural enterprises are commercial ventures both profit-making and non-profit, which use business approaches; and deploy financial, human and cultural capital (creativity, talent, cultural traditions, knowledge and intellectual property) in a strategic and entrepreneurial manner.¹⁷⁷ These enterprises “are expected to return a profit along with creating cultural value for the community and consumer.”¹⁷⁸ Both cultural organizations and cultural enterprises contribute to the development of cultural and creative industries, which

¹⁷¹ Aageson, *Cultures and globalization*, 98

¹⁷² Terry Flew, “Toward a Cultural Economic Geography of Creative Industries and Urban Development: Introduction to the Special Issue on Creative Industries and Urban Development,” *Information Society* 26, no. 2 (March 2010): 88.

¹⁷³ Aageson, *Cultures and globalization*, 96.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., 97.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

according to UNESCO, are estimated to account for over 7 per cent of the world's Gross Domestic Product (GDP).¹⁷⁹

A widely accepted definition of Creative Industries coined by the UK's Department of Culture, Media and Sport in 1997 is "Those activities which have their origin in individual creativity, skill and talent and which have a potential for wealth and job creation through the generation and exploitation of intellectual property."¹⁸⁰ These include: "Advertising; Architecture; Crafts and Designer furniture; fashion clothing; film, video and other audiovisual production; Graphic design; Educational and leisure software; Live and recorded music; performing arts and entertainments; Television, radio and internet broadcasting; visual arts and antiques; writing and publishing."¹⁸¹

Simon Evans, a cultural entrepreneur and creator of *Creative Clusters*, a network of experts in cultural development said, "In the 21st century the key factor driving development is creativity (...) Creativity is the human ability that enables us to cope with change, to understand it, to try to deploy it to our advantage...this is why instead of an industrial economy people now talk of a creative economy."¹⁸² Actually, Florida described creativity as the most elusive resource;¹⁸³ he said,

"Creativity has come to be the most highly prized commodity in our economy- and yet it is not a *commodity*. Creativity comes from people. And while people can be hired and fired, their creative capacity cannot be bought or sold, or turned on or off at will...Creativity must be motivated and nurtured in a multitude of

¹⁷⁹ UNESCO, *International Flows of Selected Cultural Goods and Services, 1994-2003* (Paris: UNESCO Publishing, 2005): 19, cited in in Thomas H. Aageson, *Cultures and globalization*, 98.

¹⁸⁰ "Creative Industries," accessed December 20, 2013, http://creativeclusters.com/clusters.dreamhosters.com/?page_id=1600.

¹⁸¹ "Creative Industries."

¹⁸² Simon Evans, "The Age of Creativity" (conference presented at Creative Cluster 2006, Mainstreaming Creativity, Fourth International Conference, Gateshead, UK, November 5-8, 2006).

¹⁸³ Flew, "Toward a Cultural Economic Geography of Creative Industries and Urban Development," 85.

ways, by employers, by people themselves and by communities where they locate.”¹⁸⁴

Media and communications scholar Terry Flew explained that the first decade of the 21st decade, was marked by resurgence in creativity and cities; he said, “Creativity was seen as the foundation of innovation, and innovation was seen as the new primary driver of economic growth.”¹⁸⁵ According to UNESCO, United Nations Creative Economy Report 2013 demonstrated that the creative economy is “one of the most rapidly growing sectors of the world economy and a highly transformative one in terms of income generation, job creation and export earnings.”¹⁸⁶ The report defined the Creative Economy “as a complex system that derives its economic value from the facilitation of economic evolution- a system that manufactures attention, complexity, identity and adaptation though the primary resource of creativity.”¹⁸⁷

Moreover, the United Nations report evidenced the ways in which “the cultural and creative industries are at the core of local creative economies in the global south and how they forge new development pathways that encourage creativity and innovation in the pursuit of inclusive, equitable and sustainable growth and development.”¹⁸⁸

Together with the idea of the creative economy is the creative city, said Evans;¹⁸⁹ “Wherever you look in the world, it is clear that creative enterprises, and creative

¹⁸⁴ Richard Florida, *The Rise of the Creative Class* (New York: Basic Books, 2008), 5, quoted in Flew, “Toward a Cultural Economic Geography of Creative Industries and Urban Development,” 85.

¹⁸⁵ Flew, “Toward a Cultural Economic Geography of Creative Industries and Urban Development,” 85.

¹⁸⁶ “United Nations Creative Economy Report 2013, Special Edition, Widening Local Development Pathways,” accessed December 22, 2013, <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/culture/themes/creativity/creative-economy-report-2013-special-edition/>

¹⁸⁷ *United Nations Creative Economy Report 2013, Special Edition, Widening Local Development Pathways*, (New York, Paris: United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), 2013): 21, <http://www.unesco.org/culture/pdf/creative-economy-report-2013.pdf>

¹⁸⁸ “United Nations Creative Economy Report 2013 Special Edition, Widening Local Development Pathways.”

¹⁸⁹ Evans, “The Age of Creativity.”

individuals, only thrive in each other's company (...) creative enterprises gather together in visible hot spots, which can grow into self-sustaining hubs of creative activity."¹⁹⁰

Terry Flew explained "the first framework that was used to understand the relationship between creative industries and cities was that of clusters."¹⁹¹ Cluster, is defined by the business management theorist Michael Porter, as "a geographic concentration of interconnected companies, specialized suppliers, service providers, associated institutions and forms in related industries."¹⁹² Based in the work of Porter, Susan Bagwell who conducted a study on creative clusters and city growth in the UK, argued:

Firms networked with each other and operating in close proximity are seen to have a competitive advantage (...) clustering is thought to lead to a number of advantages for both firms and the regions in which they operate, including increased competitiveness, higher productivity, new firm formation, growth, profitability, job growth and innovation.¹⁹³

Moreover, Evans discussed about clusters or the infrastructure for creativity. He said, "The most important element of creative infrastructure is culture (...) there is a direct connection between a country's investment in culture as creative infrastructure, and its success in the knowledge economy."¹⁹⁴ According to organization *Creative Clusters*, in the new economy, arts and culture become a source of wealth and power in a new way;¹⁹⁵ It defined the concept as:

A creative cluster includes non-profit enterprises, cultural institutions, arts venues and individual artists alongside the science park and the media center. Creative clusters are places to live as well as to work, places where cultural products are

¹⁹⁰ Evans, "The Age of Creativity."

¹⁹¹ Flew, "Toward a Cultural Economic Geography of Creative Industries and Urban Development," 86.

¹⁹² Michael Porter, "Clusters and the new Economic Competition," (Harvard Business Review, 2008): 76, quoted in Susan Bagwell, "Creative clusters and city growth," *Creative Industries Journal* 1, no. 1 (March 2008): 32.

¹⁹³ Susan Bagwell, "Creative clusters and city growth," *Creative Industries Journal* 1, no. 1 (March 2008): 32-33.

¹⁹⁴ Evans, "The Age of Creativity."

¹⁹⁵ "The creative economy," accessed December 20, 2013, http://creativeclusters.com/clusters.dreamhosters.com/?page_id=1581

consumed as well as made. They are open round the clock, for work and play. They feed on diversity and change and so thrive in busy, multicultural urban settings that have their own local distinctiveness but are also connected to the world.¹⁹⁶

2.6 Private public partnership model

According to the World Economic Forum, an international non profit organization for public-private cooperation, a Public Private Partnership (PPP) is a “voluntary alliance between various actors from different sectors where both agree to work together to reach a common goal or to fulfill a specific need that involves shared responsibilities, means, competencies and risks.”¹⁹⁷ The Canadian Council for Public Private Partnerships also defines this concept as “a cooperative venture between the public and private sectors, built on the expertise of each partner that best meets clearly defined public needs through the appropriate allocation of resources, risks and rewards.”¹⁹⁸ These definitions follow one of the assumptions of PPPs explained by economist and urban studies scholar Ronald W. McQuaid “the potential for synergy of some form, so the sum is greater than the parts.”¹⁹⁹

Indian scholar Sukhwinder Kaur, studied the role of public private partnerships in education, he said, “Public education systems in many developing countries face a number of challenges. Private participation can encourage the public sector to improve

¹⁹⁶ “Creative Clusters,” accessed December 22, 2013, http://creativeclusters.com/clusters.dreamhosters.com/?page_id=1599

¹⁹⁷ World Economic Forum, “Building on the Monterrey Consensus: The Growing Role of Public-Private Partnerships in Mobilizing Resources for Development,” (Geneva: World Economic Forum, 2006) quoted in Sukhwinder Kaur, “Role of Public Private Partnerships in Education,” *Indian Streams Research Journal* 3, no. 5 (June 2013): 2.

¹⁹⁸ Kaur, “Role of Public Private Partnerships in Education,” 2.

¹⁹⁹ Ronald McQuaid, “The theory of partnership: why have partnerships?” in *Public-private Partnerships: Theory and Practice in International Perspective*, ed. by Stephen P. Osborne, (London: Routledge, 2000), 11.

the quality and efficiency of the public schools.”²⁰⁰ Similarly, the World Bank conducted a research, which analyzed the cost and achievements of private and public schools in five developing countries, including Colombia, Dominican Republic, Philippines, Tanzania, and Thailand.²⁰¹ The study found that “Students in private schools vary on a variety of achievements; unit costs of private schools were lower than those of public schools and private schools had greater authority for decision making at the school level and better emphasis on enhancing student achievement.”²⁰²

Stephen P. Osborne, a British scholar widely published in the fields of public services and non-profit management, explained that during the 1990's there has been the establishment of public-private partnerships (PPPs) as a key tool of public policy across the world.²⁰³ He said that PPPs are seen as a “cost-efficient and effective mechanism for the implementation of public policy across a range of policy agendas, they have also been articulated as bringing significant benefits in their own right - particularly in terms of developing socially inclusive communities.”²⁰⁴ Some of the opportunities to achieve public policy outcomes with PPPs are to combat social exclusion by integrating the public and private components of local communities, including the government, local community and volunteer groups and the community itself,²⁰⁵ and to reform local public services, “making them more accessible to the local community and more responsive to their needs.”²⁰⁶

²⁰⁰ Kaur, "Role of Public Private Partnerships in Education," 6.

²⁰¹ Ibid., 4.

²⁰² World Bank, "The Role and Impact of Public Private Partnerships in Education," (Washington: DC; World Bank, 2009) quoted in Kaur, "Role of Public Private Partnerships in Education," 4.

²⁰³ Stephen P. Osborne, *Public-private Partnerships: Theory and Practice in International Perspective* (London: Routledge, 2000), 1.

²⁰⁴ Osborne, *Public-private Partnerships*, 1.

²⁰⁵ Ibid.

²⁰⁶ Ibid., 2.

US political science scholar Stephen H. Linder, and public health scholar Pauline Vaillancourt Rosenau's found that public private partnerships are growing at a rapid pace; however, they identified a gap in the literature regarding organized assessments of partnering performance.²⁰⁷ Although their work is focused in North America they acknowledged that many countries around the world are also exploring public private partnerships.²⁰⁸ Another perspective brought by Osborne is that PPPs are a divergent phenomenon in terms of the theoretical frameworks available for understanding and evaluating them; the different partners involved in them; and their prevalence and impact in different parts of the world.²⁰⁹

Ronald W. McQuaid, further discussed the reasons for developing and operating partnerships to promote urban and rural regeneration or economic development.²¹⁰ He said that PPPs should be analyzed according to the different actors involved including central or local government, the private sector, and local communities; and the multifaceted issues PPPs deal with.²¹¹

On the other hand, different scholars have criticized the public private partnership model and the creative clusters framework. Political science scholars Michele Hoyman and Christopher Faricy conducted a study about the link of the creative class to economic growth.²¹² In the study, Hoyman and Faricy reviewed previous critiques of the creative class literature and tested three models of economic development quantitatively,

²⁰⁷ Stephen H. Linder, and Pauline Vaillancourt Rosenau, "Mapping the Terrain of the Public-Private Policy Partnership," in *Public-Private Policy Partnerships*, ed. Pauline Vaillancourt Rosenau (Cambridge and London: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2000), 1.

²⁰⁸ Stephen H. Linder, and Pauline Vaillancourt Rosenau, "Mapping the Terrain of the Public-Private Policy Partnership," 1.

²⁰⁹ Osborne, *Public-private Partnerships*, 3.

²¹⁰ McQuaid, "The theory of partnership: why have partnerships?," 9.

²¹¹ *Ibid.*, 9.

²¹² Michele Hoyman, and Christopher Faricy, "It takes a village: A test of the creative class, social capital, and human capital theories," *Urban Affairs Review* 44, no. 3 (January 2009): 312.

including the creative class, across 276 American metropolitan statistical areas.²¹³ They concluded, “The creative class variable does not correlate with any measure of economic growth.”²¹⁴

Creative class is a concept coined by Richard Florida, in *The rise of the creative class* that refers to groups of people attracting economic growth, including a super-creative class (computer scientists, academics, architects, and artists) and creative professionals (managers, accountants, lawyers, and health care professionals).²¹⁵ Referring to Jamie Peck’s piece *Struggling with the creative class* Hoyman and Faricy wrote, “creative professionals have a loose connection to creativity and it is overly optimistic to refer to these workers as being members of a class.”²¹⁶ Furthermore, Hoyman and Faricy said,

Technology producers capture the vast majority of returns to investment from research and development within their own firm or industry, rather than transferring the benefits outward to the city as a whole. (...) Technology (then) is limited or conditional as a characteristic that promotes regional economic growth.²¹⁷

Overall, Hoyman and Faricy argued, “It is possible that creative measurements may be a lagged indication of economic growth, but they are not the foundation for a sound strategy to attract or grow business.”²¹⁸

Similarly, urban and regional studies scholar Faranak Miraftab critiqued the public private partnership model. Miraftab argued that PPPs belong among the privatization strategies of the neoliberal agenda, promoting the decline of the state, and

²¹³ Hoyman and Faricy, “It takes a village,” 312.

²¹⁴ Ibid., 323.

²¹⁵ Ibid., 313.

²¹⁶ Ibid.

²¹⁷ Ibid., 314.

²¹⁸ Ibid., 329.

the rise of the global market.²¹⁹ Several studies carried out by the author in South Africa since 1998, and other studies conducted by the Community Development Program of the United Nations in five countries of Africa, Latin America, and Asia before 1998 revealed “Serious discrepancies between the theory propounding partnerships as a third world panacea and their consequences in actuality.”²²⁰ Miraftab said, “In the context of the third world’s wide socioeconomic gaps and decentralizing states, where central governments often have neither the will nor the ability to intervene effectively, PPPs are free to operate as the *Trojan Horses* of development.”²²¹ According to Miraftab these partnerships are strategies that shift the responsibilities to local governments and then reach out through alliances to share those responsibilities with the private sector, NGOs, and community-based groups, usually resulting in “dysfunctional administrative structures.”²²²

Furthermore, “The interests of the community are often overwhelmed by those of the most powerful member of the partnership—the private sector firms.”²²³ Drawing from the work of several scholars, Miraftab explained that the literature on PPPs “has little to say about whether and how partnerships replace the public sector’s responsibility to serve the public good. (...) And whether they do serve the interests of the urban poor.”²²⁴

The Miraftab concluded that the literature on PPPs has not looked at the power relations and examined the influence of the environment in which partnerships are implemented.²²⁵ She argued that three points must be clarified to develop partnerships with equitable outcomes: “Rigorous definition of the partners’ roles and responsibilities

²¹⁹ Faranak Miraftab, “Public-private partnerships: The Trojan Horse of Neoliberal Development?” *Journal of Planning Education & Research* 24, no. 1 (September 2004): 90.

²²⁰ Miraftab, “Public-private partnerships,” 89.

²²¹ Ibid.

²²² Ibid., 94.

²²³ Ibid., 89.

²²⁴ Ibid., 91.

²²⁵ Ibid., 89.

and also of what is meant by the public and the private sectors; the notion of associated action and how horizontal power relations among partners are to be ensured; and the mediating role of the state to enable and regulate the partnership.”²²⁶

After reviewing these bodies of literature, I conclude that my study is filling a gap that scholar Rodríguez acknowledges in the literature concerning Colombian grassroots cultural movements. She recommended that future research should be done in order to understand how communication, art and cultural production help repair the social and cultural fabric in various regions of the country. Moreover, when looking at the theories on social change, creative clusters and public private partnership model, I found that though these theories had already been developed by other scholars, they had not been synthesized or used to explain the phenomenon of Hip-hop in Medellín.

²²⁶ Mirafteb, "Public-private partnerships," 90.

Chapter 3: Violence and the armed conflict

This study seeks to address the question: How are youth reconstructing Medellín's social, economic and cultural fabrics through Hip-hop initiatives? In this section, I describe the ways in which the city's social fabric was torn apart. I will emphasize the roles that youth have played as perpetrators and victims of violence, and discuss the presence and absence of federal and municipal governmental action in the city since the 1950s.

I will start by presenting several historical events that unleashed the violence in Colombia. A period of political conflict called *La Violencia*, the presence of guerrilla and paramilitary groups, and the emergence of the drug cartels have all increased the fragmentation of human relationships in the city of Medellín, reinforced by the lack of opportunities for youth in poorer marginalized neighborhoods. Each of these sets of conflicts has contributed to the context in which Hip-Hop initiatives emerged in the city. The case study that I am looking at emerged in the late 1990's, and it is the response of a group of youth to deal with the violence and armed conflicts that were present in the streets of their neighborhood.

3.1 1940-1970: *La Violencia* and emergence of illegal armed groups

Colombia has been at war for many years. The roots of the conflict can be traced to what's called *La Violencia*, which started in 1946 when the two rival political parties, the Liberals and Conservatives, were at war for the control of the national government. "*La Violencia* manifested itself in brutal murders, body mutilations, massacres and torture;"²²⁷ and around 200,000 people died.²²⁸ It was a phenomenon that occurred

²²⁷ Riaño, *Dwellers of memory*, 33.

initially in the rural areas and many peasant farmers lost their land and were forced to migrate into the cities.

During the 1960s a large wave of people migrated to Medellín, capital of the Department of Antioquia, and Colombia's second largest city, to escape the violence and look for employment opportunities; however the situation in the city was not economically buoyant. The textile industry was facing a downturn with increased unemployment rates and virtual economic collapse.²²⁹ Moreover, with the influx of migrants the city tripled its population in less than two decades, resulting in an urban crisis.²³⁰ The new settlements lacked formal housing, water and sewage infrastructure, schooling, and employment etc.

The local and departmental authorities did not plan effectively for these changes in Medellín nor in other Colombian cities.²³¹ For instance, in Medellín during the 1960-1970s, 50 percent of all new inhabitants "lived in illegal settlements that had spread over the foothills of the mountains."²³² As Medellín is located in a valley, the only way to expand was up the hills in areas at high risk for landslides. The settlement of the new barrios lacked basic public services and facilities such as water, electricity, and schools; as well as employment for all the incoming people.²³³

At the same time, in the late 1960's, there was an "influence of Marxist theorists and leftist politics on social movements."²³⁴ This led to the emergence of guerrilla groups

²²⁸ Hardin, introduction, 6.

²²⁹ Riaño, *Dwellers of memory*, 39.

²³⁰ The statistics are based on the period of 1951 until 1973. See Riaño, *Dwellers of Memory*, 39.

²³¹ *Ibid.*

²³² *Ibid.*

²³³ *Ibid.*

²³⁴ *Ibid.*, 44.

that used violence for political or revolutionary purposes.²³⁵ This type of rebel organization started conducting their political work in low-income *barrios* (neighborhoods).²³⁶ The guerrilla groups recruited and trained young people, most of which were already part of street gangs. Later on, when the army intervened, the guerrillas were forced to abandon the cities, leaving their former apprentices with newly acquired skills.²³⁷ Currently there are two major guerrilla groups: The National Liberation Army (ELN) and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC).

3.2 1970-2000: Drug war, local confrontations

Once the guerrilla groups started operating from the countryside, there was a large number of youth that remained in the cities, with war knowledge and skills.²³⁸ Then, with the economic recession, and facing high rates of unemployment, many youth decided to get involved in an activity that was more lucrative and that gradually took hold by the end of 1970's: the drug cartels.²³⁹

The leaders of the drug cartels were mostly people of humble origin, such as Medellín's infamous Pablo Escobar.²⁴⁰ The cartel leaders "showed remarkable imagination and self confidence building a successful business empire out of nothing."²⁴¹ Referring to Salazar, Riaño wrote "The Colombian illegal drug economy developed into

²³⁵ Ibid., 45

²³⁶ Ibid.

²³⁷ Hardin, introduction, 7.

²³⁸ Recently, the guerrilla groups mostly operate from the countryside, but there is still a number of these groups that exist in the cities, also called urban militias. Likewise, the recruitment of youth and even kids by this type of organizations has continued happening in rural villages.

²³⁹ Alonso Salazar and Ana María Jaramillo, *Las culturas del narcotráfico*, Santafé de Bogotá: Cinep, 1994, cited in Riaño, *Dwellers of Memory*, 44.

²⁴⁰ "Pablo Escobar came from a lower middle class family in Envigado near Medellín, and graduated from petty crime to the big time via work as a hit-man for criminal gangs." See: Hardin, introduction, 8.

²⁴¹ Ibid.

one of the most powerful in the world, controlling the management and distribution of cocaine as well as playing an important role in the processing of the alkaloid.”²⁴²

Both types of organizations, guerrilla groups and narcotic trafficking organizations, were highly attractive to youth because they offered the opportunity “to learn how to use firearms and to receive military training, [and] in the case of the guerrilla, ... the possibility of social recognition and enhanced economic status.”²⁴³ The flow of money from the drug economy contributed to the local economy and resulted in expensive housing renovations, automobiles, electronic equipment, and ownership of property in rural areas...etc. By 1985 it had penetrated “all sectors of society: government, politics, religion, entertainment, army and the police.”²⁴⁴

Youth played a crucial role in the development of drug trafficking organizations; the cartels hired them as *sicarios* (hired killers) or to conduct other related activities. “Killing is our business really, we do other jobs, but mostly we're hired to kill people. People from all sorts of places contract us: from Bellavista jail, from El Poblado, from Itaguí. People who don't want to show their faces, and take you on to get rid of their problem for them.”²⁴⁵ According to Antonio, a 20-year-old young man. The *sicarios* were not only “used by the drug cartels but also by business people who feared kidnapping, cattle and ranch owners facing economic risks, (and) threatened politicians and military

²⁴² Alonso Salazar, *La Cola del Lagarto. Drogas y narcotráfico en la sociedad colombiana* (Medellín: Corporación Región, 1998) cited in Riaño, *Dwellers of Memory*, 6.

²⁴³ Riaño, *Dwellers of Memory*, 45.

²⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 49.

²⁴⁵ This is the testimony of Antonio, a member of a youth gang and who used to work as a *sicario* (hired killer). His real name was changed to Antonio to protect his identity. See: Salazar, *Born to die in Medellín*, 16.

officers.”²⁴⁶ Private justice and revenge, in the form of murder, became more accepted as a legitimate means for conflict resolution at every level of society.²⁴⁷

After the assassination of the national Minister of Justice in 1984,²⁴⁸ the “big war between the drug cartels and the government”²⁴⁹ began. This included the murder and kidnapping of judges, ministers, journalists, politicians and terrorist actions such as powerful bombs that destroyed buildings and killed many people.²⁵⁰ On the other hand, the state started the strongest battle ever taken against the Medellín Drug Cartel.²⁵¹ By 1985, homicide became the leading cause of death in the country, a trend that continues today, said Pilar Riaño.²⁵²

After the death of Pablo Escobar²⁵³ in 1993, the Medellín drug cartel began to weaken.²⁵⁴ Many people thought that the violent epoch was coming to an end, but what happened is that youth gangs diversified their activities and services; and networks of small drug traffickers, organized crime and urban delinquency groups were formed.²⁵⁵ Moreover, “local gangs turned to their territories to seek social recognition and

²⁴⁶ Riaño, *Dwellers of Memory*, 46.

²⁴⁷ Ibid.

²⁴⁸ The assassination of the Ministry of Justice in 1984, led the national government, under the mandate of President Belisario Betancourt, to introduce measures to extradite Colombians in the US. This decision caused rage among the drug cartels that initiated a movement to destabilize the state. See: Riaño, *Dwellers of Memory*, 49.

²⁴⁹ Riaño, *Dwellers of Memory*, 51.

²⁵⁰ Ibid., 49

²⁵¹ Ibid.

²⁵² This fact refers to the year in which Riaño’s work was published: 2006. See: Riaño, *Dwellers of Memory*, 48.

²⁵³ Pablo Emilio Escobar (1949-1993) was Medellín’s Cartel Leader and maximum drug lord of Colombian mafia. He had the greatest fortune of the country in the cocaine trade. Colombian authorities suspect he was involved in more than 4,000 murders. He organized and funded an extensive network of *sicarios* (hired assassins). In the early nineties he led massive violent attacks to destabilize the State; he became one of the world’s most wanted terrorists. He also became congressman of the Republic of Colombia in the early eighties. See: Jordi Fabregas y Beatriz Marbella, “Medellín la más educada,” in: *Aprendiendo de Colombia. Cultura y educación para transformar la ciudad*, ed. Bertran Coppini Roser and Félix Manito (Bogotá, fundación Kreanta, 2008), 156.

²⁵⁴ The government forces shot Pablo Escobar in 1993; soon the state started to “dismantle the operations of the large Medellín and Cali Cartels.” See: Riaño, *Dwellers of Memory*, 51.

²⁵⁵ Ibid., 3.

money.”²⁵⁶ The major goal was to gain control over the territory, which generated confrontations between youth gangs and fighting between the gangs and the urban militias.²⁵⁷ Officially, “the big war between the drug cartels and the government was temporarily over, but the period of the local wars had begun.”²⁵⁸

Many youth in the *comunas* (poor neighborhoods) have engaged in criminal activities from an early age. Some have grown up with a family background of random violence,²⁵⁹ and have had access to arms since 11-13 years old.²⁶⁰ Some quit school, and did not have many legal job prospects so the streets became their home. Commercial media use also influenced their behavior; young people learnt how to use arms watching television. Antonio, a member of a local gang says: “We learn a lot from films. We get videos of people like Chuck Norris, Black Cobra, Commando, or Stallone and watch how they handle their weapons, how they cover each other, how they get away. We watch the films and discuss the tactics.”²⁶¹

Anyone could hire them to kill or commit other types of delinquent activities. These kids are “at the bottom of the hierarchy of violence.”²⁶² Afterwards, they are considered “disposable” “born to be thrown away after use.”²⁶³ And, there was a generalized growing attitude of discrimination towards poor youth.²⁶⁴

²⁵⁶ Ibid., 51.

²⁵⁷ The urban militias were groups that started in the beginning of 1990’s “as a hybrid of urban guerrilla cells and community self-defense associations. They controlled territories in the city’s peripheral low-income areas and took it upon themselves to eradicate gangs, drug consumption and petty crime in the barrios.” See: Riaño, *Dwellers of Memory*, 2.

²⁵⁸ Ibid., 51.

²⁵⁹ Hardin, introduction, 7.

²⁶⁰ Salazar, *Born to die in Medellín*, 24.

²⁶¹ Testimony of Antonio, a twenty year-old young man. See Salazar, *Born to die in Medellín*, 15.

²⁶² Hardin, introduction, 9.

²⁶³ Ibid.

²⁶⁴ Jesús Martín Barbero, “De la Comunicación a la Filosofía y viceversa: Nuevos mapas, nuevos retos,” in: *Mapas nocturnos: Diálogos con la obra de Jesús Martín Barbero*, ed. M. Cristina Laverde and Rossana Reguillo, 201-222 (Bogotá, Siglo del Hombre Editores, 1998); and Salazar et al, *La Génesis de los*

The drug trafficking permeated all levels of society, including the state. There was a high dose of corruption and bribery among state officials. “It’s hard to find guns. You either have to shoot a guy to get his, or buy them, and a good weapon costs. We nearly always buy them from the police and they sell us the ammo too,”²⁶⁵ explained Antonio. There was also institutional violence;

In Antioquia, the army started an offensive against the gangs of *sicarios* as a way of weakening the social base of the drug cartel. To this end, it employed as legitimate all kind of actions, mostly carried out by death squads, including disappearances, torture, massacres, and collective searches.²⁶⁶

After witnessing the murder of a member of the community by the local police in Medellín, Doña Azucena, a woman who used to lived in Chigorodó Urabá and had migrated to Medellín said: “Things like that happened all the time, the police would come up to destroy our houses, but we’ve all stood firm. A lot of lives were lost. That’s why we’ve never liked the law; it seems they’re always out to get the poor.”²⁶⁷

Apart from the institutional violence, Doña Azucena’s testimony is an example of the position of the state towards the *desplazados* (*displaced*); for several years, the municipal department and national authorities largely ignored the families displaced by the rural violence who had migrated to Medellín,²⁶⁸ These families lived in squatter areas, without basic services and with the risk of landslides.²⁶⁹ It took many years for the government to include the new settlements under their mandate, and to provide basic

invisibles. Historias de la segunda fundación de Medellín (Santafé de Bogotá, Programa por la Paz, 1996) in: Riaño, *Dwellers of Memory*, 2.

²⁶⁵ Salazar, *Born to die in Medellín*, 15.

²⁶⁶ Riaño, *Dwellers of Memory*, 50

²⁶⁷ Testimony of a woman, named in the book Doña Azucena, who happens to be Antonio’s mother. See: Salazar, *Born to die in Medellín*, 22.

²⁶⁸ Riaño, *Dwellers of Memory*, 13

²⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

services such as water, electricity, and elementary schools.²⁷⁰ In fact, it wasn't until the *sicariato* boom and the formation of gangs in Medellín that the state and the political and economic elites initiated any concern for youth.²⁷¹ However, once the youth violence escalated, it represented a strong threat to the political stability of the city. Thus, it was the youth's violent action, both collective and individual, that led to the development of local youth policy.²⁷²

A first step was the creation of a presidential commission for the city in 1990. The *Consejería Presidencial para Medellín* consisted of:

An office in charge of advising the president on matters of conflict, peace and social programming, such as channeling national and international funds for the development of infrastructure into Medellín's poorest areas and generating economic and employment opportunities for youth.²⁷³

Another strategy used by the commission was to try to dissolve the conflict through negotiation within armed groups, gangs and militias.²⁷⁴ However, most of these programs were halted as a result of the immense pressure of the national-level armed conflict, and the precarious socio-economic conditions of the neighborhoods in which these programs were being executed.²⁷⁵

Later on, in 1995, the national government intervened in Medellín due to the alarming violence indicators. They created an office for youth;²⁷⁶ the first municipal

²⁷⁰ Ibid., 39.

²⁷¹ Urán, "La juventud," 301.

²⁷² Ibid.

²⁷³ Riaño, *Dwellers of Memory*, 50.

²⁷⁴ Urán, "La juventud," 260.

²⁷⁵ Ibid.

²⁷⁶ Medellín elected the first municipal youth council, *Consejo Municipal de Juventud* (CMJ) in 1995, as a result of a local initiative, which was formed 15 delegates, in an election attended by approximately 11,000 voters, between 14 and 26 years. See: "Qué es el CMJ," accessed December 2, 2013, <http://consejomunicipaldejuventud.blogspot.com>

youth council in Colombia, *Consejo Municipal de Juventud* (CMJ).²⁷⁷ The mission of the CMJ is to “transmit the voice of the young people and represent their interests before government authorities and non governmental organizations.”²⁷⁸ CMJ is constituted and elected only by young people between 14 and 26 years of age.²⁷⁹ This council is still in force, and in fact, was replicated in the rest of the country.

In 1990, 190 gangs were identified in Medellín.²⁸⁰ Medellín was considered the most violent city in Colombia and all of Latin America; “the peak was in 1991-1992 with a rate of 444 homicides per 100,000 inhabitants”.²⁸¹ It is important to mention that between 1987-1990, more than 78 percent of the city’s victims of violent deaths were youth between fifteen and twenty-four years old, eight out of ten whom were male,²⁸² and from poorer social classes.²⁸³ Young men were not only the perpetrators of violence but also the major victims.

Medellín was also known as the municipality with the highest rates of unemployment; with youth unemployment at 35 percent in 1991.²⁸⁴ Additionally, in the late 1990s, Antioquia was the department of Colombia that produced the largest numbers of forced displacement (45 percent) from the countryside;²⁸⁵ “In 1998, 8,000 displaced

²⁷⁷ Urán, “La juventud,” 266.

²⁷⁸ “Qué es el CMJ,” accessed December 2, 2013, <http://consejomunicipaldejuventud.blogspot.com>

²⁷⁸ Ibid.

²⁷⁹ Ibid.

²⁸⁰ Hardin, introduction, 8.

²⁸¹ Riaño, *Dwellers of Memory*, 2.

²⁸² Consejería Presidencial para Medellín y su Área Metropolitana, *Medellín Alternativas de Futuro*. (Medellín: Presidencia de la República, 1992); and E. Rodríguez, *Políticas públicas de Juventud en Medellín. Propuestas básicas para el period 2000-2003* (Medellín: Comfenalco Antioquia, 2001) cited in Riaño, *Dwellers of Memory*, 2.

²⁸³ Riaño, *Dwellers of Memory*, 2.

²⁸⁴ Ibid., 2.

²⁸⁵ Comisión Colombiana de Juristas, *Colombia, derechos humanos y derecho humanitario, 1996* (Bogotá: Comisión Colombiana de Juristas, 1997) cited in Riaño, *Dwellers of Memory*, 13

families arrived in Medellín.”²⁸⁶ These figures show the kinds of violence, and economic and political crises that existed in the city during the last couple of decades of the twentieth century.

3.3 Fragmentation of the city’s social fabric

According to Riaño, “the disturbing images of Medellín’s youth are evidence of broader social fractures, historical inequities and networks of criminality and impunity.”²⁸⁷ The impact of sustained violence causes people to feel collective terror, uncertainty, and chaos.²⁸⁸ Many families stay in their homes for fear of crossing *las barreras invisibles* (invisible barriers) established by street gangs and armed groups to control their territory. The public spaces such as parks, squares, and markets were under military patrol and no longer available for friends and neighbors to interact;²⁸⁹ In sum, everyone in the community becomes isolated and fearful; “anyone who comes to a neighboring district is a suspect.”²⁹⁰

Moreover, according to Rodríguez, the armed conflict “erodes the traditional bonds of solidarity, collective consciousness, and trust.”²⁹¹ Armed groups recruit informants within the community; this results in distrust among neighbors and friends and a decrease in communication.²⁹² Violence has also created fissures in the social fabric of Medellín’s inhabitants affecting the ethical positions of people, especially youth; for

²⁸⁶ Ibid.

²⁸⁷ Ibid., 9.

²⁸⁸ Rodríguez, *Lo que le vamos quitando a la Guerra*, 12.

²⁸⁹ Ibid., 13.

²⁹⁰ Semana. “Violencia y Muerte: ¿Qué pasa en Medellín?” November 10, 2012. Accessed October 29, 2013. <http://www.semana.com/nacion/articulo/violencia-muerte-que-pasa-medellin/267672-3>

²⁹¹ Ibid.

²⁹² Ibid.

instance “when addressing practices and representations of sexual and gendered violence and terror (e.g. rape).”²⁹³

Finally, it is important to highlight another effect of war on the community’s social fabric. Civil society had begun to question the legitimacy of public democratic institutions and the rule of law.²⁹⁴ With governmental organizations implicated in the drug cartels, corruption and bribery increased. Furthermore, the armed conflict raised the impunity levels while decreasing the levels of good governance and transparency.²⁹⁵

3.4 *Comuna 4, Aranjuez*

Medellín is the core of the Metropolitan Area of the Aburrá Valley, formed by nine municipalities, which in total account for a population of 3.5 million. Medellín alone accounts for almost three million inhabitants.²⁹⁶ The city is divided into 16 *Comunas* (districts), which are further divided into *Barrios* (neighborhoods). In total the city contains 249 *barrios*.²⁹⁷

In this section, I talk about the *Comuna 4* or District 4 also known as Aranjuez. It was chosen for the study because it houses the Hip-hop school *Cuatro Elementos Skuela*, presented in Chapter 5, located in the neighborhood with the same name (Aranjuez). I discuss the ways in which this sector was formed and its actual structure. Also, I present the major problems and needs of the community and the ways in which these issues affected youth.

²⁹³ Riaño, *Dwellers of Memory*, 8-9.

²⁹⁴ Rodríguez, *Lo que le vamos quitando a la Guerra*, 13.

²⁹⁵ Ibid.

²⁹⁶ “Estimaciones de Población 1985-2005 y Proyecciones de Población 2005-2020. Total Municipal por área, en 2012,” last modified November 7, 2012.

http://www.dane.gov.co/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=75&Itemid=72

²⁹⁷ Alcaldía de Medellín, “Límites Administrativos y Politicos,” accessed December 2, 2013.

<http://poseidon.medellin.gov.co/geonetwork/srv/es/main.home>

The *Comuna 4*, Aranjuez is located in the northeastern part of Medellín. It borders districts 1 and 2 (Popular and Santa Cruz) on the north, and district 3 (Manrique) on the east; on the west by the Medellín River, and on the south by district 10 (La Candelaria). It has an area of 486.45 hectares, which corresponds to 30.9 percent of the northeastern and 4.7 percent of urban land Medellín.²⁹⁸

The estimated population of Aranjuez District is 161,491 inhabitants, which is about 7% of the total population of Medellín (Medellín est. population 2,441,123 inhabitants).²⁹⁹ According to City Planning, District 4 is divided into 17 neighborhoods: Berlin, La Piñuela, Las Esmeraldas, Campo Valdés, Manrique Central No. 1, San Isidro, Aranjuez, Brasilia, Miranda, San Pedro, Sevilla, Palermo, Bermejil, Los Alamos, Moravia, Jardín Botánico, Parque Norte and Universidad de Antioquia. The last 3 neighborhoods are considered institutional, in the sense that they don't record population or community organization. These sites are important to the city and the Department of Antioquia due to the educational, cultural and recreational services provided to the general population.³⁰⁰ In Colombia homes are classified in six socioeconomic strata: strata 1 (low-low), 2 (low), 3 (medium-low), 4 (medium), 5 (medium-high), 6 (high). The population of *Comuna 4* lives in houses located in socioeconomic strata 1, 2, and 3. It prevails stratum 3: the 59.54 percent live in medium-low stratum.³⁰¹

²⁹⁸ Instituto Popular de Capacitación IPC. "Plan de Desarrollo Local Comuna 4 de Medellín, 2008-2015. Construyendo territorio con Equidad" (Medellín: n.p., 2008), 18.

²⁹⁹ According to the census conducted in 2005, the estimated population for 2013 of the *Comuna 4*, is 161,491 inhabitants, and the total population of Medellín is 2,441,123. See: Censo 2005, Distribución elaborada por convenio entre el DANE y el Municipio de Medellín entre sep 2009 a junio 2010, "Proyecciones de Población Municipio de Medellín por comunas y corregimientos Años 1993, 2005-2015," accessed October 29, 2013, <http://www.medellin.gov.co/>

³⁰⁰ IPC, "Plan de Desarrollo Local Comuna 4 de Medellín, 2008-2015," 20.

³⁰¹ Ibid., 21.

In the early 1920s, in what is known today as Aranjuez, there were several large farms that belonged to well-to-do families who took urban planning into their own hands mapped out the neighborhoods and streets; and started selling the land at affordable prices.³⁰² It soon began to be inhabited by middle class people.³⁰³ In general, its own inhabitants mostly did the construction of housing and other buildings in this sector.³⁰⁴

Later, in the mid 1940's and early 1950's, there was another period of urban development, characterized by spontaneous settlements considered illegal by the municipal administration.³⁰⁵ Then a second period of illegal settlement occurred in the 1960s as a result of migration caused by violence in the countryside. As a result, areas such as Moravia, Los Álamos, and Palermo began to be highly populated, overcrowded, and with inadequate infrastructure for education, housing and health and a poor quality of public services.³⁰⁶

Today, *Comuna 4* can be divided into two sectors. The first sector contains the oldest neighborhoods such as Manrique, Campo Valdés, Las Esmeraldas, Miranda, Aranjuez, Berlín, La Piñuela, San Pedro and Sevilla; considered one of the most vital and popular areas of the city, with the highest rate of growth in the first half of the twentieth century.³⁰⁷ The second sector is made up of the neighborhoods that were formed later,

³⁰² Ibid., 19

³⁰³ Bedoya Aguirre, Parmenio A, “Transformaciones y características de la vivienda vernacula en el barrio Aranjuez de Medellín a partir de las formas de habitar de sus moradores desde principios del Siglo XX,” (Master diss., Universidad Nacional de Colombia, 2011): 17, accessed October 29, 2013, http://www.bdigital.unal.edu.co/6841/4/71745275_2012_1.pdf

³⁰⁴ Bedoya, “Transformaciones y características de la vivienda vernacula en el barrio Aranjuez de Medellín,” 17.

³⁰⁵ IPC, “Plan de Desarrollo Local Comuna 4 de Medellín, 2008-2015,” 19.

³⁰⁶ Ibid.

³⁰⁷ Ibid., 20.

located parallel to Medellín river and includes Moravia, Los Alamos, Palermo and San Isidro.³⁰⁸

In 2008, the city administration formally studied *Comuna 4*, and created a Development Plan for the following eight years, *Plan De Desarrollo Comuna 4, (2008-2015)*.³⁰⁹ This process was carried out through communal assemblies, with the participation of different actors involved on decision-making and community groups.³¹⁰ In general, what the studies reported was that although the district is close to the city center, and to basic facilities such as hospitals, supermarkets, drug stores, schools, recreational parks, sports fields, and cultural centers, many of its inhabitants “are still unable to access employment, health, education and culture.”³¹¹ The study found that the Quality of Life Index (Índice de Calidad de Vida, ICV)³¹² and the Human Development Index HDI (Índice de Desarrollo Humano, IDH)³¹³ of the *Comuna 4* were below the city’s average rates.³¹⁴

The study also found that there was a very high school dropout rate.³¹⁵ This was thought to be due to family economic constraints, the low quality of education, and a lack

³⁰⁸ Ibid.

³⁰⁹ The plan is projected to 2015, which includes two periods of Municipal Administration in order to "ensure the effective management of the same, as well as its monitoring and evaluation." See: Ibid., 17.

³¹⁰ Ibid., 12.

³¹¹ Ibid., 20.

³¹² The Quality of Life Index of the *Comuna 4*, in 2006, is 81,71 while Medellín’s Index is 83,77. The study also demonstrated that the district’s Quality of Life Index decreased in 2005, and then increased in 2006, while the city’s index was always increasing. This means that while other sectors of the city are increasing the quality of life, the *Comuna 4* has stayed behind. See: Ibid., 21.

³¹³ In regards with the Human Development Index HDI, the *Comuna 4* has a HDI of 73,68 while Medellín has a HDI of 80,16. This shows a great difference when compared to the City’s index, which reflects the conditions of inequality that exist in this sector compared to other districts of the city, and the higher levels of investment that this district needs. See: Ibid., 22.

³¹⁴ These indicators were calculated by the Municipality of Medellín, in a survey conducted in 2006. See: Ibid., 21-22.

³¹⁵ Ibid., 23

of strategies for monitoring the children and the youth at school.³¹⁶ Moreover, the study found that there is limited access for young people 18-22 to higher education.³¹⁷ Public universities do not have enough capacity; and private institutions are inaccessible due to their high cost.³¹⁸ Paradoxically, although the two public Universities of the city, *Universidad de Antioquia* and *Universidad Nacional*, are both close to the *Comuna 4*, only a very small percentage of its inhabitants attended college.³¹⁹

The report also found that the level of youth unemployment was particularly high. The unemployment rate in the *Comuna 4* was 13.72 percent in 2006; higher than the 13.13 percent recorded in Medellín overall.

The *Comuna 4* also presented problems of violence associated with domestic issues, conflicts between neighbors, homicides and crime.³²⁰ In 2007, the homicide rate was 10.4 percent, second in the city after *La Candelaria* with 14.9%.³²¹ Although that the armed political conflict has been greatly reduced in this sector, the report suggested that further research be conducted in order to understand the nature of the conflicts after the negotiations of the government with paramilitary forces, and the efforts of the state to reduce guerilla groups in the city.³²² Moreover, drug trafficking is still ever-present in the *Comuna 4* (sale and consumption of drugs). In fact there is a high rate of alcoholism and drug addiction.³²³ Lastly, there is violence caused by street gangs, which seek territorial control.

³¹⁶ Ibid.

³¹⁷ Ibid., 24.

³¹⁸ Ibid., 25.

³¹⁹ Ibid.

³²⁰ Ibid., 44.

³²¹ This statistic was calculated by the Secretary of State in 2007. See: Ibid., 44.

³²² Ibid.

³²³ Ibid., 45.

Finally, an assessment was made with regards to the cultural and recreational sports provisions within the district. The study found that in 2006, there were few opportunities for people to engage in cultural and artistic activities.³²⁴ There were not enough spaces to promote culture and scarce encouragement of local artistic groups or individuals with artistic talent.³²⁵ Additionally some neighborhoods lacked spaces to practice sports or their sport fields and facilities need improvements.³²⁶

This chapter sets the stage in the city of Medellín in the moment in which youth subcultures emerged, particularly the Hip-hop movement. It shows the different sets of conflicts that exist in the city, and the effects they caused in the daily lives of its inhabitants; for instance the constant sense of fear of going outside and interacting with neighbors, which resulted in the fragmentation of the social fabric. Moreover, a look at the conditions of the *Comuna 4* showed that this district lacked spaces for the promotion of culture and encounter. The chapter also discusses the difficulties faced by youth in marginalized neighborhoods, specifically accessing higher education and finding employment; which led many of them to become *sicarios* (hired killers) or conduct other criminal activities to gain economic stability.

³²⁴ Ibid., 51.

³²⁵ Ibid., 52.

³²⁶ Ibid., 55.

Chapter 4: Culture and peace building in Colombia

In this chapter I describe the processes of building cultural policy in Colombia and in Medellín since the late 80's beginning of the 90's. The latter is important, in order to learn what was happening in the country and in the city regarding cultural policy; this was happening simultaneously as hip-hop groups emerged. Also, it is relevant to this research because some of these changes are benefiting the Hip-hop movement today; specifically the creation of a National Ministry of Culture, which encourages the exchange of Hip-hop knowledge between different existing groups around the country.

4.1 National Cultural Policy

Attempts to build cultural policy in Colombia have existed since the 1960's. The *Instituto Colombiano de Cultura*, Colcultura (Colombian Institute of Culture) Colcultura was founded in 1968 and fostered discussions around cultural policy since then.³²⁷ The poet Jorge Rojas, first director of Colcultura, promoted the first national cultural policy plan, *Plan Nacional de Política Cultural* in 1974.³²⁸ Two years later, the deputy director of Colcultura, Jorge Ruiz, published *La Política Cultural en Colombia* (Cultural Policy in Colombia). Ruiz insisted on the need to incorporate cultural programs in development plans, decentralizing cultural activities, encouraging cultural creation, and creating the necessary tools for planning and managing culture and training people for it.³²⁹ Moreover, the government under President Virgilio Barco, 1986-1990, presented the document *New orientation of a cultural policy for Colombia*, before the Council of Economic and Social

³²⁷ Bravo, *Itinerarios Culturales 1985-2007*, 142.

³²⁸ *Ibid.*, 143.

³²⁹ *Ibid.*, 144.

Policy under the slogan "a culture for democracy, a democracy for the culture."³³⁰ Colcultura elaborated this document with the participation of researchers, artists and cultural agents. It shows "a solid body of cultural policy, which also emphasizes the role of the mass media, basic task in cultural development, as well as to think of a necessary openness to Latin America and the Caribbean."³³¹

In the 1990s, amidst the violence in Medellín, and other parts of the country, the national government, under President César Gaviria Trujillo, decided to make a constitutional change that would redefine its legal and political system.³³² A new constitution in 1991 replaced the constitution that had been in place since 1886. A major change was the definition of the multiethnic and multicultural character of the country.³³³ Article 7 in the 1991 Constitution, affirms that, "The State recognizes and protects the ethnic and cultural diversity of the Colombian nation."³³⁴ Hence "In this direction a cultural policy was key."³³⁵ The creation of the Constitution of 1991 was a first step towards the transformation of cultural policy regarding public space.³³⁶

³³⁰ The main strategies defined in the document were: 1. Incorporate the cultural dimension in development plans and in the process of administrative decentralization 2. Integrate culture with education, democratic training and development of science and technology 3. Encourage artistic creation, research on cultural processes and training of talents 4. Expand and improve the reproduction and dissemination of culture through mass media 5. Preserve the cultural heritage of Colombians 6. Enhance cultural cooperation with Latin America and the Caribbean 7. Improve the coordination capacity of management and cultural institutions. See: Bravo, *Itinerarios Culturales 1985-2007*, 145.

³³¹ Ibid.

³³² Marta Elena Bravo, "Políticas Culturales en Colombia," ed. Rubim Albino and Rubens Bayardo, in: *Itinerarios culturales 1985-2007*, 296.

³³³ Ana María Ochoa Gautier, *Entre los deseos y los derechos. Un ensayo crítico sobre políticas culturales* (Bogotá, Colombia: La Silueta Ediciones Ltda, 2003): 18.

³³⁴ Other articles that are related to the respect and promotion of culture in the Colombian Constitution of 1991 are: 8, 10, 70, 71, and 72. See: Presidencia de la República de Colombia, "Constitución Política De Colombia," last modified May 2008, <http://web.presidencia.gov.co/constitucion/index.pdf>

³³⁵ Bravo, "Políticas Culturales en Colombia," 296.

³³⁶ Ochoa, *Entre los deseos y los derechos*, 18.

After the enactment of the new Constitution of 1991, several cultural laws were passed.³³⁷ It is important to highlight the Law 397 of 1997, *Ley General de Cultura*, which comprises the basic concepts and the objectives of the current cultural programs at the national level. The Law 397 of 1997 is influenced by the work of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).³³⁸ UNESCO has played an important role internationally since the 1970's, raising awareness among nation states of the importance of cultural policy and cultural development.³³⁹ In fact, the definition of culture by UNESCO was taken almost word for word in the Law 397 of 1997: culture is “a set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features of society or a social group, and that it encompasses, in addition to art and literature, lifestyles, ways of living together, value systems, traditions and beliefs.”³⁴⁰

The 397 Bill *Ley General de Cultura* constituted a second step in transforming the role of cultural policy; it gave birth to the national Ministry of Culture in 1997.³⁴¹ The Ministry of Culture replaced the *Instituto Colombiano de Cultura*, Colcultura (Colombian Institute of Culture), which had only been one body of the Ministry of Education. The elevation of the Ministry of Culture to the national stage raised the profile of cultural policy; it meant that culture was going to be present in national government decisions.³⁴² In addition, culture acquires a space before the national treasury, being entitled to its own budget.³⁴³

³³⁷ Bravo, “Políticas Culturales en Colombia,” 308.

³³⁸ Ibid.

³³⁹ Bravo, *Itinerarios Culturales 1985-2007*, 141.

³⁴⁰ This definition of Culture came out from the General Conference of Cultural Policy held in México in 1982, known as Mundiacult. See: Bravo, *Itinerarios Culturales 1985-2007*, 142.

³⁴¹ Ochoa, *Entre los deseos y los derechos*, 18.

³⁴² Bravo, *Itinerarios Culturales 1985-2007*, 297.

³⁴³ Ochoa, *Entre los deseos y los derechos*, 18.

Creating a new national Ministry of Culture during the crisis, in which armed conflict was intensified, showed that the state, as theorist George Yúdice suggests, was attempting to instill peace through culture.³⁴⁴ Others, such as García Márquez³⁴⁵ disagreed with the creation of a national ministry of culture for fear of further creating bureaucracy and the intervention of the State in this matter;³⁴⁶ in other words by increasing the size of the people working in the promotion of culture, the implementation of plans and programs could become more complex and imposed from above, and not solve the extant social and cultural problems. Nevertheless, the work undertaken by Colcultura, the Constitution of 1991, and the Law 397 of 1997 were advances in the construction of a cultural policy for Colombia.

4.2 Cultural Development Plan of Medellín, 1990

The elaboration of a local cultural plan for Medellín started in the 1980's. In 1985 and 1987 the cultural element was included in Medellín's Development Plan, under social development strategies. This project recognized the multiple cultural manifestations that existed in this moment of crisis.³⁴⁷ For instance, in a moment of the *sicariato* boom and high youth involvement in gangs and other armed groups, "there emerged a contrasting social environment of active youth participation in hundreds of youth groups,³⁴⁸ and a parallel blossoming of youth countercultural expressions –e.g.,

³⁴⁴ George Yúdice, "El lugar de la cultura en las políticas de paz y democracia." In: *Entre los deseos y los derechos. Un Ensayo Crítico sobre políticas Culturales* (Bogotá, Colombia: La Silueta Ediciones Ltda, 2003), 12.

³⁴⁵ Gabriel García Márquez is a Colombian writer, who won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1982.

³⁴⁶ Bravo, *Itinerarios Culturales 1985-2007*, 297.

³⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 125.

³⁴⁸ "According to a 1994 census conducted by the Youth Office of Medellín, there were 600 groups in Medellín's municipal area. They comprised a diverse range of community, cultural, social and religious groups." See Footnote 3 in: Riaño, *Dwellers of Memory*, 23.

poetry, graffiti art, rock, punk, rap, and metal musical expressions”³⁴⁹ These countercultural movements, according to Urán, were partly a result of the expansion of new forms of translocal, diasporic and corporate commercial communications, which opened the city to new cultural dynamics.³⁵⁰ Multiple communication channels, such as television, radio, mass media, and later on the Internet, allowed youth to engage in these types of cultural practices first as audience members in the 1960s and later on as active producers in 1980s.³⁵¹

For several years the local government and the cultural sector, which includes Medellín’s Committee of Cultural entities and the University, had tried to find a way to develop these initiatives. Finally, Juan Gómez Martínez, the first popular mayor to be elected in 1988, promised to make it happen.³⁵² There was a broad participation of various cultural and social actors; around 600 people got together for the development of the cultural plan.³⁵³ The different actors included: the Council representatives and MPs; officials from the Ministry of Education, Culture and Recreation in Medellín; other officials of the city administration and the department of Antioquia; Cultural Institutions Committee; educators, and educational union leaders; administrators, teachers, staff and university researchers; representatives of the media; artists and other cultural workers; public libraries leaders; NGO’s; business and trade associations; community leaders, local boards, committees of citizen action; officials of the Colombian Institute of Culture, Colcultura and the United Nations Program for Development, and the Project

³⁴⁹ Carlos Rincón, *Mapas y Pliegues. Ensayos de cartografía cultural y de lectura del barroco* (Santafé de Bogotá: Colcultura, 1991) and Jorge Giraldo, “Rock e ideología,” in *Medellín en vivo. La Historia del Rock*. Omar Urán, ed. 12-28. Medellín: IPC, 1997) cited in: Riaño, *Dwellers of Memory*, 3.

³⁵⁰ Urán, “La juventud,” 276-277.

³⁵¹ *Ibid.*

³⁵² The first mayor to be elected by popular vote was Juan Gómez Martínez, in 1988. See: Bravo, *Itinerarios Culturales 1985-2007*, 125.

³⁵³ *Ibid.*, 126-127

"Fortalecimiento de la Cultura Popular" (Strengthening Popular Culture). The Municipality approved the plan in 1990; it was the first Cultural Development plan made by a Colombian city.³⁵⁴ The plan was promoted under the slogan: "a response to the affirmation of life and creativity."³⁵⁵

The plan considered the following aspects: the problems that arose with the massive migration from urban areas; the territorial characterization of the new settlements up the hills; the problems faced by the city in providing education, culture, and communication, and especially the role of media in the development of culture; the significance of alternative media in the communities; community participation in cultural policy; the design and use of public space; how people spend their free time, and the existent cultural industries...among others.³⁵⁶ The latter was important because the cultural plan acknowledged a variety of topics including some of the major issues faced by people in marginalized communities including youth.

The Cultural Development Plan highlights the role of cultural institutions or groups.³⁵⁷ It considers the support of compensation funds (*cajas de compensación*),³⁵⁸ and the private sector; and encompasses the role of NGO's, which everyday acquire greater significance in the city's social and cultural development showing positive accomplishments.³⁵⁹ NGOs have been working with youth and serving as mediators among youth, the state, and other social sectors.³⁶⁰ These organizations have begun to see

³⁵⁴ Ibid., 152.

³⁵⁵ Ibid.

³⁵⁶ Ibid., 129-130.

³⁵⁷ In 1990, more than 200 organizations or cultural groups existed in Norwest neighborhoods of Medellín; this area had major security issues. Also, 60 libraries were spread all over the city. See: Ibid., 130.

³⁵⁸ *Cajas de compensación* are non-profit organizations that provide different services to the community such as health, tourism, recreation, education, sports, housing, culture and social security.

³⁵⁹ Bravo, *Itinerarios Culturales 1985-2007*, 131.

³⁶⁰ Urán, "La juventud," 268.

young people as protagonists of cultural transformations instead of seeing youth as a problem, or as being socially disabled. Some NGOs that are pioneers in making a non-paternalistic or welfarist approach to the issue of young people in the city include Instituto Popular de Capacitación, Corporación Región, Corporación Convivamos y Corporación Simón Bolívar. These organizations have focused on promoting spaces for youth's political and cultural participation.³⁶¹

Some of the goals of the city's cultural plan are: to guide the planning processes of Medellín from a cultural perspective; strengthen the city's cultural development contribute to the city's modernization process;³⁶² manage the resources for the cultural development of the city;³⁶³ and articulate the plan with the regional and national cultural programs.³⁶⁴ Marta Elena Bravo explains that the general purpose of the Plan is to support the modernization process of the city, aimed at achieving sociocultural development instead of economic development, which was the common denominator.³⁶⁵

The main policies of the Cultural Development Plan of Medellín of 1990 are: culture and education, culture and communication, heritage and cultural identity, community participation and cultural self-management, rationalization and coordination of resources. These policies are embodied in different projects that are grouped as followed: infrastructure and staffing; outreach and creativity support; training and education; organization and coordination; legislation; financing and investment.³⁶⁶

³⁶¹ Ibid., 269.

³⁶² Bravo, *Itinerarios Culturales 1985-2007*, 136.

³⁶³ Ibid., 128.

³⁶⁴ The notion was to articulate the city's cultural plan with the *Bases del Plan de Desarrollo Cultural de Antioquia*, and the *Plan Nacional de Cultura*, with the aim of achieving a local, regional and national harmonious development. See: Ibid., 128.

³⁶⁵ Ibid., 136.

³⁶⁶ Ibid., 133.

The Cultural Development Plan of Medellín promoted 67 projects, some of which have already been executed others are still in process.³⁶⁷ It is important to highlight the projects that were being supported by the presidential council for Medellín *Consejería Presidencial para Medellín*, which were included in Medellín's cultural plan.³⁶⁸ As mentioned in chapter three, this council served as an advisory body to the President in conflict, peace and social development issues for the city of Medellín and the metropolitan area.³⁶⁹ Some of these projects were: the strengthening of the popular public libraries, specially the ones located in the northwest and northeast of the city;³⁷⁰ the cultural development Centers, *Centros de Desarrollo Cultural*,³⁷¹ and the cultural map of Medellín *Mapa Cultural de Medellín*, an investigation led by 3 universities in the areas of: the images of the city, neighborhood formations, and migrations.³⁷²

Other projects included in the plan are: utilizing the metro free spaces to promote culture.³⁷³ Today there is a project called "Metro arte", which has generated cultural dynamics in the city. The consolidation of the historical archive of Medellín, *Archivo Histórico de Medellín*; and a Latin American and Caribbean meeting of cultural promotion, *Encuentro Latinoamericano y del Caribe, de Promoción y Animación Cultural*.³⁷⁴

³⁶⁷ Ibid., 154.

³⁶⁸ Ibid., 136, 154.

³⁶⁹ With the support of The *Consejería Presidencial para Medellín* the City received 699 millions of pesos for this projects (equivalent to \$349.000 US dollars). See: Ibid., 154

³⁷⁰ Ibid., 136.

³⁷¹ The *Centros de Desarrollo Cultural* would have a strong relationship with the *Núcleos de vida ciudadana* posed by the Presidential Council, they both had similar goals. See: Ibid.

³⁷² The universities that initiated this Project are: Universidad Nacional, de Antioquia, and Bolivariana. See: Ibid., 154.

³⁷³ Medellín's metro was inaugurated on November 30, 1995 (the first section of Line A). Hence, the Cultural Development Plan of the city of 1990, considered the project of the metro, which would be opened five years later.

³⁷⁴ Bravo, *Itinerarios Culturales 1985-2007*, 154.

In conclusion, the process of formulating the Cultural Development Plan of Medellín, allowed the use of new methodologies, such as citizen participation in the creation of cultural policy. It also highlighted the efforts made by different organizations or groups towards the cultural development of the city. The plan was well received especially bearing in mind the crisis affecting Medellín at the time and served as a guide to future cultural policy.

On the other hand, the plan had some limitations. As explained in a text presented in the Culture and Development Symposium organized by the *Universidad Industrial de Santander* and the *Área Cultural del Banco de la República*, in Bucaramanga 1997, “the plan provided the establishment of a technical and operational committee with people from outside the municipal administration.³⁷⁵ This committee worked a while and then its functions were taken over by the local government, “which does not seem the most convenient.”³⁷⁶ Hence, although different representatives of civil society participated in the formulation of the plan, at the time of execution they were not involved any more; the latter is a problem because cultural programs may be imposed from above, which was not the initial goal of the plan.

Moreover, there were limitations concerning the process of monitoring and evaluation. According to the text presented in the Culture and Development Symposium, there was a lack of rigor in the evaluation, monitoring and determination of indicators for each of the projects of the cultural plan.³⁷⁷ Also, some projects were not continued in all

³⁷⁵ Ibid., 155.

³⁷⁶ Ibid.

³⁷⁷ Ibid.

subsequent administrations: “the attitudes of public officials concerning the educational and cultural policies have not always been the most defined.”³⁷⁸

4.3 Urban development as a tool to promote education and culture

Here, I explain the strategies implemented during the past administrations, aimed at reconstructing the city’s social, cultural and economic fabric. Some of these measures include funding public schools, or building new educational institutions. This will affect youth in the sense that it provides opportunities for them to engage in primary and secondary education, taking into consideration the lack of facilities that existed in the city in the past years.

Furthermore, the government is making changes to the physical structure of Medellín, for example, creating new transportation systems, and building new libraries and parks in strategic points of the city. These measures seek to open up access for education to anybody, including youth; meeting spaces for the community, which were scarce due to the effects of violence in the city; and connect the isolated *Comunas* (poor neighborhoods) with the rest of the city, which benefits inhabitants especially youth, who are the main victims of the armed conflict.

This section also shows how government strategies are affecting the Hip-Hop movement; particularly I will discuss the Participatory Budget, a measure implemented in the administration of Sergio Fajardo (2003-2007), and the following administrations. Thanks to the Participatory Budget, the government provides funds for conducting a Hip-hop festival in the city.

In the late 1990s, Medellín began to be transformed through the transportation system. An elevated train, called *Metrocable*, was conceived in order to integrate the

³⁷⁸ Ibid.

isolated neighborhoods with the rest of the city. According to Metro de Medellín, the state-owned company that manages the *Metrocable*, the creation of this cable propelled transit system, has the purpose of “improving transportation conditions for the citizens of Medellín”³⁷⁹ especially “the advancement of living conditions for the lower income population.”³⁸⁰ The new cable system was inaugurated in 2004 and has three lines that go up the northeastern and western mountains, connecting the poorest neighborhoods with the center of the city. The *Metrocable* significantly reduces commuting time at a low cost.

Later, under the leadership of the Mayor Sergio Fajardo (2003, 2007) and with a similar goal of social inclusion, the local government decided to make structural changes in the way that public spaces were imagined, using education and culture as its main axes.³⁸¹ Taking into consideration the lack of credibility of the State, due to the high rates of corruption and low presence in many areas of the city, the government began increasing its physical presence through the injection of social investment. According to Fabregas and Marbella, “the challenge was to restore the state's presence in every corner of the city and in all layers of society, creating new public spaces and implementing social programs with strong impact on the most vulnerable sectors of society.”³⁸²

Some of the main strategies implemented by this administration were the construction of new libraries, schools, and the creation and renovation of public space,

³⁷⁹ “Metrocable,” last modified October 23, 2013.

https://www.metrodemedellin.gov.co/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=61&Itemid=165&lang=en

³⁸⁰ Ibid.

³⁸¹ Sergio Fajardo, a mathematician by profession, had never been involved in politics. His political campaign was based on the principles of transparency, consistency, social investment, citizen participation, and combating corruption. He created a political party called *Compromiso Cívico Ciudadano*, and won the election in 2003, obtaining at the time the highest number of votes in history for the Mayor of Medellín. He came to power with a team of people with experience in the private, academic and social sector. See: Jordi Fabregas y Beatriz Marbella, “Medellín la más educada,” in: *Aprendiendo de Colombia. Cultura y educación para transformar la ciudad*, ed. Bertran Coppini Roser and Félix Manito (Bogotá, fundación Kreanta, 2008), 158, 167.

³⁸² Fabregas y Marbella, “Medellín la más educada,” 159.

understanding the public space as “the site for social equality, coexistence and integration.”³⁸³ The government was concerned to create a pleasant, safe and aesthetic city;³⁸⁴ and to promote spaces for healthy leisure and recreation but also for citizen encounter and cultural exchange.

Under the slogan: “*Medellín la más educada*, (Medellín, the most educated city), the government sought to reduce inequality investing 40% percent of the city’s budget in education.³⁸⁵ In the early 2000 the new administration found that public schools where in bad conditions, the edifications had infrastructure, electrical and sanitary problems. So, the state assessed the situation of each center identifying the main needs, and therefore planning the creation of new schools.³⁸⁶ Mayor Fajardo said: “High quality (of education) for everyone, for all society... Education should be a right, not a privilege.”³⁸⁷

Moreover, for the construction of library parks, the government considered the areas of the city with the lowest indices of human development *Índices de Desarrollo Humano* (IDH).³⁸⁸ The administration relied in a team of architects and urban designers who analyzed the conditions of the territory and built “the best possible buildings in some of the poorest neighborhoods;”³⁸⁹ not only for the provision of quality urban infrastructure but also for the amenities and services offered to people. The library is no

³⁸³ Ibid., 160.

³⁸⁴ Ibid.

³⁸⁵ In the early 2000s, many schools and educational institutions had closed due to the situation of violence that existed in the city. Others were in deplorable condition. Overall quality standards of public education were far below compared to education in private schools. See: Horacio Arango, “Entrevista con Horacio Arango,” in: *Aprendiendo de Colombia, cultura y educación para transformar la ciudad*, ed. Bertran Coppini Roser and Félix Manito (Bogotá: Fundación Kreanta, 2008), 162.

³⁸⁶ Arango, “Entrevista con Horacio Arango,” 162.

³⁸⁷ Sergio Fajardo. “Entrevista con Sergio Fajardo,” in: *Aprendiendo de Colombia, Cultura y educación para transformar la ciudad*, ed. Bertran Coppini Roser and Félix Manito (Bogotá: Fundación Kreanta, 2008), 171.

³⁸⁸ Fabregas and Marbella, “Medellín la más educada,” 160.

³⁸⁹ Lorenzo, and Alejandro Echeverri. “Bogotá and Medellín Architecture and Politics” *Architectural Design* 81, no 3, (May 2011): 100, accessed October 25, 2013, doi: 10.1002/ad.1246.100.

longer a traditional space; it seeks to be a meeting point for anyone, of any age, in a city where there is no public space for citizens.³⁹⁰ The latter explains why the new libraries are named parks; they include: playgrounds, reading rooms, Internet access, gyms and business support centers (*Centros de Desarrollo Zonal*).³⁹¹ These facilities are “focused in the creation of spaces of encounter that serve as urban landmarks and gathering spaces for the community.”³⁹² According to Mayor Fajardo, the keyword is to “meet again, because the continuous violence, locks us physically, socially and culturally.”³⁹³

Additionally, these new rare and sumptuous buildings, even called monuments,³⁹⁴ were built in places that were associated with pain. For instance, where the libraries León de Greiff and Belén are located, there was a prison, and a secret police service with the worst dungeons.³⁹⁵ These measures implemented by the government seek to make a radical shift in people’s mindsets, creating new symbolic references.³⁹⁶

4.3.1 Centro de Desarrollo Cultural Moravia

The *Centro Cultural Moravia* (Cultural Center of Moravia) is located in the neighborhood of Moravia, also part of *Comuna 4, Aranjuez*. The *Centro Cultural Moravia* emerges as a grassroots initiative to promote culture in one of the most

³⁹⁰ Juan Luis Mejía, “Entrevista con Juan Luis Mejía,” in: *Aprendiendo de Colombia. Cultura y educación para transformar la ciudad*, ed. Bertran Coppini Roser and Félix Manito (Bogotá, fundación Kreanta, 2008), 177.

³⁹¹ The *Centros de Desarrollo Zonal* CEDEZOS, offer support to micro and family businesses that are related to the city’s strategic clusters: electricity; textile, clothing, design, and fashion; construction; business tourism, fairs and conventions; medical and dental services; and food; through microcredits, business training, and business management advice. They are located in different districts of the city. See: “Cedezo.” Accessed October 25, 2013.

<http://www.culturaemedellin.gov.co/sites/CulturaE/CulturaE/Paginas/Cedezo.aspx>

³⁹² Castro and Echeverri, “Bogotá and Medellín Architecture and Politics,” 100.

³⁹³ Fajardo, “Entrevista con Sergio Fajardo,” 172.

³⁹⁴ Alonso Salazar, “Entrevista con Alonso Salazar,” in: Bertran Coppini Roser and Félix Manito, edit. *Aprendiendo de Colombia, Cultura y educación para transformar la ciudad*, Bogotá, Fundación Kreanta, 2008, 193.

³⁹⁵ Mejía, “Entrevista con Juan Luis Mejía,” 177.

³⁹⁶ Salazar, “Entrevista con Alonso Salazar,” 193.

marginalized areas of the city. It soon got the attention of different actors in the city, including the private sector, which donated a great amount of funds, the municipality, and the caja de compensación *Comfenalco Antioquia*. Its construction was a reality in 2005, during the administration of Sergio Fajardo (2003-2007). It came during a time when the city administration had made great efforts in urban development; this center was designed more like a plaza or public space than just a house of culture.

Today, the *Centro Cultural Moravia* is managed through an alliance between the city administration and *Comfenalco Antioquia*. This Cultural Center provides various facilities and services to the community, including artistic training to youth in Hip-hop, which is why I consider that it is necessary to acknowledge the presence of this institution, because it is located in the same district as the Hip-hop School *Cuatro Elementos Skuela*.

4.4 Participatory Budget

Another strategy promoted by the government, that has been successful, is the Participatory Budget (*Presupuesto participativo*). This strategy is based on a model implemented in Porto Alegre Brasil.³⁹⁷ The Participatory Budget consists in the allocation of a percentage of the overall budget of the Municipality of Medellín, to the local administrative boards (*Juntas Administradoras Locales* (JAL) and Community Action boards *Juntas de Acción Comunal* (JAC). Through this model the government consults the community about the needs or situations that could be improved; thus the administration gives communities the power to make decisions about how to invest the

³⁹⁷ Jorge Melguizo, "Entrevista con Jorge Melguizo," in: *Aprendiendo de Colombia. Cultura y educación para transformar la ciudad*, ed. Bertran Coppini Roser and Félix Manito (Bogotá, fundación Kreanta, 2008), 182.

budget.³⁹⁸ This involves the implementation and training of participatory mechanisms, planning and discussion of public investment priorities.³⁹⁹

In the cultural dimension, the government contributed 31.000 million pesos (equivalent to \$15.5 million US Dollars) to projects defined and implemented by the communities of all Medellín's neighborhoods.⁴⁰⁰ For example the neighborhood Aranjuez decided to invest 65% of their participatory budget in culture. Jorge Melguizo, who served as Secretary of Culture of Medellín in the municipality of Fajardo and Salazar, said: "It has been evidenced that in the poorest neighborhoods of the city people value culture."⁴⁰¹ Hence, the Participatory Budget has allowed the promotion of cultural activities from a grassroots level; "thanks to the Participatory Budget there is a huge and increasingly well cultural programming in the neighborhoods of the city, especially in the poorest neighborhoods."⁴⁰²

This chapter is an overview of Cultural Policy in Colombia. Overall it shows that there have been advances in policy, which attempted to instill peace. Furthermore, the government is promoting policy around culture, at a national level and particularly in Medellín as a development strategy. Lastly, the State recognizes the importance of community participation in the development of cultural plans. However, although the State acknowledges the existence of NGO's and other community groups that are already working for the promotion of culture, there is a lacuna specifically at the local level, to

³⁹⁸ Alfonso Insuasty Rodríguez, Walter Aristizabal, Elizabeth Peláez Toro, "Educación superior y participación en el marco de la implementación del presupuesto participativo en la comuna uno de Medellín," in: *El Ágora USB*, Vol. 10, Issue 2, (July-December 2010): 412.

³⁹⁹ Insuasty et al, "Educación superior y participación en el marco de la implementación del presupuesto participativo en la comuna uno de Medellín," 412.

⁴⁰⁰ Melguizo, "Entrevista con Jorge Melguizo," 182.

⁴⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 182-183.

⁴⁰² *Ibid.*, 185.

include the perspective of these groups in the city's cultural development plan and work with the processes already existent in the community.

Chapter 5: Change through Hip-Hop

When I met Henry Arteaga also known as JKE (Hecke), he was sitting at a desk outside a classroom with his Macintosh computer open. He was wearing a cap that said *Calles de Medellín* (Streets of Medellín), and a nice pair of sneakers. Kids and young adults were walking towards Henry, and they all greeted each other with a handshake. Henry is not only the leader of the initiative *Cuatro Elementos Skuela* but also the founder of *Crew Peligrosos*, a Hip-hop collective that drives this Hip-hop school.

When I asked him about the relationship between Hip-Hop and the Colombian conflict, he responded: “Hip-hop was a different tool for saying no. This should not be present within youth. This does not work that way... Hip-hop was born to change the bad and make it good,” referring to the origins of the movement. So, with these words in mind, I present some basic concepts regarding Hip-Hop and a brief summary of its history.

5.1 Fundamentals of Hip-Hop

In the early 1970’s Hip-hop emerged as an underground art movement in the Bronx, New York. It started among youth, mostly African American in the ghettos of the big city; many of who came from the West Indies, bringing the cultural traditions of dance hall music, and improvised spoken word. The movement began partly in response to the systemic oppressive treatment of young people of color. With creativity and innovation, urban youth explored new forms of making music, as well as other artistic expressions, for the purpose of fun and pleasure, and for discussing public issues that were important to them.

Hip-hop is made up of four elements: disc jockeys (DJs), emcees (MC's), break dancers (b-boys and b-girls), and graffiti writers (aerosol artists). Hip-hop encompasses an attitude “rendered in the form of stylized dress, language, and gestures associated with urban street culture.”⁴⁰³

Some pioneers of Hip-hop are Kool DJ Herc, Afrika Bambaata, and Grandmaster Flash.⁴⁰⁴ DJ Herc emigrated from Jamaica, and used the Jamaican sound system as a model for his “mammoth speaker setup;”⁴⁰⁵ He merged Caribbean dance hits with Blaxploitation soundtracks.⁴⁰⁶ Bambaata found musical inspiration in rock, Third World music and electronic instrumentation, and Flash was fascinated by records and audio circuitry and became intrigued with innovating through the technology surrounding music. According to Nelson George these three founding fathers of Hip-Hop music, the so-called Old School, embraced a musical curiosity that inspired the creation of Hip-Hop.⁴⁰⁷

Kool DJ Herc, Afrika Bambaata, and Grandmaster Flash gained their respect and popularity through the art of deejaying, which consisted of mixing “prerecorded hits alternately on two turntables, while reciting into a microphone party phrases, such as “let’s jam, y’all,” to the crowd.”⁴⁰⁸ “Back in the day”⁴⁰⁹ the DJ’s (Disc Jockeys) used to play music in basements, street corners, public parks, and block parties.

⁴⁰³ Cheryl Lynette Keyes, *Rap Music and Street Consciousness* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2002), 1.

⁴⁰⁴ Murray Forman and Mark Anthony Neal, edit., *That’s the Joint! The Hip-Hop Studies Reader* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 45.

⁴⁰⁵ Nelson George, “Hip-Hop’s Founding Fathers Speak the Truth,” in: *That’s the Joint! The Hip-Hop Studies Reader*, ed. Murray Forman, and Mark Anthony Neal (New York: Routledge, 2004), 45.

⁴⁰⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁷ Ibid., 46.

⁴⁰⁸ Keyes, *Rap Music and Street Consciousness*, 1.

⁴⁰⁹ “Common expression within Hip Hop, most frequently employed to describe the past and to mark moments in the evolution of the Hip Hop culture.” See: Murray Forman, “Hip-Hop Ya Don’t Stop: Hip-

Soon, the DJ's started hiring MC's (Master of Ceremonies) to complement their music.⁴¹⁰ MC's were live art-performers, also known as rappers, who had been around for a few years.⁴¹¹ "It's about survival, economics, and keeping our people moving on,"⁴¹² said Bambaata. Adding the MC's was not only a way to entertain the audience, but also to "keep rivals from stealing their two most prized possessions: their records, and their technique."⁴¹³ During that time, battling for earning your reputation may have been "all a poor youth had,"⁴¹⁴ taking into consideration the deplorable conditions that black and Latino communities were facing in a time of recession in New York City.⁴¹⁵

But apart from the creation of music (which includes DJ's and MC's), Hip-Hop emerged thanks to different artistic expressions such as breaking or breakdancing, and graffiti writing that were integrated or interlocked with each other since the early stages.⁴¹⁶ Breakdancing began as a game in which black and Latin American adolescents challenged each other through "competitive, acrobatic and pantomimic dancing,"⁴¹⁷ and became "a way of claiming the streets with physical presence, to publicly inscribe your identity on the surfaces of the city."⁴¹⁸ Breakdancing was influenced by the Capoeira martial art; which originated in slave camps in Brazil and developed into a dance. Graffiti

Hip History and Historiography," in: *That's the Joint! The Hip-Hop Studies Reader*, ed. Murray Forman, and Mark Anthony Neal (New York: Routledge, 2004), 9.

⁴¹⁰ Watkins, S. Craig. *Hip hop matters: Politics, Pop Culture, and the Struggle for the Soul of a Movement*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 2005): 13.

⁴¹¹ Watkins, Hip Hop Matters, 13.

⁴¹² Forman and Neal, *That's the Joint*, 223.

⁴¹³ Watkins, Hip Hop Matters, 13.

⁴¹⁴ Ibid.

⁴¹⁵ Ibid.

⁴¹⁶ Greg Dimitriadis, "Hip Hop: From Live Performance to Mediated Narrative," in: *That's the Joint! The Hip-Hop Studies Reader*, ed. Murray Forman, and Mark Anthony Neal (New York: Routledge, 2004), 424.

⁴¹⁷ Sally Banes, "Breaking," in: *That's the Joint! The Hip-Hop Studies Reader*, ed. Murray Forman, and Mark Anthony Neal (New York: Routledge, 2004), 13.

⁴¹⁸ Banes, "Breaking," 14.

writing was another way of rebuilding your identity⁴¹⁹ by publishing your tag around the city.⁴²⁰ It evolved as a medium to portray “the everyday experience and thoughts of social groups that lack access to traditional modes of public expression.”⁴²¹ With graffiti writing, marginal youth narrated their history in visible public places, such as trains and city walls, to symbolically appropriate urban space.⁴²²

Hip-hop aesthetics are based on three components: music or “beats”, “lyrics”, and “flow”, or the way in which lyrics and beats are combined.⁴²³ Hip-hop music is mostly influenced by African American music, from “figures such as the Last Poets, Gil Scott Heron, and Millie Jackson, as well as in the speeches of Malcolm X, the Black Panthers, and Blaxploitation films.”⁴²⁴ The Latin American influence was also important in the initial stages of Hip-hop, especially in breakdancing thanks to Latino dancers such as the Rock Steady Crew, and in graffiti writing with artists such as Futura 2000. Some Latino rappers also contributed to the development of the genre such as Disco Wiz, DJ Charlie Chase, Ruby Dee, and Devastating Tito.⁴²⁵

As Hip-hop music evolved, its lyrics began to describe and analyze the reality lived by most young boys and girls: stigmatization by the dominant institutions of the school, police, etc. and drug addiction, teen pregnancy, police brutality, and poverty.⁴²⁶ It was a difficult time for marginalized youth, many of which were involved in street

⁴¹⁹ Arlene B Tickner, “Aquí en el Ghetto: Hip-hop in Colombia, Cuba, and Mexico,” *Latin American Politics & Society* 50, no.3 (Fall 2008): 123.

⁴²⁰ Banes, “Breaking,” 14.

⁴²¹ Néstor García Canclini, *Culturas híbridas. Estrategias para entrar y salir de la modernidad* (México City: Grijalbo, 1989) cited in: Tickner, “Aquí en el Ghetto,” 127.

⁴²² Ibid.

⁴²³ William Jelani Cobb, *To the Break of dawn: a Freestyle on the Hip hop Aesthetic* (New York: New York University, 2008), 14.

⁴²⁴ Tony Mitchell, *Global noise: Rap and Hip-Hop Outside the USA*, ed. Tony Mitchell (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 2001), 5.

⁴²⁵ Mitchell, *Global noise*, 5.

⁴²⁶ Michael Eric Dyson, “The Culture of Hip-hop,” In: *That’s the Joint! The Hip-Hop Studies Reader*, edited by Murray Forman, and Mark Anthony Neal (New York: Routledge, 2004), 61.

gangs. The most notorious street gangs were the *Black Spades*, mostly African Americans, and the *Savage Skulls*, mostly Puerto Ricans.⁴²⁷ The gangs fought for territory and reputation, and when they were not at war with each other they intimidated their neighbors.⁴²⁸ Some gang members stole from local stores, harassed young women or caused trouble at local events; “it was as if all of the pain and pessimism that came from being young, poor, black or Latino was channeled inside and often against the very people who shared a similar deprivation.”⁴²⁹

Afrika Bambaata had been a member of the *Black Spades* gang. However, as soon as he got immersed in the Hip-hop movement “he saw an opportunity to combine his love of music and B-boying with his desire to enhance community life.”⁴³⁰ Bambaata believed that through hip-hop young people could transform their lives; “he understood that the misery associated with poverty bred contempt that was often channeled inward.”⁴³¹ So, Hip-hop could be a tool to empower youth and give them a voice. In 1975, Bambaata created a group called the Zulu Nation,⁴³² and started recruiting what he called *Warriors for the Community*;⁴³³ these warriors were inhabitants of the ghetto, independent of their color.⁴³⁴ The Zulu Nation, got together weekly, in an atmosphere of peace and tolerance, with the purpose of finding ways to end the violence and the presence of drugs that were rising in the city.⁴³⁵ These meetings became a home for some, and a source of discipline

⁴²⁷ Watkins, *Hip hop matters*, 22.

⁴²⁸ Ibid.

⁴²⁹ Ibid.

⁴³⁰ Ibid., 23.

⁴³¹ Ibid., 25.

⁴³² The name was inspired by a movie called Zulu, which was about African Americans fighting for their freedom. See Watkins, *Hip hop Matters*, 23.

⁴³³ Ibid.

⁴³⁴ Tickner, “Aquí en el Guetto,” 123.

⁴³⁵ Watkins, *Hip hop Matters*, 25.

for others.⁴³⁶ The Zulu nation was one of the first attempts of a grassroots organization to mobilize disaffected youth.⁴³⁷ According to Watkins:

Bambaataa knew that the troubles facing ghetto youths required dramatic intervention. He argued that the solution was to empower people to confront head-on the problems facing the community. When nearly no one else did, Bambaata believed hip-hop could lead the way to a brighter day.⁴³⁸

While all of this was happening, some recording companies saw an opportunity to record and distribute this new type of rhythm, called rap.⁴³⁹ Rap is “a form of Hip-hop music.”⁴⁴⁰ It “is DJ and MC music”⁴⁴¹ that consists of speaking or telling stories in rhyme accompanied by a beat. The DJ plays the music that accompanies rap lyrics, making use of a rhythmic base (beat), over which a melodic sequence of voices or instruments taken from preexisting songs (sample) is recorded.⁴⁴² Moreover, “Rap, is an entirely new genre (...) that embodies the music and text of hundreds of years of oppression and dissent (...) It is based not on rock but on the historical music of protest that characterizes the black experience in America.”⁴⁴³

The first song that gained attention in the mass media was *Rappers Delight* recorded and distributed in 1979 by Sugar Hills.⁴⁴⁴ The song was a hit mostly because “the art of talking rhythmically or rapping exclusively over a danceable track offered

⁴³⁶ Ibid.

⁴³⁷ Ibid., 24-25.

⁴³⁸ Ibid., 25.

⁴³⁹ Rap and Hip-hop are different, because rap describes only the lyrics and music; whereas Hip-hop refers to other aesthetic forms such as breakdancing and graffiti, and types of clothing and style, culture, etc.

⁴⁴⁰ Adam Krims, *Rap music and the poetics of identity* (Cambridge; New York: University Press, 2000), 12.

⁴⁴¹ Dick Hebdige, “Rap and Hip-Hop: The New York Connection,” in: *That’s the Joint! The Hip-Hop Studies Reader*, ed. Murray Forman, and Mark Anthony Neal (New York: Routledge, 2004), 223.

⁴⁴² Tickner, “Aquí en el Ghetto,” 143.

⁴⁴³ Richard W. Oliver, and Tim Leffel. *Hip Hop Inc. Success Strategies of the Rap Moguls* (New York, NY: Thunder’s Mouth Press, 2006): 39-40.

⁴⁴⁴ *Rappers Delight* was the longest rap recording at the time, nearly fifteen minutes long. See: Keyes, *Rap Music and Street Consciousness*, 69.

something quite rare in the world of pop culture, an original idea.”⁴⁴⁵ The single sold “one hundred thousand copies a week in New York alone”.⁴⁴⁶ Moreover, in 1982 the song *The Message* by Grandmaster Flash and The Furious Five was released. It showed a “child’s state of mind and the American- apartheid-like conditions that characterized vast parts of black ghetto life.”⁴⁴⁷ *The Message* was an important step showing that rap could be used as a “forum for socially conscious discourse.”⁴⁴⁸ Flash’s work was an important awakening to use rap to combine social protest, musical creation and cultural expression.⁴⁴⁹ This type of rap is often called political/protest rap or progressive/conscious rap⁴⁵⁰ and it “focuses on political issues, racism, sexism, equality and ethnic identity.”⁴⁵¹

After the commercial success of the recording company Sugar Hills, other artists received contracts from different independent companies⁴⁵² at the local and international level. Rap’s popularity grew moving from the streets into the music mainstream,⁴⁵³ evolving into a vibrant cultural industry. Hip-hop started circulating in the form of radio, albums, music videos, and fashion. It even reached the US Entertainment industry in the 1990’s; according to Dennis, the US entertainment industry cashed in “on the growing international success and popularity of rap and aided by the expansion and reach of mass

⁴⁴⁵ Watkins, *Hip hop matters*, 15.

⁴⁴⁶ Richard W. Oliver and Tim Leffel, *Hip Hop Inc. Success Strategies of the Rap Moguls* (New York, NY: Thunder’s Mouth Press, 2006), 64.

⁴⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 21.

⁴⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴⁹ Dyson, “The Culture of Hip-hop,” 62.

⁴⁵⁰ Tickner, “Aquí en el Ghetto,” 124.

⁴⁵¹ Elligan, *Rap Therapy*, 39.

⁴⁵² Keyes, *Rap Music and Street Consciousness*, 72.

⁴⁵³ *Ibid.*, 79.

communication systems, began to intensify the exportation of U.S. hip-hop and rap through cinema, television and the music markets.”⁴⁵⁴

Throughout the distribution of radio, music, video, and fashion the Hip-hop movement was spread all over the world. This generated debate within the movement because it was difficult to control the people that participated in it. Watkins said that some of the big issues that generate great division within the movement are the pull between hip-hop’s commercial vitality and its strivings to be a meaningful source of youth empowerment and social change.⁴⁵⁵

Different types of commercial rap started to circulate around the globe including gangsta and materialistic rap. The gangsta or gangster rap focuses on “violence, guns, misogyny and profane language. Gangsta rap promotes an antisocial message of violence, crime, and sexism.”⁴⁵⁶ Gangsta rappers say that their music reflects the reality in their communities and that their lyrics report the atrocities lived by many people on a daily basis.⁴⁵⁷ Materialistic rap represents the aspirations of youth raised in poor and marginalized communities, and “focuses on promoting messages of the value of wealth, sex, possessions, and the trappings of affluence.”⁴⁵⁸ The lyrics and music videos of this type of rap often show expensive jewelry, clothing, extravagant parties, exclusive automobiles and homes, etc.⁴⁵⁹

Hence, mass media advertisers started using rap music to promote their products; taking into consideration the great influence of rap among youth. Materialistic rap,

⁴⁵⁴ Christopher Dennis, "Afro-Colombian Hip-Hop: Globalization, Popular Music and Ethnic Identities," *Studies In Latin American Popular Culture* 25 (January 2006): 273.

⁴⁵⁵ Watkins, *Hip Hop Matters*, 10.

⁴⁵⁶ Elligan, *Rap Therapy*, 30.

⁴⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁸ Ibid., 35.

⁴⁵⁹ Ibid.,

encouraged consumption of all kind of brands and designers products. Some authors such as Chuck D, suggested that one of the unconscious or conscious messages transmitted to many youth who are consumers of this type of rap, is that if you are not a professional athlete, entertainer, or having an extravagant lifestyle you are no one.⁴⁶⁰

Hip-hop was spread to Colombia and other Latin-American countries through the mass media and diasporic migration.⁴⁶¹ “When I started (dancing) there was not the facility that there is today of (having) the Internet...the only thing I had was a VHS and an old movie called *Beat Street*...I watched and repeated the same movie, over and over again”⁴⁶² said Luis Montayo B-boy and professor of *Cuatro Elementos Skuela*. *Beat Street* (1984), and other movies such as *Wild Style* (1982) and *Flash dance* (1983) arrived in the urban centers of Colombia, becoming an inspiration to many youth.⁴⁶³ “The imitation of breakdancing in private homes and on city streets characterized hip-hop’s initial development”⁴⁶⁴ in Colombia and in other Latin-American countries.

A second way in which Hip-hop arrived in the Colombian scene was through the flow of people. People, with and without formal papers “interacted with Latino and black communities in cities such as New York and Miami... On returning to their countries of origin, the migrants brought distinct elements of Hip-hop culture with them.”⁴⁶⁵ Henry Arteaga, leader of *Cuatro Elementos Skuela*, told me that the flow of information happening throughout the coasts could be one of the origins of the hip-hop rhythms in

⁴⁶⁰ Elligan, *Rap Therapy*, 37.

⁴⁶¹ Tickner, “Aquí en el Guetto,” 129.

⁴⁶² Luis Montayo, interview with author, May 29, 2013

⁴⁶³ Tickner, “Aquí en el Guetto,” 129.

⁴⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁶⁵ Ibid.

Colombia; he said “*many of the cops of the Urabá Antioqueño* when they traveled to Panamá and from Panamá to the US brought information that started to evolve.”⁴⁶⁶

5.2 Case Study: *Cuatro Elementos Skuela*, Neighborhood of Aranjuez

It was a rainy night the first time I came to *Cuatro Elementos Skuela*, on May 21, 2013. We parked closed by and started walking towards the Educational Institution Gilberto Alzate Avendaño, an institution that during the day is a public school and at 7:00 pm becomes a Hip-hop hub. There was a security guard at the entrance. The building had a patio, with a basketball court in the middle, and throughout the corridors there were several classrooms; which had their desks outside organized in rows one on top of the other. The walls were painted blue and beige and some walls were faded. There were some puddles in the patio and in the corridors floor.

We walked in, and the young boys and girls greeted us with a big smile. There was a teenager around 17 years old, who said he injured his knee and could not dance for a while. He mentioned the names of some bones and muscles that he had learned throughout the Internet while he told us about his dream of becoming a doctor someday.

I went to the classrooms to see the classes, but apparently several professors were in Bogotá attending an event. Also, because of the rain not many kids could make it tonight. So, a few of them were practicing inside the classrooms. In one room there were three girls practicing *breakdance*. They taught me some basic steps of Hip-hop and invited me to come back a few days later to attend a class.

I returned to the corridor and met with Henry Arteaga, also known as JKE, leader of this initiative, and other members of the school. We all sat in desks outside one of the classrooms. The guys were discussing about how to share their knowledge of Hip-hop

⁴⁶⁶ Henry Arteaga, interview with author, May 23, 2013.

with people in other Colombian regions and towns, “Urabá, Cauca.” I thought the conversation was fascinating and I wondered how this exchange of knowledge was happening at a grassroots level. Then, they said that it was very important to stop these people’s migration to the city. They mentioned that it would be nice to invite *hip-hoppers* from other parts of Colombia to festivals, and contests in Medellín and that the money they earn could be shared with the boys and girls that participated in the event.

Afterwards, we all went to a room at the end of the corridor. The room was painted white in the inside and it was full of cans of paint, boxes, stereos, and tape recordings. Someone proudly said this room was going to be their new recording studio, and it was going to have some black panels on the walls for acoustics. JKE and other members of *Crew Peligrosos* remembered one time when they traveled to France to do a Hip-hop presentation. They were amazed with the big rooms and the musical instruments they got to use for the show. They said: “Those people are true professionals of rap” and they fantasized with having that kind of infrastructure in here.

A few days later, I went back to *Cuatro Elementos Skuela*. I arrived early, at around 5:30 pm, so I got to see the primary students leaving the school. After a while the school was empty, but soon the hip-hop students were coming in. It was a sunny day. Some of the young boys and girls that we have met a couple of days before greet me enthusiastically. The kids started practicing. Young boys and girls from different ages were dancing breakdance, and teaching each other. While some girls were doing choreography, the boys were spinning in their heads, hands, and making other moves. All of them were wearing comfortable clothes combined with casual clothes. Breakdancing

demands great physical activity and discipline; most of them come to the school 3-4 times a week and some come everyday.

In another classroom, there were some of the more advanced b-boys practicing. All of them were standing on a *cypher* or circle and they took turns to get in the center. The one in the middle of the *cypher* did all kinds of contortions, following the rhythm of a funky hip-hop song. And when one of the boys fell all of them started laughing. I could tell they were having fun.

In the next section I explain the model of the school *Cuatro Elementos Skuela*. I present some basic information: age and number of students, type of classes, activities, and different alliances with other organizations.

5.2.1 The Model

This school is a voluntary initiative that started in 2002, by the Hip-hop Collective *Crew Peligrosos* (Dangerous Crew). All the members of *Crew Peligrosos* are professors at the school and they contribute with 10 percent of their salary to run the initiative. The classes are free, and there is not limit of age to attend *Cuatro Elementos Skuela*; everyone is welcome to enter the school. Some of the participants come from the neighborhood Aranjuez; others come from other neighborhoods of the *Comuna 4* or from other sectors of the city. At the moment, there are 437 people registered in the school, which range from 6 to 34 years old.

As indicated by its name, *Cuatro Elementos Skuela* (Four elements School) the initiative relates the four elements of the Hip-hop movement. The classes offered at the school vary from breakdancing and other types of dance, to graffiti writing, DJ (Deejays) and MC (Master of ceremonies). It is important to highlight that within the dance classes,

the school offers its own dancing technique called Afro Latin Rock, “here there are more than 300 people that practice it,” said Arteaga, leader of the school. Moreover, according to César, the breakdancing music includes different Latino rhythms such as: *tango*, *porros*, *vallentos*, *cumbia*, which creates a Latino identity and makes them unique, and attractive to so many people.⁴⁶⁷

In addition to the classes, the initiative has other activities that are oriented towards the encouragement of the students to be better artists, and to share the knowledge of Hip-hop with other people that are interested in learning more about the movement. First, the leaders of the school organize presentations in the city and tours around the country for the students, who then have the possibility to perform before different audiences. These entails discipline to be in shape. Also, the students are encouraged to participate in other events organized by different Hip-hop groups and in Hip-hop *battles*⁴⁶⁸ around the city and the metropolitan area.

Secondly, the leaders of this initiative organize a festival in the city called Hip4. The festival is a space that promotes artistic expression through breakdancing competition. Finally, the initiative seeks to expand the knowledge to other parts of Colombia. The professors of the school conduct workshops in different cities in order to share the knowledge of Hip-hop, as well as acquire new knowledge from other groups of people.

Cuatro Elementos Skuela is a grassroots initiative that operates with the resources and the time of the members of the collective *Crew Peligrosos*. However, it has received

⁴⁶⁷ César Augusto Sánchez, interview with author, May 29, 2013.

⁴⁶⁸ Battles are hip-hop events, in which b-boys and b-girls compete with each other through breakdancing.

support from different governmental and non-governmental organizations in order to expand their activities and scope.

The community supports the Hip-hop movement by allocation part of the resources received from the City's participatory budget to the Hip-hop Festival Hip4, which is organized by *Crew Peligrosos* and *Cuatro Elementos Skuela*. This Festival allows participants from Medellín and other cities in Colombia perform in different stages and exchange information with other *hip-hoppers*.

At a national level, the school *Cuatro Elementos Skuela* has received support from the Ministry of Culture. According to Arteaga, the school has signed agreements with the National Ministry of Culture to promote exchange of knowledge of Hip-hop in different regions of Colombia. He added that this organism liked the processes led by the school, and decided to establish joint projects with them.⁴⁶⁹

Cuatro Elementos Skuela has received support from non-governmental organizations; for instance, a foundation in the United States called Abc. The foundation is based in Florida, and its mission is to identify and support "high-impact initiatives and leaders in the Americas striving to promote peace, sustainability and prosperity."⁴⁷⁰ According to Arteaga, Abc liked the project a lot and so with their help they are exploring how extend the school to different parts of the city.

Some private organizations such as Redbull, and Offcorss are supporters of the initiative, among others. Red Bull is a company that sells energy drinks, "Red bull is the entity with which we invent something and we end up associated with them. They believe

⁴⁶⁹ Henry Arteaga, interview with author, May 23, 2013.

⁴⁷⁰ "About the Abc foundation," accessed December 2, 2013, <http://www.abcfound.org/about>

that it is great what we do,”⁴⁷¹ said Arteaga. And Offcorss is a Colombian clothing brand for children, which recently sponsored a tour around the country for the students of *Cuatro Elementos Skuela*. Arteaga explained in the school they have a mechanism to secure funding from various entities in order to take the kids to different art shows and competitions around the country.

5.2.2 Interview themes

I identified four themes in the interviews with five school members, and one interview with the leader of another Hip-hop collective in the *Comuna 4*:

1. The members of *Crew Peligrosos*, want to share the knowledge and experience about Hip-hop they have learned throughout the years with all who want to learn.
2. In *Cuatro Elementos Skuela* the participants are encouraged not only to become a professional artist, but also to be better as a person everyday.
3. *Crew Peligrosos* lyrics refer to the life in the neighborhood and it also shows a social consciousness.
4. According to the interviewees several changes have occurred in the neighborhood since the creation of *Cuatro Elementos Skuela*.

5.2.2.1 Sharing the knowledge

Henry Arteaga said: “We had a clear objective... share the knowledge we were learning from Hip-hop, because when I wanted to learn, it was denied to me. The guys were like that...(they would say) this is only for us.”⁴⁷² According to Arteaga, the initiative *Cuatro Elementos Skuela* started spontaneously. All of a sudden more kids were joining the spaces where they practiced Hip-hop. The movement started to attract more

⁴⁷¹ Henry Arteaga, interview with author, May 23, 2013.

⁴⁷² Ibid.

people and they decided to teach others what they knew about Hip-hop: “Wow how cool! I want to be like you. And we gave all the opportunity to be better than us”⁴⁷³

Luis Montayo, who is originally from the city of Bogotá, joined *Crew Peligrosos* and *Cuatro Elementos Skuela* two years ago; he said “At first, I came (to the school) to give my skills and knowledge; but then, I missed it. I came to teach some workshops, shared with the group and went back to Bogotá, and I thought, I am losing my time here, I could be teaching something to so many people!”⁴⁷⁴

When talking about expanding to other cities in Colombia, Henry said that the purpose was to share the knowledge with others. “It starts to generate collectives, where people generate proposals and dialogue.”⁴⁷⁵ Henry explained that this type of exchange enriches their knowledge and also he said that for them “is very important to share our experience; I believed that it could be useful for someone to improve their quality of life and generate a revolutionary spirit.”⁴⁷⁶

5.2.2.2 Personal and artistic training

The second theme is that Hip-hop encourages people to be better personally and a professional in the arts everyday. According to Arteaga, the philosophy of Hip-hop does not consist in competing or struggling with others but on challenging oneself; “in Hip-hop we learned (...) that the battle is not against the other, but is internal. Everyday one self-improves.”⁴⁷⁷ In this sense, Montayo highlighted that something positive about the school is that it gives the participants two types of education: an artistic and a personal training. He explained that they teach the kids: what is Hip-hop, what elements does it

⁴⁷³ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁴ Luis Montayo, interview with author, May 29, 2013

⁴⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁶ Henry Arteaga, e-mail message to author, September 16, 2013.

⁴⁷⁷ Henry Arteaga, interview with author, May 23, 2013.

have, how can they practice it, and how does Hip-hop contribute to their life. Then they focus on the personal level emphasizing that the foundation of Hip-hop is to have fun and respect for others.⁴⁷⁸ Referring to what he liked the most about the initiative, Montoya said: “The union (among all and) the respect. First training people before artists, because we gain nothing by being good artists without being humble (...) without respecting others. In other words, leave your ego aside; accept that you made a mistake (and) learn to tolerate others.”

Arteaga emphasized that one of the purposes of the initiative is to become a professional artist and to gain sufficient experience to follow a vocational career in the arts. He said: “To be artistically talented. Do good music, dance well, create nice graphics, do good mixes.”⁴⁷⁹ Also Johan Serna mentioned that the objective of the initiative is to “generate a school of art, peace, graffiti, DJ... In order to make us dream to have an artistic professional life...to live the life in a different way.”⁴⁸⁰

Moreover, since *Crew Peligrosos* has had commercial success with their music on a national and international level, they have gained economic stability. “Our art became a project of life... And because we made it our project of life, and we are immersed on it for 24 hours, it brings remuneration thanks to our spectacles and our songs.”⁴⁸¹ *Crew Peligrosos's* success and their interest in sharing their knowledge, gives opportunities to the youth to gain expertise in the arts, and become professional artists. Montayo explained:

When they mature as artists, both in the professional sense and in the personal sense, we help them take advantage of their level, the talent they have acquired...

⁴⁷⁸ Luis Montayo, interview with author, May 29, 2013

⁴⁷⁹ Henry Arteaga, interview with author, May 23, 2013.

⁴⁸⁰ Johan Serna, interview with author, May 29, 2013.

⁴⁸¹ Ibid.

(Through) starting to tour in national events and competitions; on tours with certain brands... (In) presentations, different shows, spectacles.

5.2.2.3 Non-violent discourse

Through the Hip-hop movement, members of Crew Peligrosos and *Cuatro Elementos Skuela*, have developed a sense of territorial belonging to their neighbourhood. The music produced by *Crew Peligrosos* discusses the life in the neighborhood, the way they feel about the environment that surrounds them, their responsibility towards the planet, etc. When discussing his songs, Arteaga, also known as MC JKE, said, “If I’m in a country that is violent, why should I generate violence through discourse.”⁴⁸² And he recited one of his songs:

(English Translation)

The world will end and I'm guilty of it
 I consume it purely because of my greed and my ego
 I get sick of rage because I am a butcher
 I have killed slowly the will to go to heaven
 I live in a hell that has no devil
 But I hear the sirens that remind me of *Pablo* (Escobar)
 We played to be a *sicario* (hired killer) because of the TV.
 And in the neighborhood, even the thugs want to change their life.
 I hear prayers before a murder
 To the virgin of the war with a contract offer
 Mulatto with his gun, gunpowder explodes there in heaven
 Which camouflages the government-sponsored bullets
 False positive, death is, death boy
 Don't drink your ideas, don't be part of this circus
 I practice what I explain, what I don't I chew it, swallow it and vomit it so they
 (can) take my picture.

(Original Spanish Version)

Se va a acabar el mundo y yo soy culpable de ello
 Lo consumo netamente por codicia y por mi ego
 Me enfermo de la rabia porque soy un carnicero
 He matado lentamente las ganas de ir al cielo
 Vivo en un infierno que no tiene diablo
 Pero escucho las sirenas que me recuerdan a Pablo
 Jugamos al sicario por culpa de la Tele

⁴⁸² Ibid.

Y en el barrio hasta los pillos cambiar de vida quieren
 Escucho oraciones antes de un asesinato
 Para la virgen de la guerra con una oferta de contrato
 Mulato con su fierro, pólvora estalla allá en el cielo
 Que camufla las balas que patrocina el gobierno
 Falso positivo, muerte es, muerte chico
 No embriaguez tus ideas, no seas parte de este circo
 Lo que explico lo practico, lo que no lo mastico, Lo trago y lo vomito pa' que
 tomen la fotico.⁴⁸³

Additionally Arteaga explained that most of the kids involved in the school are surprised with the lyrics of *Crew Peligrosos* songs, because they are different from the songs of others rappers. “Many rap songs would say: She has a big butt...I am the guy with the *vareta* (weed), and I don’t give a fuck... the government is a mother fucker, and they killed my dude... And so with this type of (messages) people tend to react in the same way.”⁴⁸⁴

5.2.2.4 Changes in the neighborhood

According to most of the interviewees, there have been changes in the neighborhood since the creation of *Cuatro Elementos Skuela*. For instance, people of different ages assist at the events promoted by the school or street performances of its members, which were things that did not happen before. Johan, a member of the school said: “When would you imagine a grandparent in a Hip-hop event? (...) It attracts people from all generations, from young to elder people. We make a *cypher* or circle in the park and the adults (shout) let us see! Open the *cypher!*”⁴⁸⁵

Members of the community have changed their way of looking at the different artistic expressions of Hip-hop. For example, Luis Montayo said that people in the

⁴⁸³ Henry Arteaga, interview with author, May 23, 2013.

⁴⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁸⁵ Johan Serna, interview with author, May 29, 2013.

neighborhood appreciate the group's graffiti writing because they see it as street art that reflects a message not as an act of vandalism.⁴⁸⁶

One of the most visible transformations is the change in the reputation of the neighborhood; today it is known for its cultural and artistic expressions. César Augusto Sánchez said: "This *barrio* (neighborhood) is 100 percent culture and it was not like this. This *barrio* was very heavy," referring to the situation of violence and crime.⁴⁸⁷ Carlos Pradilla, a leader of another Hip-hop collective, also located in the *Comuna 4*, who used to attend *Cuatro Elementos Skuela* said that the school benefits a greater part of the district and the larger municipality.⁴⁸⁸ He explained that the school made Hip-hop visible to the district and showed that this movement could be a way of life.⁴⁸⁹ Furthermore, many youth from other areas of the city, who were trained at *Cuatro Elementos Skuela*, have returned to their districts to create their own Hip-hop initiative, which suggests a multiplier effect.⁴⁹⁰

Lastly, Pradilla said that the initiative demonstrated that Hip-hop could be taught at a school where the kid could assist with the permission of his/her parents, "because they would not teach (him/her) anything wrong. But rather, how to use the free time well spent."⁴⁹¹ Moreover, some professors explained that many parents visit the school to receive feedback about their kids, showing how *Cuatro Elementos Skuela* helps strengthen the relationships between parents and children.

⁴⁸⁶ Luis Montayo, interview with author, May 29, 2013.

⁴⁸⁷ César Augusto Sánchez, interview with author, May 29, 2013.

⁴⁸⁸ Carlos Pradilla, interview with author, May 27, 2013.

⁴⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁹¹ Ibid.

This chapter presented the fundamentals of the hip-hop movement and of the case study *Cuatro Elementos Skuela* in the neighborhood of Aranjuez. I described the model of the hip-hop school and the different themes identified in the interviews. I also raised the key elements of social change in the community; particularly how this hip-hop school transmits a philosophy of non-violence, offers healthy spaces for youth and other members of the community, and provides artistic training to young boys and girls.

Chapter 6: Discussion

My life was... let's be brutally honest, a full waste. I lived around drugs; I lived around the worst thugs of these neighborhoods. My childhood was never productive, because I did not enjoy what a child (usually) enjoys, going to a park, or playing soccer in the street. No, I was totally locked out because if I left (the house), they would kill me or I would get shot.

Then, I discovered the dance. It was 3 blocks from my house. But, to get to the training site, I had to walk more than 35 minutes around the neighborhood, because there were barriers. So, if I went through that border, ah! this (guy) is from the neighborhood below!' pum! And it was the end.

That was around 1992-1994, when I started dancing. And so, I had to take a longer route to get there. But, once I started dancing, I released the stress and the energies. Then, I went back (home) and returned again to the same atmosphere. My brothers were immersed in the dark circle of those times. We did not have food, or other stuff. My mother lived completely stressed. So, my life was the life of an adult in a child's body. Repressed, right?

Then, I met the (dance) group and I said: I have to get out of this... This is not my circle. Mom, what are we going to do? Mom, I want to dance! I want to do something. Trust me, let's get out of here and do something (different). And from that moment, I moved (to a different place) and I began to flourish in the dance. I had bad energies and my body lived with rage. As a result of experiencing all those (bad) things, my body was aggressive.

Today, somebody comes looking for trouble, and (I say) 'I don't like trouble, leave me alone that I am in my own thing.' And now I can go to any park, because people don't see me as the guy from that block that we want to kill, but as the guy who dances; 'those kids are clean, they live an awesome life, and they say hi to us', so, my life changed 100 percent.

If I was not at this point, I would not be alive. Or I would still be involved in that because that was my only option. But I found the alternative of the dance. And I started traveling, the same thing that happens to the kids nowadays. I felt it was freedom.

I began to make money, throughout the dance. So, I started supporting my mom; and strengthening my brothers, helping them to quit using drugs. I am the youngest of three brothers. They were deeply involved in drug addiction. So, I paid for their rehabilitation and for other things. And today my brothers are not addicts anymore. And they are working, in different companies.

The dance taught me to be educated and taught me to train people; and it helped me so much that I educated my family. Today, I am a calm person. What more (can I ask) than that?⁴⁹²

The latter is the testimony of Carlos Augusto Sánchez, also known as *Azura*, who started dancing breakdance when he was 9 years old. In 2013 as I write this, César is 28 years old and is a professor at *Cuatro Elementos Skuela*, and member of the Hip-hop collective *Crew Peligrosos*. The testimony of César Sánchez is just one example of the transformative power of a Hip-hop initiative in the life of a person.

In this study, I have argued that a group of youth of the neighborhood of Aranjuez, in Medellín is transforming their lives and the lives of other members of the community through the Hip-hop movement. In previous chapters I examined the ways in which the social fabric was torn apart in Medellín; how people were and are still afraid of going out of the house for fear of being killed; and how many youth in marginalized neighborhoods became the city's main victims and perpetrators of violence. In this section I will present a summary of the findings of the study. I demonstrate the ways in which the initiative *Cuatro Elementos Skuela* is contributing to the reconstruction of the city's social, economic and cultural fabric.

6.1 Analysis of findings

When researching the origins of the Hip-hop movement, I discovered that the Bronx in the early 1970's had similarities with Medellín in the last quarter of the twentieth century. It was a time of recession in New York City, and there was a systematic oppressive treatment towards young people of color, and Latinos. Entire neighborhoods of poor African Americans, Puerto Ricans, and others were uprooted and

⁴⁹² César Augusto Sánchez, interview with author, May 29, 2013.

forced to move to other sectors of the city, such as the South Bronx, where unemployment levels were very high.⁴⁹³ Furthermore, the Municipal administration had reduced social services for the inner cities.⁴⁹⁴ The South Bronx was considered “the poorest section of the poorest boroughs in the city.”⁴⁹⁵ And many youth were involved in street gangs, drug addiction, and criminal activities.

Similarly, in 1960’s-1970’s Medellín’s textile industry faced an economic crisis and the city’s unemployment rates increased considerably. Many people were forcibly displaced from rural areas, due to the ongoing political violence, and came to the city, tripling its population in less than two decades.⁴⁹⁶ The new urban squatter settlements in the hills of Medellín lacked basic facilities such as housing, water, sewage, schooling, etc. For many years, all levels of government ignored families who had migrated into the cities;⁴⁹⁷ and people living in marginalized neighborhoods were victims of institutional violence.⁴⁹⁸ The situation in Medellín was even more serious because the city was also immersed in the political armed conflict at a national level, which is still going on. And due to the development of the drug business, the rates of violence and corruption increased at all levels of society. While this was happening, guerillas, paramilitary forces and drug cartels, were recruiting young men in poor neighborhoods as their combatants and to do the dirty work of getting rid of other people.

It is under these similar circumstances that the Hip-hop movement emerged in the South Bronx and later on in Medellín. Amidst these very difficult circumstances,

⁴⁹³ Jeff Chang, *Can't stop, won't stop: a history of the hip-hop generation; introduction by DJ Kool Herc*. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2005), 11.

⁴⁹⁴ Chang, *Can't Stop Won't Stop*, 14.

⁴⁹⁵ Reiland Rabaka, *The hip-hop movement: from R&B and the civil rights movement to rap and the hip hop generation* (Maryland: The Rowman & Littlefield Publishing Group, Inc., 2013), 289.

⁴⁹⁶ Riaño, *Dwellers of Memory*, 39.

⁴⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 13.

⁴⁹⁸ Salazar, *Born to die in Medellín*, 22.

however, similar kinds of artistic expression also emerged among the youth. In the South Bronx, “street gangs were replaced by crews of youth who combatted each other artistically rather than violently.”⁴⁹⁹ Afrika Bambaata, an ex gang member, saw in Hip-hop a tool to empower youth and give them a voice. So, he started an organization called the Zulu Nation around 1975, which had artistic and political goals.

The Hip-hop movement expanded outside of the United States primarily thanks to the influence of the corporate commercial music industry and mass media, and the movement of diasporas throughout the Americas, some of which were part of the Colombia-US drug traffic. Henry Arteaga and other members of *Crew Peligrosos* began to dabble in breakdance, rap and various hip-hop expressions in the late 1990’s, during some of the darkest years that Medellín has ever experienced; when the homicide rate placed it as the most violent city in Colombia and Latina America.⁵⁰⁰ Moreover, the *Crew Peligrosos* arose from *Comuna 4*, a district where the Quality of Life Index, and Human Development Index are lower than Medellín’s average rate;⁵⁰¹ and where its inhabitants have difficulties accessing employment, health services, education and culture facilities.⁵⁰² In 2002, *Cuatro Elementos Skuela*, emerged as a grassroots initiative in the neighborhood of Aranjuez, in Medellín, after the members of *Crew Peligrosos* noticed the large number of young people that wanted to learn about Hip-hop.⁵⁰³

This volunteer initiative offers an alternative for youth in poor neighborhoods to spend their free time in a healthy environment and become professional street artists.

⁴⁹⁹ Keyes, *Rap Music and Street Consciousness*, 184.

⁵⁰⁰ The peak was in 1991-1992 with a rate of 444 homicides per 100,000 inhabitants. See: Riaño, *Dwellers of Memory*, 2.

⁵⁰¹ IPC, “Plan de Desarrollo Local Comuna 4 de Medellín, 2008-2015,” 21-22.

⁵⁰² *Ibid.*, 20.

⁵⁰³ Henry Arteaga, interview with author, May 23, 2013.

Cuatro Elementos Skuela follows the philosophy of having fun while respecting others, which was one of the legacies of Bambaata's Zulu nation. Below I describe three ways through which Hip-hop is producing changes in the neighborhood of Aranjuez.

I visited *Cuatro Elementos Skuela* (Four elements school) in May of 2013, spoke to many of the participants and observed their operation over several visits. Overall, I noticed that the people involved in this initiative were greatly satisfied. While there may be several reasons for this, I will draw from the literature about identity and culture to explain why so many young people are attracted to the Hip-hop movement and how this practice is generating social change.

Many of the youth in Medellín from marginalized neighborhoods found in Hip-hop a way to make sense of their lives and the world they live in. More so, it is through Hip-Hop that the participants of *Cuatro Elementos Skuela* have built a new personal and a collective identity. Arteaga said:

Hip-hop tries to give us an identity. That simple thing of Hip-hop, moving your hip, and becoming something in which you are important, in which you are someone. And it motivates you to say where I come from, and where I belong. And if I don't have a way to find out who my ancestors are, then I come from a street where I could do this (thing). I come from a neighborhood (...) with this population where I have this type of language, and customs.⁵⁰⁴ This is why I love my neighborhood so much.⁵⁰⁵

Despite the difficult situation faced by youth in underprivileged neighborhoods, they have developed a sense of territorial belonging where they are living through hip-hop. They have formed new identities, as Stuart Hall writes, not from "the so called return to roots but coming-to-terms-with our *routes*."⁵⁰⁶ They are not "*who we are or where we came from* so much as what we might become, how we have been represented

⁵⁰⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁰⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁰⁶ Hall, "Who Needs Identity," 4.

and how that bears on how we might represent ourselves.”⁵⁰⁷ This is distinct from Nuñez who argued that cultural and artistic expressions are the codes that represent identities already existent within the population; he explained that through these expressions people communicate what they think, feel and resist.

Further the youth immersed in the hip-hop movement have appropriated public spaces. Graffiti writers express their experiences and thoughts through their art in public space, and break-dancers claim the streets making performances in parks or plazas. The territorial belonging is further illustrated by the lyrics of their songs. *Crew Peligrosos* sings about the life in their neighborhood of Aranjuez. Arteaga mentioned:

They all like when we talk about *MedaYork*, (the combination of the words Medellín and New York),⁵⁰⁸ or Arranjuez (with a double R, thanks to the enormous influence of rap),⁵⁰⁹ or *Cerebros latinos* (Latin Brains). It makes them feel that they are part of all this creation that we have experienced. We created a language without realizing it, and the kids liked it.⁵¹⁰

Moreover, music in itself is closely related to the formation of identities. English music and cultural studies critic Simon Frith has written: “My point is not that a social group has beliefs which it then articulates in its music, but that music, an aesthetic practice, articulates in itself an understanding of both group relations and individuality, on the basis of which ethical codes and social ideologies are understood.”⁵¹¹ Frith’s words imply that instead of agreeing in values, which are then expressed in cultural activities, “they only get to know themselves as groups (as a particular organization of

⁵⁰⁷ Hall, “Who Needs Identity,” 4.

⁵⁰⁸ The word Medayork highlights the influence of New York in the emergence of Hip Hop, and the new creations that are happening in Medellín, within the different elements: Graffiti, breakdancing, DJ and MC; it also shows how these elements have become part of the daily life in the city.

⁵⁰⁹ Arranjuez, means that the neighborhood Aranjuez should be called Arranjuez (In Spanish a double R in the middle of a word makes the sound stronger).

⁵¹⁰ Henry Arteaga, interview with author, May 23, 2013.

⁵¹¹ Frith, “Music and Identity,” 110-111.

individual and social interests, of sameness and difference) through cultural activity.”⁵¹² “We are magnets on the street,”⁵¹³ said Cristian Montoya, also known as *Rat Race*. He explained that the school attracts kids from the community, who watched Rat Race and other break-dancers standing on their hands or spinning on their heads; and afterwards observed other alternative forms of cultural expression such as graffiti writing, rapping and deejaying.⁵¹⁴ “When they come here and start getting into it” Montoya added, “you see the change; in the way they dress, talk (and) think...they prefer to be here than to be outside.”⁵¹⁵

Lastly, these b-boys and b-girls, DJs, MCs, and graffiti writers are change agents because of their promotion of a non-violent discourse, part of their attraction to other neighborhood youth. *Crew Peligrosos*, promotes an attitude of respect and cooperation among its members, hence this is what their followers practice. Bambataa’s Zulu Nation also modeled a non-violent discourse in the South Bronx, at the beginning of the 70’s.

Arts and culture can also contribute to peace processes. César Augusto Sánchez is an example of a person who used to live in an atmosphere of violence and drugs, and who through dance healed wounds left by a conflictive childhood. Sánchez, said: “I had bad energies and my body lived with rage... Today I am a calm person.”⁵¹⁶ Moreover, Sánchez’s participation in the arts helped him find other alternatives for him and his family; which shows how art heals, records the past and points to the future.”⁵¹⁷ “We heal

⁵¹² Ibid.

⁵¹³ Cristian Montoya, interview with author, May 29, 2013.

⁵¹⁴ Ibid.

⁵¹⁵ Ibid.

⁵¹⁶ César Augusto Sánchez, interview with author, May 29, 2013.

⁵¹⁷ Scher, "Can the Arts Change the World?," 6.

the pain of many people. Although we were not seeking to heal, but the creation that is generated here, makes it happen.”⁵¹⁸

Sánchez, a professor at *Cuatro Elementos Skuela*, confirmed the findings of Don Elligan, who conducted a study about the value of rap as psychotherapy. He found that many youth and young adults have benefited from using rap music as a tool to promote a greater insight and self-awareness.⁵¹⁹ My research confirms Elligan’s insights, showing how hip-hop has had a healing influence in the streets of Medellín; youth involved in the Hip-hop movement are using rap music as a way to release the tension and negative emotions and to make sense of the violence affecting their lives. As Carlos Pradilla said:

If I did not have the music I would feel lonely (and) empty. The music taught me to see things farther, to let things out, not keep things inside. If I feel angry or sad, I put on a music track and start improvising (rapping). And, if it is too strong I let it out writing.⁵²⁰

The participatory communications for social change framework proposes that communities are active agents of change, using cultural production as a central element in processes of empowerment.⁵²¹ Considering that in Medellín the State has been absent in many aspects of youth’s lives, youth involved in the Hip-hop movement have found their own ways of developing a participatory citizenship. For instance, through the initiative *Cuatro Elementos Skuela* in Aranjuez, youth are addressing deep concerns about access to education, cultural, sport and recreational spaces, etc. This initiative shows how youth are no longer seen as victims but as community builders.⁵²²

⁵¹⁸ Henry Arteaga, interview with author, May 23, 2013.

⁵¹⁹ Elligan, *Rap Therapy*, ix.

⁵²⁰ Carlos Pradilla, interview with author, May 27, 2013.

⁵²¹ Coryat, "Challenging the Silences and Omissions of Dominant Media," 138.

⁵²² Ersing, "Building the Capacity of Youths through Community Cultural Arts," 26.

Moreover, *Cuatro Elementos Skuela*, is a grassroots initiative that is maintained independently without resources from the government or other organizations. Although the school has made alliances with governmental and non-governmental organizations to secure funding for various activities, the base resources for operating the school come from the efforts of the leaders of the initiative who are entrepreneurs in the hip-hop industry.

In the following sections I highlight various changes that the initiative *Cuatro Elementos Skuela* have brought the community, which are contributing to reconstruct the city's social, cultural and economic fabric.

6.2 Changes in the social fabric

“A person is not born a criminal; a person becomes a criminal. (But) if we don't let the person become a criminal, if instead we create artists, then that is our contribution (to the neighborhood),”⁵²³ said Cristian Montoya.

The grassroots initiative *Cuatro Elementos Skuela* constitutes an alternative for youth of underprivileged neighborhoods, who have joined the group rather than joining street gangs or other armed groups. Additionally, some young people have quit using drugs since joining the school; “we are not doing this for the peace of Colombia” Arteaga explained,” or to take kids out of drug addiction.” However, breakdancing and other hip-hop expressions require a lot of self-discipline, and “it does happen when you have discipline in what you do.”⁵²⁴

Since the mission of *Cuatro Elementos Skuela* is to share the knowledge with all who want to learn, this initiative has crossed regional borders. The professors travel to

⁵²³ Cristian Montoya, interview with author, May 29, 2013.

⁵²⁴ Henry Arteaga, interview with author, May 23, 2013.

other cities to teach about the different elements of the Hip-hop movement. This suggests a multiplier effect that is producing changes not only at a local level, but also at a national level. Furthermore, this initiative has contributed to reconstruct the city's social fabric. Some examples in which we could observe such transformation is to see people of different ages interacting around hip-hop events. This is important when taking into consideration the lack of space for recreation and culture in the *Comuna 4*, and the fear members of the community have about leaving their houses, and interacting with their neighbors.

6.3 Changes in the cultural fabric

The influence of youth countercultural expressions in cultural policy began in the 1980s.⁵²⁵ The elaboration of the first cultural development plan in Medellín in the late 80's, recognized the multiple cultural manifestations that existed in the city, including poetry, graffiti art, rock, punk, rap, and metal musical expressions,⁵²⁶ and the role that these institutions or groups had been playing during the past years.⁵²⁷

Cuatro Elementos Skuela, which started in 2002, has contributed to the city's cultural fabric by providing healthy recreational spaces for the community. Not only does it offer classes to whoever wants to learn about Hip-hop, but also the school organizes artistic presentations and shows, which benefit the district and the larger city. For instance, for the past nine years *Crew Peligrosos* and *Cuatro Elementos Skuela* have organized a breakdance festival called Hip4. An interesting point regarding this festival is that it is operated with the city's participatory budget. This means that the residents of the

⁵²⁵ Bravo, *Itinerarios Culturales 1985-2007*, 125.

⁵²⁶ Carlos Rincón, *Mapas y Pliegues. Ensayos de cartografía cultural y de lectura del barroco* (Santafé de Bogotá: Colcultura, 1991) and Jorge Giraldo, "Rock e ideología," in *Medellín en vivo. La Historia del Rock*. Omar Urán, ed. 12-28. Medellín: IPC, 1997) cited in: Riaño, *Dwellers of Memory*, 3.

⁵²⁷ Bravo, *Itinerarios Culturales 1985-2007*, 130.

barrio Aranjuez, were responsible for the decision of allocating part of the city's participatory budget to promoting the *Hip4* festival. This suggests the great influence of the Hip-hop movement in the neighborhood. Even more interesting is to learn that the neighborhood of Aranjuez decided to invest 65 percent of its participatory budget in culture.⁵²⁸

Another important point regarding advances in cultural policy is that *Cuatro Elementos Skuela* has signed agreements with the National Ministry of Culture, the most important body in charge of promoting culture in Colombia.⁵²⁹ These agreements have supported the initiative's expansion to other regions in Colombia, specifically in breakdancing.⁵³⁰ According to Arteaga, the alliances between the hip-hop school and the Ministry of Culture, have allowed them to share their experiences in other places and “generate new leaderships and networks in the b-boy dance.”⁵³¹ It is important to highlight that according to Arteaga, the Ministry of Culture, has focused on the school processes, not on the products,⁵³² which is a vital element in Community Cultural Development work, as noted by Adam and Goldbard.⁵³³ In this respect, the State is respecting the perspective of community groups and promoting the richness of what is already existent in the community.

6.4 Changes in the economic fabric

The *Cuatro Elementos Skuela* initiative is also contributing to the reconstruction of Medellín's economic fabric; this initiative is helping young people support themselves.

⁵²⁸ Jorge Melguizo, “Entrevista con Jorge Melguizo,” 182.

⁵²⁹ Henry Arteaga, interview with author, May 23, 2013.

⁵³⁰ Henry Arteaga, e-mail message to author, September 16, 2013.

⁵³¹ Ibid.

⁵³² Henry Arteaga, interview with author, May 23, 2013.

⁵³³ “Community Cultural Development work must be “open-ended, leaving the content and focus to be determined by participants;” See: Adams and Goldbard, *Creative Community*, 65.

Comuna 4, where the hip-hop school is located, has very high levels of unemployment and very little access to higher education.⁵³⁴ In this context, *Cuatro Elementos Skuela* offers training, which provides youth with skills and experience to become professional street artists, and follow vocational careers in the arts. Arteaga said,

I don't need a university degree that says I am a professional, or to gain money. I am a professional because of the entire trajectory that I have had in the hip-hop movement, and you could see it (when we are) on stage (...) (Academic) degrees require economic conditions and create elites and that should not be like that. The experience is more valuable than any other thing.⁵³⁵

Hip-hop's different performance skills become vehicles for many youth to find employment. In fact, the members of *Crew Peligrosos* are succeeding commercially in the music industry. This has allowed them to support themselves and their families. The testimony of César Sánchez that begins this chapter is an example of the latter; once he started succeeding in the dance, he helped his mother and brothers come out from poverty and drug addiction. Moreover, the members of *Crew Peligrosos* have been able to fund the *Cuatro Elementos Skuela* initiative. The idea with the school was to provide opportunities for other kids to become professional artists as well; and to achieve this they secured funds with other organizations to take them to perform in different scenarios, around the country.

Robin Kelley said that some arenas such as music, sports, and visual arts “have provided young people with a range of options for survival, space for creative expression, and at least a modicum of control over their own labor.”⁵³⁶ He explained that these expressions, “comprise a range of strategies within capitalism, some quite entrepreneurial,

⁵³⁴ IPC, “Plan de Desarrollo Local Comuna 4 de Medellín, 2008-2015,” 21-22.

⁵³⁵ Henry Arteaga, interview with author, May 23, 2013.

⁵³⁶ Kelley, *Yo Mama's Disfunktional!*, 75.

in fact-intended to enable working-class urban youth to avoid dead-end, low-wage while devoting their energies to creative and pleasurable pursuits.”⁵³⁷ Kelley’s approach can be applied to Medellín, in which youth in underprivileged neighborhoods with low prospects for getting a job are finding their own sources of employment through different forms of pleasure and artistic expressions. Hence, youth subcultures represent a great source of richness to the city; based on a high level of creativity and grassroots entrepreneurship effort.⁵³⁸

The members of *Crew Peligrosos* are cultural entrepreneurs who have created their own enterprise, which generates income and economic returns, through their music and other elements of the Hip-hop movement. Furthermore, they lead the cultural organization *Cuatro Elementos Skuela* seeking to give something back to the community and also contributing to strengthening the city’s economic fabric training another generation of youth with a set of skills that would allow them to find their own sources of employment.

Finally, it is important to highlight that Hip-hop is an alternative to generate social change in the community. *Cuatro Elementos Skuela* provides different benefits to people in the neighborhood of Aranjuez, and in other parts of the city, which have traditionally been tasks of the state. A review of cultural policy indicates that while the government is working to promote cultural spaces in the city and increase education opportunities for youth, there are still gaps in the government’s scope. This lacuna is what different community groups are filling out. Furthermore, the existence of public private

⁵³⁷ Ibid., 45.

⁵³⁸ Urán, “La juventud,” 290.

partnerships shows that joint venture processes between governmental organisms and the community itself are being pushed by the Hip-hop movement.

Chapter 7: Conclusions and Recommendations

In this study I asked how youth involved in the Hip-hop movement are contributing to restore Medellín's social, cultural and economic fabric? I looked specifically at the case of *Cuatro Elementos Skuela*, a street art school in the *barrio* Aranjuez, arguing that youth involved in this initiative are transforming their lives and the lives of others members of the community through the Hip-hop movement. The study sought to provide evidence of the positive impact that Hip-hop has brought to the neighborhood of Aranjuez in Medellín, and the methodology used by a group of young people at a grassroots level to generate social change.

Furthermore, I argue that the hip hop collective *Crew Peligrosos* and the volunteer initiative *Cuatro Elementos Skuela* are filling the absence of state action in the *Comuna 4*, in the social, cultural and economic fields specially in regards with youth. To demonstrate the latter, I looked at the role played by the state in the past thirty years. I found that for a long time, people in marginalized neighborhoods lacked basic facilities such as schooling, employment, and spaces for the promotion of culture. Today, although there have been improvements in cultural policy and the promotion of education, specifically since the administration of Sergio Fajardo (2003-2007), the *Comuna 4* which houses the initiative *Cuatro Elementos Skuela*, still presents high levels of unemployment, its inhabitants have difficult access to higher education, and lack spaces for the development and promotion of culture.

On the other hand, *Cuatro Elementos Skuela* provides a healthy space for young people to spend their free time, and offers cultural and recreational spaces for the community. The latter is contributing to restore the city's social and cultural fabric; it

promotes interaction between community members and helps address wounds left by the war. Furthermore, the school offers artistic training in the four elements of the hip-hop movement: breakdance, graffiti writing, MCing, DJing. While it is difficult to calculate the number of young people that follow vocational careers in the Hip-hop movement in Medellín, there are some youth who have been able to support themselves through Hip-hop, such as the members of *Crew Peligrosos*. This Hip-hop collective which is succeeding in the music industry, founded the school *Cuatro elementos Skuela* with the aim of offering others the opportunity to become professional artists as well.

It is important to acknowledge that *Cuatro elementos Skuela* is a volunteer initiative, coming from a grassroots level that supports itself with contributions from the members of the Hip-hop collective *Crew Peligrosos*. However, in order to expand the activities and strategies in artistic promotion, the school secures funding with governmental and non-governmental organizations, receives support from the community through the participatory budget, and also from the private sector. This model is characteristic of initiatives based on the participatory paradigm; which recognizes that although organizations usually need support at certain point, the change agent comes from the community itself, which makes its own decisions, and operates independently. So far, *Cuatro Elementos Skuela* is achieving positive results in making changes in the community, which suggests it is worth looking at in more depth and especially studying their methodology. I highly recommend that, leaders in governmental and non-governmental organizations and other cultural workers especially at a local level look at community initiatives that already have a trajectory and know the needs of the community more closely, and might therefore work together to achieve better results.

Furthermore, for future research, I recommend a comparison between the effects of a private-public partnership model and a grassroots-based initiative, especially in regards to Hip-hop. In Chapter three, I mentioned a cultural center located in the *Comuna 4*, The *Centro de Desarrollo Cultural Moravia*. This cultural center led by the state and Comfenalco Antioquia, a private, non-profit organization that provides different social services to the populations; represents one example of the urban development strategies promoted in recent administrations. While this institution is not specifically situated in the same *barrio* (neighborhood) than *Cuatro Elementos Skuela*, it is located in the same *Comuna* (District) and it also provides artistic training in Hip-hop. In my experience so far, the Hip-hop school *Cuatro Elementos Skuela* provides a more solid training in Hip-hop than *Centro de Desarrollo Cultural Moravia*. Hence, I suggest that in this particular case, an initiative led by a community group is generating greater impact than one that is a hybrid of public and private leadership. However, more research is necessary to make a deeper comparison between both approaches.

The role of hip-hop as a self-supporting artistic enterprise is important in order to understand the success of the case study *Cuatro Elementos Skuela*. This initiative exists thanks to the achievements of the members of the collective *Crew Peligrosos* in the music industry. Furthermore, one of the objectives of the hip-hop school is to provide young boys and girls with skills to be able to continue a career as professional artists. This suggests that the commercialization of art and culture is vital in the sustainable development of this type of initiatives. I recommend that future researchers look more closely at the phenomenon of Hip-hop and the possibilities that it brings in terms of employment opportunities.

The Hip-hop movement is opening up cultural spaces in the neighborhood of Aranjuez, in Medellín and offering exciting opportunities to young boys and girls in marginalized neighborhoods. The school *Cuatro Elementos Skuela* is a source of inspiration and social change, which is worth looking at closely. An initiative that emerges from a grassroots level is pushing policy and contributing to the economic growth of the city of Medellín.

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