Medellín in the headlines:
The role of the media in the dissemination of urban models

Medellín in the headlines:
The role of the media in the dissemination of urban models

Abstract

The circulation of ideas about 'best practices' and policies shape multi-scalar governance networks. This paper examines the role of the international press, both as an actor and as a medium for the circulation of urban planning models. We aim to deepen the theoretical notions on the role of media, particularly the written press, in building narratives of 'urban models', and their circulation in other contexts. And second, by extending the reaches of multi-sited ethnography as the main methodological approach to follow policy mobility. This research monitored, and analysed news items published about Medellín on the digital editions of several newspapers across the globe between 2004 and 2017. The resulting examination shows, firstly, how the changes of the image of the city has been portrayed over time, with a growth of news items highlighting Medellín's urban model as an inspirational source for other cities in the world. Secondly, the research shows the importance of international media for building a particular storytelling about urban transformations. We argue that newspapers constitute a key informational infrastructure for urban policy mobility contributing to amplify mythical narratives of 'urban models' and to institute new metrics of good governance.

Keywords

Policy mobility, press, storytelling, Medellín model, multi-sited ethnography

Introduction

In only a decade, the international perception associated with the city of Medellín has significantly transformed. While in the early 1990s Medellín was labelled 'the most violent city in the world', in 2013 it was awarded the 'most innovative city in the world' by the City of Year competition organized by the Wall Street Journal, the Urban Land Institute and Citigroup. In 2014 the selection of Medellín as host of the seventh World Urban Forum (WUF), world's premier conference on urban issues organised by UN-Habitat, crystalized the aspiration of becoming a benchmark for urban innovation. This has been the result of major urban transformations, such as improved mobility and accessibility at city scale and public investment in upgrading the most vulnerable areas prone to violence and largely self-built by its inhabitants. These achievements have attracted urban experts across the globe and consolidated the reputation on forging a model for the resurgence of the city. What is the role of media press in the dissemination of urban models and how urban models are depicted by media to reach a broader audience? We argue that newspapers constitute a key informational infrastructure for urban policy mobility contributing to amplify mythical narratives of 'urban models' and to institute new metrics of good governance.

Advocates and experts in urban politics at the national and international level have not only analysed the metamorphosis of the city but have referred to it as the "Medellín Miracle" (Franz, 2017; Maclean, 2015) or the "Medellín model" (Alcaldía de Medellín & IDB, 2009). The city has become a worldwide champion for urban innovation and a reference for some of its flagship projects, such as the metro-cable system, which has and is being implemented in other Latin American cities such as Rio de Janeiro and La Paz (Freire-Medeiros & Name, 2017). Throughout this process, media outlets around the world have been fundamental, accounting for the changes in Medellín, while contributing to its dissemination as an urban model. Thus,

press operates both asa channel for city model diffusion and as an actor that in interaction with others (experts and institutions) contribute to the local government legitimationand validation.

This article demonstrates how media, particularly the international press, has been central to contributing to the dissemination of the 'Medellín model'. Based on recent theoretical debates, in geography and urban studies focusing on the mobility of policies (Baker & Temenos, 2015; McCann, 2008; 2011; Peck, 2011), we stated the changing nature of the perception of the city and the construction of a narrative (storytelling) simplifying processes underlying urban transformation to make them more relatable, and in turn replicable by other cities. From the methodological perspective, inspired by the concept "follow the policy" (Peck & Theodore, 2012), for several years we have tracked the news published about Medellín and its urban change in the digital editions of newspapers around the world. Accordingly, the analysis of the media as channel is based on our review on 405 records published between 2004 and 2017 in 144 journals from 21 countries around the world[1]. Additionally, we trace the evolving relationship between local government decentralised organisations and the international press through the discourse analysis of official institutional reports. This methodological approach helped explaining the role of media as an actor in terms its entanglement and alliances and to understand the justification for enacting new ways to measure good governance.

The paper is structured in three parts. The first will address the most relevant approaches to the mobility of urban policies and reveal the role of the media in these debates. This section will demonstrate how, despite the media and, in particular, the press, are usually considered in these debates, not enough attention has been given to the dual role they play as actors and, at the same time, as circuits through which policies circulate and urban models are defined. The second part will discuss how the media operates as an institutional ally of local government to frame the internationalization of the city. This section will explain how the municipal institutional architecture generate a new metrics of good governance and seeks external validation as tool for gaining local legitimacy. The third section traces Medellín's portrayal in the international press using quantitative and qualitative analysis. This section will reveal how the image that is transmitted about Medellín has changed, focusing on what is said about its construction as an urban model and source of inspiration for other cities around of the world. To conclude, this paper will demonstrate the contributions on the relationship between urban planning and analyse the importance of the media, due to their intrinsic characteristics, in the diffusion of a restricted and simplified 'history of the transformation of Medellín'.

Urban policy mobility and the media

The notion of policy mobility conceptualises and explores the spatial and relational dynamics that exist when 'best practices' become policy models. This includes the mutation of these policies as they move from one place to another and their newfound implementation (Peck, 2011; Peck & Theodore, 2010, 2012, 2015; McCann & Ward, 2010, 2012, 2013, 2015; McCann, 2013; Temenos, 2015; Longhurst & McCann, 2016; Ward, 2018). Nonetheless, critical policy mobilities studies acknowledge that "*modelling* involves an extensive web of intermediaries, audiences, resistance movements, advocates, interlocutors, spaces of translation and mediation, and not least, sites of repeated recalibration and reinvention" (DiMaggio and Powell quoted in Theodore and Peck, 2015, p.25). As such a 'model' is always in becoming and is deployed by different actors to pursue their political legitimacy.

Researches following this approach attempt to answer the questions of who, how and through which channels do policy-making is produced, mobilised and transformed. For example, depending on those stakeholders that influence policy production, there is a need to identify

those experts or individuals, whether as policy 'transfer agents' (McCann, 2008; Jacobs & Lees, 2013; Jajamovich, 2016, 2018), as 'travelling technocrats' (Larner & Laurie, 2010), as 'transnational bureaucracies' (Kuus, 2015) or as 'persuasive practitioners' (Montero, 2017a), who given their technical knowledge or proven expertise in successful operations, play a central role in policy mobility from a place to another. Similarly, different studies place their focus on the channels where policies are circulated: policy tourism or study tours (González, 2011; McCann, 2011; Cook & Ward, 2011; 2012; Wood 2014; Cook, Ward, & Ward, 2015; Montero, 2017b); benchmarking strategies (McCann, 2004); international conferences (McCann, 2011; Cook & Ward, 2012; Kennedy, 2015; Temenos, 2015; Montero, 2017a) y urban government alliances and city to city cooperation (Clarke, 2012a,2012b).

Despite the relevance of media and the press in shaping public discourse around public policy and urban planning (Flyvbjerg, 2002, 2012)[2], these have been ignored or conceptualised as relevant actors in policy mobility. Eugene McCann (2011) has placed media, together with teachers and professional organisations, among the most influential actor groups moving policy between places –what the author calls *informational infrastructures*. That is, groups of "individuals, institutions, organizations, and technologies that interpret, frame, package, and represent information about best policy practices, successful cities, and cutting-edge ideas" (McCann, 2011, p.114). Informational infrastructures create, show and promote models and best practices through research, publications, accreditation processes, or diffusion in different media platforms (Temenos, 2015). Nonetheless, few studies analyse the role of media with concrete cases. McCann's (2004) work on the 'best places to live', which follows rankings made by United States magazines, shows how media discourse can heighten a city's success reputation, influencing discussions about policy-making and, in a broader sense, competition among cities. For Temenos (2015) local media participation in conferences is key, because coverage of said events contribute to expand their influence over the narratives that are being touched upon. In the same line, for Wood (2016) the role of non-human materials, such as the newspaper pieces, are pivotal in the process of translation for urban learning. Scale notwithstanding, media platforms build narratives and mental maps about cities, good and bad policies, and help to make popular findings, insights, and debates from both experts and accredited organisations (McCann, 2004, 2011; Temenos, 2015).

The inclusion of media into policy mobility analyses, however, has methodological implications. Relevant literature has insisted that in order to outline the origin, trajectory and transformation of policies, it is necessary to use the "follow the policy" technique –that is, following actors, policies or places (Peck & Theodore, 2012; McCann & Ward, 2012). In following, ethnography is probably the most appropriate methodology to research policy mobility, more so following McCann and Ward's call to engage in a "situation" analysis (2012, p.47), that is, relational spaces where political actors engage and interact with each other. These ideas have led to studies on the logic and functioning of "micro-spaces of policy mobility" such as policy tourism (González, 2011; Montero, 2017b; Wood, 2014), and conferences (Cook & Ward, 2012; Temenos, 2015; Montero, 2017a). These spaces have provided authors with scenarios where actors interact, from form to substance, the type of information circulating, the language, persuasion techniques, networking, and more.

However, as some authors have pointed (Ball, 2016; Gulson et al., 2017; Theodore & Peck, 2017), the 'follow the policy' technique and the search for face-to-face situations (which occur in very specific time and place) have certain limitations. On one side, the difficulty to handle the intensity and speed with which ideas surge and move; on the other, the assumption that the researcher's presence is necessary to chronicle the relational quality of policy circulation.

These questions have also been addressed by Peck and Theodore, who point that "it is not always possible to 'be there', when in the study of global policy networks there is a constant imperative to also 'be' somewhere else" (2012, p.25). In sum, the main avenues to inquire policy mobility involve following the people, meetings and materials (Wood, 2016).

In following, it seems necessary to experiment with new research methodologies focused on policy mobility. Some examples are argumentative analysis (Kennedy, 2015) or multi-ethnography that includes analysis of written press and social media platforms like Twitter (Gulson et al., 2017) or online video platforms such as YouTube or Vimeo (Montero, 2018). In our case, the inclusion of the media, particularly written press, in the production and dissemination of the Medellín's case, implies a systematic exercise of tracking headlines and news. We have used the change detection and notification service of Google Alerts, searched directly in some newspapers that had previously published news about Medellín and also those newspapers or journalists registered by the ACI in their reports. In this sense, we have adapted the 'follow the policy' technique to the universe of the news and digital press. In parallel, we have reinterpreted multi-sited ethnography (Marcus, 1995), looking after sources from across the world and their reach, whether as a news item, long-form investigation, chronicle, editorials or op-ed columns. Our work aims to contribute to the policy mobility debate from a two-fold perspective. First, deepening the theoretical notions on the role of media as informational infrastructure, particularly the written press, in building narratives of 'urban models', and their circulation in other contexts. And second, by extending the reaches of multi-sited ethnography as the main methodological approach to follow policy mobility.

Media as institutional ally for the internationalisation of the city

Medellín developed a techno managerial approach to governance and strengthen local government institutions as part of the response to the urban crisis experimented in the 90's. This shift emerged also in the context of a national process of democratisation and decentralisation converged with the alliances among economic elites, social organisations and public institutions. Additionally, Medellín's local government has developed an institutional reengineering that attempts to facilitate inter-institutional coordination, increasing public revenues, and abilities to consolidate public private alliances. These institutional shifts have been endorsed and promoted by a new political leadership and attempts to maintain political continuity in a complex entanglement of independent political movements in alliances with traditional political parties. Moreover, it has been decisive the function of publicly owned decentralised institutions run in a corporate style to provide public infrastructure and services such as the Agency for International Cooperation (ACI), the Metro de Medellín, the Public Utilities Enterprise (EPM), and Urban Development Enterprise (EDU) among others. In sum, this convergence of political alliances and institutional arrangements has been depicted as the kernel of Medellín's Urban Governance Innovation (Ortiz, 2019).

The Medellín's Agency for International Cooperation (ACI) -founded in 2002- became a key laboratory for shaping 'local globalness' (MacCann, 2011, p. 37). As its mission reads, it aims "to contribute to the improvement of the quality of life in Medellín and the region through their economic and social development articulating national and international actors to consolidate cooperation and investment alliances" (ACI, 2016, p.8). It becomes a clear example of the "establishment of new institutional relays through which elite business interests can directly influence major local development decisions" (Brenner & Theodore, 2002, p.369). In this attempt, the media plays a role in the making of local institutions as a pivotal part of the

production of informational infrastructures of policy mobility. ACI's institutional strategy of operation "promotes Medellín' strategic positioning in the world through the organisation of corporate events, activities with investors, cooperation organisations, media and communication, conferences, journalistic articles, promotion of content in social media, international awards postulation and services associated to image management and the projection of the city in the world" (ACI, 2017, p.23). In this case, the liaison with media outlets and international journalist is part and parcel of a multifaceted strategy to attract international investment yet its efficiency still needs to be proven[1].

Not only international press is instrumental to spread the mythical narratives of the city's transformation but also shapes the way in which institutions, such as the ACI, report their performance and measure their impact on positioning the city internationally. The ACI since 2012 started reporting not only foreign investment but also the visit of international journalists, the presence of international validators -described as politicians, high profile experts and policy makers that visit the city to know its transformation to tell the world about it - and tracing positive news about the city in the attempt to track how the city's stigma is changing (ACI, 2015). The turning point for international recognition was "to be acknowledged as the most innovative city of the world in 2013, has attracted 229 international journalists have visited Medellín to know its progress, projects and investment opportunities for foreign entrepreneurs to expand their businesses" (ACI, 2015, p.12). In 2014, the year were the hosted the World Urban Forum, the city's popularity reached a peak reporting 4259 positive news in local, national and international media outlets, the visit of 250 international journalists, and 1129 international validators clustered in 143 delegations (ACI, 2015). In 2016, ACI reported the visit of 259 journalist from 29 countries representing media channels such as CNN, Telemundo, Deustche Welle, El PaísPaís, etc. (ACI, 2016, p.24). In 2017, for instance an external firm -BUHO- was hired to systematically follow the media coverage of the city interns of favorable image and investment making the mundane routine of monitoring newspapers to trace journalist that have interest for the city to proactively engage with the media outlets eager to know more about the city's transformation (ACI, 2017). In this way, ACI's interaction with the media institute a new set of metrics that redefine partly what constitutes 'good urban governance'.

The intertwined nature of attracting foreign investment and the diffusion of the 'Medellín model' have introduced the challenge to also turn the ACI as a node of global urban knowledge. In 2016, the Wold Bank Organizational Knowledge Sharing Program partner with ACI using a technical assistance engagement with the Leadership, Learning, and Innovation Unit in the Equitable Growth, Finance and Institutions vice-presidency and the Social, Urban, Rural and Resilience Global Practice. The World Bank highlighted ACI's achievements to partner with them explaining that "to date, more than 600 visiting delegations were hosted and more than US$800 million in foreign direct investment and more than US$50 million in international cooperation were brought into the region according to ACI" (World Bank Group, 2017, p.1). The outcome of the alliance was the establishment of an initiative called 'Medellín Lab' that aims at "reinforcing ACI's role as a knowledge broker" (World Bank Group, 2017, p.1) and takes advantage of "knowledge transfer initiatives [that] have been designed and implemented to position Medellín as a benchmark for best practices" (ACI website, 2018). The Medellín Lab is framed as a platform for learning exchange across cities to illustrate the city's innovative public management and governance model to identify common points for its replicability (World Bank, 2017). Thus, ACI fully embraces the 'best practice' approach and by doing so

---

[1] The ways in which the strategies of international investment is managed lies beyond the scope of this paper.

ACI also becomes the gatekeeper of the representation of the city's achievements and good governance practices as an essential part to define what gets to be portrayed in the press.

Medellín as headline: from the most violent city to the most innovative in the world

The following analysis is based on 405 news items published between 2004 and 2017 in the digital archives of newspapers from across the world (see Figure 1), in which Medellín is alluded at. Having 2004 as a departure point is not circumstantial: it is the year were the first Metrocable line started operating (Brand & Dávila, 2011), and it marks the beginning of Sergio Fajardo's mayoral government (2004-2007), considered to be a milestone in the city's transformation. By then, Medellín still carried the burden of having been catalogued as the 'most violent and insecure city in the world', an apex reached in 1991, when the city had a murder rate of 381 homicides per 100,000 residents. This violent perception was common until the mid-2000s, when a gradual transformation in news about Medellín begin making rounds in national and international publications (see Figure 2).
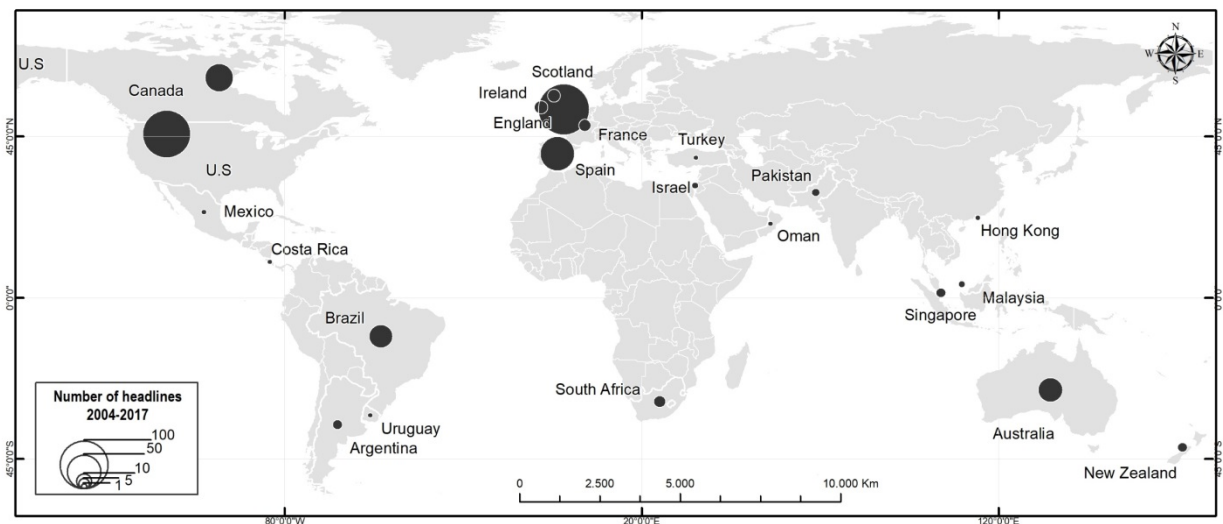

Figure 1. Medellín in the world news

The amount of news related to insecurity and narco-traffic diminished considerably and, from 2007 onwards, international media channels start showing the city's urban transformation with more frequency. Since 2011 the narrative flip is consolidated, reaching its highest differential with the opening of Comuna 13's escalator project, one of the city's most celebrated urban solutions to accessibility and connectivity. Furthermore, the preamble and development of the VII World Urban Forum, between 2013-2014, became a platform for the diffusion of Medellín's model (See Figure 3). This model has been summarized as "an ambitious plan of social reform based, mainly on an urban reconstruction that have included… a network of social inclusion, a reclaim of public space, the upgrading of peripheral neighbourhoods, the renewal of downtown areas and the expansion of a transportation system… all based on transparency and community empowerment" (BID, EDU & Alcaldía de Medellín, 2014, p.4). The amount and topics of the news items that are still published about Medellín show that, despite changes around urban policies, international interest remains constant.
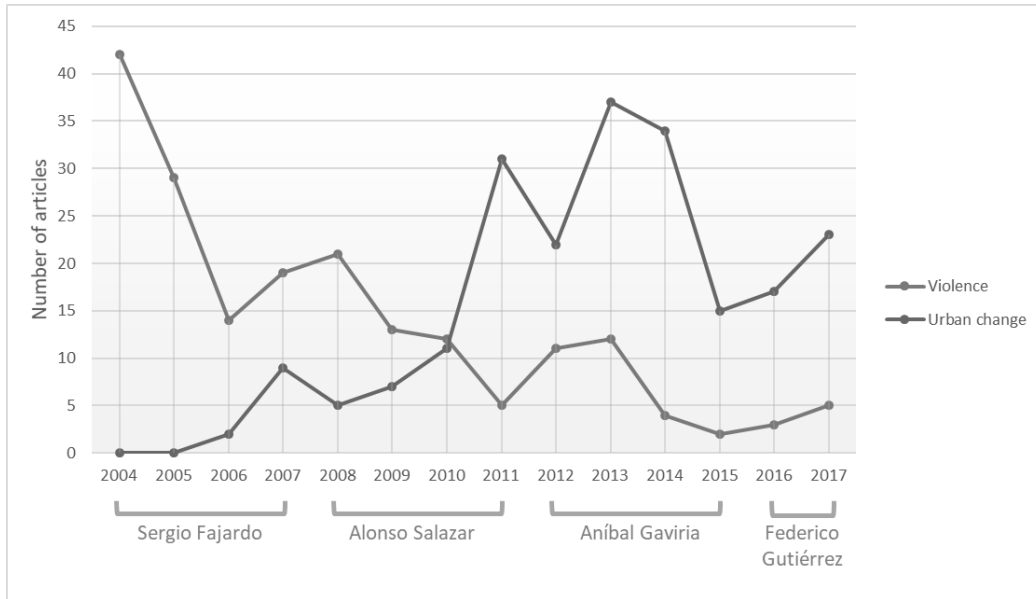
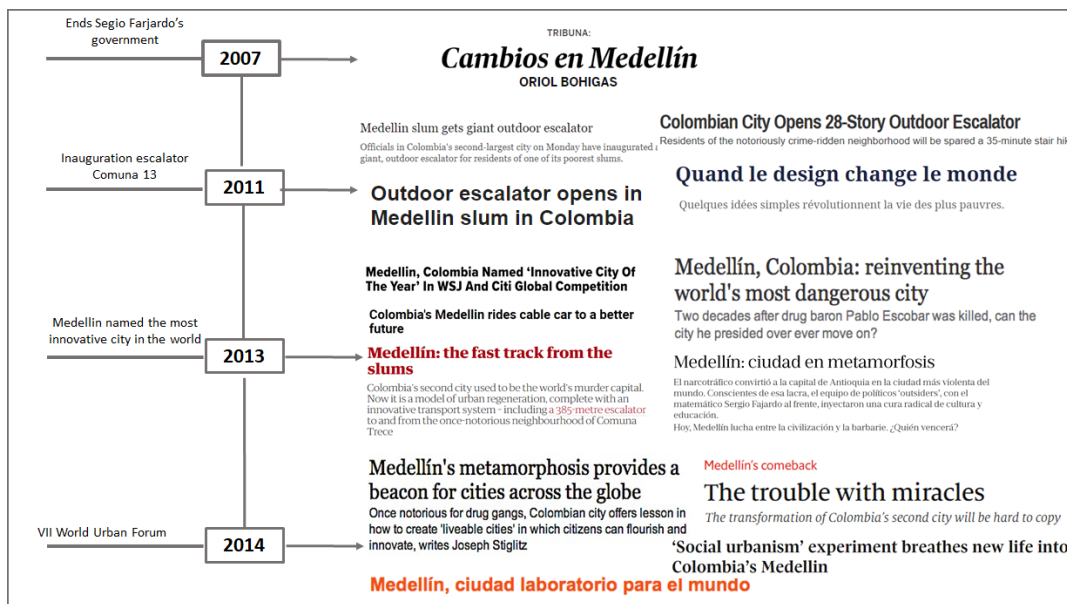Figure 2. Main news subject about Medellín in Mayoral periods

Figure 3. Timeline milestones and headlines

Once upon a time, there was a city…

Media press shapes and disseminate stories. Different authors have highlighted the importance of storytelling in urban planning practices (Sandercock, 2003; Throgmorton, 2003; Hulst, 2012; Mager & Matthey, 2015; Bulkens et al., 2015; Olesen, 2017). According to James Throgmorton (2003) planning is a persuasive form of storytelling about the future. A well-told story allows readers to aspire, visualise and wish for transformation, while motivating them to act if they believe their actions have an impact. Leonie Sandercock also points to the persuasive aspect of storytelling and points its role as a change catalyst: "stories and storytelling can be powerful agents or aids in the service of change, as shapers of a new imagination of alternatives" (2003, p.18). Similarly, police mobility literature references the relevance of narratives around territorial development and in trans-local urban policy circulation (Lieto, 2013; Montero, 2017a, 2018; Honeck, 2018).

Laura Lieto (2013) argues that narratives about successful policies can become "mythical tales", as long as they are not a mere retelling of events, but socially constructed narratives dependent on interchanges, negotiation and translation processes, essential for policy network circulation. What travels from one place to another, more than policies themselves, are "mythical narratives" about successful policies in any given cities. Medellín's "mythical narratives", circulating in international press, describe its trajectory from the most violent city in the world to an international capital of innovation, thanks to a new way of policy-making, and innovative urban solutions on mobility and public spaces in excluded areas of the city.

Storytelling and mythical narratives about successful policies have characteristics that ease their circulation: allusions to origin as context and as scenario, the chronological sequence, a plot with different protagonists (heroes, anti-heroes), a dose of dramatic tension, an ending with a solution and an overarching moral related to the generalisation potential (Sandercock, 2003; Lieto, 2013). These ingredients have been incorporated into Medellín's transformation storytelling, one that the international press has helped to articulate and spread. Headlines such as "Medellín's falling homicide rate and social investment brings fresh hope to the former murder capital of the world" (*The Independent* 2015), or "Medellín, ex-sede de cartel de drogas, hoje é exemplo de desenvolvimento" (*O globo* 2017), capture the foundational, dramatic and hope-driven elements of the city's success history.

In Medellín's mythical narrative, the origin story has a double form. First, that of a violent and criminal past: "In the grip of the infamous drug lord Pablo Escobar, Medellín became the murder capital of the world. Cocaine exports outpaced coffee. Even after Escobar was killed by Colombian special forces, the slums he once controlled were dominated by violence" (*The Boston Globe,* 2015). Second, once the transformation begins, which international media pair with Sergio Fajardo's election as mayor in 2003, an unconventional politician who became the ideologue of change (*Mail and Guardian,* 2013; *Le Figaro,* 2013; *The Economist,* 2014; *The Guardian,* 2014, *Exame,* 2017; *El País,* 2014; 2016; 2017).

As with any storytelling, in Medellín it is impossible to ignore the story's protagonist, whether heroes or villains. As mentioned in *The Guardian* (2016), the city's resurgence reflects the dynamics between the mayors that promoted change (Sergio Fajardo, Alfonso Salazar, Aníbal Gaviria and Federico Gutiérrez), and narco criminals like Pablo Escobar and Don Berna. Other protagonists are architects like Alejandro Echeverri and Gustavo Restrepo, who directed

several urban projects in the EDU and represented the transformative power of architecture (*Mail and Guardian,* 2012; *Folhia de Londrina,* 2013; *Los Andes,* 2015). Finally, the people of Medellín's comunas, whose testimonies about the changes on their lives and their surroundings provide the story with drama and emotion.

> "Arley Palomino, 18, says he remembers when just walking to school was an act of bravery. Firefights between gangs could break out at any time. "We were isolated here. The police wouldn't even dare come," he says, lounging under a leafy tree next to the España Library with a small group of secondary school students, lulled by the steady hum of cable cars and the heat of the day" (*The Guardian,* 2014).

In recent years, however, the importance of other actors in the city's resurgence has also been recognised –the story's "unsung heroes" (*The Guardian,* 2017). These include youth collectives (4 Elementos, Casa Kolacho o Crew Peligrosos) who promoted different social development initiatives through street-art, hip-hop music, art festivals and educational programmes (*El País,* 2016a;2016b; *The Guardian,* 2017).

Medellín's storytelling ending is one of convergence and moral. As mentioned, it is a story amply covered by international media as an innovative repertoire of governance practices and urban interventions in the city's most vulnerable and afflicted areas (*Le Monde,* 2009; *The Economist,* 2014; *The Straitstimes, 2014).* The resulting moral of the story has been of overcoming and hope for other cities, particularly in the Global South, who face similar challenges to Medellín, "the city has become an inspiration for other cities living difficult times" (*The Sundaily,* 2014). The moral not only reflects the persuasive character of storytelling, but openly suggests the possibility that the Medellín experience should be a reference for other cities.

The narrative built around Medellín by the international press is a convergence of what Throgmorton qualifies as a good story: "powerful memories, deep fears, passionate hopes, intense angers, and visionary dreams, and it is these emotions that give good stories their power" (2003, p.128). These stories can also shape meanings, telling readers what is important and what is not. In this process, multiple voices are usually left out of the story. Some articles, though, have managed to show a wider spectrum, including official voices but also other actors who, while recognising Medellín's transformation, warn that the threats of violence and narco crime are present, just like inequality and unemployment (*The Guardian,* 2014;2016: *El País,* 2012; 2016c).

The Medellín model according to the press

Media articles referencing Medellín's transformation are usually framed through the argument of how the most violent city in the world became a an 'example', a 'landmark', 'inspiration' or 'model' for other cities. This model-city condition is based on governance practices, urbanistic strategies and 'creative solutions' designed for urban problems (Sánchez & Moura, 2005). Notwithstanding of this, city models also intend to be catalyst for hegemonic political projects and instrumental to dissolute contestation and its circulation often obscures situated spatial and political processes (Sánchez & Moura, 2005; Moore, 2013). In contrast, local coalitions of NGO, universities and grassroots organisations –such as 'Diálogos campo-ciudad', the Social Urban Forum, Movimiento de Pobladores– have coalesced to denounce the discontent with the city model and the mainstream narrative of the urban success story calling

for a 'city with dignity' using their own media outlets. In particular, Medellín has developed an alliance of independent community media -Alianza Alternativa de Medios- to amplify the social unrest outside the circuit of the international press.

There is a common narrative about Medellín as a historically successful urban model. This narrative puts Medellín as an example of "good governance" (Franz, 2017) and the local state as the main agent of change. Articles highlight the municipal government's capacity to transform the way to do politics, to make transcendent decisions, and change the course of the city: "Bastou pulso forte nas decisões políticas e um governo decente por parte de uma série de prefeitos para tudo mudar" (*Jornal do Comercio,* 2013). These decisions show the state's priority in engaging with those neighbourhoods in the periphery, afflicted by exclusion, insecurity and violence, and which for years had been subjected to blatant electioneering or simply left out of the public agenda. According to *The Economist* "The solution was a radical urban makeover with a redistributive purpose: the best projects were reserved for the poorest, most violent areas" (2014).

The government's change in priorities were also focused on practices of transparency and efficiency (*Jornal GGN,* 2012; *The Guardian,* 2016; *El País,* 2017). *The Guardian* (2016), observes that these were possible thanks to the "bureaucratic independence" of agencies such as the Empresa de Desarrollo Urbano – Urban Development Enterprise- (EDU), responsible for the management and operation of urban projects: "this independence allowed the EDU to look freely at the city as a whole, enabling its experimental and visionary approach that exceeded what previous authorities had achieved". In addition, this was "a lesson to cities around the world of the importance of independent design bureaus working alongside local authorities" (*The Guardian,* 2016).

Even though the local state is featured as the focal force of urban change is also acknowledged that citizens played a relevant role city transformation. The international press's image of Medellín as a model of governance shows a city project built in the 'comunas', together with local residents, through participatory processes and citizens' consultations (*Folha de Londrina,* 2013; *Mail and Guardian,* 2014; *El País,* 2016; *The Guardian,* 2016). The sight of mayor Sergio Fajardo visiting comunas and engaging with citizens was a strong one, suggesting an urban planning model that included dwellers in the process of transformation of their own neighbourhoods. This message was effectively spread by the press, where the transformation of Medellín was not only a technical-physical matter, but also profoundly political.

Municipal public finances were pivotal for Medellín to invest in public infrastructure in deprived areas. Some works studying Medellín's governance have stressed the fundamental role of the Empresas Públicas de Medellín (EPM) as a source of project financing (Maclean, 2014; Franz, 2017). EPM is a utilities public agency, considered one of the strongest in Latin America, which transfers 30% of its net annual gains to the municipal budget. However, this aspect has not been as covered when detailing the city's recent success (*Financial Times,* 2012; *The Economist,* 2014; *The Guardian,* 2016; *Gazeta do povo,* 2016). For *the Economist* (2014), "unfortunately for those visiting mayors", EPM's resources and the city's political and entrepreneurial culture have been the deciding factors of transformation. This perspective suggests that even if "the recipe looks simple" it would be hard to successfully copy in cities with different contexts.

The press took hold of model's iconic projects. In relation to the urban components of the Medellín model, the international press discourse identifies two main types of integrating

interventions. First, an integrated transport system, particularly the Metrocable and its capacity to connect the poorest comunas with the city centre. And second, the renovation of the city's peripheries through the construction of escalators (Comuna 13), as well as libraries, cultural centres, schools and colleges. The Metrocable was described as "le seul téléphérique au monde intégré au réseau du métro urbain. Mais, au-delà de la prouesse technique, l'important, c'est la 'prouesse sociale': grâce au téléphérique, les quartiers pauvres sont désenclavés" (*Le Monde*, 2009). The escalators were considered "the most striking initiative" (*Sundaily Malasia,* 2014), and a set of "avant-garde public buildings in areas that were the most run-down" (*The Straitstimes,* 2014). Most of the articles show images of these projects. According to *The Guardian* the main architectural success of the Medellín model has been "the balance between the embedded and the iconic –integrating spaces, places and systems into the social fabric of the city on the one hand, while also creating buildings of international quality which would be photographed again and again" (2016).

The escalators from Comuna 13 have captured a significative amount of attention among international media. "The escalators –like one might expect at the Mall of America in Minneapolis, not the barrios of Medellín– are beacons of urban renewal. They are a curious form of public transportation found in the most unlikely of places" (*Globe and Mail,* 2016). The project has impressed due to its unexpected and innovative character. Built in one of the most violent and impoverished comunas of the city, the escalators brought accessibility to nearly 12,000 people, who used to transit up the slopes through narrow, steep and dangerous passages (*The Telegraph,* 2011; *Time,* 2011; *The Times,* 2011; *Anchorage daily news,* 2016; *Gazeta do povo,* 2016). The escalators emerged as a 'creative solution' par excellence, capable of tackling issues of connectivity and security simultaneously. However, the strategies to deal with violence and control of non-state armed actors are neither depicted nor their trade-offs discussed.

Medellín's urban model is mostly defined by the projects developed between 2004 and 2011, during the mayoral administrations of Sergio Fajardo and Alonso Salazar. Although there has been an implied continuity between successive mayors (*The Guardian,* 2014b; 2014c; *The Globe and Mail,* 2014; *The Economist,* 2014), aside from the light train and a new Metrocable line inaugurated in 2016, the star projects of mayor Aníbal Gaviria have not been included by the international press as part of this model. These include the river's park and 'green belt' to deter the city's expansion and the river Medellín longitudinal park, that looks to integrate mobility and public spaces.

In sum, the description of the Medellín model has not changed during those years. It emphasises key physical and organisational aspects and overlooks the long dure social processes of social organisation, the strength of non-governmental organisations pivotal for urban planning and the more complex national-wide strategies to deal with armed conflict. Part of the mythical narratives erected by the press showcase the mayors as iconic figures and its ability to deal public investment in infrastructure as the core of the success fetichize 'technological solutions' and advocates for 'expert driven' city changes depolitizising urban transformations. The mythical narrative, essential for attracting the attention of press readers, that is created erodes the possibilities to addresses the critical accounts on 'best practice' diffusion in terms of the epistemic colonialism involved (Vainer, 2014), the situated nature of planning practices (Moore, 2013) and the urban technological fixes they become (Angotti & Irazabal, 2017).

Media as a platform of transfer agents

The ways in which international media has described Medellín's transformation shows how the role of the press in policy mobility cannot be underestimated. As informational infrastructure (McCann, 2011; Temenos, 2015), the press has diffused the Medellín urban model experience, while also serving as a platform to make visible and give voice to a specific group of experts and makers, including transfer agents (Stone, 2004) to validate and promote the model. Nonetheless, there is a disjuncture between the countries where issues about urban informality and violence are vital challenges -except Brazil, South Africa and Argentina - and the geographies were most of the newspapers have covered the Medellín model as figure 1 shows. This fact suggests that the location of the media as transfer agent not necessarily is aligned with the places were a potential emulation could take place.

The Banco Interamericano de Desarrollo (BID) was the first multilateral agency calling Medellín a model of urban transformation (Alcaldía de Medellín & BID, 2009). The BID has contributed to the legitimacy of the model and to its systematisation through diffusion, detailing projects, methodologies, institutional designs, and financial instruments as a template for reference or replication in other contexts (Alcaldía de Medellín & BID, 2011; BID, EDU & Alcaldía de Medellín, 2014). Several news items support Medellín's model based on the insights provided by BID specialists around issues of governance, security and mobility (*El País* 2016; 2017; *Exame*, 2017). Furthermore, one article exalting the qualities of Medellín's public transport system, positioning it as a model for other Latin American cities, was financed by the BID itself (*El País,* 2017). On a similar note, in 2004 the Rockefeller Foundation included Medellín among the first 33 cities for its '100 Resilient Cities Project', considering that the policies developed to tackle poverty and violence were resilience strategies with great transformative power, and a model for other cities across the world (*The Guardian,* 2014a). The Rockefeller Foundation also supports financially the 'Cities' section of *The Guardian*, where nearly fifteen articles about Medellín's transformation have been published. The convergence between media and powerful agents validating urban models is evident. This convergence also suggests that the media could amplify multilateral agencies interests limiting their ability of critical assessment and independence.

This convergence between actors, technologies and processes of informational infrastructures (Temenos, 2015), who contribute in the transference and mobility of the Medellín model, manifests in other ways. One is through opinion pieces and columns where internationally recognised experts detail Medellín's metamorphosis. Such is the case of the opinion piece from Oriol Bohigas[3] in the Spanish newspaper *El País*. Bohigas is the reference architect of the celebrated Barcelona model (Capel, 2005), which was an inspiration for Medellín. After his visit in 2007, when some of the landmark projects were still in development, Bohigas referred to the city's reconstruction as an "effort of great transcendence for contemporary urban and political experiences (*El País* 2007). Similarly, Joseph Stiglitz, Nobel prize in economics and former vice-president of the World Bank, described Medellín as a "beacon for cities across the world" after his participation in the VII World Urban Forum, in an article published in media from different countries, such as the United Kingdom, United States, Spain and Singapore (*The Guardian,* 2014c; *El País* 2014a; *Pittsbourg post-gazette,* 2014; *The straitstimes,* 2014).

Press from cities such as Buenos Aires, Mendoza (Argentina, Sao Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, Recife, Londrina (Brazil); Germiston o Ciudad del Cabo (South Africa), have reported on conferences and seminars where ideologues, experts, and makers from different Medellín administrations have shown its urban model. Aside from regular coverage, the press usually includes interviews with Colombian experts, who are usually asked how the model can be reproduced in their cities of origin. In Latin America the answer is usually the same: if these

urban solutions were successful in a city like Medellín, with all its problems, then they can be valid for any city in the region (*Folha de Londrina,* 2013; *Los Andes,* 2015; *Huffington Post Brazil,* 2016; *Gazeta do povo,* 2016; *Correo 24 horas,* 2017). Similarity of the context becomes an essential part of a strategy of persuasion that media engages with.

By reproducing the narratives of Colombian experts, through these conferences and interviews, the press contributes to transfer knowledge and spread the model (Temenos, 2015). This convergence between experts, conferences and press, reinforces the circulation of policies, due to the press's power as a public opinion and deliberation generator (Flyvbjerg, 2012). For example, an article about Medellín published in a local Recife newspaper, generated such interest among local architects that they decided to visit the city to learn more about its model. After several visits, interviews and workshops, they created the movement 'The Recife we need', a city agenda anchored in five priorities inspired by the Medellín model (*Jornal do Comercio,* 2013). In this case, the media amplification of a 'success story' was the precursor of the formation of a visit delegation suggesting the impact media can have on local politics.

Migrations of the Medellín Model

The press accomplish a double function as a channel for city model diffusion, presenting it as an experience that can be emulated and also highlights how different cities in the Global South, affected by inequality and violence, have found Medellín as a source of inspiration. In South Africa, a column in the *Cape Argus* newspaper, insisted on the need for national politicians to take Medellín as a reference for urban policies:

> As for Cape Town, we can only really learn from cities which are making headway in the face of similar problems to ours. What they do in Seattle or Stockholm is interesting but not compelling; the kind of place that matters to us is Colombia's second city, Medellín, which could be Cape Town's long-lost twin (*Cape Argus,* 2015).

According to El País (2015), citing sources from ACI, Medellín has South-South cooperation agreements with several South African cities, including the metro region of Ekurhuleni. This is not the first time that Colombian measures have served as model for South Africa: in the last decade, nearly thirteen cities have developed projects of South-South cooperation to adopt the BRT system, following Bogotá's Transmilenio (Wood, 2014; 2015a, 2015b).

During the 2014 VII WUF, other African cities like Yaoundé, Cameroon's capital, tried to establish cooperation links with Medellín:

> ¿Adónde irían dos urbanistas africanas en busca de modelo? A Medellín (Colombia), naturalmente. A la ciudad-marca, el laboratorio encerrado entre montañas y rodeado de selva; a la urbe para todo...Tan creativa que basta pronunciar su nombre para ver brotar savia nueva de proyectos, iniciativas ciudadanas, educativas, de transporte… (*El País,* 2015)

In some Latin American cities, admiration towards the Medellín model have gone farther and have materialised in urban policies. In Palhoca, Brazil, with guidance from the leading architect in charge of Comuna 13's Urban Integration Project, a favela was used for a pilot project using Medellín methodology (*Folha de Londrina,* 2013). In Rio de Janeiro, according to local authorities, the process of favela pacification and preparations for global mega events, were inspired in Medellín's development policies (*Daily Telegraph,* 2010). In this case, two strategic cableways have been built in favelas, planned according to their location, size and degree of

conflict (Freire-Medeiros & Name, 2017). However, according to the local press, the cableway in the Complejo Aleman favela has not been as successful as expected. Since its start, the local population considered the project did not match their needs; shortly after its inauguration, the system stopped functioning due to lack of payments from the local government to the operations company (*Huffington Post Brazil,* 2016; *Exame,* 2017). Results have been more positive in other cities (Ecatepec de Morelos, Caracas, La Paz o Manizales), where cableways have been developed in order to connect poorer communities with the rest of the city (*Times of Oman,* 2014; *The Guardian,* 2015; *The Economist,* 2017).

These references by the press to adaptations and interpretations of the Medellín model in other cities, illustrate the centrality of debates around policy mobility. First, cities tend to have an easier learning process from those with similar contexts (Woods, 2015a). Even if coverage in media platforms from Northern sources has been extensive, enthusiasm about its model has been more present in Latin American and South African media, mostly due to similarities in urban processes and problems. However, as the Rio de Janeiro case shows, applying the same solution to similar problems is not enough when institutional design and political culture is lacking. Second, despite Medellín's broad catalogue of integrated landmark projects, the cable-car system has consolidated as the most circulated solution. As Peck and Theodore (2010) suggest, policies do not necessarily travel from one place to another as 'complete packages', but instead in parts or pieces that are re-interpreted by the actors that define the process. These are not simple imitations, but policies of transformation in constant mutation.

Conclusions

This article has analysed the role of media, particularly international press, in the change of perception about Medellín and the diffusion of its model. One of the most significative findings is the amount of news circulating about the city, and the diversity of places where this transformation has been deemed newsworthy. Furthermore, it is noticeable how 2011 represented an inflection point on the type of news published about Medellín, when the number of positive references surpassed negative ones by a very large margin. Thus, we have argued that newspapers constitute a key informational infrastructure for urban policy mobility contributing to amplify mythical narratives of 'urban models' and to institute new metrics of good governance such as the production of positive news.

This turn was due to several factors. First, the factual changes that occurred in the city. Second, the role of international validators like the World Bank, the BID and UN-Habitat, who have qualified the process as a successful model of urban transformation, identifying a series of good practices that can be translated to other contexts. Third, being named the 'most innovative city in the world' by the City of the Year Award, sponsored by *The Wall Street Journal,* el *Urban Land Institute* y *Citigroup,* which drew widespread interest from journalists around the world who wanted to see *in-situ* the reasoning behind the award (Montoya, 2013). Fourth, hosting the VII WUF, which placed the city in the international press's agenda. And finally, a crosscutting factor: the effective strategies designed by the ACI to promote positive news about Medellín.

In addition, this work has shown that the digital press is not an isolated resource or source of information, but also a subject of analysis. A storytelling analysis through press publications shows its usefulness to examine policy mobility outside of physical spaces. By identifying news items and chronicles about Medellín's transformation, we have shown that there is a choice of images and arguments –it is not a full description of what has been done in the city,

but a selection of iconic projects to showcase Medellín's change and a source of inspiration for other cities. By looking at narratives about Medellín and following them through the press, it has been possible to show how media works as both a diffusion channel and as an actor in the circulation of policies considered as urban models.

Changing the perception of city image is a multifaceted process. It operates in different scales, here we only have focused on the international press role in the process of shifting the narratives about urban violence and despair that Medellín portrayed for one that inspire hope and is worth of emulation. Even if media such as the press are not the only diffusion platforms, their role remains central, as it simplifies the story while having a wider reach, thus contributing to shift the collective perception about the city. Furthermore, it naturally complements, adds and connects with other platforms, such as conferences, seminars, or *study tours* by international delegations invited by the ACI. As the evidence shows, these events reach a wider audience and have a higher impact due to press coverage.

Finally, through this analysis we identified two leading narratives about Medellín: the "violent city" and the "city in transformation". In the last decade these two narratives have not only intersected, but the former reinforces the latter. News items chronicling Medellín's transformation always refer to the city's historical problems of violence and narco-crime. The 'city in transformation' narrative makes these allusions all the more powerful, from their storytelling persuasive power and their relations to policy mobility. By insisting on framing these problems as a thing of the past that the city managed to overcome, the resulting message for other cities is a powerful one: 'if a city like Medellín managed to do it, anyone can'. As Sandercock points, "stories of success, or of exemplary actions, serve as inspirations when they are re-told" (2003, p.18).In sum, this paper has contributed to expand the understanding of how *informational infrastructures* manifest on the ground. We showed how the press is entangled as channel of urban models dissemination through non-human materials as well as an actor that shapes 'local globalness' (MacCann, 2011, p. 37). We have demonstrated the role of storytelling practices not only as functional to expand policy mobility to broader audience beyond 'urban experts' but also central for local government as strategy to build a new city image internationally that in turn legitimizes local policy priorities and interventions. Bringing new urban governance metrics, such as production of positive news, international journalist and international validators visits, gauge the mutation of local state functions and the investment in changing the symbolic representation of the city.

Notes

[1] In order to gather international news items, we used Google Alerts and made a systematic tracking of news sites like El País from Spain, The Guardian in the United Kingdom and The New York Times in the United States. The selection excluded all news related to the plane crash of November 28, 2016, which was a global news, and articles related to the Netflix series 'Narcos', which follows the life of Pablo Escobar.

[2] For example, during the strategic urban planning processes in the 90s in Latin American cities, the local press was one of the actors promoting these plans and were part of the Consejo Directivo in charge of its formulation.

[3] This was the first reference from the international press that showed in detail Medellin's urban transformation.

Disclosure statement

References

Angotti, Tom & Irazabal, Clara (2017) Planning Latin American Cities: Dependencies and "Best Practices". *Latin American Perspectives*, 44(2), 4-17. DOI: 10.1177/0094582X16689556

Agencia de Cooperación e Inversión de Medellín y el Área Metropolitana. (2015). *Informe de gestión 2014: creando lazos con el mundo para el desarrollo de Medellín.* Medellín: ACI.

Agencia de Cooperación e Inversión de Medellín y el Área Metropolitana. (2016). *Informe de gestión 2016: creamos lazos con el mundo para el desarrollo de Medellín.* Medellín: ACI.

Agencia de Cooperación e Inversión de Medellín y el Área Metropolitana. (2017). *Informe de gestión 2017: 15 años creando lazos con el mundo para el desarrollo de Medellín.* Medellín: ACI.

Agencia de Cooperación e Inversión de Medellín y el Área Metropolitana. (2018). Medellin on the way to become a learning node. https://acimedellin.org/medellin-on-the-way-to-become-a-learning-node/?lang=en . (Retrieved on January 2019)

Alcaldía de Medellín & Banco Interamericano de Desarrollo. (2009). *Medellín, Transformación de una ciudad*. Medellín: Alcaldía de Medellín & BID.

Alcaldía de Medellín, Banco Interamericano de Desarrollo & Organización de las Naciones Unidas (Eds.). (2011). *Laboratorio Medellín: Catálogo de diez prácticas vivas*. Medellín: Mesa Editores.

Ball, Stephen J. (2016). Following policy: networks, network ethnography and education policy mobilities. *Journal of Education Policy*, 31(5), 549-566. DOI: 10.1080/02680939.2015.1122232

Baker, Tom, & Temenos, Cristina (2015). Urban policy mobilities research: Introduction to a debate. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research,* 39(4), 224-227. DOI: 10.1111/1468-2427.12252

Banco Interamericano de Desarrollo, Empresa de Desarrollo Urbano & Alcaldía de Medellín (Eds.). (2014). *Equidad Territorial en Medellín. La empresa de desarrollo urbano como motor de la transformación urbana*. Medellín: BID, EDU & Alcaldía de Medellín.

Brand, Peter, & Dávila, Julio (2011). Mobility innovation at the urban margins. *City*, 15(6), 647-661. DOI: 10.1080/13604813.2011.609007

Brenner, Neil & Theodore, Nik (2012) Cities and the Geographies of "Actually Existing Neoliberalism", *Antipode*, 34(3), 349- 379. DOI: 10.1111/1467-8330.00246

Bulkents, Maartje, Minca, Claudio, & Muzaini, Hamzah (2015). Storytelling as method in spatial planning. *European Planning Studies*, 23(11), 2310-2326. DOI: 10.1080/09654313.2014.942600

Capel, Horacio (2005). *El modelo Barcelona: Un exámen crítico*. Barcelona: Ediciones El Serbal.

Clark, Nick (2012a). Actually existing comparative urbanism: Imitation and cosmopolitanism in North-south interurban partnerships. *Urban Geography*, 33(6), 796-815. DOI: 10.2747/0272-3638.33.6.796

Clark, Nick (2012b). Urban policy mobility, anti-politics and histories of the transnational municipal movement. *Progress in Human Geography*, 36(1), 25–43. DOI: 10.1177/0309132511407952

Cook, Ian R., & Ward, Kevin (2011). Trans-urban networks of learning: Mega events and policy tourism. The case of Manchester's Commonwealth and Olympic Games. *Urban Studies*, 48(12), 2519-2535. DOI: 10.1177/0042098011411941

Cook, Ian R., & Ward, Kevin (2012). Conferences, informational infrastructures and mobile policies: the process of getting Sweden 'BID ready'. *European Urban and Regional Studies,* 19(2), 137-152. DOI: 10.1177/0969776411420029

Cook, Ian R., Ward, Stephen V., & Ward, Kevin (2015). Post-war planning and policy tourism: the international study tours of the Town and Country Planning Association 1947 - 1961. *Planning Theory & Practice*, 16(2), 184-205. DOI: 10.1080/14649357.2015.1027948

Flyvbjerg, Bent (2002). Bringing power to planning research: One researcher's praxis story. *Journal of Planning Education and Research*, 21(4), 353-366. DOI: 10.1177/0739456X0202100401

Flyvbjerg, Bent (2012). Why mass media matter to planning research: The case of megaprojects. *Journal of Planning Education and Research,* 32(2), 169-181. DOI: 10.1177/0739456X12441950

Franz, Tobias (2017). Urban governance and economic development in Medellin: An 'urban miracle'?. *Latin American Perspectives,* 44(2), 52-70. DOI: 10.1177/0094582X16668313

Freire-Medeiros, Bianca, & Name, Leo (2017). Does the future of the favela fit in an aerial cable car? Examining tourism mobilities and urban inequalities through a decolonial lens. *Canadian Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Studies / Revue canadienne des études latino-américaines et caraïbes*, 42(1), 1-16. DOI: 10.1080/08263663.2017.1281944

González, Sara (2011). Bilbao and Barcelona 'in Motion': How urban regeneration 'models' travel and mutate in the global flows of policy tourism. *Urban Studies,* 48(7), 1397-1418. DOI: 10.1177/0042098010374510

Gulson, Kalervo, Lewis, Steven, Lingard, Bob, Lubienski, Christopher, Takayama, Keita, & Webb, P. Taylor (2017). Policy mobilities and methodology: A proposition for inventive methods in education policy studies. *Critical Studies in Education*, 58(2), 1-18. DOI: 10.1080/17508487.2017.1288150

Honeck, Thomas (2018). A touch of post-truth: The roles of narratives in urban policy mobilities. *Geographica Helvetica*, 73, 133-145. DOI: 10.5194/gh-73-133-2018

Hulst, Merlijn van (2012). Storytelling: a model of and a model for planning. *Planning Theory,* 11(3), 299-318. DOI: 10.1177/1473095212440425

Jacobs, Jane, & Lees, Loretta (2013). Defensible space on the move: Revisiting the urban geography of Alice Coleman. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 37(5), 1559-1583. DOI: 10.1111/1468-2427.12047

Jajamovich, Guillermo (2016). Historicizing the circulation of urban policies through career paths analysis: Barcelonian experts and their role in redeveloping Buenos Aires' Puerto Madero. *Iberoamericana*, XVI (62), 167-183. DOI: 10.18441/ibam.16.2016.62.167-183

Jajamovich, Guillermo (2018). Puerto Madero en movimiento: un abordaje a partir de la circulación de la Corporación Antiguo Puerto Madero (1989-2017). Buenos Aires: Teseo Press.

Kennedy, Sean M. (2015). Urban policy mobilities, argumentation and the case of the model city. *Urban Geography*, 37(1), 96-116. DOI: 10.1080/02723638.2015.1055932

Kuus, Merje (2015) Transnational bureaucracies: How do we know what they know? *Progress in Human Geography*, 39(4), 432-448. DOI: 10.1177/0309132514535285

Larner, Wendy, & Laurie, Nina (2010). Travelling technocrats, embodied knowledges: Globalising privatisation in telecoms and water. *Geoforum*, 41(2), 218-226. DOI: 10.1016/j.geoforum.2009.11.005

Lieto, Laura (2015). Cross-border mythologies: The problem with traveling planning ideas. *Planning Theory*, 14(2), 115-129. DOI: 10.1177/1473095213513257

Longhurst, Andrew & McCann, Eugene (2016). Political struggles on a frontier of harm reduction drug policy: geographies of constrained policy mobility. *Space and Polity*, 20(1), 109-123. DOI: 10.1080/13562576.2016.1140403

Maclean, Kate (2015). *Social Urbanism and the Politics of Violence: The Medellín Miracle*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

McCann, Eugene (2004). 'Best Places': Interurban competition, quality of life and popular media discourse. *Urban Studies*, 41(10), 1909–1929. DOI: 10.1080/0042098042000256314

McCann, Eugene (2008). Expertise, truth, and urban policy mobilities: Global circuits of knowledge in the development of Vancouver, Canada's "four pillar" drug strategy. *Environment and Planning A*, 40(4), 885- 904. DOI: 10.1068/a38456

McCann, Eugene (2011). Urban policy mobilities and global circuits of knowledge: Toward a research agenda. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers,* 101(1), 107-130. DOI: 10.1080/00045608.2010.520219

McCann, Eugene (2013). Policy boosterism, policy mobilities, and the extrospective city. Urban Geography 34(1), 5-29. DOI: 10.1080/02723638.2013.778627

McCann, Eugene, & Ward, Kevin (2010). Relationality/territoriality: Toward a conceptualization of cities in the world. *Geoforum,* 41, 175-184. DOI: 10.1016/j.geoforum.2009.06.006

McCann, Eugene, & Ward, Kevin (2012). Assembling urbanism: following policies and `studying through' the sites and situations of policy making. *Environment and Planning A* 44, 42-51. DOI: 10.1068/a44178

McCann, Eugene, & Ward, Kevin (2013). A multi-disciplinary approach to policy transfer research: geographies, assemblages, mobilities and mutations. *Policy Studies*, 34(1), 2-18. DOI: 10.1080/01442872.2012.748563

McCann, Eugene, & Ward, Kevin (2015). Thinking through dualisms in urban policy mobilities. I*nternational Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 39(4), 828-830. DOI: 10.1111/1468-2427.12254

Mager, Christophe & Matthey, Laurent (2015). Tales of the City: Storytelling as a contemporary tool of urban planning and design. *Articulo Journal of Urban Research*, Special Issue, 7. DOI: 10.4000/articulo.2779

Marcus, George E. (1995). Ethnography in/of the world system: The Emergence of Multi-Sited Ethnography. *Annual Review of Anthropology,* 24, 95-117.

Montero, Sergio (2017a). Persuasive practitioners: Mobilizing the 'Bogotá model' through storytelling. *Novos Estudos*, 36(1), 59-75. DOI: 10.25091/s0101-3300201700010003

Montero, Sergio (2017b). Study tours and inter-city policy learning: Mobilizing's transportation Bogotá policies in Guadalajara. *Environment and Planning A*, 49(2), 332-350. DOI: 10.1177/0308518X16669353

Montero, Sergio (2018). San Francisco through Bogotá's eyes: Leveraging urban policy change through the circulation of media objects. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research,* 42(5), 751-768. DOI: 10.1111/1468-2427.12655

Montoya, Juan Carlos (2013). A los ojos de la prensa internacional. *LINK: Medio informativo de la Agencia de Cooperación e Inversión de Medellín y el Área Metropolitana (ACI)*, 1(1), 59-60.

Moore, Susan (2013). What's Wrong with Best Practice? Questioning the Typification of New Urbanism. *Urban Studies*, 50(11), 2371-2387. DOI: 10.1177/0042098013478231

Olesen, Kristian (2017). Talk to the hand: strategic spatial planning as persuasive storytelling of the Loop City. *European Planning Studies*, 25(6), 978-993. DOI: 10.1080/09654313.2017.1296936

Ortiz, Catalina (2019). Medellin. In: Orum, T. (ed.) Wiley-Blackwell Encyclopedia of Urban and Regional Studies.

Peck, Jamie (2011). Geographies of policy: From transfer- diffusion to mobility-mutation. *Progress in Human Geography*, 36(5), 1-25. DOI: 10.1177/0309132510394010

Peck, Jamie, & Theodore, Nik (2010). Mobilizing policy: Models, methods and mutations. *Geoforum,* 41, 169-174. DOI: 10.1016/j.geoforum.2010.01.002

Peck, Jamie, & Theodore, Nik (2012). Follow the policy: A distended case approach. *Environment and Planning A*, 44, 21-30. DOI: 10.1068/a44179

Peck, Jamie, & Theodore, Nik (2015). *Fast Policy: Experimental Statecraft at the Thresholds of Neoliberalism*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Sánchez, Fernanda & Moura, Rosa (2005). Ciudades-modelo: estrategias convergentes para su difusión internacional. Revista eure, 31(93), 21-34. DOI: 10.4067/S0250-71612005009300002

Sandercock, Leonie (2003). Out of the closet: The importance of stories and storytelling in planning practice. Planning Theory & Practice, 4(1), 11-28. DOI: 10.1080/1464935032000057209

Stone, Diane (2004). Transfer agents and global networks in the "transnationalization" of policy. Journal of European Public Policy, 11(3), 545-566. DOI: 10.1080/13501760410001694291

Temenos, Cristina (2015). Mobilizing drug policy activism: Conferences, convergence spaces and ephemeral fixtures in social movement mobilization. Space and Polity, 20(1), 124-141. DOI: 10.1080/13562576.2015.1072913

Throgmorton, James (2003). Planning as persuasive storytelling in a global-scale web of relationships. *Planning Theory,* 2(2), 125-151. DOI: 10.1177/14730952030022003

Vainer, Carlos (2014). Disseminating 'Best Practice'? The coloniality of urban knowledge and city models. Susan Parnell & Sophie Oldfield (Eds). *The Routledge Handbook on Cities of the Global South* (pp. 48-56). London: Routledge.

Ward, Kevin (2018). Policy mobilities, politics and place: The making of financial urban futures. *European Urban and Regional Studies*, 25(3), 266-283. DOI: 10.1177/0969776417731405

Wood, Astrid (2014). Learning through policy tourism: Circulating Bus Rapid Transit from South America to South Africa. *Environment and Planning A*, 46(11), 2654-2669. DOI: 10.1068/a140016p

Wood, Astrid (2015a). Multiple temporalities of policy circulation: Gradual, repetitive and delayed processes of BRT adoption in South African cities. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 39(3), 568-580. DOI: 10.1111/1468-2427.12216

Wood, Astrid (2015b). The politics of policy circulation: Unpacking the relationship between South African and South American cities in the adoption of Bus Rapid Transit. *Antipode*, 47(4), 1062-1079. DOI: 10.1111/anti.12135

Wood, Astrid (2016). Tracing policy movements: Methods for studying learning and policy circulation. *Environment and Planning A* 48(2), 391-406. DOI: 10.1177/0308518X15605329

World Bank Group. (2017). Case Story: Inclusive, Safe and Resileint – Medellin, Colombia. 2 p.