CHAPTER 3

Planning for Mobility and Socio-Environmental Justice: The Case of Medellín, Colombia

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3.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to examine how the issue of transport mobility can contribute to debates about the relationship between resilience and environmental justice. It will do so through the case of the *Metrocables*, the world's first modern, urban, aerial cable-car linked to a public mass transport system. This was implemented in the early 2000s in Medellín, Colombia's second-largest city, with some 3.5 million inhabitants (Sarmiento et al. 2013).

The *Metrocables* were developed in the context of a range of urban interventions seeking to address the city's notorious levels of violence in the 1990s and early 2000s. With Medellín's reputation as one of the world's most violent cities, linked to the emergence of illegal armed

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groups and the narcotics export business, reclaiming the safe and civic use of public space was a critical political and planning challenge. This was an important consideration in the transport projects pursued in the 1990s and 2000s, where the 'recovery of public spaces was perceived as an effective deterrent to violence and crime' (Stienen 2009: 120). The statutory basis for addressing urban public space as a priority was provided by: the 1989 Urban Reform Law in Colombia, which redefined public spaces as areas for meeting collective urban needs and the safety and peace of citizens; and the 1991 National Constitution, which recognized public space as a constitutional right, with public authorities designated as its guarantors (Stienen 2009).

Projects like the *Metrocables* have earned Medellín a place in the 100 Resilient Cities Challenge,[1] an initiative launched by the Rockefeller Foundation in May 2013. Yet, the label 'resilience', as used by the municipality's Chief Resilience Officer[2] appointed in April 2014 in response to this initiative, was not visible in the discourse and practices related to the development of the *Metrocables* and associated urban projects by earlier municipal administrations.[3] Nevertheless, it is worth asking whether the Medellín experience might contribute to contemporary debates on resilience and its relationship with environmental justice.

3.2 Defining Resilience and Environmental Justice in Relation to Transport Mobility

Mainstream transport planning has acknowledged the importance of the environment. However, the theoretical, conceptual and methodological approach to mainstream transport planning, and how it addresses environmental issues while marginalizing social issues, needs deeper scrutiny if contemporary cities are to address the enormous socio-environmental challenges and inequalities they face in the coming decades (Baeten 2000; Jones and Lucas 2012; Levy 2013a). In building a framework through which to examine the Medellín experience and its contribution to socio-environmental inequalities, three related contentions about mainstream transport planning are identified below.

First, the neoclassical economic and behavioural approaches underpinning mainstream transport planning do not recognize the power relations and structural drivers underpinning the relationship between mobility and urban development (Levy 2013a). Thus, distributional questions in development are marginal in traditional approaches to transport planning (Braeten 2000; Leinbach 2000), resulting in its complicit

reproduction of socio-environmental and spatial inequalities in cities (Vasconcellos 2001). As a result, mainstream transport planning has given relatively little attention to the relationship between transport and poverty and exclusion in the city (Lucas 2012, 2006; Stanley and Vella-Brodrick 2009) as well as to the distribution of environmental hazards and risks and their interaction with transport systems.

This neglect might explain, partly, the emphasis on resilience in traditional transport planning, rather than socio-environmental justice, and on the treatment of resilience itself. Resilience is perceived largely in physical terms, for instance 'as the ability of the transport network to withstand the impacts' of physical environmental threats (in this case, extreme weather) and 'to operate in the face of such weather and to recover promptly from its effects' (UKDT 2014: 8). While this does not reflect a more inter-disciplinary understanding of resilience, it does encompass the ability to bounce back or return to a state where the essential activities of life can continue to function within the existing status quo, a key element of its definition within environmental literature (Pelling 2011).

A focus on socio-environmental justice is predicated on an acknowledgement of power relations and how transport is implicated in the creation of inequalities in the city, concerns largely beyond traditional transport planning. Indeed, the embrace of neoliberal policies by mainstream transport planning in most parts of the world, with increasing privatization of public transport provision and management in an alleged bid for more 'efficient' urban transport practices, has pushed socio-environmental inequalities even further from transport agendas. This lacuna has resulted in a growing critique of the contradictory character of notions like 'sustainable mobility' in contemporary cities (Essebo and Baeten 2012), promoting economic growth alongside addressing environmental risk and socio-environmental injustice.

In this chapter, we argue for recognition of how intersecting power relations of class, gender, age, race, ethnicity, religion and sexuality are articulated in the relationship between transport mobility, urban development and the environment. This has implications for notions like travel choice and 'deep distribution', defined as:

> an understanding of transport based on the articulation of power relations in public and private space at the level of the household, community and society that generate the structural inequality and dominant relations under which decisions about 'travel choice' are made. (Levy 2013a: 52)

This approach also implies a shift from resilience as the maintenance of the status quo (even if there are planning attempts to make transport mobility fairer) to socio-environmental justice, in which structural inequalities are challenged to support a system of transport that enables the exercise of equal rights in the city (Parnell and Pieterse 2010).

The second contention concerning mainstream transport planning is that it does not acknowledge the social significance of public space in transport (Levy 2013a, b). Mainstream transport planning is less likely to be concerned with the often exclusionary experience of different social groups in the public spaces created and shaped by the modes and channels of urban transport because of its lack of recognition of the social position of transport users. It is also less likely to be concerned with deep distribution issues and the right to appropriation of public space in the planning and design of urban transport. This chapter will demonstrate that the right to public space is a central consideration in shifting from resilience to socio-environmental justice in transport.

The third contention is that the essentially expert-led and top-down character of mainstream transport planning does not consider citizen participation in decision-making about transport as an important part of the planning process. Indeed, taking on more

> bottom-up strategies will require a sea change in the traditional attitudes of transport experts and the organizational culture of the profession. (Booth and Richardson 2001:148)

This chapter is premised on the view that, without attention to citizen participation in decision-making, transport planning cannot effectively address questions of socio-environmental justice.

In challenging these contentions in traditional transport planning, the chapter argues that a focus on resilience as the ability to bounce back but maintain the status quo is not enough to address the challenges of mobility in contemporary cities. Given growing socio-environmental urban inequalities in most parts of the world, focusing only on resilience may end up creating the conditions for a differential sustainability, that is:

> by adjusting [socio-environmental] thresholds to meet the needs and wants of certain privileged social groups and territories at the expense of others. (Allen 2014: 523–4)

Such a focus will fail to address a more transformative transport agenda that tackles questions of deep distribution in the socio-environmental conditions of cities. Nevertheless, Pelling (2011) argues for a linked relationship between this more transformative agenda and resilience, a relationship that is both:

> nested and compounding… Nesting allows higher-order change to facilitate lower-order change so that transformative change in a social system could open scope for local transitions and resilience. Compounding reflects the potential for lower-order changes to stimulate or hinder higher-order change. Building resilience can provoke reflection and be upscaled with consequent changes across a management regime, enabling transitional and potentially transformative change. (Pelling 2011: 24–25)

This chapter proposes that a focus on socio-environmental justice will take us closer to a more transformative agenda for urban transport planning in contemporary cities, one which addresses the structural causes of inequality. Building on debates about social justice between Iris Marion Young (1990, 1998) and Nancy Fraser (1996, 1998a, b), their use in the examination of environmental justice (Allen and Frediani 2013) and of transport and the just city (Levy 2015), socio-environmental justice is defined as comprising the three intersecting principles of *redistribution, reciprocal recognition*, and *parity political participation*.

In line with the arguments above, the domain of *redistribution* is understood as an approach to transport planning that addresses the underlying relations of deep distribution underpinning material conditions in the city. This domain embraces both socioeconomic and environmental resource inequalities and exposure to hazards in the city.

The principle of *reciprocal recognition* (Levy 2015) is explored through the politics of recognition 'where assimilation to majority or dominant cultural norms is no longer the price of equal respect' (Fraser 1996: 3). In the context of transport, the domain of reciprocal recognition concerns the two-way relationships between the recognition of difference (of transport users) in institutions, policies and daily urban practices, and the recognition by oppressed women and men themselves of their own rights (Levy 2015).

The third domain focuses on *parity political participation* and combines Young's notion of political participation and Fraser's notion of

'parity participation', based on her arguments that 'justice requires social arrangements that permit all (adult) members of society to interact with one another as peers' (Fraser 1996: 30). This goes beyond top-down regulations for formal legal equality, and interacts with both the material conditions that will enable women and men to participate politically (for which redistribution is a precondition) along with the 'inter-subjective' conditions for mutual respect between diverse people and the achievement of social esteem (for which reciprocal recognition is a precondition). This emphasizes the interdependence between the principles of socio-environmental justice.

The Medellín case offers an opportunity to explore a set of urban practices related to transport and mobility within a discourse of rights and redistribution (Coupé et al. 2013). Although there were other more instrumental aims as well, one of the central tenets of the programmes that followed the first *Metrocable* line in 2004 was to address growing socioeconomic and spatial marginality of people in specific areas of the city. The next sections will reflect on the *Metrocables* and these associated programmes through the tripartite lens of socio-environmental justice discussed above. The case study arises from a 2-year research project coordinated by the Development Planning Unit, UCL, involving researchers in Medellín, Bogotá and London (Dávila 2013).

3.3 Medellín's *Metrocables* and Urban Upgrading: Redressing Imbalances

Over the past two decades, Medellín has undergone remarkable changes—from an almost pariah city with high levels of violence, unemployment and poverty, to 'a city with potential for long-lasting success' (*Wall Street Journal* 2013). This is partly due to the actions of a strong and proactive local state, focused on physical interventions in public transport, housing, social infrastructure and public space, and greater democratic openness in decision-making. To what extent did these interventions address issues of deep distribution?

In the 1990s, at the height of the violence that marred daily life in Medellín, the urban poor especially had to contend with high homicide rates resulting from the interaction of a complex web of actors including left-wing and right-wing militias, armed gangs and common criminals (Hylton 2007). Economic liberalization had led to high unemployment

and a flood of imports including textiles, garments and other manufactured goods, of which Medellín had been a key producer in Colombia from the 1920s (Stienen 2009).

As inter-personal inequalities increased,[4] formal sources of employment dwindled, leading to the multiplication of informal street vendors. This, coupled with a perceived rise in criminality in some of the more central public spaces, encouraged the middle classes to retreat to enclosed spaces and guarded buildings. Most low-income settlements on the steep hills around the river valley where the historical city centre sits are largely the result of the illegal occupation of land designated in successive master plans as unsuitable for housing due to the high risks of landslides. Informal settlements occupy less than a quarter of the city's area, and yet they house over half of its population, many of whom rent the dwelling in which they live.

Authorities have regularly evicted settlers and occasionally demolished shacks in what they consider illegal settlements since they first appeared in the 1940s. However, until the mid-2000s, these settlements were tolerated and gradually legalized, without toning down a discourse of risk intended to deter future low-income occupants. The presence of sturdily built high-rise buildings on the same steep hills in wealthy neighbourhoods a few kilometres south starkly demonstrates that risk is a relative concept that can be overcome with plentiful capital and technical know-how.

Medellin's cable-car lines are pioneers in the use of ski-lift technology (conventionally used in tourist areas) for mass transport in dense and hilly low-income settlements. Among the system's advantages are the speed at which a line can be built (pylons need little space), the comparatively low cost (under US$30 million for the first line, under US$50 million for the second one), the lack of localized emissions, and convenience, especially for passengers who do not need to carry large parcels (Brand and Dávila 2013, 2011). These lines are potentially a bold and imaginative step to redress deeply seated social problems.

The first *Metrocable* line, built under the municipal administration of Mayor Luis Pérez (elected for 2001–2003), was one of several municipal interventions in what were seen as the most problematic low-income settlements. The administration of Pérez's successor, Sergio Fajardo (2004–2007), established an extensive programme of urban upgrading, social infrastructure, support to small firms and business skilling in some of the

city's poorest districts. The administration coined the expression 'social urbanism' to describe a set of projects used to leverage a profound social transformation with a view to creating a new social contract (Medellín and IDB 2008).

Not overtly fond of the aerial cable-car lines as a mass-transit solution, the Fajardo administration focused on a programme of 'Integrated Urban Projects' (with the Spanish acronym PUIs) to build new public spaces, schools and public libraries, revamp existing parks, and support local businesses in three low-income areas of the municipality (Brand and Dávila 2013). A key element of these interventions was the use of high-quality architectural design and materials, as well as local labour in construction. Between 2004 and 2010, in *Comunas* (districts) 1 and 2 where the first cable-car line was built, Fajardo's administration and its successor (led by Mayor Alonso Salazar, 2008–2011) invested nearly eight times as much (US$225 million) in these interventions than had been invested in building the line. Local residents made up 92% of the construction labour force (Calderón 2012), corresponding to approximately 3400 new jobs (EDU 2007a in Calderón, 2012). Despite its scepticism, in 2006 the Fajardo administration built a second line, coupled with an Integrated Urban Project in the low-income sectors of *Comunas* 7 and 13, the districts served by the line.

These interventions sought as yet timid but more effective redistribution of wealth than had previously been attempted (Dávila 2009). Started with relatively isolated and somewhat random interventions by Perez's administration (such as the 'Bank of the Poor'), some of these were continued over the following three administrations. Crucial to these was a significant and growing source of annual income from *Empresas Públicas de Medellín* (EPM), a municipally owned utilities company supplying basic services to Medellín and its neighbouring municipalities: generation (24% of the country's total) and distribution of energy, water and sanitation, and telecommunications. In effect, EPM is a multinational public company with assets in excess of US$10 billion that between 2010 and 2012 transferred close to US$1.4 billion in surplus to the municipal government, providing much-needed cash for projects, including the city's low-income settlements (Coupé et al. 2013).

Despite difficulties in collecting reliable data in informal settlements and identifying robust cause–effect relationships, the evidence suggests that interventions in the poorer districts, although restricted to projects rather than city-wide interventions, appear to have contributed to

increased incomes and reduced social exclusion in these areas. Reduced levels of violence and municipal investment in transport and other infrastructure led to a significant rise in economic activity in neighbourhoods close to the cable-car stations. Average incomes in these areas grew in real terms for both women and men when compared to the city's legal minimum wage (Coupé and Cardona 2013). Similarly, cable-car trips have been associated with reduced social exclusion (Zapata Córdoba et al. 2014), while transport fares for those who can make use of the Metro system (including cable-cars and feeder buses) are lower than those who must use several buses in their trips (Coupé and Cardona 2013).

The intention of the local government to address 'social urbanism' in a highly unequal society does, therefore, seem to have met with some success and could be said to have contributed to the increased resilience of the city. However, the political imperatives within the short window available to a local government elected for only 4 years, as well as the localized nature of many of these interventions, also highlight the limits of collective action to confront deeper processes of maldistribution.

3.4 The Politics of Recognition

The lens of the politics of recognition in Medellín offers 'an in depth exploration of the discursive powers shaping governance practices at various spatial levels' (Ernste et al. 2012: 512). In the 1990s, national, regional and local government waged a state-led campaign to reconstruct a collective vision for Medellín in the face of social disintegration, economic stagnation and high levels of violence. As discussed in Sect. 3.3, this involved high-quality design and architecture as a 'technology of power' (Rabinow 1983 in Stienen 2009: 109) to re-engineer physical as well as social relations. With its roots in the 1989 Urban Reform Law and the 1991 Political Constitution of Colombia, the state was given the

> duty… to protect the integrity of public space and its dedication to common use, which has prevalence over individual interests. (Colombian Government 2015)

Therefore, the politics of recognition around the *Metrocables* in Medellín has its roots in prior processes at national and local scales.

The campaign included a discursive reconstruction of the image of Medellín as a proud city and all sectors of its population as urban

citizens. In 1991, local government set up *Mesas de Concertación* (public round tables) and open forums in which grassroots organizations, local NGOs, trade unions, universities, the municipality and the city's business sector participated in order 'to confront violence and to rebuild social cohesion and civilized social order' (Stienen 2009: 112). Continued through the 1990s, this collective initiative was acknowledged by all involved as an 'educational process', building reciprocal recognition in the city. But who was educating whom about what? And who and what were being valued in this process?

While the Metro Company and local businesspeople sought to make Medellín a 'world-class city' (see also Dávila 2014), progressive intellectuals, former activists and grassroots organizations were seeking to make it more socially just. They argued that the 'world-class city' vision had translated into a war against informality. This reflected a lack of recognition of poor women and men, the quality of their lives and livelihoods, for example, through the eviction of informal traders in the city centre. There was also unease about the moral tone of the coalition around the Metro Company. In the 1990s, the Metro's operating company sought to establish a *Cultura Ciudadana*,[5] 'a set of conventions for dealing with violence, exclusion, and difference' (Stienen 2009: 110). From 1996, this was reinforced in the city's transport system by *Cultura Metro*, a set of norms of acceptable behaviour for users of the Metro system, enforced by Metro employees and, in apparent solidarity, by transport users as well.

During the 1990s, what was promoted as recognition 'for all' appeared increasingly to become recognition of a middle-class notion of space and lifestyle in the city—although the lifestyles of the youth, so implicated in the violent gang culture, and poor sections of the population also had some representation in the public debates. Ultimately, these debates appear to be focused on 'rebuilding and strengthening of the legitimacy of the state' (Stienen 2009: 110) and on creating the basis for urban upgrading to support the aspiration of Medellín as a competitive city (Dávila 2014).

The politics of recognition in Medellín reflects the same conflicts into the twenty-first century. When Mayor Luis Pérez championed the *Metrocables* as a redistributive project for the city, this had both spatial and symbolic dimensions:

> we must implement projects for the poor as if they were for the rich; the poor are entitled to more than conventional projects for the poor. (Coupé et al. 2013: 60)

The extent to which the poor participated in these planning processes will be discussed in the next section. The fact that Mayor Pérez could not get an insurance company to underwrite the risk of building the first line reflects the limited consensus and recognition of the poor by elements of the national and international private sector, despite a decade of open debate and the launching of a new civic project.

Mayor Fajardo's discourse around 'social urbanism' explicitly acknowledges that the city owed an historic debt to the socially marginalized districts of the city. However, while social urbanism, as a form of spatialized social policy (Sotomayor 2013: 3) reflected a recognition by the state of poor areas in the city, it did not always reflect the voices of the poor themselves. Indeed, even before the first *Metrocable* line was built, the intellectuals and former activists, many of whom had moved into local government with Mayor Fajardo:

> found themselves compromised with the interests of the city's establishment in attracting external investments. The interests of radical subaltern groups became unintentionally subordinated by the …[latter's] over-articulated voices. (Stienen 2009: 135)

The fault lines that became apparent in the 1990s grew in the 2000s, exacerbating

> the tension between aesthetic concerns and the grandeur of public works on the one hand, and claims by residents who cannot meet their basic needs, on the other. (Sotomayor 2013: 12)

For those in *Comuna* 13, a hilly low-income district west of the city centre, this fault line is most dramatically reflected in a set of public escalators built by the municipality. This was perceived by some local residents as mal-recognition of the economic hardships and daily violence they still face (Sotomayor 2013).

3.5 Parity Political Participation

Greater democratic openness after the 1991 national Constitution, higher levels of education, and the rise to positions of power in the municipal administration of individuals and groups seeking consensus, created a conjuncture for a new approach to urban governance and planning (Medellín and IDB 2008). Several local institutions played important roles in these interventions. The Metro Company is a public company owned in equal parts by the Municipality of Medellín and the Province of Antioquia (of which Medellín is the capital city). The *Empresas Públicas de Medellín* (EPM or the Public Utility Company of Medellín in English) provided basic infrastructure services to low-income areas and generated cash for the municipality's coffers. The *Empresa de Desarrollo Urbano* (EDU or Urban Development Corporation in English), created in 2002, brought together experienced technicians, recent graduates and academics new to public administration to implement well-designed projects. Under the banner of 'social urbanism', the Integrated Urban Projects (PUIs) brought in under Mayor Fajardo, to operate alongside the *Metrocable*, established community participation in the planning and design of public facilities.

The public sector was both the instigator and the executor of these projects. Led by an inter-disciplinary group in the EDU, this arm of the municipality created a series of spaces for community participation, using a specified methodology (Calderón 2012). In the PUI-Nororiental, the first of these initiatives adjacent to *Línea K* of the *Metrocable*, the key elements of participation were: public hearings in the diagnosis stage to the development of Community Committees (CCs) created during more local meetings; the *Talleres de Imaginarios Urbanos* (Workshops of Urban Perceptions) and *Talleres de Imaginarios por Proyecto* (Workshops of Project Dreams and Ideas) as vehicles for feeding community needs and ideas into project design; and the *Pactos Ciudadanos* (Citizen Agreements) which sought to embed responsibility for project maintenance and sustainability (Calderón 2012).

In his evaluation, Calderón (2012) notes that this first PUI increased local accountability and reduced the negative stigma of these *Comunas* in the city. However, Calderón also questions the representativeness of the community and the CCs in the process, despite efforts to include the young and elderly, and notes:

> since the PUI-Model gave priority to the construction of public spaces and facilities, during the participatory activities discussions or solutions to other problems or demands that were highly prioritized by the community were not taken into consideration. (Calderón 2012: 11)

The PUI process operated alongside other mechanisms established throughout the 1990s for communities to participate in city-wide planning processes (Coupé et al. 2013). From 1997, PUI served to generate mutual trust between the state and communities (Carvajal 2009). Drawing on Brazil's participatory budgeting methodology (Cabannes 2004), the municipality invited local communities where PUIs were implemented to decide collectively on the use of a small but symbolically significant share of public investment, subsequent to the initial PUI process. In addition to enabling decisions on ordinary physical investments such as containment walls and football pitches, the mechanism allowed local communities to prioritize investment for university scholarships and programmes promoting conviviality and citizen participation. Although the process was not explicitly gendered, some women appear to have been empowered through it (Coupé 2013).

The case of Medellín clearly shows the strong interaction between the socio-environmental principles of parity political participation, the processes of reciprocal recognition strengthened through participation, and redistribution of selected material conditions such as the creation and improvement of public facilities and public space in the city.

3.6 Conclusion

The case of the *Metrocables* and the related Integrated Urban Projects demonstrates the interactions between the principles of socio-environmental justice. It also highlights the tensions between local and other needs:

> (I)t is clear that Medellin's model of urban restructuring conveys the city's ambivalent aspirations of becoming, on the one hand, more democratic, equitable and inclusive through redistributional infrastructure and anti-poverty programs; and on the other hand, a better fit for attracting foreign capital investment through the internationalization of an emblematic experience of resurgence. (Sotomayor 2013: 13)

The physical/spatial and discursive construction of the notion of social urbanism and the resulting reconstruction of the right to public space related to transport was central in this process and raises a number of challenges. In physical terms, the combination of *Metrocable*, the transport intervention, and PUIs, the planning interventions, was critical in achieving spatial and socioeconomic change, as indicated by the differential experience and impacts of *Línea K* and *Línea J*. According to Mayor Salazar, the local government sought 'to activate the power of aesthetics as a motor for social change' (Brand and Dávila 2013: 50). However, in reality this was possible only where the use of high-quality engineering (the *Metrocables*) and architectural design interventions (community libraries, housing and other public facilities), combined with focused spatial planning (the PUI initiatives), were undertaken with strong institutional commitments within powerful—and conflictive—political processes of change in the country.

What is impressive about the Medellín model is the speed at which these physical and spatial changes took place. Community libraries, for example, were completed in 12–15 months. This is partly driven by the four-year electoral cycle:

> Because mayors cannot be immediately re-elected, they seek to maximize political gain during their restricted tenure by accelerating project implementation. (Sotomayor 2013:10)

The quality and selection of physical interventions is also important, supported by strong technical and urban management capacity. For example, PUIs:

> display a great symbolic capacity to change previous imageries associated to marginal places, rendering a swift sense of transformation. (Sotomayor 2013: 2)

While these physical interventions brought fast selective improvements for particular groups, there is a question about the scale of redistribution and its basis in expressed needs. This highlights the limitations of pursuing a preconceived project approach (spatial and architectural focus on public facilities and public space) at the expense of other priority expressed needs and city-wide regulation and planning, respectively. In the case of Medellín:

> the high degree of exceptionality required to implement a PUI, fails to challenge the processes by which socio-spatial injustices are created and reproduced in the city. (Sotomayor 2013: 14)

The wider challenge then is how policy-makers and planners can combine bottom-up projects with city-wide planning to achieve more transformative processes that challenge structural inequalities in the city.

The Medellín case is also instructive in its commitment to the creation of a new discourse of citizenship around and through physical and spatial design interventions. This built on longer-term development of citizenship through a decade of public debate which, while contested, attempted to be inclusive. However, research findings on these processes:

> suggest that Medellín's *Cultura Ciudadana* emerged out of two interrelated but different public spheres: the discursive controversy about the most legitimate forms of urban life in Medellín, including the tensions between formality and informality, and the city's emerging Metrospace. The former was structured by a multiplicity of voices, the latter by an authoritarian and exclusive normative order. (Stienen 2009: 134)

In both theoretical and practical terms, we argue that this intentional reconstruction of discursive practices combined with material interventions highlights the political construction of 'myth' to create the framework and motivations for apparent transformation: '(T)he logic of myth can reconcile seemingly opposing ideals into one coherent, emplotted and naturalised story' (Essebo and Baeten 2012: 556).

> (R)egardless… if we see it as a unifying story around which reformation can unite or as a keeper of the present order, myth affects behaviour in much the same way as personal belief guides everyday practice. (Essebo and Baeten 2012: 559)

Essebo and Baeten specifically focused on the construction of myth around sustainable mobility and the discursive and material tensions between mobility linked to growth, equality and sustainability. The discussion in this chapter would suggest that the Medellín case reflects exactly these tensions.

At best, then, it could be argued that transport planning in Medellín probably reflects an improving resilience along with transitional or

incremental change—but not a transformational change that has altered the structural relations reproducing inequalities in the city (Pelling 2011). Thus, the *Metrocables* project and the promotion of 'social urbanism' in Medellín have only partially and differentially addressed the conditions for socio-environmental justice. While some redistribution was achieved, the limited scale and exceptional character of the planned interventions did not address deep distribution questions in the city.

While extraordinary and bold processes for an inclusive deliberative politics took place in the city in the 1990s, building a collective consciousness about possible directions for change among many groups, the *Metrocables* project and the PUI initiatives gave only partial recognition to selected poor citizens. This was increasingly within a 'world-class' city discourse reflecting middle-class aspirations and lifestyles, as proponents of inclusive and deliberative citizenship were elected to power and increasingly bought into a unifying myth of citizenship created through a coalition of political, policy and business leadership. These contradictory tendencies spilled over into the participatory practices associated with both initiatives, and at best it can be argued that there was partial rather than parity participation.

As the tension between the inclusive and competitive city is played out in the future, attempts to redirect, scale up and maintain a trajectory for city-wide socio-environmental justice may be increasingly derailed—perhaps even undermining the future resilience of citizens and the city. Will the city's recent designation as among the 100 Resilient Cities Challenge address any of these critical contradictions to move Medellín more firmly onto a path of socio-environmental justice?

Notes

1. See http://www.100resilientcities.org/ (accessed 20 June 2015).
2. See http://urb.im/live/blog/wuf7/md/140410a (accessed 20 June 2015).
3. Medellín, with 2.3 million inhabitants, is the most populated and richest municipality in a metropolitan area of nine municipalities and 3.5 million people. In this chapter, 'local administration' refers solely to the municipality of Medellín.
4. By the early 2000s, Medellín had the second-highest level of income inequality in Colombia, in turn one of the world's most unequal societies. The city's Gini coefficient was 0.55 in 2002, exceeded by only Bogota's at 0.57. In both cities, and Colombia as a whole, inequality dropped in the decade after 2002, due in part to social investment programmes. See Angulo (2014).
5. Stienen (2009: 110) observes that this can be translated into English as either 'urban culture' or 'civic culture'.

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