University of Sussex

Money, Culture, and Change;

Financial sustainability, and the inner-life of youth-led organisations in Medellin, Colombia

THESIS SUBMITTED FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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August 2018

I hereby declare that this thesis has not been and will not be, submitted in whole or in part to another University for the award of any other degree.

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DPHIL DEVELOPMENT STUDIES

<u>Money, Culture, and Change;</u>

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<u>in Medellin, Colombia</u>

<u>SUMMARY</u>

The thesis examines the role of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) in development, by inquiring into their capacity to articulate and enact *alternative solutions* towards social transformation (Banks, Hulme, & Edwards, 2015). More specifically, the thesis enhances our knowledge of how CSOs engage with the shrinking availability of funding for civil society. A prominent view within the literature is that to assure their financial sustainability, CSOs need to engage with and harness market forces- reflecting what some have seen as a process of *deep-marketisation* that has accompanied the hegemony of the neoliberal model (Carroll & Jarvis, 2015).

This research inquired into the pathways toward financial sustainability taken by small, value-driven, youth-led CSOs in Medellin, Colombia. I aimed to understand the connections between how organisations finance themselves and their culture, worldviews, and contributions to social change.

The backbone of this research is a cooperative inquiry called *Plata, Cultura, y Cambio* (Spanish for 'Money, Culture, and Change') which, over the course of ten months, engaged ten leaders of youth-led CSOs in

Medellin, Colombia, in a process of self-reflection (first person inquiry), collective analysis, and exploration of their organisational cultures and practices (second person inquiry) (Heron & Reason, 1997; Reason & Bradbury, 2008). The findings from this action research process contribute to a deeper understanding of the world-views of the leaders of youth-led CSOs in Medellin.

The argument I develop is that while seeking financial sustainability, youth-led CSOs in Medellin experience and must navigate the tension between official development discourses that promote competitiveness, innovation, the creation of employment and economic growth, and their own commitment to the co-creation of meaning around spaces, ideas, and practices that help people be together, reflect on their reality, and express themselves. To navigate this tension, they are learning how to selectively engage with market logic, while creating mechanisms to generate non-market values through economies of solidarity.

Key Words: CSOs, funding models, organisational culture, Medellin (Colombia), cooperative inquiry, youth.

Acknowledgements

I am grateful for the opportunity to do research in a city as complex and fascinating as Medellin. I am thankful for all the smiles, time, dedication, and curiosity that gave oxygen to *Plata, Cultura, y Cambio*. All the co-researchers welcomed this work and have been willing to open themselves up to research that became emotional and intimate. Through my interaction with the co-researchers and the community around them, I have deepened my sense of appreciation for the messiness of collaboration, while being reminded of the spiritual practice of working with others.

Special thanks to Carolina Lopez Barrera, who has helped this research come to life, accompanying it with her hard work, enthusiasm, sharp intelligence, and patience. Most of all, I am grateful for the beautiful friendship we started.

The reflections that are embedded in this thesis have represented a sort of coming into adulthood for me. I understand this thesis as a symbolic materialisation of an in-depth thought process, in direct conversation with my own personal growth. I am grateful to all the mentors, family members, and friends who have accompanied me in this journey and reminded me to *trust*. I have been fortunate to write this thesis accompanied by a warm sense of kindness towards myself: it has been beautiful to acknowledge how much I have enjoyed the research and to also accept the moments when reading my own words gave me nausea. I am grateful to my partner Kirsten and to my supervisors for having read my drafts when I could not do it anymore.

I am grateful to all the people who read and commented on my chapters including Khuyen Bui Gia, Christy Selica Zinn, Fiammetta Wegner, Gynna Brightside, Liv Abye, and Tana Paddock. Special thanks to my dear friend Madeleine Kasson who took the time to copyedit this work. I am also grateful to Izaias Martins from EAFIT University in Medellin for his support while applying for a visa during my fieldwork, for his help navigating the city, and for always making the time to improvise chats on my thesis.

I also wish to thank the PhD community at IDS for their company and support. I am particularly grateful to Gynna Brightside, my incredible PhD 'critical friend'; it was so fun to carry out research in Medellin simultaneously.

Witnessing each other through the thesis writing and working towards a digital project that brings together our research has been validating and energising.

I have been continuously humbled by the capacity of my two supervisors, James Sumberg and Marina Apgar, to make me feel seen and heard, and to give me the freedom to explore my ideas and meaning-making process without constrictions. I am grateful for the deep respect that I have felt from them. I have enjoyed being an apprentice, and I have learned a lot about the art of research. Their supervision is a stunning example of what it looks like to mentor young researchers. I hope to be a supervisor soon enough and to continue supporting research that stimulates critical reflection, conscious action, and personal transformation.

I am grateful for all my adventures with Recrear: for the opportunity of having created my own path, and for the roads of growth and expansions that I have been allowed to walk. It is an honour to be part of a community filled with passionate and caring people from all over the world. My experience with Recrear would not have been the same without the kind, warm, stunning presence of Kirsten. I am so lucky to have the opportunity to grow into a partnership that feels every day bolder, more nurturing, and more authentic.

Finally, I am boundlessly grateful to all my family and my friends. I feel rich, held, joyous, and free thanks to your presence in my life.

September 2018, Medellin, Colombia

*Este trabajo está dedicado a todas
las personas que siguen caminando las utopías*

*y a las organisaciones que participaron
en Plata, Cultura, y Cambio*

para recordarme que el amor es la señal

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Chapter 1: Introduction

A. *Overview*

This thesis provides an account of my doctoral research which inquires into grassroots, youth-led[1] Civil Society Organisations' (CSOs)[2] pathways towards financial sustainability[3]. Here I scrutinise the relationships between how organisations fund themselves and their organisational culture; I am particularly interested in how their experiences managing funding interact with the narratives and framings of social change that they use to make sense of, legitimise, and connect with their work. The research was conducted through a cooperative inquiry in Medellin, Colombia.

B. *Research Motivation*

During my first week in Colombia, I spent a few days in a small hostel in Cali. I was deep into a novel when I noticed two girls who seemed focused on making cool looking objects with bright coloured strings. I sat next to them on the floor and stayed silent, observing for a few minutes. A girl with olive skin and deep green eyes told me it was a Mexican tradition - they are called *ojos de dios*, 'the eyes of God'.

"They are made for children, as a blessing. Each one is different", she said, "and each one has its own story." She continued: "I learned how to make them at *Casa Madre* (Mother House), in the botanical garden of Medellin." At *Casa*

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[1] I define as 'youth-led' those organisations that are predominantly managed by young people and whose membership, staff, and volunteers are composed mainly of young people (Prasad, 2012). The age range used to define youth varies significantly across countries; in Colombia, youth are considered individuals between the age of 14 to 28 years old (Colombia-Joven, 2014). I regard as leaders those people who invest a considerable amount of time in the CSO, over extended periods of time, and who self-identify and are identified by their peers as having leadership in the CSO.

[2] The definition of civil society is contested (see discussion in chapter 2, on page 38 of this thesis). In this study, the term Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) broadly refers to a group of people who organise (formally or informally) for a common purpose, under a common vision, or to respond to a community need. According to the UN system, CSOs are regarded as being separate from the state and the market (https://www.ungreporting.org/glossary/civil-society-organisations-csos/). However, it is worth noting that this separation can be blurry in practice, as this study explores.

[3] In this thesis, I define financial sustainability as the "ongoing ability of an organisation to generate enough resources to work towards its vision" (CIVICUS).

Madre, a group of women of the Huichol people[4] shared their knowledge with her: "The house was a big point of reference for me. It had a fire in the middle which had to be kept alive always because it was the heart of the house." Around this fire, she learned ancient wisdom and heard stories. Now the place had closed down: the botanical garden changed administration, she explained, "but I am left with this knowledge. And I love making these. To me, making them is the purest way to give voice to the subconscious."

While I was trying to wrap my head around what that sentence could have meant to her, the girl asked me which of the *mandalas* on the floor had caught my attention. I pointed to an orange, red, and purple one. It reminded me of sunsets, and I imagined it hanging in my house-to-be. Warmly shaking my hand, the girl introduced herself as Caterina. Then she continued: "Ah, you know, we are one, and everything is interconnected. Our actions impact others much more than we think." Pointing to the purple star in the middle, Caterina added: "This will remind you of that."

This brief encounter moved me. I imagined Caterina learning how to make *ojos de dios*, creating meaning out of coloured strings and small sticks. I wondered what might be the story of *Casa Madre* in Medellin: why did it close? This encounter was also a reminder that when I listen to others with curiosity and care, something shifts. I did not know how to refer to this shift– I experienced it as a loosening of my ability to feel the moment with others, as if the encounter with somebody else acquired an artistic quality, a change in consistency. What I did know was that I started experiencing this shift while working closely with others within community processes, with groups and organisations belonging to what academia calls *civil society*.

I first heard the term civil society in high school, studying Gramsci's work. Writing from jail in fascist Italy, Gramsci understood civil society as the arena of an authoritarian system which allows for the dialectic contestation over ideas and norms to breathe through – a space where new visions could find

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[4] The Huichol or Wixaritari people are an indigenous people from the central Northwest part of Mexico, in the Sierra Madre (Arcos & Chavez, 1999).

traction to shake consolidated hegemonic powers and re-define what is normal and legitimate (Fontana, 2002). In university, I had studied Putnam's *social capital*, which I understood as the connections and shared values that enable people and groups to trust each other and work together (Putnam, Leonardi, & Nanetti, 1993). I appreciated why social relationships would be valuable intuitively: like a tree whose roots and branches grow to absorb more nutrients and sun, through contact with others we feel invigorated, we receive support. In other words, we access valuable intangible resources.

By my early 20s, my desire to connect, to have a bigger voice, to belong, to share my experience, to question the status quo, and to collectively construct new ideas—while having fun—led me to co-found Recrear. Today a small non-profit, Recrear began in 2010 as an informal international network experimenting with creative approaches and techniques to engage young people to take an active role as agents of change in their community. To me, it was exhilarating to experience how a group of young people with no institutional support could articulate ideas and make things happen. I worked persistently with Recrear throughout my postgraduate degree. When I finished my studies, I dedicated all my time to the organisation. Some of my colleagues did the same, but we could not afford to pay ourselves.

For a few years, we functioned informally by partnering with youth organisations from all over the world. From Ecuador to Thailand, Cuba to Bangladesh, I collected anecdotes of organisational growth in late-night heart-to-hearts with leaders of CSOs of different shapes and sizes. Through these encounters, I observed that organisational histories, directions, and structures were tied to financial sustainability, or the lack thereof. Financial sustainability was indispensable to the organisation's work; I was reminded of this over and over.

In 2012/13, I had the opportunity to take part in a year-long residential fellowship in Montreal to develop a sustainability model for Recrear. I learned about budgeting, strategic reviews, branding, organisational structures, governance, evaluation, social entrepreneurship, and corporate social responsibility. I did extensive research and spoke to many experts. The bottom-line of their advice was the same: to grow, we needed to find our "place in the market". Recrear's work is rooted in the idea that there is value in listening to

others' stories: we organise creative research with young people to facilitate reflection on their own experience and deepen their understanding of their own community. Learning with and from each other about their own context empowers participants to have a wider agency. But where could we find the funding to do this work that was so important to us?

Because of Recrear's explorations and reflections about our role in the "development industry" and in the world, I started asking, "How do independent organisations support themselves, and with which implications?". Turning to academia to explore the topic, I learned that the dilemma I experienced in my day-to-day life was also emerging in the literature.

C. *Funding, culture, and the existential crisis of CSOs*

CSOs have long been regarded as key players in community development processes (James, 1994; Lewis & Sobhan, 1999). Their role is considered critical in promoting "alternative" solutions to development challenges by working with communities and facilitating participation from the bottom up. Praised for being able to think creatively and boldly, overcoming the bureaucracy of the state and going beyond the profit-seeking goals of the private sector, CSOs have been acclaimed as "idea labs" that give oxygen to grassroots solutions and provide space for the exercise of citizenship (Gordon, 2000; Hulme & Edwards, 1997).

Given the failure of state-led development throughout the 1970s and 1980s, CSOs came to be seen as a viable development alternative; according to Bank and Hulme (2012) by the late 1970s, CSOs became the "new sweethearts of the development sector" (p. 5). By stepping in to fill the gap left by shrinking public budgets, and in delivering services previously provided by the state, CSOs became important development partners compensating a weakening welfare state (Banks & Hulme, 2012; Fowler, 2000; Gordon, 2000; Hulme & Edwards, 1997; Hulme et al., 1997). Banks, Hulme, & Edwards (2015) argue that, as CSOs were integrated into the international development system, they were reduced to implementing states' and donors' agendas. The consequence is a paradox: to survive, many CSOs have had to step further away from the powerless, and move closer to the powerful (Banks et al., 2015). Funding dependency meant many CSOs disconnected from their roots (Hulme & Edwards, 1997), while

"becoming passive in the face of structural constraints in the aid chain" (Banks & Hulme, 2012, p. 17).

With growing competition, CSOs had to professionalise to survive (Eikenberry & Kluver, 2004). They began addressing funding scarcity by investing more in marketing and fundraising, strategic planning, income generation and diversification (Jäger & Schröer, 2014; Martin & Osberg, 2007). Meanwhile, in the last decade, the funding available to CSOs declined (Elbers & Arts, 2011; Longhurst, 2016). CSOs became increasingly unstable, learning how to manage increasingly complex donor constraints which might undermine CSOs' strength and autonomy as well as the local ownership of their work (Elbers & Arts, 2011). The literature acknowledges that CSOs have been facing an 'existential crisis' with financial sustainability at its heart (Banks & Hulme, 2012; Bebbington, Hickey, & Mitlin, 2008; Lewis & Kanji, 2009; Mitlin, Hickey, & Bebbington, 2007; Ward, 2016).

In response to a changing external environment of increased competition and shrinking funding, there has been a trend for CSOs to take on an entrepreneurial turn. By the time I started my doctoral studies in 2015, the academic literature on social entrepreneurship was flourishing. While social entrepreneurship is a contested term, it broadly refers to activities intended to address social goals by operating in the marketplace (Young, 2008). Some have argued that this "sector bending" between non-profit and for-profit could provide independence from donors, increase financial capacity, and make CSOs more flexible (Dees & Anderson, 2003). Others worry that the *marketisation* of CSOs, a process in which the logic and practices from the business sector become integrated into CSOs, puts them at risk of mission drift (Calvo & Morales, 2015; Eikenberry & Kluver, 2004; Khieng & Dahles, 2015). Bringing together my professional experience and the literature, it became clear to me that CSOs are currently facing a period of profound change.

In this thesis, I look at the experience of youth-led CSOs, organisations which are unavoidably facing and engaging with this moment of change in civil society. Working with Recrear's partners, I have witnessed the path of young people interested in coming together with a shared vision but challenged to obtain sufficient resources to sustain their work over time. Youth-led CSOs are confronted with the pressure to negotiate, and, too often, compromise their

vision of transformation because of the need to pursue financial sustainability. As a response to this, they are likely to experiment with different funding models. For example, they might try to obtain grants from donors and find this challenging – donors might look for experience youth-led CSOs lack, or only fund specific projects that match their agendas (thus limiting the independence of CSOs). Unrestricted funding is a mirage, and there might be no alignment between the donor and the CSO vision or culture. CSOs might risk 'following the money' and losing their independence. Some organisations might consider generating their own funds through, for example, social entrepreneurship models. Either way, obtaining resources urges CSOs to redirect limited resources towards fundraising, branding, and management. While this exploration of funding models is a necessity, how does this affect their ability to pursue the vision that motivated the group in the first place?

I assume a close relationship between CSOs' organisational culture and their capacity to deliver outcomes. The literature suggests that the characteristics of donors' engagement, for example, could facilitate, or hinder, the type and quality of CSOs' work (Elbers & Arts, 2011). While mostly studied in the private sector, organisational culture has been identified as an essential dimension of management, effectiveness, and "success". One of the most influential theorists of culture, Hofstede (1980), defines culture as "the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one group or category from people of another" (Hofstede, 1980, p. 5). Schein (2004) distinguishes between three levels of culture: level one includes the most visible artefacts; in level two are belief and values; in level three are more subconscious assumptions the organisation holds. Intended broadly as the glue that holds together an organisation through shared patterns of meaning (Martin & Siehl, 1983), organisational culture is understood here as the bundle of ideas, norms and habits that imply an organisation's ways of working. Lewis (2003) suggests organisational culture is a neglected aspect in international development and proposes it as a useful entry point to analyse the "material and nonmaterial aspects of sustainability" (Lewis, 2003, p. 2). He stresses that there is a relationship between the type of organisational culture and the various

components of sustainability[5]. Paying attention to culture, I explore the links between how CSOs fund themselves, and the worldviews through which they make sense of, legitimise and connect with their work.

I assume that inquiring into the role of funding to effect organisational culture can be a valuable entry point to explore the "existential crisis" of CSOs. I am therefore interested in funding models as much more than a means to an end. Instead, I seek to understand more deeply how the existential crisis of CSOs, and their relationship with funding, might influence the inner life of CSOs, and with what implications. The central assumption that underpins this research is that funding models carry with them broader meanings, which are experienced, socialised, translated and assimilated into organisational cultures.

Yet, I am not only interested in *whether* CSOs manage to sustain their work. The concern is also *how* they stay alive considering that, as Edwards (2014b) stresses, even though CSOs are growing in number, they are "divorcing from the forces that drive deeper social change" (online). I understand social transformation as change that effects society at a more systemic level, change that recognises and alters the root causes of current social processes (Khondker, 2014a). In a paper on the meaning of *transformation*, Robert Gass (2014) kicks off with a powerful image: "Surrendering to an irresistible inner urging, one day the caterpillar begins to shed its skin" (p. 1). Just like in the case of the caterpillar, profound transformation in society emerges as a response to a sort of "inner urging", which "alters the very nature of something" (Gass, 2015). In social change processes, as Reeler (2007) stresses, transformational power is embedded in shifting relationships: through interactions, we construct and deconstruct our narrative in such a way as to form and transform our consciousness.

Gass (2015) highlights a concern shared by social change practitioners: "In order to effect social transformation, many of us perceive that we also need a transformation in the way we work for change" (p. 1). Por, Bradbury and Uldall

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[5] Lewis (2003) discusses sustainability as a multidimensional concept: financial sustainability refers to the ability to generate resources and reduce dependency on development assistance funds; organisational sustainability refers to the capacity to continue to generate value over time; benefit sustainability refers to the continuing capacity to deliver the intended change beyond the scope of the project or organisation (such as through state or private sectors).

(2018) reflect: "We are in desperate need of adaptive organising efforts for more sustainable ways of living, working, and partnering" (p. 118). I share these concerns and believe that transformation, therefore, cannot be separated from how people come together in doing the work they value. Nilsson and Paddock (2014) recognise that there is a link between the inner lives of people working for an organisation and their ability to generate change; they find that people experience the core of an organisation through their daily practices and interactions. By changing the way employees feel when they are at work, an organisation can become a "living expression of the transformation it seeks to achieve" (Nilsson & Paddock, 2014). I am particularly interested in the potential for CSOs to provide spaces where relationships and power dynamics can transform.

D. *The research context: Medellin, Colombia*

> What we found doing our work, is that the more we know, the more the world expands itself. We are learning that there are many ways of living. We need to be able to appreciate, explore and respect new ways to live more sustainable lives. We need to promote the opportunity to create new ways to be happy and feel good. (Co-leader of La Múcura, personal communication, 20 May, 2014)

> We are trying to promote a model of transformation. We need to create more community space to believe that yes, we can see reality differently. (Co-leader of 100en1Día, personal communication, 10 May, 2014)

In April 2013, I travelled to Medellin, Colombia to attend a training organised by the Youth Urban Fund, a small grant programme made available to youth-led organisations by the UN-Habitat. During this trip, I met a range of socially engaged young Colombians. Some considered themselves social entrepreneurs, some worked with grant-funded CSO models, and others were in search of their own funding models, moving from one experiment to the other. I was fascinated by their optimism, and spent hours hearing about the youth-led initiatives around the city. Reference to the urban conflict of the 1980s and 1990s was omnipresent in my conversations with people in Medellin. I learned

that Medellin's history provides necessary grounding to understand the city's current dynamics. My experience networking, collaborating and building relationships with these various youth-led CSOs sparked my interest in CSOs in Medellin.

As I eventually realised, what I observed in my early interactions with youth leaders was the tip of the iceberg of decades of work to heal and transform Colombian society. With abundant natural resources and a diversified economy, Colombia's gross domestic product (GDP) almost doubled in the last 20 years (Stirk, 2013). Colombia's GDP growth was on average 4.4% during the 2000s: the country has one of the fastest growing economies in Latin America (Brandon, Cunha, & Marchesini, 2015). While considered a middle-income country, there is also a high level of inequality, and 28% of the population lives below the poverty line (*OECD Economic Surveys Colombia*, 2017). Infamously, the country has struggled with a 52-year internal armed conflict, which led to widespread violations of human rights and caused massive internal displacement– in 2013 Colombia had 5.7 million internally displaced people (Shultz et al., 2014). It is partially because of this armed conflict that Colombia is the second highest Official Development Assistance (ODA) recipient in Latin America and the Caribbean, after Haiti (Stirk, 2013).

Since 2012, Colombia has been undergoing a process of reconciliation between the government and main guerrilla group, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC). During my fieldwork, I had the chance to witness an essential milestone in the peace process: a controversial plebiscite in which Colombians voted, by a small margin, to say *no* to the peace agreements. The agreement was quickly amended and approved, but the situation remains unstable, and Colombia now faces the challenges of a complex (and expensive) transitional justice plan (*Crisis Group*, 2017). To set the context of this research, below I present a brief history of the city's conflicts (D.1) and locate the evolution of CSOs in Medellin as part of the broader history of the city (D.2).

D.1 A (very) brief history of Medellin

Medellin is located in the valley of Aburrá in the region of Antioquia, geographically isolating it from the rest of Colombia. Before Spanish colonisation, Antioquia was sparsely populated by different indigenous groups;

early colonisers found plenty of space to settle in the valley (personal communication n. 10, 11 January, 2017; Melo, 1985). In a memoir, the poet Andress Berger Kiss describes how the migrants to Antioquia were rebels, including a "considerable minority of Spanish Hebrew entrepreneurs that had survived the Spanish Inquisition by converting to Catholicism" (Kiss, 1933, Kindle location 19-21). The director of a local museum dedicated to the memory of the city, *Casa Museo de la Memoria*, explained that, while this is historically contested, this early Jewish influence is part of popular oral narratives (personal communication n. 9, 18 August, 2016).

As the majority of early colonisers were men, there was strong mixing between Spanish and indigenous people (Melo, 1985). Indigenous people were considered inferior, and their culture was wiped out almost entirely (Melo, 1985). The whole province of Antioquia grew from a few hundred people in 1675 to 100,000 by the early 1800s, with 6,000 inhabitants in Medellin (Uribe, 1981). Throughout the Spanish Colonial period, the town had little economic or political influence (Londoño, Fernando, & Zuluaga, 1988; Melo, 1997; Payne, 1986).

Probably because of its geographical isolation, Medellin developed a self-sufficient local economy, exchanging products with the various towns across Antioquia (personal communication n. 10, 11 January 2017; Payne, 1986). It was the growth of the mining industry that, coupled with the production and sale of coffee, allowed the accumulation of capital (Londoño et al., 1988). During the nineteenth century, coal and gold mines increased the economic relevance of the region of Antioquia, of which Medellin became the capital (Melo, 1993). Towards the beginning of the twentieth century the financial flows channelled into industrialisation, mostly in textile production (Payne, 1986), and Medellin became the first industrialised centre of Colombia (Payne, 1986; Ramirez Patiño, 2011a, 2011b). This early history of Medellin and Antioquia meant that the *paisas*, as the inhabitants of Medellin are nick-named, are known for their entrepreneurial spirit, studied extensively by historians (see Téllez, 2010).

Throughout the twentieth century, Medellin transformed dramatically alongside its industrialisation. Industrialisation reproduced patterns of inequality and exclusion which were made worse with the political conflict that started in 1948 (*'la Violencia'* - 1948 to 1958). *La Violencia* brought high levels

of instability and insecurity around the country: between 200,000 and 300,000 people died (Palacios, 1995; Villar, 2001, p. 52). Moreover, the decade of *la Violencia* saw massive waves of unregulated urbanisation. The population of the city increased 50-fold in the last 100 years, and between 1938 and 1951, the population quadrupled:

> Everything that today is covered by houses and cement was, just 90 years ago, farming land. Almost every neighbourhood has gone through a process of transformation that has changed its appearance within the last two to three decades completely. (Melo, 1993, online)

The industrialisation affected the urban development of the city. As the city expanded to integrate new comers, there was a complete lack of vision for the city's development (Payne, 1986; Melo, 1997; Mejia, 1991). According to the director of research of *Casa Museo de la Memoria*, the urban growth of Medellin was characterised by "the upper classes fleeing the lower classes" (personal communication n. 10, 11 January, 2017). As the elites relocated and built new neighbourhoods, new working-class ones would appear next to them.

Except for a few sections of the city designed for the elites, urban development in Medellin was fast paced and unplanned (ibid). As the population grew, more working-class neighbourhoods were established on the sides of the valley. In these newly formed neighbourhoods on the slopes of the valley, the state was mostly absent, which meant that it was easy for armed groups to take control. During the 1980s and 1990s, these unplanned neighbourhoods became the most violent and unstable parts of the city (personal communication n. 10, 11 January, 2017)

Next to the rising inequality, the tension around ownership of land was another cause of the different waves of conflict in Colombia (Sánchez Gómez, 2013). During the period of '*la violencia*' (1948 to 1958), Antioquia lost a significant proportion of its small farmers. Many were killed or displaced while land was being accumulated by big landowners (ibid). After 10 years of conflict, the two main Colombian parties negotiated a bipartisan political system known as the National Front (1958 to 1974) (ibid). This agreement excluded the political participation of social movements, movements of farmers, and any other minority social movements other than those of political elites (Sánchez Gómez, 2013). In 1964, this exclusion led to the creation of the first guerrilla

movement and the foundation of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) claiming to represent the rural poor of Colombia (Sánchez Gómez, 2013).

The growing drug trade industry exacerbated the situation. To acquire land for the production of illicit substances, big landowners forcedly displaced small farmers. This history is recent and vivid in people's imaginations. For example, the director of research at *Casa Museo de la Memoria* told me that a drug baron killed his grandfather because he did not want to sell his land in the West of Antioquia (personal communication n. 10, 11 January, 2017). It was in the 1980s that the state started the official fight against drug trafficking; different political and economic interests began mixing, forming what my interviewee referred to as "a time bomb" (ibid).

Medellin's mix of social inequality, political conflict, economic interest, and narco-trafficking were a toxic combination. The city's working-class neighbourhoods provided the stage for this conflict, which deepened in the early 1980s. It was easy for armed groups to exploit young people in the poorest *comunas*[6] who were ready to join a militia or kill for a couple of thousand pesos (less than a dollar) (Dodson, Piatelli, & Schmalzbauer, 2007). In this sense, armed groups gained traction by leveraging inequality to pursue their own political, economic and territorial interests.

Violence became even more brutal with the emergence of paramilitary forces in the 1990s (Hanson, 2008; Reyes, 2015). Initially, the paramilitaries emerged for self-defence (it is suggested by some that these groups were promoted by the elite with the knowledge of the state). Eventually, paramilitarism changed into one of the worst expressions of violence in the armed conflict (Ronderos, 2014). In 1993, with the death of Pablo Escobar, the infamous leader of the *Cartel de Medellin*, the state started gaining ground against the cartels. The power vacuum in the parts of Medellin in which the public sector had no actual jurisdiction provided an opening for the paramilitaries.

A new phase of the conflict lasted from 1993 to circa 2006. In this phase, right-wing paramilitary groups carried out '*limpieza social*' (social cleansing),

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[6] The urban area of Medellin is divided into six zones, divided into 16 communes (*comunas*). Each *comuna* is divided into several neighbourhoods.

while the state also intervened with military operations (Reyes, 2015). The worst was the operation Orion, in *Comuna 13*. This operation, coordinated in 2002 by the Colombian military and police forces under the order of President Alvaro Uribe Velez, was hugely controversial: approximately 1,000 armed forces entered the *comuna* by air and land, causing displacement and killing between 150-300 young people (Franco & Caputo, 2013).

As the paramilitaries officially demobilised between 2013 and 2016, the conflict transformed again. The term "*BACRIM*" is used to refer to new and emergent types of criminal groups in Colombia. Financial gain motivates many of them; others retain political links protecting people, or through extortion, illegal mining, contraband, arms trafficking and the control of drug trafficking routes (Avila, 2016). The conflict also moved more underground, obscuring some of the causes that keep nourishing it, such as inequality.

Medellin's recent transformation has been considered 'miraculous' by many. In 2013, the Wall Street Journal and Citi Group honoured Medellin as "Innovative City of the Year" (BBC, 2013). This shift started with the election of mayor Sergio Fajardo (2004-2007) and his *Compromiso Ciudadano* (citizen's commitment) promoting a policy referred to as "social urbanism" (Angotti, Irazábal, & Franz, 2017; Fukuyama & Colby, 2011; Turok, 2014). The policy promotes the creation of public spaces to reach the most underprivileged neighbourhoods of the city. Fayardo and his successor, Alonso Salazar, invested in connecting and physically upgrading different parts of town and in the construction of schools, library-parks and public spaces. For example, the creation of the Metrocable, which connects the main line of the metro system to the hillside through an aerial cable, is regarded as a major accomplishment. The Metrocable is prized for its symbolic value, creating a sense of inclusion for the hillside neighbourhoods, and boosting local pride (Brand & Dávila, 2011; Hernández-Garcia, 2013; Jaime, 2013). Today, Medellin's identity revolves around being modern, optimistic, and entrepreneurial. The city is positioning itself towards international markets and is driven by a strong neoliberal agenda (Noreña, 2016). In this study, I am interested in how youth-led CSOs are influenced by and adapting to this shifting context.

D. 2 A brief history of CSOs in Medellin

Mirroring the evolution of the urban area described in the previous section, the history of CSOs in Medellin reflects both the economic and political development of Colombia.

Until the end of the 19th century, in Colombia, as in most of Latin America, the Catholic Church was the main actor engaging in charitable activities (Evans, 2016; Vargas, 1995). It had a particularly strong hold in Antioquia, and its values defined the region (Mejia, 1991). Until the 1930s, Colombia was a largely traditional society with power centralised in a strong elite (Evans, 2016; ICNL, 2019).

The decades from the 1930s through the 1950s, were characterised by the development of class identity. Workers and farmers were becoming aware of themselves as political actors and organised to defend their rights – this stimulated the flourishing of workers' unions and peasants' movements (Vellinga, 2010; Hernández & Téllez, 2017). An important moment in Colombia's history was the 1928 worker strike in Ciénaga against the United Fruit Company, which ended with a massacre by the Colombian army and the deaths of between 800 and 3,000 people (Ayala, 1997, p.139). This tragic event and the indignation that it sparked was followed by a wider recognition of labour unions: Colombia counted 109 worker associations between 1909 and 1929 - that number increased to 464 between 1930 and 1937 (Palacios, 1995).

Between the 1930s and the 1950s, Colombia also saw a surge of non-profit organisations involved in advocacy on both extremes of the political spectrum (Evans, 2016). This radicalisation foreshadowed the conflict that broke out in 1948 ('*la Violencia*'). As mentioned above, this conflict generated large scale migration from the countryside to Medellin. In the newly formed *barrios* that emerged, citizens started organising autonomously to be able to build houses, support the process of becoming a community, and demand their rights.

In August, 2016 I took part in a tour of Castilla, a *comuna* in the north-west of the city. During the tour we sat in the small desks of a school and watched a short documentary in which a group of old women narrated how they founded their neighbourhood by creating support groups and building everything with their own hands, from houses to public spaces such as the

church. This story is not uncommon in Medellin – families of new migrants settle in the outskirts of the city and start building their livelihoods (Payne, 1986). Organised groups of citizens, meeting every seven days to plan and make decisions, were the engine of community development (Giraldo, 2014).

In 1958, the government recognised the *Juntas de Acción Comunal* (JACs) (Community Action Boards). Considered the first type of community organisation in Colombia, JACs encouraged citizen engagement and participatory community management (Gallego & Fonseca, 2016; Hernández & Téllez, 2017). They were also intended as institutions that could mediate between communities, municipal and national government (ibid). By 1974, there were more than 18,000 JACs; by 1993 the number had increased to 42,582 JACs with 2.5 million members (Villar, 2001; Evans, 2016).

The period of the 1940s through the 1970s saw a shift towards a more modern Medellin, with social movements inspired by global debates and trends. The emergence of the feminist movement, which started in the 1930s, and continued throughout the 1940s under the coordination of the *Union Feminina* and the *Alianza Feminina*, reflects this cultural shift. Women came together across political and class lines and their efforts culminated in 1957, the year Colombian women were granted the right to vote (Sentiido, 2017). The feminist movement in Colombia experienced its second wave in the 1970s, under a strong left-wing ideology. In 1978, Medellin hosted a national meeting attended by 250 women from all over the country to define the participation of Colombia in the international campaign for abortion and contraceptives, and against forced sterilisations (Wills Obregon, 2004). The 1970s were also characterized by the emergence of ethnic rights discourses. In particular, Colombia experienced mobilisation of indigenous people and demands for empowerment by the Afro-Colombian populations, claiming their ethnic, territorial, and cultural rights (Erlingsson, 2013).

The work of social movements and community organisations that flourished in the 1980s was influenced by ideologies such as the Theology of Liberation, Popular Education, and Critical Pedagogy (Oldenski, 2002). These provided new ways of seeing reality, and encouraged personal transformation through critical and reflective awareness (Paulo Freire's 'conscientisation'), independent of party lines (Hernández & Téllez, 2017; Oldenski, 2002).

Colombia and Medellin were also influenced by Latin American trends. Throughout the late 1970s, 1980s and 1990s, the concept of civil society became very popular across Latin America. The continent underwent a wave of dictatorships; CSOs' efforts were promoted by the flow of international cooperation funds targeted at peace, democratisation, social inclusion, and poverty alleviation (Edwards & Hulme, 1997). By the 1980s, academics and others in Medellin were putting considerable effort into creating awareness about the urgent need to build social fabric and to increase citizen participation (Hernández & Téllez, 2017). By the 1990s, civic participation grew rapidly - a study by Anheier and Salamon (1999) found that Colombia had the highest volunteer rate amongst Latin American countries, 48% of Colombians volunteered. Moreover, Colombian CSOs were coming together around human rights defence and the peace agenda (Rojas-Rodriguez, 2004).

Montoya (2015) found that it is between the 1980s and the 1990s that young people in Medellin started to recognise themselves as political subjects. Young people in Medellin were stigmatized for their 'political apathy'; Galeano (2010) stresses that in the middle of the urban conflict, which saw young people as protagonists, youth became more visibly engaged within their neighbourhoods. Rejecting more adult-centric organisational structures, they came together in horizontal, self-managed, and informal groups (Galeano, 2010). Between 1990-2010, organised young people in the marginalised and growing neighbourhoods of the city rejected their stigmatisation as 'violent' by engaging in cultural and artistic productions through street-art, hip-hop, rock, punk, reggae and other aesthetic expressions. These groups provided spaces for young people to meet, socialize and exchange ideas (Montoya, 2015; Galeano, 2010).

Debates around civic participation were recognised and validated with the 1991 constitution. Previous to this constitutional reform, which was pressured by student movements (Salas, 2017), Colombia's 1886 constitution had no ideological principles of citizen participation (Transparency International, 2003). The 1991 constitution institutionalized CSOs in the juridical form of non-profits corporations, associations, and foundations (ICNL, 2019). Importantly, the new constitution de-centralized power to the local level, recognised the defence of human rights, and valued civic participation. The core

themes of the constitution were *democratización, descentralización y privatización* (democratisation, decentralisation, and privatisation) (CP, Constitución de Colombia de 1991, as cited in Evans, 2016). This new constitution granted more rights to women (Wills Obregon, 2004), and it guaranteed free expression (Article 40) and free association (Article 38) as fundamental human rights (Vargas, 1995).

The history of CSOs in Colombia, which by the 1980s and 1990s were becoming more pluralistic and diverse, was influenced by key legislation in the early 1990s. With the laws 777 and 1403 of 1992, and 2459 of 1993, the state was authorized to contract directly with those CSOs recognised as suitable. The law 080 of 1993 redefined the relationship between the state and NGOs, and the law 152 of 1994 obliged the administration of local government to formulate and execute a local development plan (Transparency International, 2003; Salas, 2017).

These reforms created more oxygen for CSOs in Colombia, which prospered in the 1990s and 2000s. The legislation also shifted the relationship between the state and CSOs. In line with the prevailing neoliberal ideologies which asked the state to diminish its role in local development, CSOs became partners in the execution of state contracts. Strengthening CSOs was regarded as a mechanism to deepen democracy. As Evans (2016) highlights:

> Article 103 of the constitution recognises that "civil societies are the natural mechanism" of the democratic process and citizen representation and that the government is to promote, train, and contribute to said organisations. (p. 39)

This new dynamic on the one side meant that CSOs grew in number and were able to attract more resources. However, according to Salas (2017), these new laws disadvantaged grassroots and informal groups (such as youth-led informal groups) because they required CSOs to provide at least 30% of their own resources in order to access public funding. This meant that larger, more professionalized CSOs were better able to capture the bulk of the funding. Meanwhile, in the 1990s, the concept of corporate social responsibility also became popular and many big companies in Colombia set up their own social programs. This also meant private companies were more likely to implement

projects directly, reducing their donations to grassroots organisations (Salas, 2017).

In 2010, the room to manoeuvre for CSOs decreased. The right-wing president, Alvaro Uribe, stigmatized human rights CSOs as collaborators with left-wing rebels (Hincapié, 2017). Additionally, as Colombia came to be considered a middle-income country, it was no longer a priority for constrained international cooperation budgets (Pousadela & Cruz, 2016).

To conclude, both Colombia in general, and Medellin in particular, are regarded as having dynamic CSOs with a tradition of coordinated action (CCONG, 2010, 2016; Evans, 2016). CSOs focus on generating public debates, promoting human rights, creating a culture of peace, and preventing violence (Colak, 2010; CCONG, 2016). Yet, despite CSOs' important strengths, consultations stress that the lack of financial resources have promoted more competition, individualism and a lack of solidarity between CSOs (CCONG, 2010).

E. Aims of the study and research questions

In this study, I inquired into the pathways toward financial sustainability taken by youth-led CSOs in Medellin. I aimed to understand the connections between how organisations finance themselves, their culture and their understanding of social change. I did so by exploring youth-led CSOs' experiences seeking financial sustainability, and then analysing whether and how the financial mechanisms they leverage generate narratives, symbols, and structures which then permeate their organisational cultures.

In his *Epistemologies of the South*, Boaventura de Sousa (2007) explains that Southern experiences are often invisible because they tend to be understood through Western theories (Alvaro, 2011; de Sousa Santos, 2011). In speaking about "the South", Boaventura de Sousa is not only talking about geography, he is talking about voices that are usually marginalised. He suggests that at the base of global injustice there is an epistemological problem, "a global cognitive injustice" (Boaventura de Sousa, 2007 p. 11). While Western theories are made universal, Southern knowledge is dismissed as contextual (de Sousa Santos, 2011). The division is such, he argues, that knowledge becomes inexistent: "inexistence means not existing in any relevant or comprehensive

way of being" (de Sousa Santos, 2007, p. 2). The problem is that this Western exceptionalism comes along with the inability of the West to learn from the world. In this research, I am interested in knowledge as it expresses itself in Medellin.

Engaging with my research question with a desire to learn from and with Southern epistemologies, this thesis is inspired by a participatory world-view which comprehends knowledge as enacted within everyday experiences (Reason & Bradbury, 2008). I utilised a participatory action research (PAR) methodology to provide an opportunity for practitioners to collectively explore and recognise their practices, worldviews, and cultures. The research was designed to dive into the experience and subjectivity of youth-led CSOs and invites the knowledge from youth-led CSOs into current academic debates.

The central research question that drives this study is:

How are CSOs seeking financial sustainability, and with what implications for their organisational culture and understanding of social change?

The specific questions I use to operationalise the research are:

- What is the funding context of CSOs in Medellin, and how are youth-led CSOs engaging with it?
- What worldviews ground youth-led CSOs?
- What is the relationship between the worldviews of youth-led CSOs and their organisational culture and how does funding play into this equation?
- How do youth-led CSOs transition to financial sustainability?

F. *Introducing* **Plata, Cultura, y Cambio**

This research is rooted in a participatory paradigm, as articulated by Heron and Reason (1997) and Guba and Lincoln (2005). I utilised participatory action research (PAR) methodology with the intention of creating "participative communities of inquiry in which qualities of engagement, curiosity and question-posing are brought to bear on significant practical issues" (Reason & Bradbury, 2008, p. 1).

To address the research questions, I identified youth-led CSO leaders as "knowledge holders". Yet, I assumed that their knowledge is embedded within

their organisations' practices and sense-making. Based on my experience as a practitioner, I also assumed that, in most cases, they do not take/have the time and space to analyse how their funding mechanisms influence and interact with their culture. Assuming that this knowledge is not readily available, I utilised PAR to provide CSO leaders in Medellin with a platform to explore and make sense of their funding realities, and, through a collective exploration process, address the research question as well as their daily challenges.

The method that forms the operational backbone of this research is a cooperative inquiry called *Plata, Cultura, y Cambio*, (Spanish for 'Money, Culture, and Change'), which engaged a group of CSO leaders in Medellin in a process of self-reflection, collective analysis, and exploration of their organisational culture and practices. Along with the cooperative inquiry, I conducted semi-structured interviews, used participant observation, and undertook a foresight exercise (carried out through a two-day scenario building workshop).

The integration of these different methods ensured that I would be able to gather appropriate data in different phases of the research process. Furthermore, I used the data from these methods to triangulate information from various sources besides the CSO leaders who were co-researchers with me. Data gathered through other methods has been shared and discussed (to the extent possible) with the cooperative inquiry group. This was meant to enrich the group's understanding and provide different perspectives to group discussions. With the intention of allowing for new theory to emerge, I used a grounded theory approach within the PAR process (as suggested by Teram, Schachter, & Stalker, 2005).

Ten organisations took part in the research; each being represented by either one or two people with leadership roles in the organisation. *Leaders* are defined as those people who dedicate a considerable amount of time to the organisation, and who both self-define as leaders and are recognised by their peers as contributing to CSO's leadership. I set up and coordinated the research meetings, presenting myself as both a doctoral student and the director of research of Recrear. In Table 1, the 10 organisations are briefly introduced:

Corporación artística y cultural Voces y Palabras

Based in *Comuna 5*, *Voces y Palabras* was born as a response to the wave of violence in the neighbourhood. It seeks to generate spaces for artistic and cultural entertainment, working, in particular, with storytelling, through which young people can make visible and socialise the problems of their community. Their work is designed to reinvent public space and generate profound reflections.

How do they sustain themselves? Applying to grants, providing storytelling services, volunteering

Type of organisation: NGO

Year of formation: 2009

Main researcher: Liliana

Deditos Verdes

Deditos Verdes wants to reconnect citizens to the earth by organising ecological actions such as urban gardening. It utilises games, art, and culture as tools for the construction of communities of peace, the protection of the environment, and social transformation.

How do they sustain themselves? Offering services (they set up urban gardens and provide urban gardening workshops), applying to grants, private sector partnership, volunteering.

Type of organisation: community project in transition to social enterprise

Year of formation: 2011

Main researcher: Carla

Movimiento Tierra en Resistencia (MTR)

The MTR is a network of youth-organisations in the *Comuna 5*. Bringing together organisations with diverse political, environmental, social and cultural missions, they articulate the youth vision for the community. Their work seeks to explore new ways for young people to live well together.

How do they sustain themselves? Applying to grants, volunteering

Type of organisation: Network of young people

Year of formation: 2015

Main Researcher: Stiven

Antares Dance

Antares Dance is a community organisation located in the *corregimiento* (rural areas in the outskirts of Medellin) of Altavista. Made up of children and young people, the group of *Antares Dance* utilises dance to empower themselves and bring forward social transformation. They provide dance classes to the community and have been engaged with a range of social processes around the city.

How do they sustain themselves? Offering services (dance and theatre shows), Applying to grants, volunteering

Type of organisation: Informal group

Year of formation: 2008

Main researchers: Sarah and Cruz

Corporación Casa Mia

Corporación Casa Mia was born as a community effort in the neighbourhood of Santander, in the *Comuna* 6. The organisation works to generate a space for reconciliation and restoration between humans, and between people and nature. They consider affection their main methodological tool.

How do they sustain themselves? Applying to grants, volunteering (Aditionally, one of the founders recently launched a social enterprise spinning off *Casa Mia* called: *De Mentes Pensantes*.)

Type of organisation: NGO

Year of formation: 1994 informally, 1998 formally

Main researchers: Ximena and Dorian

Art-C-8
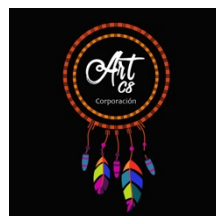
Art-C-8 is an organisation that works to strengthen youth coexistence based on art, talent-development and culture in the *Comuna* 8. It is made up of a multidisciplinary group of young people. Currently, they seek to articulate the youth of the *comuna*.

How do they sustain themselves? International cooperation (fund from Columbia University in the United States)

Type of organisation: NGO

Year of formation: Active as an informal group since 2011, registered in 2016

Main researcher: Claudia

Los Chicos del Siglo XX

Los Chicos del Siglo XX is an art collective that was born in response to the demand to bring art to communities. They create artistic proposals to generate positive changes in people, based on social problems and personal experiences.

How do they sustain themselves? Applying to grants, volunteering, providing artistic services

Type of organisation: Informal group

Year of formation: 2011

Main researchers: Camilo and Laura

Techo

Techo is a Latin American-wide non-profit organisation, which, through the construction of prefabricated houses, seeks to overcome the situation of extreme poverty in precarious settlements.

How do they sustain themselves? CSR investments, donations

Type of organisation: NGO

Year of formation: 2006 (Medellin chapter)

Main researcher: Alina

World Tech Makers

World Tech Maker is a social enterprise that aims to promote the development of the technological creative power of Latin America. Through coding boot camps, it supplements the deficiency of programmers and technology entrepreneurs in Latin America.

How do they sustain themselves? Providing services (Coding boot camps)

Type of organisation: Social enterprise (Registered as a company)

Year of formation: 2011

Main researcher: Jorge

Casa Mariposas

Casa Mariposas is a research and educational social enterprise dedicated to the study and protection of butterflies. *Casa Mariposa* seeks to serve the community through education, research and marketing. Located in *El Retiro*, they manage a butterfly farm and a rural school.

How do they sustain themselves? Selling products, receiving support from the NGO *Laboratorio del Espíritu*

Type of organisation: Social enterprise (spin-off from a local NGO)

Year of formation: 2008

Main researcher: Joseph

Table 1: A brief description of the 10 youth-led CSOs represented in Plata, Cultura, y Cambio.

G. *Chapters synopsis*

Chapter 2 grounds the thesis within existing literature. It places the research within debates around changes in civil society, with particular reference to the challenges CSOs face in sustaining their work. In doing so, it discusses the blurring relationship between civil society, state, and market. I also present some key debates around social entrepreneurship as an alternative organisational model. I utilise literature on organisational culture to suggest the value in exploring the links between funding models, organisational culture, and worldviews.

Chapter 3 sets out the case for why I chose to utilise PAR for this research. Here, I discuss my epistemology, describe the research methods utilised, and examine the validity and ethics of the study. The chapter walks the reader through my research decisions, experiences, and challenges; it clarifies how the research methodology allowed for engagement with the research questions. The chapter also explains my decision to utilise a grounded theory approach to engage with the data and analysis generated. Finally, the chapter includes an overview of my own experience with the research and discusses my positionality.

Chapter 4 explores the question: What is the funding context of CSOs in Medellin, and how are youth-led CSOs engaging with it? This chapter paints the

picture of the CSOs' ecosystem in Medellin as it emerged from this PAR study. I discuss some of the challenges that organisations face managing public funding and seeking independence and autonomy. The chapter also argues that CSOs in Medellin "prefigure" the reality they envision for themselves through daily actions and ways of being. I conclude by explaining that the co-researchers experience a tension in the process of obtaining resources to sustain their visions.

Chapter 5 I seek to explain the nature of the tension youth-led CSOs experience around the challenge of sustainability by describing the difference between two distinct framings of social change that emerged in the research. To capture the two conceptions, I utilise two expressions from the co-researchers: "we need to walk on utopia" and "we need to resolve the economic first". The former recalls the CSOs' community visions, while the latter resembles the official development conceptions in Medellin. I argue that both conceptions influence the work of youth-led CSOs in Medellin. In fact, as youth-led CSOs experience challenges with funding, they start appreciating that funding does profoundly affect their ability to achieve their visions.

Chapter 6 utilises the example of *Corporación Casa Mia,* a youth organisation in Santander, a neighbourhood in the Northwest of Medellin, to deepen the analysis of the tension around funding. Through this example, I address the question: what is the relationship between the worldviews of youth-led CSOs and their organisational culture and how does funding play into this equation? The chapter illustrates how *buen vivir* emerges within the day-to-day practices of *Corporación Casa Mia. Buen vivir* (living well, or living well together), is a Latin American indigenous worldview which understands the human experience as holistically integrated with the rest of the community. The chapter discusses how the organisation appropriated the concept of *Buen Vivir* in its organisational culture. It also explains that the organisational culture was influenced by challenging experiences around financial sustainability. It suggests that no matter how ambitious an organisational vision, a failure to meet the challenge of sustainability can significantly reduce the ability to deliver change.

Chapter 7 addresses the question: how do youth-led CSOs transition to financial sustainability? Here, I articulate my grounded theory contribution,

describing the behaviour of youth-led CSOs through the image of a tree. I then describe a series of four strategies that youth-led CSOs utilise to maintain their independence while navigating their evolving path and sustaining themselves financially. I argue the strategies are used to mitigate the sense of incoherence that is created by the friction between conceptions of development. The strategies discussed are: remaining process oriented, appropriating the concept of social entrepreneurship, (selectively) leveraging economies of solidarity, and developing close relationships with individuals in institutions.

Chapter 8 is a meta-reflective chapter which engages critically with the *diverse economies* literature, and the literature around alternative organising. This is a chapter that I wrote following an invitation by my thesis examiners to explore how my work might interact with other bodies of literature that I had not included in my conceptual framework. Here, I explore how the organisations which I carried out research with challenged, resisted, and potentially transformed neoliberal market logics through their work. I conclude with a reflection on my own writing process.

Chapter 9 brings together insights from the four empirical chapters and articulates the theoretical contribution of the thesis. In the last chapter, I also reflect on my path throughout this research process and explain how working with PAR influenced my own personal growth and understanding of civil society. To conclude, I summarise my contribution to knowledge, discuss limitations, and highlight possible further research.

Chapter 2: Conceptual framework

A. *Introduction*

In this chapter, I articulate the thesis's conceptual framework by positioning this study in relation to relevant literature and debates. To inquire into youth-led CSOs in Medellin and how they are engaging with their current funding realities, I bring into conversation literature around the role of civil society in the development process, with theories of organisational culture.

I start with a review of relevant civil society debates (part B). After explaining the imperative of achieving financial sustainability for CSOs, I then engage with literature that discusses the blurring lines between civil society, market, and state. Finally, drawing from selected literature on leadership, I discuss the implications of studying youth-leadership and justify how it might enlighten understandings of emerging civil society trends.

This research is mainly concerned with whether and how funding dynamics might influence the inner-life of youth-led CSOs. Consequently, part C presents organisational culture as an interesting lens through which I can study how the relationship with funding might affect organisations. Part D concludes the chapter.

B. *Understanding civil society*

Approaching this research from the perspective of a civil society practitioner, I realised that I had been taking the term civil society for granted. For example, when I was exposed to the ideas of Gramsci and Putman early on, I did not understand civil society as a historically constructed concept. In fact, today, the term is "much used, perhaps overused, certainly misused if not abused" (Laine, 2014, p. 59). Spini (2006) argues that as the term became part of international development jargon, it began to be utilised as if it needed no further explanation (Spini, 2006). While civil society is contested, more recently it has been appropriated both by the right and left (Edwards, 2003) becoming a "hurrah word" so that: "we are left with a one-dimensional, watered-down concept that

has ceased to have any meaning" (Chandhoke, 2007, p. 609). So, what is civil society, and why does it matter?

B. 1. The evolution of the concept of civil society

The notion of civil society originated in Greece. Socrates discussed the idea of *dialectic*, as a way of publicly discussing important themes to reveal truth and *civility* (Laine, 2014). Through participation in the communal life of the polis, those lucky enough to be citizens took part in "civil society" (ibid). It was not until the Scottish Enlightenment and the work of David Hume, Adam Ferguson, and Adam Smith, that the conception of civil society departed from the idea of the state and started to be seen as a network of human relationships (ibid). They understood civil society as a "public, ethical space regulated by laws, within which citizens pursue their private interests in harmony with the common good" (Jensen, 2006, p. 43).

For the German philosopher Hegel, the state represented the tool to ensure social ethicality and stability. For him, "well-functioning civil society cannot exist without the guidance of the state" (Laine, 2014, p. 63). Yet, Hegel was the first to conceptualise civil society as 'a system of needs' mediating between the state and the family (Bobbio, 2009). Using Hegel's definition, in *Democracy in America*, the French thinker Alexis de Tocqueville stresses the potential for associational life to foster *civility* and strengthen democracy (Ehrenberg, 1999); for him, civil society acted as society's independent "eye", promoting democratic progress while representing a space where citizens can "realise their social freedom and equality" (Woldring, 1998, p. 363-367).

On the political left, Marx saw civil society as a critical political space where the bourgeois society replicated its interests, further isolating the masses. Gramsci believed that ideologies that ferment in the civil society space have the generative power to realise new historical processes (Bobbio, 2009). In this sense, Gramsci believed that ideologies are of a higher order than institutions: ideological hegemony can lead to the formation of a collective will able to transform society by changing state-power dynamics. But there is more: he also believed that ideological hegemony could lead to the elaboration, and therefore to the diffusion and realisation, of a different conception of the world (ibid).

B. 2. Defining civil society

As the above discussion suggests, the simple exercise of defining the term civil society is a political one (Laine, 2014). These evolving understandings provide insight into how we see the world and conceive the relationships between state and citizens. How is civil society understood today, and what does this conception show about how we perceive society (and the state)?

Within current literature, the notion of civil society remains highly contested, confusing, and opaque. In Walzer's (2004) words: "civil society is a descriptive term, a sociological construction, and a liberal dream" (p. 66). In his book 'Civil Society', Edwards (2014a) summarises the various understandings of civil society and suggests that there are three distinct schools of thought which respectively see it as: a part of society, a kind of society, and as the public sphere. Edwards spent some time exploring these coexisting conceptions and stresses that each approach is useful to shed light to some aspects of civil society. Yet, each comes with its debates and questions and is incomplete if taken in isolation. Below, I briefly discuss these three approaches and explain how I will engage with them.

Probably the most widespread understanding of civil society is as *a part of society*. In this sense, the term refers to the third or non-profit sector populated by a variety of voluntary associations. This approach is rooted in the thinking of Alexis de Tocqueville, and it associates dynamic participation within voluntary associations as a precondition for a lively democracy. This school of thought sees voluntary organisations as micro-labs in which citizens form and nourish values which act as 'gene-carriers' of good society.

From this perspective, civil society is seen as a space for pluralism, where people express all sorts of different values and interests. This seems to be the school of thought currently embraced by many civil society practitioners. For example, CIVICUS, the global alliance dedicated to strengthening civil society around the world, defines civil society as "the arena - outside of the family, the state, and the market - which is created by individual and collective actions, organisations and institutions to advance shared interests" (CIVICUS, 2012, p. 8).

A challenge of this perspective is the porosity between sectors. In reality, the *modus operandi* of 'third-sector' organisations are in constant conversation

with other parts of society, in which citizens also develop and promote values, opinions, and ideas (Edwards, 2014a). Additionally, while volunteer work might distinguish civil society from the public and private sector, as CSOs become increasingly professionalized, and as overlaps between different sectors deepen, this characterisation might seem very artificial.

In the second meaning of civil society, 'civil' acts as an adjective referring to *a certain type of society*, an ideal one. This perspective reflects a normative conception of civil society. It intends civil society to be the type of society that we should collectively be working towards: one characterized by tolerance, non-discrimination, non-violence, trust, cooperation, freedom, and democracy (Edwards, 2014a). Yet, who is to decide what a good society actually is? As Chandhoke (2005) wonders, "in a morally plural world, visions of a good society will be multiple and may be incommensurate. How do we arbitrate between competing visions of the good?" (online). The vision of a good society might be manipulated by those in power: for example, by choosing to finance certain initiatives over others. In this sense, the third understanding of civil society is useful as it stresses the importance of carving space to explore and negotiate dissonant normative ideas of 'good'.

In the third school of thought, civil society is intended *as the public sphere,* in which people collectively answer the big questions about where society is heading. This school recognises the importance of spaces in which citizens discuss and negotiate. The public sphere approach emphasises the importance of debate, developing mechanisms for conflict resolution around differences, and the fair representation of such differences. It is through engagement with the mechanisms in this sphere that citizens collectively construct a sense of public interest, which is essential to meaningful participation in democratic processes. This exploration around the big ideas is intended to expand capacity to understand coexisting perspectives and experiences. As Chandhoke (2005) puts it, "deliberation is a process of open inquiry into the human condition, not a conclusion" (online).

To conclude, I understand civil society as a contested concept in the literature; in this thesis, I observe the behaviours of youth-led CSOs and explore how they reflect the tensions across the various definitions of civil society. I am interested in how these different understandings manifest within the work and

the perspectives of the co-researchers of *Plata, Cultura, y Cambio*. Through this thesis, I invited individual organisations to collectively explore their challenges. In this sense, I recognised individual organisations as a unit of analysis. Moreover, my research design does assume youth CSOs are a microcosm in which, through practices and values, people develop skills and visions that they consider necessary for progress towards a 'good society'. I also expect the various youth-led CSOs to be cultivating and acting on a variety of ideas of what is a 'good society'; how do their visions differ from, and/or link to other contrasting conceptions of social change embedded and promoted by donors and their funding streams? In bringing organisations together, I was also interested in how youth-led CSOs are both creating opportunities for other young people to engage in the public sphere and interacting with broader societal questions.

B. 3 CSOs' dance with funding – in between the state and the market

For the purpose of this research, it is helpful to explore how the evolution of CSOs has been influenced by funding availability (or lack of).

The evolution of CSOs in Latin America mirrored international trends. In the 1980s and 1990s, the Washington Consensus promoted policies that limited the state's role and put more emphasis on the market. Neoliberalism implied cuts to public expenditure, and the withdrawal of state-provided services (Chang, 2002; Murray & Overton, 2011). As Vellinga (2010) summarizes:

> In all of Latin America, liberalisation became the issue. The economy had to be governed by the market. Trade barriers had to be eliminated, protectionist practices scrapped, conditions for foreign investment liberalized. The role of the state was reduced, those institutions serving state-led development dismantled, state enterprises privatized. (p. 96)

This transition towards market economies in the region coexisted with "deep social inequalities disproportionately affecting women, youth, indigenous people, rural populations, and afro-descendants; high social conflict; and mounting citizen security issues" (Pousadela & Cruz, 2016, p. 608).

As the state retreated, and inequality increased, the most vulnerable people in society—those that the market did not find it profitable to serve—were ignored. This scenario meant that, as Dinerstein (2014) suggests, in these

decades Latin America became, paradoxically, "a laboratory for both the neoliberal experiment and experimentations in resistance against it" (p. 13-14).

Meanwhile, Gramsci's view on civil society was appropriated by those struggling against dictatorships in Eastern Europe and Latin America (Chandhoke, 2007; Ehrenberg, 1999). In Eastern European countries, civic engagement was understood as a tool of emancipation, which arguably played a significant role in the fall of the Soviet Union (ibid). Civil society was also promoted across Latin America as a way to contest and prevent the rise of authoritarianism (Carter, 2010; Norbert, 1994). As Edwards and Hulme (1996) explain, CSOs were regarded as an essential counterweight to state power, opening up channels of communication and participation, providing a training ground for activists, and promoting pluralism.

Moreover, CSOs were regarded, at least by some, as more efficient in delivering services than governments (Bebbington & Riddell, 1995). International development cooperation invested in CSOs: by *strengthening* civil society, international donors meant to contribute to the processes of democratisation and liberalisation, which were seen as crucial for poverty reduction, while counterbalancing, if not replacing, states that were often considered weak and corrupt (James, 1994; Pearce, 1997).

According to Carroll and Jarvis (2015), development actors such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund focused on CSOs as a way to mitigate neoliberalism's "internal contradictions"; they did so by "generating a political imperative to co-opt, coerce, and internalise the agency of civil society and redirect it in a way that supports social reproduction and the legitimisation of neoliberalism" (Carroll & Jarvis, 2015, p. 282). Critics point out that CSOs are too close to the international aid chain to represent resistance to neoliberalism (Banks et al., 2015). Through funding dependency, CSOs became an arm of the neoliberal project by implementing donors' agendas, following the buzzwords and the money (Carroll & Jarvis, 2015).

The proliferation of CSOs in the 1990s and 2000s is connected to this availability of funding. However, the dependency on external funding was also regarded as the "Achilles heel" of CSOs (Edwards & Hulme, 1997, p.13). The implications of this dependency were several. CSOs were criticised for becoming larger and more professionalized, accountable to their donors more than to

their constituency, following foreign agendas, and becoming simple contractors of foreign governments (Banks & Hulme, 2012; Bebbington et al., 2008; Clayton, Oakley, & Taylor, 2010). In Feldman's (1997) words:

> By the early 1980s, donor assistance had turned private voluntary organisations into development agencies, recasting their challenge and raising anew the question of the meaning of civil society. (p. 63)

Yet, by the late 1990s, the ideologies of the Washington Consensus and the neoliberal policies that had been integrated through structural adjustment programmes (SAPs) were widely criticised. Most of all, the international community realised that the state had been stripped of its capacity to direct development efforts (Banks & Hulme, 2012). The comeback of the state was vindicated through the Paris Declaration in 2005 (Dabelstein, 2013), in which the state was acknowledged as an important development actor if development were to be less piecemeal and fragmented. Throughout the 2000s, aid grew but a bigger percentage of it was directed through the public sector (Dabelstein, 2013).

In the context of Latin America in general, and in Medellin in particular, a lively ecosystem of CSOs was seen as a requirement if the state was to be legitimate (Carter, 2010; Norbert, 1994; Romero, 2012). Starting from the 2000s, public sector became a more important funding source for CSOs than international cooperation (Ortega & Villamarín, 2009). This new, close relationship came along with another long list of challenges. The relationship between CSOs and the state is controversial for those who, like Dabhi (2005), believe that:

> Above all, civil society must support, challenge, and ensure that government is transparent and accountable, acts responsibly towards the vulnerable, marginalised and excluded groups and communities, and upholds human rights such as the right to education, health, employment and dignity. (p. 35)

In the literature, the growing role of the state as a donor has been associated with a trend towards CSOs becoming increasingly depoliticised (Bloodgood & Tremblay-Boire, 2017; Atia & Herrold, 2018). Parades (2008) studied how different Colombian presidents between 1994 and 2006 related to CSOs, and found the approach was highly instrumental. For Parades (2008),

CSOs become an arm of state intervention, a way of reaching deeper into society on an arms-length basis.

In the last two decades, despite the widespread criticisms of neoliberal development theories, the practices associated with these theories have been consolidated into the fabric of society. Carroll and Jarvis (2015) divide neoliberalism into three eras: the Washington Consensus, post-Washington Consensus—in which CSOs were seen as partners—and the current period, which they refer to as deep-marketisation. In the current era, political agendas continue pushing towards "the commodification of everything" (Harvey, 2006), and this becomes increasingly normalised in everyday actions (Millward-Hopkins, 2017; Salvatore & Massimo, 2016). Such normalisation is probably the defining characteristic of neoliberalism, which transforms structural power from "a contingent and contestable accomplishment to a seemingly permanent reality, within which market-driven politics holds sway" (Leys, 2001, as cited in William, 2007, p. 37). The era of deep-marketisation is characterised by attention towards "creating 'enabling environments' that support market building, and which utilise predominantly private capital to fund development" (Carroll & Jarvis, 2015, p. 295).

The literature discusses how the public sector also behaves within a neoliberal worldview: the state has been sharing responsibility such as policy-making and implementation with non-state actors, and increasingly with for-profit companies. Ortega and Villamarín (2009) explain how, as Colombia became integrated in the global market, and considering state decentralisation and civil society fragmentation, the state increasingly internalised the logic of the market.

For example, Steele and Shapiro (2017) document governments and international donors 'subcontracting state building' to private sector companies. In the case of Colombia, USAID, in partnership with the Colombian government, directs large contracts aimed at state building to private sectors. Such intermediaries, as Steele and Shapiro (2017) argue, "are not the appropriate actor for establishing links between citizens and states. Indeed, they turn out to substitute for the state rather than prompt its development" (p. 899).

The way state subcontracting works is controversial even when the state works with CSOs rather than private sector companies. Kutay (2014) explains how governments' close relationship to CSOs has come along with the proliferation of managerialism amongst CSOs. He explains how CSOs are captured by public administrations and market forces. In his words:

> The functional differentiation between the state, the market, and civil society is blurred at an organisational level because of their coupling through managerialism. (p. 261)

According to this argument, the type of CSOs that are willing to engage with such practices get promoted, while other ways of knowing and doing are excluded. Those organisations that work within the given framework are further legitimized, a process that side-lines more progressive social movements (Feldman, 1997; Kutay, 2014).

What has this meant for small and progressive CSOs? In the last decade, funding available to CSOs shrank, leaving small and progressive CSOs with the challenge of getting creative, and reinventing themselves (Elbers & Arts, 2011; Longhurst, 2016). It is not surprising that sustainability is high on CSOs' agenda.

In Europe and North America, the debates suggest CSOs need to reinvent themselves to be more business-like. As an article published in the Guardian stresses in addressing CSOs: "If we are going to respond to the challenges of the future effectively, we must rethink how we operate" (Ohs, 2015). CSOs must "learn the language of businesses" to be competitive; they should start thinking of themselves as "not-for-profit businesses". This is controversial (if not a non-sequitur). The most voted comment under the articles starts: "I disagree", with the commenter suggesting that "turning charities into businesses is likely to result in turning charitable acts into nothing but exercises in marketing and PR" and concluding that "turning the voluntary sector into economics has moral implications" (comment to the article by Ohs, 2015).

In Southern countries, CSOs are even more susceptible to funding scarcity and have less proximity to donors' priorities. In a multiyear study on Southern CSOs, Ward (2016) found that CSOs in the South are facing a phase of rapid change. The term *disruption*, which originated within the business management community, has entered the development jargon: "CSOs will often

need to be agile", finds Ward (2016). Yet flexibility is difficult, given that, like Watkins, Swidler, & Hannan (2012) emphasise, the funding chain between donors and grassroots CSOs can be long, with big organisations getting the fattest slice of funding, and local CSOs left with "smaller amounts to do the work of actually implementing the donors' vision in local communities" (Watkins et al., 2012, p. 287-288). The literature points out that there is an imbalance of power between Northern and Southern CSOs, and the partnerships "tend to be highly unequal, balanced heavily in favour of those with the funding and resources" (Bank & Hulme, 2012, p. 4).

In a recent issue of the journal *Development in Practice* dedicated to Civil Society Sustainability, Pousadela and Cruz (2016) review the historical patterns of CSOs sustainability in Latin America. They explain how, since Latin America is now regarded as a middle-income region, international donors have started to pull out cooperation funding. This change in ranking has implications: "Sudden reductions of financial support by traditional cooperating agencies are currently threatening the survival of the civil society institutional framework built around international aid flows" (Pousadela and Cruz, 2016, p. 612). Meanwhile, the majority of funding that still reaches the region goes towards government rather than CSOs. Pousadela and Cruz (2016) point out that this also limits the freedom of CSOs:

> Dependence on the state as a funding source tends to reduce the autonomy of civil society to play its vital role in advocating for rights and criticising, denouncing, and forcing the powerful to account for their actions, either because CSOs tend to align ideologically with the hand that feeds them (or are overlooked if they do not), or because they are driven to unilaterally emphasise technical knowhow and compete for government contracts with other CSOs (and even with private companies). (p. 611)

Most significantly, funding opportunities available in the region, either coming from the state, multilateral agencies, or corporate foundations, have something in common: "They are unlikely to devote resources to institutional strengthening or collective learning processes" (Pousadela & Cruz, 2016, p. 615). Pousadela and Cruz (2016) conclude that financial sustainability might be the most urgent challenge of CSOs in Latin America. CSOs are under increasing

pressure to find innovative ways to be sustainable, independently from donors; so, how do they reinvent themselves?

B. 4. Young people and civil society

Given the growing numbers of people aged 18 to 30 across the world, young people are now high on the international development agenda. The United Nations system, academics, and demographic studies have started referring to this phenomenon as the 'youth bulge', signalling that the percentage of young people in the world is currently at a record high. The same age group is also found to be increasingly disengaged from partisan politics (Urdal, 2006; UN, 2016). Furthermore, a 2015 baseline study by S4YE reports that "globally young people are up to four times more likely to be unemployed than adults" (Goldin, 2015).

In the past, young people where either overlooked or problematised. For example, in the context of Colombia, young people, especially young men, had been associated with crime and violence (Rodriguez, 2012). Through my work with Recrear, I have witnessed a shift in this rhetoric. The new attention on youth has been associated with a reframing of young people as untapped potential. The half dozen international conferences I have attended on youth-participation replicated the mantra: *young people are not the future, they are the present.*

Yet, seeing young people as an "untapped asset" is easier said than done. Youth participation remains mostly tokenistic. Despite the rhetoric around the importance of youth engagement, participation, and leadership, too often young people are seen as the beneficiaries of programmes that remain adult-centric. In fact, as Cornwall (2004) reminds, "having a voice clearly depends on more than getting a seat at the table" (p. 84); within *invited spaces* of participation, power dynamics remain at play. It remains hard for young people to participate substantively in decision making spaces. Elias (2017) explains the value of "demanding that institutional bodies, people, and processes recognise, react, and reform to integrate the inclusion of young, marginalised knowledge and participation" (Elias, 2017, p. 88). In fact, young people rarely get invited to the table and, when they do, they might be uncomfortable engaging with the

propositional way of knowing (knowing in conceptual terms) (Heron & Reason, 2008) favoured within formal spaces.

The current generation of young people is having to invent new ways of fitting within changing economic and political structures. On the one side, young people are disillusioned with traditional politics (Farthing, 2010). Moreover, because of the high unemployment rates, and the more flexible nature of the markets, most of the young people in the world can only dream of a stable job contract (ibid). Funding is therefore a challenge to meaningful youth participation mainly because, in their transition to adulthood, young people often need to sustain themselves (this need is much more urgent for young people in lower-income families).

Given the power imbalance that young people experience engaging with the formal system, it is not surprising that access to funding is an even more pressing issue for youth-led CSOs. A report by Rhise (2016) suggests that for youth-led organisations: "It all comes down to funding" (Dougherty et al., 2016). The study concludes that youth-led CSOs are in an even tougher position to obtain funding, because they might not be able to prove the credibility required to engage with large donors. Young people tend to have less ability to navigate the complexities and bureaucracies associated with funding applications and find it more frustrating to follow the agendas set by Northern donors (ibid). The study found that the limited accessibility of funding, which is dominated by a handful of major donors, makes it particularly inaccessible for youth-led initiatives to access resources: "Funding tends to be risk-averse, slow-flowing and offered to established organisations" (Dougherty et al., 2016, p. 54). It is not surprising that "grassroots organisations only receive 2% of available human rights funding and .02% of all development assistance" (ibid, p. 54).

 In this thesis, I am interested in the coexistence of two trends amongst young people. The first is a recognition that, despite losing interest in traditional politics, young people are finding new ways of participating in society. Farthing (2010) talks about young people being "radically unpolitical": young people are searching for new forms of actions, conceptions of politics, and arenas for participation. For example, they are turning to CSOs to gain relevant skills, give back to their communities, and meaningfully engage with their peers. The rates of volunteering amongst young people are on the rise. Dougherty et al. (2016)'s

study, which brought together data from six Northern countries, finds that there is "a clear disconnect between engagement opportunities currently available to youth and how youth leaders want to engage" (p. 6). The report points to a sort of invisible youth-leadership, that is inventing new ways of working together, but that is not recognised by the formal international development system. Further, it suggests youth leadership should not be looked for in an idealised, predefined form, but it should instead be seen and understood in the way it exists (ibid) – an intention that I set clear in this study.

The second trend, and one that is mainstream in the current development discourse, is entrepreneurship. Donors and international development actors are actively promoting the idea that anybody can be an entrepreneur (Bandinelli, 2013). The logic of promoting entrepreneurship amongst young people is simple: we know that there are not enough jobs, so why can't young people create new jobs for themselves? Bringing together fund scarcity in the civil society sector, high unemployment rates, and the desire to explore new ways of participation leaves young people with a challenge to reinvent their engagement with 'civil society'.

Finally, most youth-led organisations are small in size and budget. As part of recent UK research on "Civil Society Futures", Frost (2018) notices that studies on civil society tend to focus on large and medium CSOs; however, he finds that small organisations behave differently, including in the way they engage with funding. In short, there are reasons to think youth-led organisations might behave differently. Even if it might be sensible to imagine that small youth-led organisations in the South are both extremely vulnerable to the funding scarcity, and most likely to experiment and innovate, the experience of youth-led CSOs remains particularly under-explored. Here, I contribute to this research gap in civil society literature by clarifying how small, youth-led organisations engage with funding and by exploring the implications of such relationships for the evolution of civil society.

B. 5 Towards social entrepreneurship

As discussed above, the relationships between civil society, the state and market are shifting. Market logics have become more prominent within both the states' and CSOs' practices. Experimenting with income-generating activities is

one increasingly popular way for CSOs to navigate this changing context (Eikenberry & Kluver, 2004). Some CSOs have appropriated tools and approaches from the private sector and incorporated them into their management and routines (Lewis, 2001; Pinho, Rodrigues, & Dibb, 2014). More broadly, since the 1980s the field of non-profit management has been focused on integrating market approaches into CSOs (Jäger & Schröer, 2014; Martin & Osberg, 2007; Phills, Deiglmeier, & Miller, 2008).

While civil society adapted, the private sector has also changed. Neoliberal reforms weakened the state, empowering corporations to play a more significant role in policy processes; multinationals have expanded to developing markets creating private-public partnerships and working more closely with CSOs (O'Laughlin, 2008). In this environment, and as a response to growing public pressure, private companies have integrated Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programmes, articulating self-regulating strategies to frame their responsibility to, and to engage with, the public sphere (O'Laughlin, 2008). The enthusiasm for financial inclusion and microfinance opened a wave of literature on "bottom of the pyramid", which embraces the idea that it is possible to help the poor while being profitable (Prahalad & Hammond, 2002). These various ideas all converged around social entrepreneurship, which occupies a large, porous space between civil society and the private sector. In the interaction between the two, tools and approaches from the private sector are incorporated into the management and routines of CSOs.

In the literature social entrepreneurship remains a contested term. For example, there is a difference between social entrepreneurship and social enterprise and while the terms are often used interchangeably, they point to different things. Social entrepreneurship refers to the process of seizing opportunities, promoting a market-changing innovation and taking risks (Luke & Chu, 2013). Meanwhile, social enterprise refers to the institutional expression of social entrepreneurship, which does not always embody this entrepreneurial zeal; a social enterprise is an organisation that exists for a social purpose and fulfils its mission through market-based techniques (ibid). The challenge of defining these terms relates to the fact that the meanings associated with social entrepreneurship vary considerably by geographical regions, and in relation to

political inclinations: social entrepreneurship is not the same thing for everybody, everywhere.

Broadly, social entrepreneurship refers to activities intended to address social goals by operating in the marketplace (Young, 2008). The concept has become a buzzword: donors, policymakers, business schools, and development practitioners all share a fascination with it. Social entrepreneurship promises "the best of both worlds". It suggests the efficiency and boldness of the private sector and the *do-good* of civil society – all coated with ideas of innovation and strategically embracing emerging opportunities. As such, it has been regarded as a strategic antidote to the crisis of CSOs (Dart, 2004). In this context, states, multilateral donors, and philanthropic foundations in the last decade have made considerable investments to promote social entrepreneurship (Bandinelli, 2013). It is also relevant to observe that young leaders, who might have traditionally opted for acting through a traditional CSO, find the concept of social entrepreneurship increasingly attractive (Pompa, 2016). This would make sense, given their struggle with unemployment and considering the shrinking funding for CSOs discussed in the previous section.

B.7 Understanding social entrepreneurship through three metaphors

Below I will draw from three different metaphors[7] to explore diverse notions of social entrepreneurship: the social American dream, the spectrum, and the zoo.

The *social American dream*:

To answer the question "What is social entrepreneurship?", many philanthropists respond by focusing on social entrepreneurs. For example, the Skoll World Forum defines social entrepreneurs as: "society's change agents, creators of innovations that disrupt the status quo and transform our world".[8]

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[7] The metaphor of the spectrum is described by Nicholls (2010) while the metaphor of the zoo is presented in Young and Lecy (2014). The 'social American dream' is a term I adapted to capture a portion of the literature on social entrepreneurship which emphasises the role of the 'hero' entrepreneur.

[8] The Skoll World Forum is an online platform with news and information to 'accelerate entrepreneurial approaches and innovative solutions to the world's most pressing social issues'. http://skollworldforum.org/about/

Social enterprise enthusiasts rally around the 'epic' figure of the social entrepreneur, who, as defined on the website of the Schwab Foundation for Social Entrepreneurship, "pursues poverty alleviation goals with entrepreneurial zeal, business methods and the courage to innovate and overcome traditional practices". I am using the term *social American dream* even if it does not emerge explicitly in the literature because this conceptualisation of social entrepreneurship developed in North America and it emphasises the role of the self-made and *hero* entrepreneur (Nicholls, 2010).

This conception leads with the term *entrepreneurship*: "Any definition of the term 'social entrepreneurship' must start with the word 'entrepreneurship'. The word 'social' modifies entrepreneurship" (Martin & Osberg, 2007). Martin and Osberg (2007) stress that a key characteristic of an entrepreneur is the ability to identify opportunities and the willingness to take the risk to explore them: entrepreneurs promote large-scale, innovative, systemic and sustainable social change. In their words: "The entrepreneur does not try to optimise the current system with minor adjustments, but instead finds a wholly new way of approaching the problem" (Martin & Osberg, 2007).

The spectrum:

Imagine a continuum with two extremes: charities on one end and private businesses on the other (Nicholls, 2010). Everything in between the two extremes can be thought of as hybrid models, which create a combination of economic value and social value. This metaphor includes organisations that do not necessarily have the characteristics of systematic change makers, but that define themselves as social enterprises (Young & Lecy, 2014). For example, this metaphor encompasses those CSOs which have turned to marketisation to support their activities.

The Zoo:

Young and Lecy (2014) find existing metaphors static – not accounting for change over time, nor for the interaction between different players. They compare the social enterprise spectrum to a zoo, with different animals and species. They identify six types of animals with distinct characteristics: for-profit business corporations, social businesses, social cooperatives, commercial non-profit organisations, public-private partnerships, and hybrid organisations. Young and Lecy argue that the metaphor allows imagining the multiplicity of

organisational models and their dynamic interactions, from competition to complementarity.

These three metaphors are not mutually exclusive. Instead, each metaphor is useful to this study to understand a different feature of social entrepreneurship. For example, the first metaphor, which is preferred by philanthropists investing in social entrepreneurs, tends to highlight the role of individuals in taking bold initiatives. Its emphasis on the role of the individual seems to challenge the more collective nature of civil society action. The spectrum conveys the range of organisations by framing the concept of social enterprise between two extremes. This metaphor captures the essence of social entrepreneurship; it suggests that social and market goals are combined, to different extents. Finally, the idea of a zoo helps deepen the awareness that the social enterprise space is dynamic and diverse. Each animal will require a specific environment to thrive, and their evolution is context specific (each animal has its geographical origin).

Most importantly for my research, these metaphors make visible different attitudes and positions within the social entrepreneurship literature. The dilemma is: is a social enterprise a business with a social conscience, or a CSO that is financially sustainable? Within the "zoo" of social enterprises, there are surely examples of both. Jäger and Schröer (2014) compare the organisational identity of market and not-for-profit players; they bring forward the notion of *functional solidarity,* arguing for the existence of hybrid organisations whose identities "systematically integrate civil society and market" (p. 1,281). In this research, I ask if functional solidarity can be seen in the context of Medellin. How are organisational cultures taking shape around these evolving identities?

Jäger and Schröer's idea of functional solidarity is questioned in the literature. Those concerned with the status of civil society worry that marketisation might result in mission drift (Eikenberry & Kluver, 2004; Khieng & Dahles, 2015). To me, it is interesting to understand how social entrepreneurship practices are assimilated and used within CSOs. How does the mission of an organisation shift and adapt because of the need to find its place in the market? This is a fundamental question, given that many social entrepreneurs answer the dilemma 'what is social?' with employment and

poverty alleviation. As Sumberg and Okali (2013) argue in an analysis of youth entrepreneurship programmes in Ghana, if development is to imply social justice, it is necessary to consider the transformative role of entrepreneurship in changing structures and power relations (Sumberg & Okali, 2013).

Critics of social entrepreneurship stress that the concept of social entrepreneurship is itself problematic. The terms *social* and *entrepreneurship* are terms that evoke distinct cultures, sets of values, and worldviews (Jäger & Schröer, 2014). For Hyunbae Cho (2006), social entrepreneurship sounds like an oxymoron. Hyunbae Cho (2006) argues that the definition of social is too often taken for granted: defining what is social is intrinsically political. For this reason, Hyunbae Cho suggests that it is crucial for social enterprise stakeholders to "come explicitly to terms with the substantive and political value embedded in their actions" (Hyunbae Cho, 2006, p. 36).

How *social* modifies *entrepreneurship* is not obvious. Assuming the existence in the public sphere of conflicting interests, power dynamics, values and worldviews, "to speak of *the* social good may be to engage in the act of discursive marginalisation" and might impose a "false we" (ibid, p. 37). Moreover, the problem of "whose social" leads to the question: how does the subjective vision of the world embedded in social enterprise relate to "the need to engage in participatory deliberation to negotiate between conflicting visions of social transformation?" (Hyunbae Cho, 2006, p. 37). If the causes of social problems are structural and embedded in politics and power, and not in market failure, the risk is to put forward "cosmetically satisfying solutions" asking the "wrong questions" (ibid). In other words, the question is whether it is possible to transcend the problems that are created by neoliberal policies' reliance on the market by utilising the forces of the market itself.

What are the implications of this conception of social entrepreneurship being "exported" from North America through institutions like the Ashoka Foundation (Bandinelli, 2013)? Considering the interrelation between global, national, and local levels, how might the soft power of concepts such as social entrepreneurships impact local CSOs (Gaventa, 2006, 2010)? If discourses drive practice, and it is assumed ideas trickle down through funding availability and capacity building programmes, how is the rhetoric of social entrepreneurship influencing how young people engage with their communities in developing

countries? How does such rhetoric impact CSOs' vision of the world and their engagement with their communities? These questions are at the heart of this study.

B. 7 Civil society and social entrepreneurship in this research

In this section, I explain how I will relate to the concepts of civil society and social entrepreneurship in this research.

I am interested in civil society because I understand it as a space with the potential of articulating social transformation. In its most aspirational sense, civil society matters because, as Elshtain put it, it is "a sphere of our communal life in which we answer together the most important questions: what is our purpose, what is the right way to act, and what is the common good" (cited in Eikenberry & Kluver, 2004, p. 132). In the process of collectively answering these questions, it helps society "amplify care, compassion and hope" (Pratten, Pratten, Greenwood, Fenton, & Dinham, 2017, p. 12). I assume that social transformation is about altering power dynamics within society; as an analytical tool to observe power dynamics, I utilise the multidimensional approach to power developed by Gaventa (2006) and VeneKlasen and Miller (2002). I am particularly interested in how transformation of *power within* manifests within bodies, hearts, and minds of people and organisations.

I consider civil society an arena which can host more compassionate ways of being and relating to each other and in which people can deepen the quality of their human interaction and create synergy to allow for *power with* others, thus generating collaboration, and collective action (Gaventa, 2006). In facilitating a PAR process in which youth-led CSOs can explore their relationship with funding and culture, I am interested in observing (and in witnessing co-researchers observing) how social transformation manifests within their organisations.

I am interested in studying youth-leadership because I assume young people will have to deal with the consequences of the current crisis of civil society and will have to reinvent the concept. I understand youth as a phase of transition between childhood and adulthood that is creative, and rich with possibilities: a time of searching for meaning, identity, and belonging; a space in which society "seeks to attain its potential" (Honwana, 2012, p. 11) and in which,

as Foucault (1976) put it, society "hides its dreams" (cited in Honwana, 2012, p. 11). I assume that studying youth organisations could be therefore a way of peeking into the way civil society is evolving. I consider the contested and multiple definitions of civil society as outlined by Edwards (2014a) - I am interested in how young leaders in Medellin identify their specific organisational models.[9] In the same way, I inquire into how youth-led CSOs perceive themselves and their role in society. What are their visions of change? How do they understand their role towards achieving such views?

My intention with this study is to look at the experience and realities of youth CSOs. In fact, reviewing the literature, it seemed to me that in the rhetoric of CSOs as grassroots champions who will transform society, there is a tragic hero characterisation. CSOs are supposed to, in the words of the rapper Macklemore, "change the game, don't let the game change you" (Macklemore & Lewis, 2012, track 6). They are supposed to bring about transformational change, work closely with the community, and keep a safe distance from donors and governments to be independent. All of this in an unstable funding environment characterised by high levels of dependency, where funding might suddenly dry up (Lewis, 2001). How do the efforts by CSOs to become financially sustainable relate to their ability to "generate alternatives"?

I have suggested both civil society and the state have evolved in relation to neoliberal policies. I am interested in the way CSOs engage with their financial sustainability challenge because I have observed how the search for sustainability leads CSOs to engage with the paradoxes of neoliberalism. I understand social entrepreneurship partially as an institutional model that responds to the trend of deep-marketisation and is born out of neoliberal ideologies. I also appreciate it as a model that seeks to address the financial crisis of the social sector, and that might become increasingly attractive for young people that want to transform their dream job into their day job. I am

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[9] To avoid over-imposing any specific idea of what is regarded or not as a civil society organisation, during the application process co-researchers were asked to identify their CSO by selecting from a list of options including NGO, informal group, social enterprise, networks of young people, social movement, and other (see further details in Chapter 3).

interested in how youth-led processes with a robust social orientation might be moving along the spectrum, using market logic to achieve their mission, and how they might settle for a balance between the two. I inquire into how youth-led organisations interpret the concept of social entrepreneurship and utilise it to promote social transformation. In other words, I am interested in asking, "Are youth-led CSOs in Medellin interacting with the concept of social entrepreneurship?". If so, what is the meaning they assign to it? How are they navigating their funding challenges?

C. *Understanding CSOs through organisational culture*

The literature on civil society is primarily concerned with the role of CSOs in society. As discussed, civil society is composed of all sorts of diverse groups; the literature on organisational theory is insightful when it comes to an understanding of how organisations, from within, might navigate the "existential crisis" that I described in the previous section. Moreover, given that organisations mediate most aspects of modern life, and our way of organising has evolved along with different stages of consciousness (Laloux, 2014), the focus on organisations provides a lens into the worldviews that drive institutions and groups. In this sense, exploring the way organisations function can generate a more profound reflection on current social dynamics and development paths (Grey, 2008; Pérez-Díaz, 2014).

Within organisational theory, I am interested in the concept of culture. I understand organisational culture as the bundle of ideas, norms and habits within an organisation; culture is something that can be perceived and felt, but not easily defined (Handy, 1999). To explain how culture matters, I find it useful to think of the idea of *prana*, the Sanskrit word for 'life force'. According to the yoga tradition, *prana* is the connecting link between the material world, our consciousness and the mind (Maheshwarananda, 2000). We all experience *prana*: imagine the feeling of entering a room full of happy people, versus that of entering a room with high levels of stress. Like *prana*, culture can be thought of as the life force of an organisation. Culture matters because it influences, and is in turn influenced by, people's behaviours, assumptions, and the way they draw conclusions based on observations (Pinho et al., 2014).

Schein depicts organisational culture as an onion with three different layers (Schein, 2004, 2010). In the outer layer are artefacts which are the visible features of an organisation such as its branding, or the way its office might be arranged. One layer below artefacts lay espoused values and beliefs. Schein (2010) suggests that to understand this second layer it is useful to ask questions about the meanings behind artefacts. Inquiring into artefacts will make apparent those values and beliefs that are taken for granted and widely shared within the organisation. Hidden in the third layer of the onion are a set of underlying assumptions, which belong to the sub-conscious of an organisation and are held by individuals. These assumptions, as Schein (2004) puts it, form the DNA of an organisation.

In the private sector, culture has long been associated with a firm's performance and results, catching the attention of both business gurus and academics (Lewis, 2001). If seen as a lens through which an organisation understands the world, organisational culture impacts "the firm's choice of outcomes and, second, the means to achieve these outcomes, including organisational structure and processes" (Moorman, 1995, p. 320). Along these lines, many businesses ask themselves what type of organisational culture leads to better results. Handy (1999) argues that there is no better culture. Instead, different cultures are appropriate to different types of organisations, and different goals. His analysis of the relationship between goals and culture centres around how much, how quickly, and with how much risk firms plan to profit. While Handy's focus is on for-profit business, his observation that an organisation's goals and culture are interrelated is critically important to this study: goals influence culture, and are influenced by it, argues Handy (1999).

I am particularly interested in how the organisational culture of youth-led CSOs in Medellin might be influenced by funding, and how this might interact with CSOs' types of outcomes and approaches towards social change. As previously discussed, management theories in the civil society sector have mirrored and borrowed from the private sector. The Minnesota Council of Non-Profits (2014) argues this can be problematic:

> Non-profit organisations are different from business and government. One would reasonably expect to manage and govern them differently. However, in the absence of a general framework for non-profit

management, third sector organisations are under persistent pressure to look like something else. (NonProfitQuartely, 2015)

What are the implications of developing organisational cultures that resemble those in the private sector, given that CSOs ultimately seek to achieve different outcomes? This is an essential question at the heart of the debate I am exploring. I have argued CSOs cannot afford to ignore the sustainability challenge, and therefore they are learning from the private sector, whose *raison d'être* has traditionally been that of generating profit. However, if this goal of profitability influences culture, and if culture influences goals, there seems to be a blind spot in understanding how the culture of CSOs influences their work. The management literature does not provide a satisfying answer to this question. This is partially because the majority of the literature on organisational culture is based on studies carried out in the private sector, often among large firms and in the global North.

The literature recognises that organisational culture does not exist in isolation. Hofstede (1980) explains that the culture of an organisation "reflects national culture, professional subculture, and the organisation's history" (Hofstede, 1980, p. 27). In other words, organisational culture cannot be separated from its context; it fits within broader cultural discourses. Culture is never static: it is socially constructed as people negotiate their values and actions in relation to the changing environment and new ideas (Maraña, 2010). While organisational culture changes, certain aspects of culture are easier to change than others: symbols are easier to change than values, which are more profoundly embedded within an organisation, and more constant (Waisfisz, 2002).

A range of theories have framed the relationship between national culture and organisational culture. Cultural anthropology and management have both engaged with organisational culture, but have developed two parallel theories, which Allaire and Firsirotu (1984) compare and try to integrate. Each theory highlights different aspects and, not surprisingly, they provide different insight into organisational culture. According to Allaire and Firsirotu, from a structural functionalist perspective, organisations interact with their environment around specific goals, purposes and needs. For this reason, scholars associated with this school argue that organisational culture is never

disconnected from the social system of which it is a part (ibid). In this sense, organisations are sub-value systems of a higher-order one (Allaire and Firsirotu, 1984). This is to say, change in values and priorities in society permeate organisations: such an organisation-society interrelation is "necessary to the legitimation of the organisation's goal and activities" (Allaire & Firsirotu, 1984, p. 183-226).

Hatch and Schultz (1997) argue that framing organisational culture as something created within an institution is not helpful. They explain that the separation between internal functioning and external relations is blurred within organisations (Hatch & Schultz, 1997); they stress that organisational culture is open to external influences. The ecological-adaptations school suggests that society's values are only one of the factors that shape organisational culture (Allaire and Firsirotu, 1984). This suggests that organisations might therefore diverge from the system of which they are a part. Culture, for them, is a mechanism for survival and adaptation in a changing environment; thus, organisations experience a "never-ending quest for fit in equilibrium between an organisation and its environment" (Baumüller, 2007, p. 132).

Linking the two schools together, it emerges that, on the one hand, organisations can embody society's cultural norms. This would suggest that scrutinising trends in organisational culture could provide a window into broader cultural trends, as I have indicated. On the other hand, culture can be used by organisations as an instrument to navigate, negotiate and shape their changing environment. Through learning and feedback loops, CSOs develop their cultures. Therefore, here I consider that organisations are continually managing a careful balancing act between their environment and their unique culture. This study inquiries into how funding interacts with such a balancing act. Given that this might be context specific, I made a conscious effort to understand the cultural context of Medellin; the interaction between local cultures, the cultures of the youth-sector, and that of the CSOs represented by the co-researchers were topics of regular discussion during the cooperative inquiry meetings.

Assuming that culture develops in a relational way to the environment, it is also sensible to believe that there is a cultural exchange between donors and organisations. Scholars have highlighted a tension between the ability of CSOs

to be close to their communities, and simultaneously satisfy their donors (Elbers & Arts, 2011; Bank & Hulme, 2012). For example, donors and partners might recommend "best practices", such as reporting or evaluation frameworks. Elbers and Arts (2011) discuss how CSOs might use strategies of portraying, avoiding, influencing and buffering to manage their relationship with donors. Are CSOs managing donors' relationships and practices without being changed by them? Given the power imbalance between youth-led CSOs and their donors, how are CSOs able to influence the culture of donors?

I have argued that organisations are under pressure to increase their market orientation and integrate more management tools to professionalise (Lewis, 2001). This has implications for organisational culture. Pinho et al. (2014) studied the connection between market orientation, organisational culture and organisational performance in the non-profit healthcare sector in Portugal. They conclude that market orientation promotes organisational commitment and performance. The logic behind this is that, in developing a market-oriented culture, the organisation rallies around the common goal of delivering superior customer value. Among scholars who study the private sector, there is general agreement about the positive relationship between market orientation and a strong organisational culture. This being said, the notions of client and superior customer value are highly controversial; seeing communities as clients clashes with a vision of development that portrays CSOs as empowering and transformative actors (Eikenberry & Kluver, 2004). How is this need to engage with market forces changing the cultures of youth-led CSOs?

Lewis (2003) argues that using the lens of organisational culture can help highlight the interaction between power, agency, and structure: it is an invitation to pay attention to the way groups construct meaning, negotiate values, interact with actors, and engage with development trends. In sum, one of the assumptions that underpins my research is that the exchanges and interactions with different actors imply a cultural encounter and dialogue, which might influence CSOs organisational culture; culture develops and adapts as CSOs interact with a changing world (Khieng & Dahles, 2015). The symbolic context within which CSOs operate is shaped by relationships with volunteers/employees, donors, communities and partners. Reflecting the above

discussion, Figure 2 summarises some of the interactions that might influence the organisational culture of CSOs.
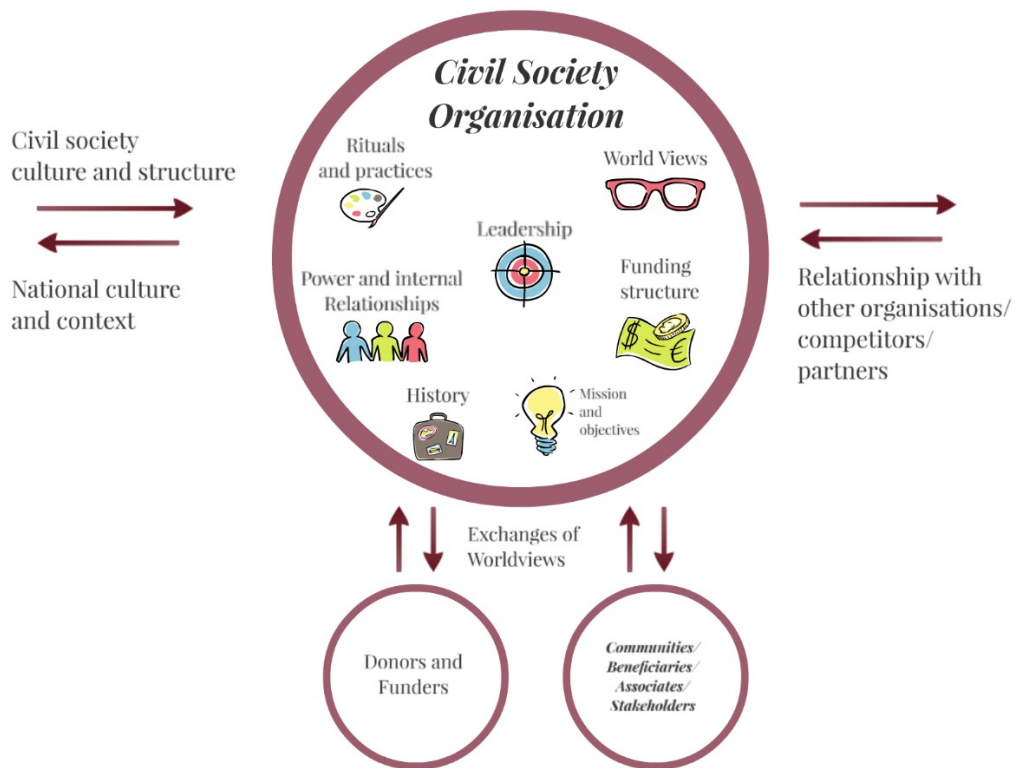
Figure 1: Elements that I expect might influence the organisational culture of CSOs.

Figure 1 shows that, in conversation with donors and communities, CSOs might constantly enxchange and evolve their worldviews. Their culture might be influced by national culture, as well as the culture of the civil society sector. Organisational culture includes worldviews, which are articulated through leaderships styles, the types of internal relationships, and relationships with other organisations such as partners. It evolves as part of an organisation's history and in relation to the organisation's specific missions and objectives; it is expressed and consolidated through rituals and practices. Finally, funding structures might interact with all of these elements. Looking at the role of funding in the construction of culture is of particular interest for this study.

C.1 The role of leadership in culture

While theorists take radically different approaches towards organisational culture, there is a consensus on the importance of leadership as critical for shaping, changing, and communicating organisational culture (Schein 2004; Sarros, Cooper, & Santora, 2011). Scholars emphasise that leaders are in a strategic position to influence culture, which in turn responds to leadership styles. The tone, vision, and practices of an organisation's leadership can affect employees' value systems, increasing motivation and encouraging creative thinking (McMurray, Pirola-Merlo, Sarros, & Islam, 2010). This being said, Martin and Siehl (1983) underline that "organisational cultures are composed of various interlocking, nested, sometimes conflicting subcultures" (p. 52-64). This might be particularly true for bigger organisations; nevertheless, Schein (1985) suggests that the meanings, ideas, and values communicated by the leadership will lead to a strong sense of direction and priorities shared broadly within the organisation. In fact, according to Laloux (2014), consciously or unconsciously, "leaders put in place organisational structures, practices, and cultures that make sense to them, that correspond to their way of dealing with the world" (p. 41).

Studying the leadership experiences of social change organisations in the United States, Ospina and Foldy (2010) have a different perspective on leadership and its relationship to organisational culture. They argue for what they call a 'post-heroic' approach to leadership (ibid). Pointing out that leadership has been studied predominately in profit-driven contexts, they find a more fluid and diffused leadership style in social change organisations. Most importantly, they argue that leadership is a relational process, which undermines the idea of strong leaders- able to impact organisational culture singlehandedly. Instead, they frame leadership as a space in-between, in which different individuals, their world-views, and the practices they implement interact.

Ospina and Foldy's work is relevant to this study because it highlights that the motivation for leadership is deeply rooted in values. Such values, they argue, are in constant dialogue with practices. This study pays attention to the worldviews that are behind the work of CSOs, and how they interact with practices, such as funding mechanisms, to shape culture. They define the

specific worldview held by social change organisations in the United States as "grounded humanism", which reflects an appreciation of human diversity, based on awareness of the role power dynamics within social structures (Ospina & Foldy, 2010). Given that Ospina and Foldy's research was carried out in the United States, I expect to find a different set of values underlying the work of youth-led CSOs in Medellin. Moreover, adopting their notion that leadership is relational, it might follow that funding dynamics influence the quality of organisational relationships (at the inter- and intra-organisational level).

What is most valuable about Ospina and Foldy's work, is that they argue that leadership should be seen as extending beyond what leaders do. In this sense, observing practices is not enough if the goal is to understand the meaning behind them. Scharmer (2016) follows a similar direction suggesting that the blind spot of leadership research is the source from which the doing emerges. Scharmer argues leadership is an embodied experience. He suggests that to understand leadership we must move from object to source: we have studied what leaders do and how they do it, but we are still not aware of the inner place, the source from which leaders operate (Scharmer, 2016). Inquiring into what is the source that drives leaders moves the discussion beyond the values that leaders hold.

C.2 'Presencing' organisational culture

Organisations as we know them today are simply the expression of our current world-view, our current stage of development.
(Laloux, 2014, p. 15)

In the book *Change the Story, Change the Future*, Korten (2015) argues that real societal transformation will come through a complete reconceptualisation of the stories we tell ourselves. To promote real change, we must transform our worldviews and the set of stories and premises that we believe are true. The process of changing the story, he argues, will involve a drastic change in how society understands the economy. Korten (2015) suggests that a critical aspect of this shift will be in how we tell the story about money being "sacred" and more important to our wellbeing than the quality of our

relationships, and our harmony with nature. He argues we are currently acting like six blind people touching different parts of an elephant but being unable to understand what the elephant is as a whole. To understand the nature of an elephant, we need to go beyond the physical and material: our way of thinking is blind to the elephant's "internal essence" (Korten, 2015).

Instead, he presents the narrative of "the living universe". The essence of this story is a different relationship with the Earth which involves recognising the life of the planet and an understanding that "our future depends on learning to organise in co-productive partnership with Earth's biosphere" (Korten, 2015, p. 18). The story also taps into contemporary cognitive science suggesting "the human brain evolved to reward cooperation, service, and compassion" (ibid, p. 12). Humans activate their intelligence in connection to each other: we are meant to co-evolve and co-create and we possess a distributed agency meaning that "our multiple interlinked minds have capabilities inherently greater than those of a single mind" (Korten, 2015, p. 13).

Similar ideas are reflected in the ongoing research by Otto Scharmer (2016), at the Presencing Institute of MIT, who speaks about the need for "sensing" and "co-sensing" to "lead from our emerging self". Theory U, which Scharmer popularised through a Massive Online Open Course (MOOC), invites individuals to be mindful of the quality of awareness and attention that they operate from. Scharmer argues that the quality of results in a social system is a function of such attention. The implication is that the profound transformations in society will need to be rooted in individual's transformation.

Korten and Scharmer are not isolated examples of a growing interest in consciousness applied to management and understandings of development. According to Laloux (2014), this paradigm responds to a crisis in management tied to the inability of the modern organisation to embrace people in their wholeness. Laloux calls the most widespread organisational model the "orange organisations": an organisation in which "rationality is valued above all else; emotions, doubts, and dreams are best kept behind a mask, so that we do not make ourselves vulnerable" (p. 28). Laloux claims that we have reached a tipping point in our consciousness that is allowing us to move into a new phase of development, and therefore of management. He studied 12 organisations that he considered to be functioning in this new way, and which he suggested are

able to embody the "next stage in the evolution of human consciousness" (p. 37). He identifies three breakthroughs: 1) self-organisation and self-management (instead of imposing hierarchies or having bosses), 2) striving for wholeness (instead of showing a professional self), and 3) evolutionary purpose (instead of traditional strategic planning, organisations are trained to "listen" to their "evolutionary purpose" and focus on broader goals instead of concentrating on outdoing competitors).

Scharmer, Laloux, and Korten speak of "ego", suggesting that the shift of consciousness is possible when we disentangle and stop identifying with our ego. By replacing fear with trust, our compass moves from outside to inside, deeper within ourselves, where individuals are more concerned about our "inner rightness" in the pursuit of a life well-lived, rather than success (Laloux, 2014). Scharmer (2003) suggests that a mindset shift will be required for individuals to expand their awareness from themselves to the whole system- the "social field", as he calls it. He describes this field as the "subtle territory of social reality creation" (p. 3). Pulling from agriculture, he suggests that "the quality of the yield—the visible result—is a function of the quality of the soil, of those elements of the field that are invisible to the eye" (p. 3).

I find this body of literature noteworthy because it links individual and collective processes, explaining why we perpetuate the systems of injustice and inequality dictated by neoliberal logic. This being said, this literature is coming out of Western universities and gaining traction in the private sector. For example, Laloux's (2014) 12 cases focus on organisations with more than 100 employees; would this understanding be useful to youth-led CSOs in the South struggling for financial sustainability in challenging scenarios?

The idea that quality of the internal relationships will affect the outcomes of an organisation was also explored in the setting of social organisations. Organisation Unbound researches social purpose organisations; in an article in *The Stanford Social Innovation Review,* Nilsson & Paddock (2014) describe the practice of *inscaping*, defined as "surfacing the inner experiences of organisational members during the normal course of everyday work" (online). The article cites a Rockefeller Foundation review that concluded that "continuous innovation in the social sector is highly under-researched" (Seelos & Mair, 2012, p. 2) and stresses that social innovation is "about changing the

underlying beliefs and relationships that structure the world" (online). In this sense, *inscaping* tries to link the inner practices of organisations to their effectiveness in the world. It suggests that organisations that are committed to social causes should value the quality and honesty of their internal relationships first of all.

Nilsson and Paddock (2014) argue that when organisational members can bring their full selves to work, their connection to the organisation's purpose deepens. They begin to connect to it not just conceptually or strategically, but experientially. As this happens, over time the organisation becomes a living expression of its purpose, with an increased capacity for innovation and impact.

C.3 Prefiguration

A similar consideration for the experiential is also emphasised by the idea of *prefiguration*, a concept discussed in social movement theory, and popular amongst New Left movements. Defined as a "direct theory" that "theorises through action, through doing" (Maeckelbergh, 2011), prefiguration assumes that ends and means are inseparable. Prefigurative politics wants to "create and sustain within the live practice of the movement, relationships and political forms that prefigured and embodied the desired society" (cited in Engler, 2014, online). While *inscaping* recognises an interdependence between the internal functioning of an organisation and its impact, prefiguration points to a temporal connection: it suggests that by embodying the society we envision in the now, we work towards materialising such future vision. In Maeckelbergh's (2011) words:

> Practicing prefigurative politics means removing the temporal distinction between the struggle in the present and a goal in the future; instead, the struggle and the goal, the real and the ideal, become one in the present. (Maeckelbergh, 2011, p. 4)

Prefiguration implies a transformation in how we do things because it is:

> A practice through which movements' actors create a conflation of their ends and their means. It is an enactment of the ultimate values of an ideal society within the very means of struggle for that society. (Maeckelbergh, 2012, p. 2)

Studying the autonomous movements in Latin America, Dinerstein (2015) defines prefiguration as a process of learning hope. Recalling Levitas's argument that we need to take utopia seriously, she discusses the art of organising hope as an inquiry towards "What could we be that we are not yet", rather than "What could we be that we are not" (Dinerstein, 2014, p. 227). She points to the experimental nature of prefiguration: the manifestation of different narratives of change will be hard, and by nature will require experimentation, trial, and error.

In line with these new ideas as part of the management literature, and inspired by the concept of prefiguration, this study assumes that the culture of an organisation affects its potential to contribute to social transformation. Without a transformational culture, CSOs might be merely deepening and perpetuating unequal and unsustainable development (Nilsson & Paddock, 2014). A CSO will not be transformational if its culture does not embody a compelling narrative of change, vision of the world, and moral compass. But how do funding mechanisms contribute to the organisational culture of CSOs? To my knowledge, this is not well-understood. Given that funding is a significant concern for CSOs, I am to respond to this research gap through exploring how funding mechanisms link to the organisational culture of CSOs.

D. Conclusion

This chapter frames this research within the academic literature and highlights the critical gaps that it seeks to fill. I start the chapter reviewing literature on the concept of civil society, showing that the understanding of civil society is contested and political. I also show that the emergence of CSOs as they are today cannot be separated from neoliberal policies.

I argue that CSOs currently experience a phase of disruption and that funding dependency is at the core of this moment of "existential crisis" and potential transformation. In this study, I seek to understand how CSOs in Medellin are engaging with CSOs' existential crisis. This research proposes to understand the engagement with such crisis from within, by studying the culture of youth-led CSOs in Medellin. I suggest that the link between funding mechanisms and culture in CSOs is under-explored by management literature that tends to focus on large for-profit corporations. In response, I explore

youth-led CSOs' experiences to analyse whether and how financial mechanisms generate narratives, symbols, and structures which then permeate organisational cultures. The next chapter outlines my methodology. Chapters 4, 5, 6, and 7 present my empirical work; I will refer back to this chapter to anchor my final discussion in chapter 9.

Chapter 3: Methodology

A. *Introduction*

This chapter starts with an explanation of my research approach. A description of my research methodology and methods follows in part B. Part C recounts how I experienced the cooperative inquiry, sharing my perceptions and observations. Part D gives an overview of how I organised and analysed data; in part E, I spell out my positionality and examine the validity and ethics of the research.

I operationalised PAR through a cooperative inquiry to bring different organisational experiences in conversation with each other. Reason and Bradbury (2008) describe a cooperative inquiry as a "form of second-person action research in which all participants work together in an inquiry group as co-researchers and as co-subjects" (p. 366). Knowledge is generated by bringing into the same room different people, experiences, ideas and information, which, given the right alchemy, become tools for the group to perceive and surface narratives. The group dynamic can generate new approaches and strategies for collective action. Reason and Bradbury (2006) explain that:

> Second-person collaborative inquiry is something that has to be grown over time, moving from tentative beginning to full co-operation. Participatory action research is emergent and evolutionary: you cannot just (...) 'do it', but rather the work evolves (or does not). (p. 345)

While I had designed my methodology going into my fieldwork, the research took on a life of its own during the 13 months I spent in Medellin (see Figures 3 and 4 for a visual representation of the research activities).

I gained insight into how the co-researchers made sense of the process towards the end of my fieldwork when I asked them if they could describe the different phases of our research. After some discussion, they drew a flower on

the board. They illustrated the cooperative inquiry as composed of six separate but interconnected parts, illustrated by the petals: a moment for the establishment of trust, a moment to identify and describe, a moment to consolidate and define, a moment to reflect, a moment to generate knowledge, and a moment to socialise it. The flower is standing on the stem, on which they wrote: "the establishment of relationships of trust". They explained that what sustained the various phases of the research is trust, which nourished new synergies, which were then channelled by the group itself into profound reflections.

From my perspective, trust building (between myself and the group, but also between the various members of the group) was something we worked on tirelessly throughout the process. Over this time, it took on different rhythms. In the beginning, the only trust I had was towards the process. I was committed to staying with it and had no expectations. As the co-researchers got involved, the research became more dynamic, and the simple structure I had proposed was filled with improvisation, new meanings, and unplanned initiative.
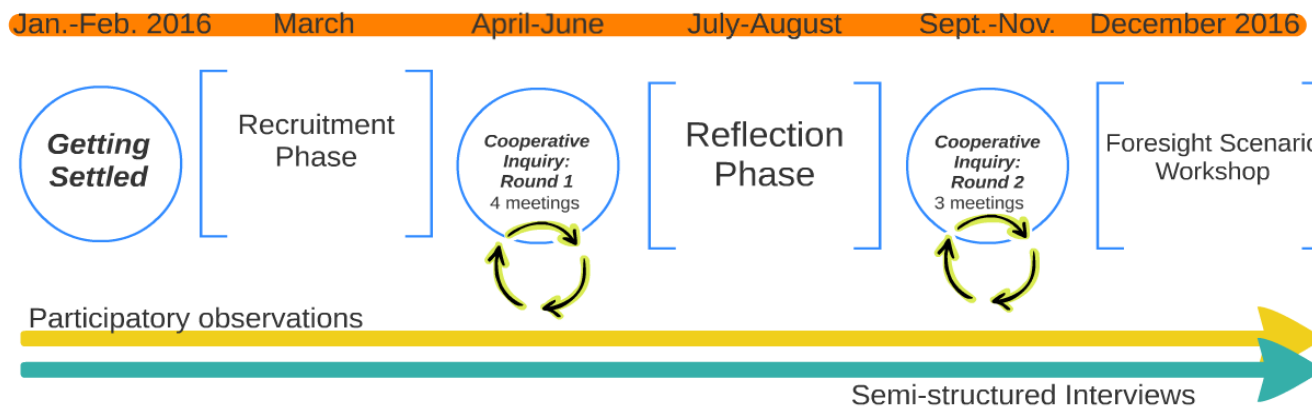
Figure 2: Fieldwork as I had initially planned and envisioned it.
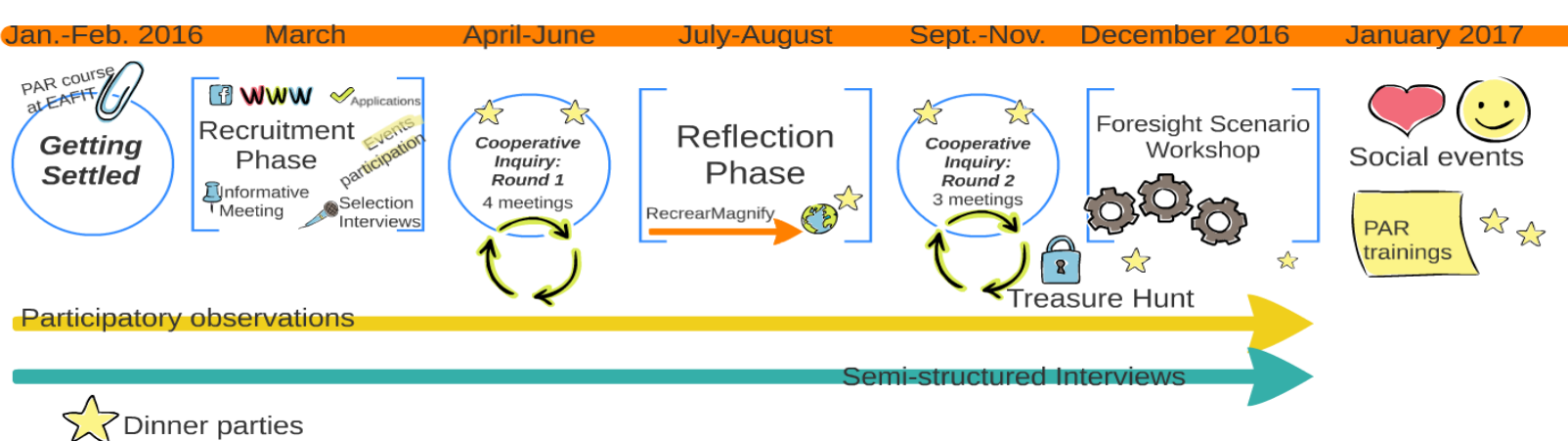
Figure 3: Fieldwork as it emerged. Additional research activities included: two PAR courses, a two-week conference, a treasure hunt to share research results, dinner parties, and other social events.

B. *From the research paradigm to methods*

Creswell (2013) suggests that all research exists within a specific worldview. It is crucial for researchers to make their paradigm explicit as this embodies their deep assumptions about the nature of reality, and the researcher's role in it – it is the philosophical foundation upon which the researcher can make claims to generating knowledge (Creswell, 2013). In choosing a research approach, Creswell (2013) suggests researchers need to engage with the research community by understanding the prevailing paradigms while being true to their inner-voice. In Prasad's (2005) words, a researcher's particular mode of inquiry should "match between their own intellectual preferences (…) so that they can develop a research style that is personally meaningful and simultaneously meets the standards of a wider academic community" (Prasad, 2005, p. 8).

In their seminal work, Guba and Lincoln (1994) identified four research paradigms: positivism, post-positivism, critical theory, and constructivist. Heron and Reason (1997) argued for the need to integrate a participatory paradigm, and subsequently, Guba and Lincoln (2005) included this as a fifth paradigm. The participatory paradigm, as articulated by Heron and Reason (1997), Reason (1996), and Guba and Lincoln (2005) resonates with my values and experience as a researcher.

The choice of the participatory paradigm as the foundation for this thesis has a number of implications. To the ontological question, "What is the nature of reality and, therefore, what is there that can be known about it?", this paradigm steps away from the idea that an objective reality exists in and of itself. It suggests instead that the nature of reality exists as our mind engages in a "co-created dance" between the researchers and the cosmos (Heron & Reason, 1997). If this is true, how can we claim to know something? Epistemologically, as the name suggests, the participatory paradigm recognises that "knowledge is created through socialising" (Machin-Mastromatteo, 2012, p. 573). Knowledge is co-constructed through collective reflection and action which facilitate peeling off different layers of separation between co-researchers (Guba & Lincoln, 2005).

To address my research question, I utilise PAR as the overarching methodology for this study. As described by Reason and Bradbury (2008), PAR

"seeks to create participative communities of inquiry in which qualities of engagement, curiosity and question posing are brought to bear on significant practical issues" (p. 1). Co-researchers should contribute to the analysis of issues and questions, apply methods, gain experiential knowledge on what they are researching and be able to represent their learning (Heron & Reason, 1997). Under the umbrella of PAR, I utilise a cooperative inquiry to bring different organisational experiences in conversation with each other. In short, a cooperative inquiry is "not research on people or about people, but research with people" (Reason & Bradbury, 2008, p. 366).

The cooperative inquiry I facilitated, *Plata, Cultura, y Cambio* (which translates to English as Money, Culture, and Change), brought together a group of 10 CSO leaders in Medellin in a collective learning process of reflection over their organisational culture and how they dealt with the need for financial sustainability. Over the course of 10 months, *Plata, Cultura, y Cambio* involved a series of week-long workshops and a two-day workshop. A range of events complemented this: two PAR courses, a two-week conference (RecrearMagnify), a treasure hunt to share research results, dinner parties, and other social events. The leaders from the organisations volunteered to take part in the research to create space in their work to reflect over their experience with financial sustainability. The cooperative inquiry process is the central organising structure of this research. It surfaced themes that we explored collectively, and on which I carried out further research as appropriate, using a selection of other methods. Overall, the process provided a window into the intimate realities and narratives of the organisations and individuals involved. This was meant to facilitate the exchange of knowledge important to their work and community. I discuss the process in part C of this chapter.

As part of the cooperative inquiry, we integrated activities meant to allow the emergence of different ways of knowing. Heron and Reason (1997) argue for an extended epistemology, suggesting that we can know about the world in four distinct ways: through experiential, presentational, propositional and practical knowledge (Heron & Reason, 1997). Propositional knowing refers to knowing in conceptual terms, usually produced by academia. Presentational knowledge refers to aesthetic forms of representation (such as drawing, music, poetry),

which contribute to the surfacing of deep-seated knowledge: the experiential. Experiential knowing means:

> Direct encounter, face-to-face meeting: feeling and imagining the presence of some energy, entity, person, place, process or thing. It is knowing through participative, empathic resonance with a being, so that as knower I feel both attuned with it and distinct from it. It is also the co-creative shaping of a world through mutual encounter. (Reason, 1998, p. 11-12).

Finally, practical knowledge is knowing how to do something; it completes other forms of knowing and is rooted in them (Reason, 1998).

To engage participants in different ways of knowing, the cooperative inquiry meetings integrated a range of activities including theatre, creative writing, mind mapping and rich picture, painting, video, photography, experiential education exercises, and the organisation of a public event. The team of co-researchers was open to engaging with creative activities and took initiatives in integrating poetry, storytelling, *trova*[10], graphic design, and dance. Throughout the rest of the thesis, I refer to and integrate the data generated through these creative activities, explaining how they contributed to the collective learning.

Beyond the cooperative inquiry, I also combined other research methods, namely: participant observation, semi-structured interviews, a foresight workshop, and an in-depth analysis of the culture of *Corporación Casa Mia*.

Participant observation:

To come closer to "feeling" the culture of the co-researchers' organisations, and to expose myself to CSOs in Medellin, I actively engaged with the organisations represented in the cooperative inquiry (Flick, 2014). Attending their workshops and events brought me closer to the work of co-researchers and helped me get a sense of their ways of doing things. With them, I took part in numerous activities (including talks, shows, get togethers, workshops, and dinner parties) and collaborated on specific projects. The participant observations offered a flavour of organisations' community

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10 *Trova* is a traditional rhythmic song utilised to share personal narratives.

relationships, group dynamics, and structure and decision-making processes. It also provided more in-depth insight into Medellin.

As part of my research, I also attended many events around the city. These ranged from a night festival organised by a cooperative of youth organisations, to meetings of storytellers in the park, community radio programmes, a locally organised TEDx Talk, organisational meetings, a "bazaar of trust", street parties, concerts, and organisational open houses. Taking part in the activities allowed me to get a better sense of the heartbeat of the city and learn about how different groups organised and coordinate activities. It also helped me to identify the themes and discourses that reoccurred in Medellin, so that I could triangulate them with the ones which came out during the cooperative inquiry. I took notes of my visits and, whenever possible and appropriate, I used my cell phone to take photos and make audio recordings.

Semi-structured interviews with key informants:

I conducted 59 semi-structured interviews (see Annex 1 for a description of the interviewees) with a range of different actors. I had no specific conversations identified before my arrival in Medellin. Initially, I snowballed contacts counting on the recommendations from the co-researchers: I was interested in exploring the co-researchers' social networks (Noy, 2008). At times, they suggested I interviewed people they did not know personally. I utilised the interviews to understand the context better, triangulate the discussions we were having in the cooperative inquiry, and gain different perspectives on the research topics we identified. Interviews ranged from 30 minutes to 2 hours. They were all designed to be open-ended. Most times, interviews began and ended in a more informal conversation. In addition to this, I carried out at least one and up to three one-to-one discussions with each cooperative inquiry member (I took extensive notes on these conversations).

Foresight scenario workshop:

Slaughter (1996) suggests that the future can exist not as "an empirical, measurable realm, but as one of vision, will, understanding and interpretation" (p. 751). In this sense, looking to the future is a natural capacity of humans. Foresight is a methodological toolkit that allows a formalisation of the natural ability to look into the future (Rhydderch, 2016; Slaughter, 1996). It is used to "understand the future systematically, usually considering a horizon of at least

10 years into the future" (Bingley, 2016, p. 7). One of the foresight methods is scenario building: a participatory process that invites critical stakeholders to collectively explore the future of a specific issue by bringing together their knowledge, experience, and intuition (Rhydderch, 2016). Scenarios are narratives created to capture a range of possible futures; they are carefully constructed, plausible, and internally consistent stories about possible futures which challenge the familiar (Linstone, 1991; Saurin & Ratcliffe, 2011).

Along with the research team of *Plata, Cultura, y Cambio*, on November 25th and 26th, 2016 I hosted a two-day foresight scenario workshop with a group of 18 participants (see Annex 3 to read the designed scenarios). Adapting foresight to serve the participatory paradigm, I wanted to explore youth-led civil society leaders' feelings and opinions about possible futures. The workshop applied a scenario building method developed by the Alun Rhydderch of School of International Futures (SOIF). I also integrated a mindfulness exercise and two theatre exercises designed to deepen the reflexivity amongst the group and make the workshop engaging to the participants.

During the workshop, participants designed a series of future scenarios for the transformation of civil society and how social processes would finance themselves in the year 2035. The question that guided the scenario building process was: In the year 2035, how will CSOs be financed in the city of Medellin? The workshop was useful to engage the co-researchers in a critical reflection while also allowing them to learn from and develop a sense of connection with other workshop participants. Stretching the imagination to the future helped participants clarify their worldviews and perception of current trends in civil society.

In-depth example of *Corporación Casa Mia*:

Following my fieldwork in 2016, I moved back to Medellin in 2018 and carried out additional research to enrich my data around the organisational culture of *Corporación Casa Mia*, which I analyse in chapter 6. To develop the analysis in chapter 6, in addition to the data that emerged during the cooperative inquiry, I carried out five more interviews ranging from 1-2.5 hours. I interviewed: one of the founders of *Casa Mia*, a past leader, and three staff members/volunteers. I had extensive conversations as well as another interview with the two current leaders of *Casa Mia* (Dorian and Ximena). I also attended

a range of community events and workshops that they organised. Additionally, in May 2018 I was invited by Dorian, Ximena, and a Norwegian researcher who was researching with the organisation, to facilitate a day-long workshop to reconstruct the history and evolution of the organisation from the 1990s to 2018. The workshop was attended by 20 people representing a mix of current and past volunteers, as well as other community members of the organisation. Finally, I read two master theses written on *Casa Mia* and reviewed a range of internal documents.

C. Cooperative inquiry: researching with others

In this section, I engage in a reflexive discussion on the cooperative inquiry process. The PAR literature places emphasis on the importance of "exploring our own subjectivity and in being clear and reflexive about our values and power" while producing "credible accounts that are both based in the subjectivity of researchers and communities" (Grant, Nelson, & Mitchell, 2008, p. 598). The term *emergent* might be one of the most used amongst PAR practitioners. Yet, there is an aura of mystery associated with the emergent nature of PAR: if you cannot do too much planning for it, how do PAR researchers make decisions? In this section, I provide a first-person account of my experience. While I also share how I learned about the experience of the co-researchers, by providing a window into how I made decisions throughout the fieldwork phase, this section contributes to assessing the validity and rigour of the research through making the process recoverable. I write this part of the chapter with a more personal voice as I am trying to describe a collective construction process which at times felt quite messy.

C.1 Getting settled

I arrived in Colombia on the last day of December 2015. I had planned to spend January in Bogotá, to do some key informant interviews and start to understand the Colombian civil society context. My schedule was flexible, and I was open to serendipity. I wanted some time to 'arrive' and get a feel for the country.

During my first weeks in Colombia, I felt particularly observant. In Bogotá, I was struck by a sense of awareness of the incredible diversity in the country. I could perceive the presence of "the conflict" in people's narratives and

tales about Colombia. I also started asking about Medellin. Most people seemed to have mixed emotions about the city – they explained to me that the culture was different from the one in Bogotá and that people are service oriented. After a week in Bogotá, I spent a few days in Cali: there I read, wrote up some notes, and had the encounter with Caterina that I described in chapter 1.

Being new to Colombia, it was crucial for me to prioritise building the right networks that I could use to make the research both legitimate and accessible to the right group of people. For this reason, upon my arrival in Colombia, I focused my attention on networking with some large umbrella organisations that could have an interest in the research area. While in some cases my relationship with these institutions did not bring forward meaningful collaborations, their interest in the research meant I was able to mention them on the recruitment call to ensure the study would be perceived as legitimate in the local context. Back in Bogotá, I scheduled three formal interviews with cold contacts. I met with senior staff at *Colombia Joven*, the government agency which coordinates youth programming, and at the *Confederación Colombiana de ONG* (CCONG), an umbrella organisation for CSOs, and at the *Instituto Distrital para la Protección de la Niñez y la Juventud (*IDIPRON), a children and youth protection institute coordinated at the city-level in Bogotá.

Informally, I met a dozen fascinating people: artists, activists, and researchers. Most of them had been introduced to me by friends of friends. When I explained I was doing a PhD studying the sustainability of youth organisations, I was flooded with stories, historical facts, and new contacts.

Arriving from Bogotá, Medellin seemed cosy. The air was warmer, and the city felt more manageable. My partner and I spent 10 days in a hostel, while we navigated the bureaucracy to rent out an apartment. One of our Recrear colleagues, Jonas, had been living in Medellin for a few years and he helped us get settled in the city. In Medellin, I had an affiliation with *Universidad EAFIT*, a well-known private university, who had facilitated my visa application. Thanks to this connection, in February Jonas, my partner Kirsten, and I delivered a short course on PAR at EAFIT which ended up being a strategic preparation for the study. Besides learning a lot about the city and its debates, we invited to the course several youth leaders from across the city. For example, during the

course, I met Ximena (*Corporación Casa Mia*) and Carla (*Deditos Verdes*), who eventually became two of the co-researchers in the cooperative inquiry.

After a lot of paperwork, we were also able to rent an apartment in Envigado, in the South of Medellin. We wanted to have an office to organise workshops, invite people over, and host events. When we moved in, the apartment was empty, so we bought two mattresses and furnished the rest of the house with wooden pallets and tires. This apartment, which was then referred to by our colleagues as *Casa Recrear*, turned out to be a critical space for the research: it quickly became a convening space to host interviews and workshops, to invite people over for breakfast, lunch and dinner, and to have intimate discussions.

C.2 Organising the cooperative inquiry

C.2.1 The recruitment process

I knew that the first steps in organising the inquiry were crucial: I had to focus on building trust, communicating openly and clearly, building relationships, and establishing a communicative space with co-researchers (Grant et al., 2008; Grey et al., 2000; Gayá Wicks & Reason, 2009). For an authentic collaboration, participation in cooperative-inquiries needs to be entirely voluntary; individuals taking part in the inquiry need to have a genuine interest in the research and a willingness to share their experience (Bergold & Thomas, 2012). According to Reason and Bradbury (2001), the ideal number for an inquiry is between 6 and 12. I designed the recruitment strategy described below with the goal of recruiting the leaders of 10 organisations interested in joining the co-investigation. This number accounted for one to two potential dropouts, leaving estimated participation of 8 leaders.

My next step was the setting up of a webpage explaining the research and inviting "leaders of youth organisations and youth social enterprises in Colombia" to join as co-researchers. In the recruitment, I did not specify what the legal status of the organisation should be, nor did I require researchers to have a formal leadership role in the organisations – as long as they self-identified as holding a leadership position in a youth organisation or youth social enterprise. The page included an explanation of why organisations should

join as co-researchers and a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) section describing the commitment required of co-researchers. I knew I was asking busy people for a significant time commitment and I wanted to make that explicit up-front: the FAQ listed the dates of the eight day-long meetings, over the course of nine months (April to December 2016). The page was published on Recrear's website with the logos of all organisations supporting the research including The Institute of Development Studies, Organisation Unbound, EAFIT University (Medellin), and the Youth Observatory of the National University (Bogotá).[11]

The challenge was then to make sure the page was widely accessed. I utilised as many channels as possible to circulate the call for applications including Facebook, Twitter, emails, WhatsApp, and word of mouth:

Facebook. Facebook is the most active social media in Colombia: most youth organisations manage Facebook pages, and it is common to share information through Facebook groups and events. For this reason, I decided to set up a Facebook event linking to the application page. The event was shared on 15 Facebook groups. Over the course of four weeks leading to March 13th, 2016, I made a post on the event page every two or three days with announcements and updates to increase views and organic outreach. In total, the page reached more than 13 thousand users and received 280 views.

Twitter. Utilising my account, I shared the application link tweeting at various organisations that use popular hashtags like #Medellin and #joven (youth). Unfortunately, I was not able to track the effectiveness of Twitter in reaching out to organisations.

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[11] To give legitimacy to my research, I asked permission to include the logos of the institutions with whom I had socialised the research, and that declared an interest in the results of the research. None of the organisations listed provided any financial support for the research. Instead, the Institute of Development Studies is my home institution for the PhD. I had been in touch with the leaders of Organisation Unbound and they were interested in how funding might influence the capacity for '*inscaping*' of organisations. EAFIT University was the local university I was associated with during my fieldwork. The Youth Observatory of the National University in Bogotá had also expressed interest in the research and helped me circulate the application with their partners in Medellin.

Emails. I compiled a list of 40 organisations and emailed the call for applications utilising MailChimp. Moreover, the form was circulated by email to the networks of umbrella organisations listed above.

WhatsApp. By far, the best way to reach people in Colombia during my fieldwork was WhatsApp. Alongside Facebook, WhatsApp is also a popular medium for young people to share news of workshops, conferences, events and calls like this one. Various organisations managed internal WhatsApp groups and shared the application among their groups.

Word of mouth. Word of mouth was probably the most influential channel for recruitment. 16 young leaders around Medellin attended the course I organised in February. During the course, I discussed the methodology that would be used in the research and asked participants if they could invite their friends and colleagues who might be interested in joining. Between February and March 2016, I also attended several events as a guest speaker, facilitator and participant including a gender hackathon targeted at youth entrepreneurs, an experiential education course, a consulting session for an emerging youth project, and several learning circles (*semilleros*). These were all critical opportunities to invite people to take part in the research process. By the time the application period ended, 23 people, representing 18 organisations, had applied.

During the first week of March, I created a WhatsApp group inviting all applicants to join an informal information meeting at my apartment. On March 12th, 2016 seven people attended this meeting which helped me to get a sense of the applicants and was an opportunity to present the research for more details. During the session, we did a creative writing exercise which asked participants, "What would your organisation look like if you had all the money in the world?". The exercise sparked an interesting discussion and gave participants a glimpse into the type of activities that would be organised during the research.

C.2.2 The selection process

The selection process was designed to build rapport with each applicant and make sure they clearly understood the research objectives and ethos. Besides the information meeting, it involved two other steps: 1) the review of applications, and 2) one-to-one interviews with each applicant. To study how organisations were seeking financial sustainability, and given my focus on youth-led organisations, I wanted to recruit the leaders of youth-led CSOs which had obtained financial sustainability without compromising their social mission, or which might find financial sustainability a challenge but were nevertheless actively pursuing it.

In thinking of the composition of the group, I used the following criteria:

- *Interest in the research based on appropriate information:* Organisations applied voluntarily to the study. However, the individual interviews ensured that applicants had a good understanding of the research process and could receive more information to make a wholly voluntary decision.

- *Diversity:* The organisations represented should include a mix of social enterprises, informal groups, and non-profit organisations. This diversity ensured that there could be a knowledge exchange between participants and that the group could learn from a range of experiences.

- *Youth-led organisations:* The term youth-led organisation is not precise. I decided that the first criterion to assess whether an organisation is a youth-led organisation would be their self-identification with the term. For this reason, the webpage I set up had the following three questions: "Do you represent a youth organisation or youth social enterprise in Colombia? Are you a leader of a young social organisation or social enterprise? Have you managed to become financially sustainable, or are you looking to become financially sustainable without compromising your social mission?" These questions were meant to attract people with interest in the research, who identified as leaders of youth-led organisations. As a follow-up, during the initial interview I carried out with each applicant, I asked why the organisation identified as a youth organisation. I received a range of responses including: we are founded by a group of young people, we are

managed by a group of young people, we serve young people, and most of our volunteers/staff are young.

While I am aware that the leadership of an organisations does not necessarily represent the organisation and all the people and relationships within it (Martin & Siehl, 1983), I wanted to recruit individuals within organisations with the agency to pursue financial sustainability and who could hold the most holistic view of the organisation (Laloux, 2014; Schein, 1985, 2004). This being said, the concept of leadership was loosely defined. The people who represented the organisations were leaders in different ways: some were the primary coordinators of the organisations, others lead specific projects or arms of the organisations. I also tried to establish contact with at least two leaders in the organisations and ensure that both people, when possible, were in the loop with the research: this way, if the primary researcher was not available for a meeting, a colleague could substitute.

- *Currently operative and in the Expansion Phase:* All organisations selected were presently active and operative. Studying non-profit organisations, Avina (1999) traces the different phases of organisational evolution. After an initial start-up phase, organisations consolidate and, recognising the need for sustainability, and they mature accordingly. Keeping this idea in mind, I purposely narrowed down the selection to organisations that were in a "growing phase" of their life cycle - they have been active for at least five years, and they seek to become sustainable (Avina, 1993).

In this phase, organisations have generally started experimenting with securing financial resources. Moreover, they tend to have a more defined and sophisticated structure, and a more established organisational culture. Given that the expansion phase happens in a different moment for each organisation, I assessed the organisation phase based on the interview with organisational leaders. I asked them to describe the current growth-phase of their organisation. The organisations I selected stressed they were either in a period of growth, changing-funding structure, or learning from the start-up phase. Three organisations were excluded from the research process, as they were very newly formed groups. All organisations had been active for at least five years except the *Movimiento Tierra en Resistencia* (MTR), which was the youngest group represented in the research. The logic for making this exception was that

the MTR is a network that brings together the experience of a range of organisations in the *Comuna* 5. In this sense, the MTR enriched our research with reflections that emerged from a different collective process between youth organisations, independent from *Plata, Cultura, y Cambio.*

Based on review of the applications and the individual interviews, 10 organisations were selected. Following the initial selection, there were some adjustments: two organisations dropped out at the beginning for lack of time availability (*Tin Tin*, *Platohedro*) and one more joined (*World Tech Makers*). By the end of the first round, the representative of *Parque Explora* dropped out because of lack of time. Meanwhile, two other organisations got involved: *Movimiento Tierra en Resistencia* and *Art-C-8*. The final composition of the group included 10 organisations, of which, three self-defined as social enterprises, three as informal groups, and four as non-profit organisations (see Table 2).

Self-define as social enterprises:	Self-define as informal groups of young people:	Self-define as non-profit organisations:
Casa Mariposas	*Antares Dance*	Techo
Deditos Verdes (community project, in transition to social enterprise)	*Movimiento Tierra en Resistencia*	*Art-C- 8* (recently registered after being an informal group for few years)
World Tech Makers	*Los chicos del siglo XX*	*Corporación Voces y Palabras*
		Corporación Casa Mia

Table 2: Breakdown of self-identification of the CSOs that took part in Plata, Cultura, y Cambio

C.2.3 Co-Researchers' ownership and collective agreements

The first meeting of the cooperative inquiry was hosted at my apartment on April 2nd, 2016. My objective was to set the tone for the cooperative inquiry – I wanted to create a comfortable atmosphere and a sense of team while allowing the co-researchers to start taking some ownership of the process. I was expecting everyone to arrive at 9:30 a.m., with the idea of having breakfast and starting the meeting at 10:00 a.m. I did everything I could to prepare, but I felt a sense of anxiety. At 9:00 a.m., someone shared an audio message on our WhatsApp group saying, "Today is not a good day to go out, stay at home". A paramilitary group had acted up the day before, and there was fear of further violence in the city. What if nobody shows up? I tried to tell myself that whatever happens is good -- *whatever happens is research!* This self-talk helped me notice the exchange that happened over WhatsApp that morning. Several people responded to the message encouraging others to stay calm and not give power to these stories. Someone shared an audio message with a poem which stressed the "urgency of love". Following the exchange helped me frame the opening discussion.

While I was still holding my breath, people started arriving – the majority of the group was there by 10:10 a.m. By 10:30 a.m. we started the day. We were 10 people, representing nine organisations (including Recrear). I had set up space so that there would be two main working rooms. One was arranged with a carpet on the floor, and small coloured pillows to sit on. The other room was mostly empty, with a big whiteboard on the wall.

At the start of the meeting, I thought it necessary to discuss what had happened over WhatsApp. I was told that the day was tense because there had been threats of violence around the city. The central message was that, against terror, we should circulate messages of love and beauty to defeat fear. This conversation and the poem's "love is urgent" captured what I then learned was the essence of the vision of many youth organisations.

After this discussion, I gave a brief introduction to the research process. I explained my positionality as the co-founder of a small organisation that has been experimenting with different paths to sustainability and how that search

led to a doctoral program. I also said that the ethos of collaborative research meant that each person was invited to find their reason to be part of the study.

To introduce ourselves, I asked each person to share their name, the organisation they represented, and the story of one moment of celebration within their organisation. Most people shared stories that involved work with colleagues and communities. Various stories were about triumph after tough days of work or at the end of a complex project. The exercise lifted the energy, and it was good to get a sense of what people appreciated and felt connected to within their work.

I invited the co-researchers to do an exercise writing a short biography of themselves and their organisations imagining the end of the research process and anticipating how it would have enriched their work. I then asked people to share these in pairs. After the exercise, people shared the central themes that emerged. What was stressed was that participants were interested in:

- Sustaining their work by developing a partnership with other organisations;
- Learning from different organisational experiences;
- Growing their network through the research;
- Creating a space of reflection;
- Producing something more practical from the study (such as useful content that they could share with other organisations).

At that point, I explained the structure of the research. I said that the study would be articulated through two rounds of action and reflection and provided a tentative overview of the proposed theme of each meeting. I also stressed that the agenda of each meeting might be modified depending on our interests and discussions. In fact, the meetings' agendas did change based on our conversations (see Annex 2 for a breakdown of each session's topic).

I was then asked if the process would continue over the years. I explained that I would be coordinating the process for the next nine months and that the group would be able to decide to continue if there was interest in doing so. There was much attention to research outcomes; I stressed that the results of the research were up to us as a group and made clear my commitment to writing a PhD thesis around our process.

Following the discussion, we moved to the next room; as we were speaking, participants drew two circles on the board and brainstormed outcomes placed in either the *academic* or *creative* circle. We agreed we should have a summary of each meeting and assign a note taker for each meeting. These notes, as well as transcripts based on audio recordings of key discussions, represent the research's documented data. We also agreed to create a Facebook page to share interesting quotes and materials, and two people volunteered to curate it. Finally, we decided that we would review our goals in a few months to determine what research outcome would be most appropriate to the knowledge that emerges in the research.

It was also essential to establish some common rules. I proposed creating a group agreement through an exercise called "the four corners". In this exercise, people stand at the centre of the room and make a proposal. The participants of the group respond to the proposal by going to the four corners of the room- each representing 'I agree', 'I disagree', 'I completely agree', or 'I completely disagree'. Participants who have no opinion, or are not sure, go to the centre. A discussion follows which leads to movement across the room and to finding consensus on each proposal.

Through this exercise, we came up with a list of propositions, which I then compiled in a document. Most proposals came directly from participants. I did an example at the beginning and proposed that all researchers should be able to use the outcomes of the research for their work. We established the following agreements:

- Our communication will happen through email and WhatsApp;
- We will create a shared Google Drive folder to access documents and research results;
- We will be punctual and inform others if we are late;
- We will limit the use of cell phones as much as possible during meetings;
- At every meeting, we will meet in a different location around the city. Two people will take care of organising lunch/snacks for each encounter;
- We will promote a culture of sharing within the group;
- We should be open to our emotions. If there is a hard moment, we should share it. If there is low energy, we will have an active break;
- We should stick to the point in the conversation and not go on rants;

- We agree to share the results of the research with our networks;
- We all have the right to write and utilise the content of the study to support our organisations.

We each signed an agreement during the second meeting of the research: this represented a first layer of consent for the study (see Annex 4).

At this point, there was a lunch break. There was good energy in the group and I prepared pasta with tomatoes and zucchini. After lunch, we did an exercise where, in pairs, each participant was interviewing another with a questionnaire that I had prepared. After each question, the couples would switch. At the end of the exercise, each person had a survey filled with the notes of their interviewers.

The day ended with an exercise in which each participant drew on the whiteboard a graph showing the timeline of their organisation (x) and funding available (y); I asked each participant to graph the history of their organisation based on these variables. Based on this, each participant narrated the story of their organisation.

People left at around 6 p.m., and I was exhausted. While I felt satisfied with the day, the storytelling exercise dragged out much longer than expected, and active listening was hard to sustain. It was a good experience for me to plan the structure of the meetings that followed. I decided that I would leave time for a looser agenda, with more space for discussion. I also realised I had to complement these meetings with one-to-one talks – there was so much to learn, and it was hard to digest all of the information at once.

C.3 Emerging research themes

During the first round of the cooperative inquiry (meetings two, three and four) we identified some key themes, which were developed throughout the research process. The sessions were structured around guided conversations, with a looser structure and fewer activities planned compared to the first meeting (see Annex 2 for a list of all topics of the cooperative inquiry meetings). As we had agreed, the meetings were also hosted at different organisations' offices: the second meeting was organised at *Casa Mia*, the third at T*echo*, and the fourth at the headquarters of *Los Chicos del Siglo XX*.

As the meetings progressed, each participant's personality started to come out along with inside jokes, and our own working style. For example, by the third meeting, we had developed a culture around food:

> I started noticing how, as trust grew within the group, the quality and depth of our conversations also changed. Cooking and eating together during those meetings felt intimate and, being a small group, we had plenty of space for silliness and jokes. When we hosted the meeting at my house, we sat on the floor simply because I did not have enough chairs, but instead a carpet and many pillows. Somehow it happened that at both *Casa Mia* and *Techo* we also sat on the floor and it became a meeting ritual which made our time feel more informal. (field notes, 15 June, 2016)

While I continued preparing agendas for the meetings, those agendas felt more like a guideline: at times, conversations could not be stopped, and I let them go. I followed my instinct when I felt that a topic had dragged out for too long and I trusted myself to make a call when it was time to change. Other times, other researchers made the call. Our work together involved a mix of group discussions, small group dynamics, pair conversations and creative techniques (drawing, theatre, painting, etc.). I found that these tools allowed the group to communicate with more nuance, allowing different personalities and skills to come out.

During the first few meetings I felt a bit nervous when starting the day was delayed: for example, regularly some people arrived late, while those who arrived on time had to wait around. However, I wanted to avoid the role of "shepherdess", and I tried to let go of my instinct to control the process, to create an environment that each participant could own. Striking a balance was difficult. On the one hand, I knew I had to be present with co-researchers for them to perceive this was a process that required commitment. I invested a lot of time in the meetings' organisation: I shared the meeting details in advance by email and WhatsApp, and I called each participant individually a few days before the scheduled date. I also put a lot of thought into the meeting agenda. On the day of the meeting, however, I let part of my control go and tried to be a lot more in-tune with what was emerging. For example, instead of feeling

irritated if the meeting started late, I learned to take that time to chat with those who arrived earlier.

My work became a lot more manageable in May when Carolina, a final year university student from Bogotá, also joined the *Plata, Cultura, y Cambio* team. Carolina contacted us to do an internship with Recrear, and she became an active participant in the research process. Between the co-researchers meetings, Carolina and I carried out interviews around the city. Her presence was vital to me because, together, we were able to debrief each interview – sharing perception and observations. Being from Bogotá, Carolina was curious about Medellin; in our conversations, I learned about the history of Colombia and reflected over the peculiarities of Medellin compared to Bogotá and other regions of the country.

During the fourth meeting of the inquiry, we took time to establish the themes that had emerged so far in our conversations and decide what we wanted to explore further. We identified the following topics which remained a focus for our collective analysis throughout the research:

- The challenge organisations face when managing public funding (e.g. the *presupuesto participativo* – which I will refer to as "el pp") and engaging with the private sector;

- How organisations understand and interact with alternative ideas of development such as *Buen Vivir*;

- The relationship with social entrepreneurial initiatives - especially regarding the ability of different CSOs to collaborate or compete with each other;

- CSOs' role in "resistance".

These themes represented the main areas of analysis for the rest of the inquiry process: they informed the key informant interview questions and where the initial set of codes that I utilised in the subsequent data analysis process (see Section D of this chapter).

C.4 Parties and get-togethers

Grant et al. (2008) stress the importance of getting to know a community by building informal relationships. It turned out that some of the most inspiring conversations I had over the year happened in the living room, balcony and kitchen of my apartment. I include parties as part of my methodology because

they felt like an integral part of the research process; our informal get-togethers enabled the cooperative inquiry work by strengthening trust, providing additional channels of communication, and, therefore, improving the quality of our formal meetings.

When I first structured the research, I knew that it was going to be hard for my colleagues to carve time out of their busy schedules. I planned to connect with each researcher individually at least once a month by attending events and participating in organisations' activities that I was invited to attend. Meanwhile, I started inviting researchers regularly to join us for dinner before a party, or to come over for coffee, lunch, or dinner. By May, I felt most co-researchers were happy to hang out. For these informal events, there was no pressure or a particular commitment to attend, which I think made spending time together more accessible. At times, participants that were coming from far away spent the night at our apartment.

Initially, I started to invite people over because I was trying to "break the ice". *Paisas* are known for being a bit reserved. In fact, it was initially hard to gain people's trust and develop the friendships that are so important to the research process. On one side, I had a genuine interest in connecting with people, on the other, I realised that coming together informally in a safe space was improving my understanding of the context in Medellin, as well as the quality of my research.

The organisation of parties was simple. We invited people informally – at times via WhatsApp groups we were added to or in one-to-one conversations. When I had an interview, I often asked my interviewees to join our next party. Each get-together was attended by 20-35 people on average. At these parties, there was music, dancing and eating.

Medellin is a segregated city, and social circles are tight. The research process made it evident that there was a significant opportunity for people from different backgrounds to collaborate. As a foreigner, it was easy for me to network with people from different social classes and backgrounds; these parties were so significant because they brought together people from very different walks of life. They were opportunities to meet in a safe space, get to know new people, and, hopefully, be more likely to collaborate and work together in the future.

Inspired by these get-togethers, my colleagues and I decided to organise a "research party" to test an application called Actionbound, which is used to digitalise treasure hunts. During this party, we organised four stations around the apartment with different activities. The first asked participants to make a collective map of the social organisations around the city, the second asked people to paint the concept of *resistance*, then they were asked to film each other acting out different roles and engaging in a discussion around *innovation* in the city. Finally, the last task asked the teams to write down music or pop culture pieces that represented young people in the city.

Around 30 people attended the party. As guests arrived, we asked them to download the application and scan the first QR code, which we printed and placed at the entrance. We then programmed the application to give all instructions. People were asked to form a team of three or four. Together, they were guided through the various stations – each team could go through the stations at their own pace. When all teams were done, we gathered in our living room and talked about the exercise while we reviewed the results of the hunt (which are uploaded directly to an online platform) on a projector. The party was a fun way to bring more people to share their opinions through creative means while getting them interested in the research of *Plata, Cultura, y Cambio*. [12]

C.5 The reflection round and RecrearMagnify

In my initial research plan, July and August 2016 were intended as a time for the group to have a break and reflect on the first phase of the research. Meanwhile, I wanted to give myself more time to carry out interviews and participatory observations digging more deeply into the themes that had emerged. During these two months, we did not have any meetings scheduled in advance. Instead, I made sure to engage each researcher in a reflection process by taking the time to schedule one-to-one conversations.

During this "reflective break", co-researchers were invited to observe their organisational culture and write down an organisational culture profile that we had designed together in Meeting 4. To provide a time and space to

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[12] See a description of this event here: http://gioelgio.com/actionbound/

write the profile, I organised a pancake breakfast. Participants interviewed each other about their organisational culture.

Another event that I did not include in my research design, but that turned out to create meaningful spaces for collective reflection was RecrearMagnify, Recrear's annual conference- a two-week training on PAR. Magnify is hosted every year in a different location: in 2016 my colleagues and I decided to host it in Medellin. During the two weeks (July 3rd to 14th, 2016) I lived with a group of 15 young people from different parts of the world. Alongside the training, we also explored Medellin, meeting up with various youth groups and learning about the city's transformation process.

As part of this reflection phase, we organised a panel discussion called *Resistance, to what?* which had as panellists four youth leaders as well as Juana, the city's secretary of youth. We hosted the event at *Museo Casa de la Memoria* a museum dedicated to the memory of the Colombian conflict. Around 50 people attended the event, including most of the *Plata, Culture, y Cambio* team.

As part of Magnify, we also did a day-long visit to *Corporation Casa Mia*. Dorian, Ximena, and their colleagues planned the whole day for us to learn about their work and meet the other members of the community. In the afternoon, they invited a handful of their partner organisations, and we had a group conversation about the challenges of working in the city.

During Magnify, I also hosted a dinner and panel discussion for the co-researchers to share their reflections and experience with *Plata, Cultura, y Cambio* with the participants of RecrearMagnify. Leidy, Joseph, Carolina, Stiven, Dorian and Ximena attended. Initially, there was some awkwardness between the participants from Magnify and the *Plata, Cultura, y Cambio* group, mostly due to language barriers. I introduced the conversation saying that the group from Magnify was learning about PAR, and they wanted to hear about experiences with the research. This opened a dialogue in which Magnify participants asked questions, which were translated into Spanish and picked up by one of the *Plata, Cultura, y Cambio* co-researchers. The translations created a sort of ritualised slowness to the conversation, but it seemed everybody was engaged with it.

The co-researchers talked about how they valued the research as an opportunity to get together regularly to think, share, and build new alliances. They also talked about how the questions that emerged in our meetings lingered with them, so that the researched spilt into their daily work, and deepened the reflection about their work. The evening was special. So special that Stiven, who until then had only "hung around" with us, but had not joined the research officially, decided he "got" what we were doing, and saw value in joining us. From this point onwards, his participation was full, and his contribution to the research hugely significant.

The two weeks of Magnify gave my research a boost. The conference was a way to see the city with fresh eyes. I knew that Medellin had a beat, but it was powerful to see how my colleagues from Venezuela, Chile, Peru, Canada, India, and other parts of Colombia perceived it. During our debriefs, they talked about how impressed they were with the youth movements and felt inspired by the vibe of the city. Finally, the conference was also a way to connect with the co-researchers from a practitioner perspective: I had done participatory observations on *their* organisations, this was an opportunity for my colleagues to take part in Recrear's work.

C.6 Second cycle: sharing our learning

The second set of meetings had a completely different feel from the first. During our September meeting, we fixed the dates of the public event that we wanted to organise to share the results of the research: we all became aware that we only had a few months left to work together. I had initially scheduled some of the final activities for December, but the group warned me: December is a dead month, everybody in Medellin is on holidays. We decided the research should be wrapped up by November; the second round felt a lot more action-oriented.

The September meeting was at Liliana's house, the office of *Corporaciòn Voces y Parablas*. She started the session by inviting us to follow her in thanking the four cardinal directions in a ritual she and Carla had learned from a women's group. It was a beautiful way of starting the day, and we ended up repeating this ritual on different occasions throughout the rest of our time together. I started the meeting by providing everyone with the space to catch up

on how they were, and what was going on with their organisations. The conversation highlighted struggles around team dynamics, personal well-being, and, of course, funding. I noticed feeling almost overwhelmed by the rawness of that first sharing. The previous conversations had opened a channel of communication and people could go directly to what mattered.

I planned to carry out a collective data analysis exercise. Taking inspiration from Jackson's (2008) experience with participatory data analysis, Carolina and I printed three copies of the interviews and meeting transcripts we had so far. Because of time constraints, Carolina and I decided to do some "pre-coding", highlighting the portions of the interviews that talked about the themes we had collectively identified. The group read through a set of 12 interviews, as well as all the notes that we took for the first four meetings. Co-researchers were invited to add codes by underlining the notes with four markers. After the coding exercise, I was planning to transition into an exercise inspired by a system-thinking technique called "rich picture" – inviting participants to pick a topic and map it out through drawings in order to capture the different relationships between actors and the debates around the selected topic (Burge, 2015; Checkland et al., 1999). However, reading through the data sparked a discussion.

I found that moment interesting. It was as if, by reading the anonymised interview transcripts, they were battling to include the perspectives they were learning in their vision of things. They could not read in silence. Instead, they would make all sort of noises, laughter, loud nods, and exclamations of all kinds. For example, they felt strongly about the interview Carolina and I did with the secretary of youth. That interview generated a discussion around how, from the institutional point of view, it was hard to understand what happens at the grassroots level. Some made the point that the opposite was also true: it is hard for us to understand the pressures and constraints that politicians face.

In the afternoon we divided into two groups: one explored the topic of the *presupuesto participativo* (participatory budget), and the other the dynamics around social entrepreneurship- two topics that had emerged from the collective analysis. After discussing the data, they were challenged to represent all the data visually. Utilising a rich picture, the groups were challenged to unpack the complexity surrounding the topic they chose, through

diagrams and symbols. The two groups came up with two rich picture posters and presented it to the rest.

During this meeting, we also did some planning. We knew we wanted to do a final event of some sort, and we agreed on organising a treasure hunt to present our research results. Carla, Joseph and Leidy volunteered to organise the event. It was proposed that each organisation could manage a station during the hunt, and we brainstormed what those stations could do.

We finally fixed the date of the foresight workshop. Since the group did not know the foresight process, I planned to facilitate the workshop. I agreed I would take care of collecting suggestions of people to invite to the foresight workshop and send invitations that would "sound more formal" to reach bigger institutions. Meanwhile, the treasure hunt would be exclusively organised by the group, inviting their friends and colleagues. The organisation phase continued into the following meeting, in early October. Together, we compiled a list of people to invite to the foresight workshop. We also wrote an open letter to use to invite people to the treasure hunt.

One of my favourite moments, and a good anecdote of how the group took ownership of the process by this point, happened during our discussion about promoting the two events. While we discussed how to reach out to our network, Joseph exclaimed, "*Basta con la foto de las palomitas*!", Which translates to "Enough of that photo with the birds!". I still laugh thinking about that moment. Joseph was referring to the photo that I had put on the Facebook page of the *Plata, Cultura, y Cambio* group – which had a sky with birds flying on it. He added "The birds are nice and all, but we've outgrown them" – we all agreed, and Joseph took the leadership to prepare some new posters to share on Facebook (see an example in Figure 4).

Figure 4: Poster that Joseph prepared to promote the treasure hunt.

I had imagined the October meeting to be a sort of closing of our work together as a group. We had it at my house and had a dinner party afterwards. I knew November to be a busy period for everybody, and we had two weekends out of four planned with activities. Instead, as the structured part of the process came to an end, a whole new wave of energy was generated. This new phase had very little management on my side - it felt organic and it was unexpected.

The treasure hunt was the first event that followed. We had partnered with a cultural centre in the Centre of Medellin called *Casa3Patios*. To plan for the event, five of us had a meeting at *Casa3Patios* – we studied the space and decided where each station would be. *La Múcura*, a Colombian organisation that had travelled Latin America for the last three years and that I had been in touch with virtually since 2014, was in Medellin. I asked them if they would be willing to do a concert to close the event, and they agreed. I was thrilled! We organised the event without any funding and decided that we would ask people to bring snacks to share.

Last minute, we also decided that we should take a video. Carla said she had a contact and put me in touch with Juan – who offered to make the video for 500.00 COP, which Recrear covered.[13] To finish off this video, we met again at my house with Stiven, Joseph and Carolina. After we had finished the filming we made some last calls to organise the foresight event and then went to the park and hung out. That evening I felt grateful for what this research brought to my life. I felt a sense of profound respect for what we were doing together all fused with a sense of care, lightness and affection for each other.

The foresight workshop was another breakthrough in the way we thought together. Thinking of the future added a different perspective to our reflection. For the research team, it was a way of going beyond talking about their work and thinking about their role in the evolution of their city – the foresight process brought us to question the term *civil society* and challenged all of us to think about how our work is contributing to the future of the city.

Again, I thought that this would be our last meeting, but the interaction continued. This time Carla took the initiative and coordinated for all of us to have a free day at the water park – we all went to the park as a group of friends. More social events followed throughout December. On one side, I was exhausted, on the other, I was thrilled to see all the new energy within the group.

13The video that we made from the event is available here:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tVZNaaB_YfM&t=242s

C.7 The discomfort of wrapping up

By the end of December, I was also becoming aware that my time in Colombia was coming to an end. I felt overwhelmed with data – still unable to piece together the experience in a coherent story, and yet extremely uncomfortable with the idea of heading back to the UK "with the data". I also felt there was so much energy in the group, and that it was selfish for me to go back to the UK to write my thesis, leaving the process hanging both at the level of action and reflection. I struggled with this position and decided to call another meeting. I, absurdly, scheduled it on Friday, December 30th. I wanted to create an opportunity to discuss early findings together and discuss next steps. The day before the meeting I shared a letter on my blog addressed to the group. In this letter, I tried to share with the group how I was feeling, and some of my preliminary personal reflections about the meaning of our research.[14]

Leidy, Carla, Joseph, Camilo and Stiven attended. I had put so much thought into this meeting. I prepared a presentation, sharing what I thought was coming out of the research, and opened a discussion about both our findings and the possible next steps for what had been *Plata, Cultura, y Cambio*. What did they want to do with the process? What was next? We spent from 6 p.m. to 11 p.m. talking– there were so many ideas and perspectives that I left the meeting exhausted, and a bit sad. The meeting symbolised a moment of transition for the group: my role was switching from being with the reflective process of the group to connecting more deeply with my sense-making. In presenting some of the theories I planned to utilise in this thesis, I also realised that the theorising was not so interesting to my colleagues, and it would be really hard to make it participatory. I was uncomfortable with the huge responsibility of translating our discussion to another language, to another context, and to the more structured symbolism of academia.

I was also aware that I had to take a forceful step back from the role of convener because the process had to find its path and independence. I had to trust it. I left Colombia confident that what happened was meaningful in itself, and that what could happen depended on many aspects, and I had little control

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[14] The letter I wrote to the co-researchers is available here: https://gioelgio.wordpress.com/2016/12/29/el-futuro-que-nos-atrevemos-a-crear-the-future-we-dare-creating/

over it. I trusted that the connection that had sparked between people and organisation was authentic and it would transform in collaborations and synergies, probably in different and unexpected ways. I realised I had never really planned for what happened to begin with, I could only keep being present with and supportive of what was emerging.

January was a roller-coaster. I delivered two trainings in PAR and offered it for free to all the co-researchers of *Plata, Cultura, y Cambio.* Before the courses, we organised two training sessions at our house with the idea of preparing Stiven, Joseph and Carla to help as co-facilitators in the two courses. In January, we hosted five full-day of courses: Carolina, Joseph, Stiven, Dorian and Ximena attended. My time in Colombia ended with a big party – a time to celebrate all the experience and bring together all the people that had become part of the extended network of *Plata, Cultura, y Cambio.*

D. *Sense making: Using Grounded Theory within the PAR paradigm*

In PAR, co-researchers contribute to the analysis of issues and questions, apply methods, gain experiential knowledge on what they are researching, and represent their learning (Heron & Reason, 1997). Utilising PAR within the academic endeavour of a PhD process, I was faced with two challenges: 1) ensuring that the participatory character of the data collection was not lost in the data analysis, and 2) avoiding over-imposing theories on the data. To mitigate these challenges, I integrate PAR with a grounded theory approach (see an example of this in Teram et al., 2005).

Grounded theory was developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967) to allow for new context-specific theories to emerge (Bryant, 2007; Glaser, 1968). I chose this approach to move from data to theory because it aligns with the intention to value and recognise the experiences of my colleagues without trying to fit it within existing theories. It also enables my desires to learn from Southern epistemologies. In this sense, while I had ideas as I was engaging with the literature review process during my first year of PhD, I tried to drop these when I started fieldwork. Instead, I moved back and forth between data collection and

analysis. I did so by pushing myself to write reflexive blogs[15] about my research experience, and then discussing them with my colleagues at the beginning of each meeting, or during informal one-to-one conversations. In this way, my reflections were questioned and enriched by the group. During the fourth meeting of the inquiry, we took time as a group to establish the main themes that had emerged so far in our conversations and what we wanted to explore further. In doing so, we identified a set of core categories which remained a focus for our analysis throughout the remainder of the research.

In our fifth meeting, following a two-month break during which co-researchers were invited to reflect and observe their organisational culture, we carried out a collective coding exercise in which the group was asked to read transcripts and notes from our meetings, as well as other interviews, and code them. The co-researchers were first invited to do a coding exercise sorting through data based on the categories we had identified in the previous meeting; the co-researchers were then invited to do *open-coding* – delineating their concepts or categories - by underlining the notes with four markers. After the coding exercise, the group was invited to analyse and summarise what they had read as well as their experience using a rich picture exercise (Burge, 2015; Checkland, 1999). I used the creation of a rich picture as a tool to experiment with *axial coding* – the practice of linking categories to make meaning of the data (Docan-Morgan, 2010).

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[15] My blog entries are available at: gioelgio.wordpress.com

E. Managing data and coding with NVivo

When I returned to the UK, I organised all my data utilising the data management software NVivo. I uploaded to NVivo and coded the data, which included:

(i)   notes of the group meetings;

(ii)   transcripts of critical discussions with the groups;

(iii)   participatory observation notes;

(iv)   secondary data shared with me by co-researchers;

(v)   interview transcripts;

(vi)   the notes on the foresight workshop;

(vii)   photos;

(viii)   audio recordings;

(ix)   notes of informal conversations and my reflections (including my blog entries).

I carried out a few rounds of data analysis on Nvivo. While labelling categories, I used the phrases used by the co-researchers as much as possible; moreover, I was able to add as memos many of the field notes I had collected through the year, as well as the comments that my colleagues had made in our conversations.

Carolina, who carried out an internship with Recrear between March and December 2016, was pivotal in helping with the work of transcribing interviews. After her internship, I contracted her to finish transcribing the last set of audio files. While we kept detailed notes of the cooperative inquiry meetings, Carolina also transcribed word-for-word hours of group discussions; pulling out direct quotes from these discussions was meaningful to conveying the tone and dynamic within our cooperative inquiry meetings. Carolina and I also created a simple format to both take notes on the events we attended around the city and on our participatory observations. Whenever possible, we tried to have two perspectives and sets of notes on the same functions.

To uncover the patterns emerging from the data collected, I tried to include the views of researchers in the data I collected outside of the group process by asking co-researchers for their opinions or feedback on a particular topic, or by discussing with them the content of an interview I had carried out. I

refer to those comments regularly in the thesis. In other words, I analysed and coded multiple layers of data. Eventually, I found it useful to use additional categories, and added concepts that we had discussed with the group, but not explicitly mentioned as themes of analysis. Other codes and specific sub-codes emerged as I read through all the material. The coding was therefore both inductive and deductive, and categories appeared in an iterative process.

I managed the data directly in Spanish (other than my fieldwork notes and blog entries, which I wrote directly in English). All the translations from Spanish to English are my own. However, the co-researchers helped me to improve translations: whenever I required clarifications I consulted them to investigate and clarify the cultural connotations of specific terms.

F. Validity, rigor and ethics

> The primary purpose of action research is not to produce academic theories based on action; nor is it to produce theories about action; nor is it to produce theoretical or empirical knowledge that can be applied in action; it is to liberate the human body, mind and spirit in the search for a better, freer world. (Reason & Bradbury, 2008, p. 5)

The notion that research is meant to unveil a "truth" is questioned in PAR approaches (Reason & Bradbury, 2001). Reality is not static or pre-existing, especially when we study ever-changing social processes; PAR seeks to capture the knowledge as it manifests, in motion. This posture towards the nature of knowledge requires an adaptation of the standards of validity and rigour utilised by other research paradigms. This section addresses the question: why would the reader have confidence in the findings from this research?

A criterion for validity in this research will be its credibility. Greenwood and Levin (2007) distinguish between internal and external credibility. For the study to be credible internally, it means that its outcomes are meaningful to the people directly involved with the research. To be credible externally the research needs to be believable to people who are outsiders to the research process.

PAR methods embrace *cogenerative learning*, it aims to:

Open horizons of discussion, to create spaces for collective reflection in which new descriptions and analyses of important situations may be developed as the basis of new action. (Greenwood & Levin, 2007, p. 72).

Meanwhile, Reason and Bradbury (2001) argue that:

A mark of quality in an action research project is that people will get energised and empowered by being involved through which they may develop newly useful, reflexive insights as a result of growing critical consciousness. (p. 344)

To understand how the team experienced the research from a more objective perspective, I engaged Anna, a student from Middlebury Institute of Development Studies, who carried out a month-long internship focused on evaluation. Anna and I designed a short survey that she utilised to carry out an exit interview with *Plata, Cultura, y Cambio* participants. One of the questions asked to describe the experience of *Plata, Cultura, y Cambio* in 10 words. Figure 5 represents a word cloud of the responses participants gave.

Figure 5: The word cloud from survey item: 'Pick ten adjectives to describe our research'.

During the interview, Anna also asked whether the experience of researching with other organisations was useful, and how. All of the respondents said that they found the process of researching with others useful and most people explained they found it helpful especially because, through the research, they were able to build new alliances and grow a network. Others said the experience helped with self-knowledge, and to generate collective knowledge.

To be credible to the reader, I have been clear about my choices explaining the selection and recruitment process. I also sought to be credible by utilising rich narrative to describe both the logic behind my decisions within the

research process as well as the research results. As Greenwood and Levin (2007) suggest, narratives are central to PAR: "Telling stories is not in contradiction to doing social science. It is fundamental to it" (p. 67). Narratives also contribute to ensuring my transparency—another validity criteria—as I build my relationship with the reader (Feldman, 2007).

Analysing data from the cooperative inquiry, it is challenging to distinguish between the individual experiences of each co-researchers, and the group consensus that was reached during cooperative inquiry meetings. I recognise that the inability to always discriminate between individual and group opinions might be a limit of analysing what emerges from a cooperative inquiry. I believe that the opportunity to build trust, engage in group discussions, and share experiences compensates for this weakness and allows for rich data. To mitigate this challenge, I triangulated data through interviews and, to deepen my analysis, in my empirical chapters I seek to strike a balance between the different types of data I collected. In this thesis, when I argue an opinion was held by "the co-researchers", I suggest either that co-researchers reached a strong group consensus during discussions, or that I am presenting a trend that I have seen across interviews, participant observations, and cooperative inquiry. When co-researchers expressed divergent opinions, I spell out the different sets of opinions.

Finally, Reason and Bradbury (2001) state that "we must ask whether the work was seeded in such a way that participation could be sustained in the absence of the initiative researcher? We must create a living interest in the work" (p. 449). In this sense, the quality of this research will have to pass the test of time and how the insights from the research will be utilised by co-researchers and other youth-led organisations.

F.1 Ethical Considerations

Discussing ethics in the context of community-based participatory research (CBPR), Banks et al. (2013) speak about the daily practice of negotiating the ethical issues and challenges that might arise throughout a research process. Discussing "every-day ethical dilemmas", they stress "the situated nature of ethics with a focus on qualities of character and responsibilities attaching to particular relationships" (Banks et al., 2013, p.

363). This approach to ethics departs from seeing the researcher as an impartial deliberator. Once we understand the researcher as an embedded participant in the research process, ethics becomes a dimension that emerges in the full spectrum of relationships, emotions, ways of being and acting that are implied in participatory research (ibid). Below, I discuss some of the challenges that this research presented and how I handled them.

Voluntary participation, appropriate information, and consent:

In the recruitment phase, I provided both a written summary as well as an oral briefing of research aims. I wanted to ensure that co-researchers had clear expectations and that they would be aware of the voluntary nature of their commitment. Co-researchers were also briefed on the collaborative nature of the research. This being said, the ESRC (Economic and Social Research Council) Framework states that, in the space of participatory research, "consent to participate is seen as an ongoing and open-ended process" (ESRC, 2015). The framework stresses that:

> Consent here is not simply resolved through the formal signing of a consent document at the start of research. Instead it is continually open to revision and questioning. Highly formalised or bureaucratic ways of securing consent should be avoided in favour of fostering relationships in which ongoing ethics regard for participants is to be sustained, even after the study itself has been completed. (ESRC, 2015, p. 31)

Ritterbusch (2012) underlines:

> Obtaining consent does not just happen in one place or in one moment; rather, it happens over time and in multiple spaces through the enactment of care ethics and communicative research relations. (Ritterbusch, 2012, p. 20)

Participatory research projects tend to involve collaboration (Dodson et al., 2007; Macaulay, Commanda, & Freeman, 1999). In the case of this research, all co-researchers involved represented community partners with a range of interests. The literature suggests that creating the space to collectively draft codes or agreements to ensure sharing of power is a successful best practice in participatory research (Macaulay et al., 1999). I attempted to do this by

organising an exercise to define the research agreement at the beginning of the research (see part E).

In January 2018, I moved back to Medellin and was able to organise one-to-one conversations with most co-researchers to present my analysis. Following these conversations, I organised a presentation which most (8 out of 10) co-researchers attended, to present my analysis of the data. The presentation was well received and was followed by a discussion of how each researcher related to my analysis of their experience. Only after this presentation, which was meant to strengthen the internal credibility of this work, did I share an additional consent form electronically asking each co-researcher to choose whether they would like their names and the name of their organisations to appear in this thesis anonymously or whether they desire attribution. All chose to have their real names attributed in this thesis with the agreement that they would review and approve each quote attributed to them as co-researchers.

Ownership and dissemination of data, findings and publications:

The process of collectively discussing potential ethical issues and of revising decisions as appropriate might be time-consuming. However, it is an important implication of transforming research relations beyond subject-object interactions. Ritterbusch (2012) argues for the "construction of research relations based on the notions of interconnection, empathy, mutual familiarity, and sustainability" (p. 22). Discovering how to embody those notions throughout the research process to make this research transformative for all participants involved was a constant challenge for me.

With multiple partners, I thought that issues might emerge regarding data ownership. To mitigate these, we agreed from the beginning that all co-researchers involved were invited to publish or write about any of the issues that emerged in the cooperative inquiry. I made explicit that I was going to write a PhD thesis about our research. This being said, all the research data collected in the cooperative inquiry is part of shared research and is therefore made available for all co-researchers to use, write and reflect on. Meeting notes were safely stored in an external hard-disk and had also been made available to participants in a shared Google folder. Anonymised interviews were made

available for consultation and coding during a cooperative inquiry meeting but, after discussion with the co-researchers, I eventually decided to store them in a private Google folder to avoid the data being used beyond the scope of this research. The research did not involve vulnerable people or children under the age of 18.

F.1 Positionality

I brought to this research my background, my gender, my nationality, my attitude to life, and my personality. I carried out this research as an Italian woman, researching youth organisations at the age of 28 to 30. My colleagues were 18-35 and I felt close to them in age. I grew up in the Italian countryside in a lower-middle class background. I was lucky enough to receive an international education and create opportunities for myself to spend the last eight years working with young people aged 18 to 30 in different parts of the world. I speak fluent Spanish because of my work in Ecuador and Cuba. I moved to Colombia with my partner, a Canadian/Peruvian woman in her mid-twenties. I am outgoing, I genuinely enjoy people's company, and I consider myself to be trusting.

During my research, I negotiated both my identity as a PhD researcher, and as the director of research at Recrear. I found that the co-researchers were a lot more receptive to the latter. In our interactions, I made it explicit that this research was responding to a personal interest, as well as a professional and academic one. I feel that my experience with Recrear brought me closer to the co-researchers in the team– they knew I understood their struggles because, as an organisation, Recrear had gone through similar ones, even if in different contexts.

In Medellin, I was an outsider: I had never lived in Colombia before this research. Recrear is a Canadian organisation, so my colleagues perceived us as a foreign institution. Often, after introducing myself, I was asked many personal questions about my background, and I was always very happy to answer them openly and sincerely. Here is an abstract from my blog on this type of interaction with my colleague Stiven:

I make coffee and we start chatting on the floor of the living room. Stiven looks at me as if I was a sort of exotic creature, and maybe I look at him

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the same way too. He interviews me over coffee. (Somehow, every time I plan to interview somebody, they interview me first). Where do you live? Where do you come from? Where do you go? After I successfully explained where I grew up, that I travelled for the last 10 years and that I now live here, in the sense that I don't live anywhere else at the moment, and I am not sure where I will be next, Stiven concludes 'ok so you are a nomad'. I am not sure that's how I would define myself, but I feel glad Stiven feels he can place me in some category. (Gioacchino, 2016)

This exchange happened at my apartment. Strangely, I think the apartment was a sort of physical representation of my positionality as a researcher. On the one hand, it was located in a good neighbourhood. Colombia's neighbourhoods are divided into *strata* from 1- 6. Each neighbourhood is assigned a level: 1 is classified as the lowest income and six as the highest. Ours was in a level 5 area, which is to say, it was considered an upper-middle class building. Our apartment was visited by people from all parts of town, and we had inside jokes with the co-researchers about the tense relationship we had with our neighbours (who were not used to people from different social classes in their building, and never warmed to us).

This being said, for most Colombians there are norms attached to different *strata*, even the furniture in the house is an important status symbol. For this reason, I think our colleagues found our house unsettling. Leidy, the researcher from *Antares Dance*, told me in a final interview that she "learned from us how not to be attached to material things because you do not have much furniture (and you use jars as glasses!) but your place is welcoming" (personal communication n. 59, 15 January, 2017). While I am sure that different people, based on social class and upbringing, perceived our apartment differently, I felt that our house was confusing. For example, we ate vegetarian food, took off our shoes at the door, and had all of our meetings on the floor – all unusual things which I think categorised us as "eccentric foreign kids". I think that having different habits our colleagues' made us strangely approachable, or at least intriguing.

I also made it very explicit from the beginning that *Plata, Cultura, y Cambio* had no budget. My colleagues knew that I was earning a living with a small consultancy, and that my PhD was not supported financially by any

institution. As I experienced it, this made the relationship with co-researchers more equal– the co-researcher team knew that I was investing my personal time in the research. I did leverage my affiliation to a British university to approach governmental bodies and when asking for some interviews. As the co-researchers suggested to me, institutions would be more responsive to an academic profile, especially a foreign one, rather than one of a civil society practitioner.

All this being said, describing my positionality is something that I will not confine to this section. Instead, my relationship to the co-researchers and other research participants was constantly evolving. For this reason, I reflect on my positionality throughout this chapter and the rest of this thesis.

G. Conclusion

> If you want to change others, you need to meet them where they are, and be open to be changed first. (Scharmer, 2017)

Heron and Reason (2001) suggest that collaborative inquiry allows participants to understand their world, make sense of their lives and develop new creative ways of looking at things. I am aware that the cooperative inquiry process that I have described in this chapter opened new paths and provided new ideas for my work. During my fieldwork, I have learned that to research I must open up and let go of pre-conceived ideas. Doing so has transformed me, and the learning that has emerged in this study will be intimately connected to my own development as a researcher, and as a person.

I feel optimistic that the process brought important learning to my colleagues, which could transform into long-lasting action. For example:

- By the time I first drafted this chapter in mid-March 2017, three of the co-researching organisations had delivered a workshop together, two organisations were co-applying for a grant, and the group met for the first time without me to plan their next steps.
- By the time I edited this chapter in June 2018 most of the co-researchers had continued nourishing a friendship and active professional exchanges, the WhatsApp group of *Plata, Cultura, y Cambio* is still active on a weekly

basis, and at least three additional joint projects have been carried out in partnership between at least two organisations.

In this chapter, I explained how, while I am the author of this thesis, I am neither the only one owning this research's methodology, nor the only one who has shaped and defined it. Reason (2006) suggests that knowledge is filtered through the researcher (first person inquiry) as well as through a collective co-construction with the participants/co-researchers (second person inquiry). Only through this reflective practice can knowledge then gain relevance, and thus be generalised (third person inquiry). This thesis seeks to express the general relevance of the research (third person) by spelling out the basis of the first and second person inquiry on which this knowledge is founded.

In the rest of the thesis, I share the results of this research process, committed to making as explicit as possible how the research data converses with my analysis. It is clear to me that the story that this thesis narrates is emergent, co-constructed, and meaningful in so far as it acquires meaning for all the people that joined the research, in different moments, throughout the year of fieldwork. Hopefully, new meanings will also transpire for those reading this thesis.

Chapter 4: *Los parches de Medellin*

A. *Introduction*

This chapter addresses the question: What is the funding context of CSOs in Medellin, and how are youth-led CSOs engaging with it? *Plata, Cultura, y Cambio* became a *parche.* The term *parche,* one of the co-researcher's favourite terms, is rich with connotations. It embodies a sense of "resistance to the system" rooted in the culture of doing things with heart and spontaneity, in connection with others. It can be used as a verb, *parchar,* meaning "to hang out" and "to spend time together"; it can be used to say a "moment to share" or "enjoying a space with others". Youth groups also refer to each other as *parches*, basically a group of people that spend time or do things together. *Parche* is used to suggest a sense of sympathy and affinity between different groups of young people. This chapter provides a glimpse into the experiences and perspectives of the *parches* that took part in *Plata, Cultura, y Cambio* in order to understand how youth-led CSOs engaged with the funding culture.

What emerged in the cooperative inquiry is that the co-researchers sustained their work through a desire to *be* with others. Most co-researchers describe their organisations as spaces of connection and believed that people need to creatively and lovingly embody different ways of being together to transform society. In the cooperative inquiry, we found that the co-researchers envisioned social transformation as a continuous practice that, beyond "technical" results, cherishes the construction of daily experiences of harmony, joy, and peace.

To make their vision a reality, youth-led CSOs, at some point, need resources. Cohering to the essence of their work while securing resources to sustain themselves is a key challenge that emerged in the inquiry. In the efforts to secure funding, youth-led CSOs interact with a range of social and political actors; the most prominent of which are the local government and its institutions. I explain how, within these interactions, youth-led CSOs perceive that they have little agency and power to change a system that only leaves them with "the crumbs" of available funding. Instead, their collective agency is exercised through their day-to-day activities, rituals and ways of being. It is exercised by steering their relationships and actions towards the type of

community they wish to live in: I argue that co-researchers had strong inclinations towards *prefiguring* their visions through their daily practices.

The chapter opens with a description of a theatre skit which portrays some key tensions that the co-researchers feel concerning their funding context (part B). The skit, along with the debrief that followed it, highlight two sides of the same story: the difficulty of managing relationships with donors, and how co-researchers value collaboration with others to actualise their daily work and rituals. Part C explores the values of CSOs and shows how the co-researchers understand their work and engage with it, despite their difficulties accessing funds.

I then discuss how the youth-led organisations I worked with experienced the efforts to fund their work (part D). Part D.1 addresses how they engage with their most significant donors: the local government. To convey the quality of such engagement, I review the historical role of youth in the city of Medellin; I further illustrate the co-researchers' discomfort of managing public funding through an in-depth discussion of how youth-led CSOs engage with the *presupuesto participativo*, the participatory budget. Part D.2 discusses the different funding mechanisms that youth-led CSOs tap into, beyond the local government. Part F concludes with a reflection of how youth-led organisations experience the process of obtaining resources for their work.

B. *Funded and co-opted, or penniless and isolated?*

During the second meeting of the cooperative inquiry, we carried out a theatre exercise .[16] In proposing the exercise, I asked the researchers to divide into two groups and to prepare a skit to describe the challenges they experienced to fund their work. The groups had about 15 minutes to prepare the skit and then acted it out. Below, I describe one of the skits they presented as it captured a set of dynamics that kept re-appearing throughout the inquiry.

The skit started with two people (representing two youth-led organisations) stepping on stage and sitting on the floor with a marker and a

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[16] The exercise I proposed is part of Forum Theatre, a practice to 'rehearse reality' inspired by the toolkit of Augusto Boal's 'theatre of the oppressed' (for more see Fernandes, 2017)

sheet of paper. They both started scribbling on their sheets of paper. Meanwhile, other actors approached them with different suggestions about their drawings. They would whisper phrases such as "circles are more in fashion" or "you should try painting with a different colour". Some of the suggestions sounded kind and empathetic, while others came across as more assertive.

The two actors on the floor reacted differently to these suggestions. One kept scribbling, ignoring the suggestions (I will refer to the organisations this actor represented as the *uncompromising organisation*); the other actor engaged with the suggestions and adapted the drawing accordingly (I will refer to the organisation this actor represented as the *compromising organisation*).

Finally, an actor stepped onto a chair and loudly clapped her hands. In response, three actors formed a line in front of the chair. Each handed in a sheet (representing a proposal) to the person standing on the chair. The first two were rejected, while the *compromising organisation* was told their project *could* be approved *if* it were to integrate the suggested modification. Meanwhile, the *uncompromising organisation* did not show up to the call. Instead, the actor remained on the floor, still scribbling: the scene ended with this actor folding the sheet into an aeroplane and flying it.

After the first round, the actors repeated the skit. This time, other co-researchers that were not taking part in the scene were invited to step in and substitute any character to change the outcome of the skit. Two people stepped in to replace the role of those giving suggestions. The new actors tried to be more open to the work of the young organisations. The *compromising organisation* was also substituted: the new actor negotiated with the person standing on the chair (the donor) to make sure she did not have to modify her project too drastically.

A debrief followed. The group explained how the skit sought to represent the different attitudes that youth-led organisations might have towards the process of obtaining funding. It also wanted to display the power of established and well-funded institutions in steering the work of youth-led organisations and setting trends: the person on the chair clapping represented the local government, they explained, and the clap represented a call for proposals.

We had a lively discussion around how youth-led organisations engage with the local government. They mentioned that it was hard to establish the right attitude to engaging with public funding. For example, the actor that did listen to the feedback might simply "sell" the project when the local government requires something completely different from the one envisioned initially: the *compromising organisation* would risk being co-opted, and thereby lose its identity and become a subcontractor of the donor's vision.

Someone pointed out that not playing by the rules had many implications: for example, the organisation that refused to adapt to the donor's feedback remained alone. Plus, the scarcity of resources (represented by having only one marker to use) coupled with the isolation also meant that it would be hard to improve the quality of their work. In the discussion, the idea that the *uncompromising organisation* was isolated was questioned: it was pointed out that in the real-world organisations do not need to be isolated. There are more options than either getting co-opted or being isolated: youth-led CSOs can also find alternative networks to *resist* and articulate *power with* other actors. What does it mean to resist?

C. The Prefiguration of community and the work of resistance

> Our logic is very different from the logic of the world because we say that you need to start doing what you love now. You don't have to wait. (Leader of social theatre called '*Hora* 25', personal communication n. 28, 30 November, 2016)

Resistencia, resistance, was a theme that emerged early in the cooperative inquiry discussions and collective analysis. It was also regularly referred to during the interviews. Since, to me, the term resistance had no specific connotation, I started asking interviewees and co-researchers, "Resistance to what?". I collected a long list of answers, which ranged all the way from "the system" and "the conflict", to "pollution" and "commercials". Different groups and people conceptualise it differently, based on their specific work. It looked like everybody spoke of resisting something different, but,

across the board, young people involved in civil society processes saw themselves as engaged in acts of resistance.

In July, as part of Magnify, Recrear hosted a panel discussion called *Resistance to What?*. We invited five panellists, including the city's Secretary of Youth, a professor at the University of Antioquia who is an expert on youth, Claudia (leader of Art-C-8), Dorian (leader of *Casa Mia*), and el Aka (leader of *Agro-arte*). Hosted at Museum House of Memory, the panel was moderated by the museum's young Director of Research.

During the panel, I learned that, historically, resisting meant resisting the armed conflict. The discussion revolved around the meanings of resistance for youth-led organisations today. My analysis of the panel discussion is that the concept of resistance is much more an attitude than a fixed idea. I understood resistance as a stance, a desire to change the system. El Aka, for example, explained that resistance is a form of ensuring dignity. He added that it is not about a discourse; instead, resistance is embedded within action. Claudia, from Art-C-8, also echoed this idea, explaining that young people resist through their action. She gave an example of the "song for life", a ritual to promote peace and co-habiting. In short, in discussing resistance they did not focus on what it meant, but on how it was exercised (panel discussion, 18th July, 2016).

I could not put my finger on it, but I left the panel event with a sense that there was something about it that did not work. Months later, Stiven, leader of *Movimiento Tierra and Resistencia,* managed to articulate something simple and essential by saying that:

> The problem with the panel discussion was that you can't just talk about resistance. Resistance is something you have to experience with others. During the event, the set-up of the room made it hard to connect. (Stiven Usme, personal communication, 26 November, 2016).

He explained that the distance between the speakers and audience, as well as the formality and weight of the space in the auditorium-style room "blocked the energy flow" (ibid). Stiven's observation that resistance is an experience captures the essence of what, I learned, moves and motivates youth-led CSOs: by creating experiences that feel different, that challenge the norm, youth-led CSOs prefigured their vision– they *resisted*.

In our cooperative inquiry, this emerged with the sentences: *nos convoca estar con el otro*, which translates to 'we are called to be with the other', *lo importante se hace de parche*, 'things that matter are done *de parche'*, *los procesos emergen de lo afectivo*, 'processes emerge out of affection'. These phrases highlight a set of ideas which value how people come together, their bond, their emotional ties, and their experience of belonging. When I asked a sociology professor at the University of Antioquia what youth-led organisations work towards, he said young people are in search for authenticity, adding that young people are claiming *la libertad de ser,* the freedom of being (personal communication n. 32, 2 November, 2016). The co-researchers emphasised that to change society, they need to embody *en nuestro ser,* in our being*,* the change they want to see. To do so, they focus on rituals, art, food, and the connection with nature as forms of resistance.

The co-researchers perceive that their actions exist in different dimensions; for example, they distinguish between the *technical* and the *experiential*. If the *technical* aspect of the CSOs' work is the content of a training, ideas of peace-building, a story, or a butterfly (each organisation has its version of what the technical is for them), the *experiential* aspect of their work is the being behind that doing. In relation to the technical, they see the need to deal with structural problems, e.g. providing training for employment. While with the experiential, they focus on the way they feel and conceive of themselves and the world, and the intrinsic potential that this holds for social transformation.

The value of the experiential, next to the technical, suggests a restructuring of how to think about social processes: introducing an indicator of the *quality* of the experience would put into question much of the work associated with development. These ideas break away from seeing only what is "rational" and acknowledge that other, more intangible forces are at play in the process of social transformation. What emerged is that resistance is a way of being together in the present, grounded in a sense of connection, empathy, and community with the other. Collective action is a manifestation of this desire to be together.

The concept of resistance, in the way the co-researchers understood it, overlaps with the practice of prefiguration, defined as a *direct theory* (Sturgeon,

1995) which, according to Maeckelbergh (2011), assumes that ends and means are inseparable. Prefiguration is discussed in the context of new social movements as the practice of actualising utopias within political actions such as protests in which groups practice, for example, egalitarian decision-making (Maeckelbergh 2009, 2011; Yates, 2015). Maeckelbergh (2011) states that:

> Practicing prefigurative politics means removing the temporal distinction between the struggle in the present and a goal in the future; instead, the struggle and the goal, the real and the ideal, become one in the present. (p. 4)

According to Boggs (1977), who coined the term, prefiguration is:

> The embodiment, within the ongoing political practice of a movement, of those forms of social relations, decision-making, culture, and human experience that are the ultimate goal. (p. 100)

However, none of the co-researchers' organisations had an explicit political agenda, in the sense that they only sporadically interacted with *visible and hidden power* (such as influencing legislations, lobbying, organising demonstrations, or organising direct action) (JASS, 2006). Instead, the co-researchers were more interested in prefiguring community by creating spaces, organising rituals, and experimenting with tools that can generate a feeling of community in the present. The type of prefiguration that my colleagues engaged with seeks to prefigure first the experience of wellbeing with others, and only through such connections embody new possibilities of interaction, organising, and exchange. In other terms, they focused on developing *power within*, and *power with* as a prerequisite to articulate *power to* shape and craft a meaningful life. The bulk of their work was concerned with practices to strengthen *invisible power*, intended as the power to shape meaning, values and what is normal (JASS, 2006).

How do they seek to fund this kind of prefiguration of community?

D. Funding youth-led CSOs

In the theatre skit described above, the co-researchers identified the local government and its institutions as their main funder. In fact, the public sector was by far the most significant funder of youth-led CSOs: 9 out of 10

organisations that took part in *Plata, Cultura, y Cambio* at some point in their history received funding or were contracted by the local government of Medellin. Below, I discuss the historical evolution of this relationship.

D. 1 Young people and the local government in Medellin

As I discussed in the introduction to this thesis, Medellin has gone through tremendous transformation in the last decades. The city developed in an unplanned fashion and, until recently, life in Medellin revolved primarily around neighbourhoods—in Spanish: *barrios*. Given the pattern of urban development, the poorer *barrios* had no sense of belonging to the city. Writing in 1986, Payne explained how people still used the expression 'going down to Medellin' when talking about the city centre because the *barrios* in the valley were perceived as separate. During an interview, a representative of local government explained to me that:

> If we look at the history of how many of the big *barrios* in Medellin were formed, we see that there was a group of neighbours who every eight days did *convite*.[17] One would help build the house of the other, they would get together and sell *empanadas* to make the aqueduct. (personal communication n. 11, 16 August, 2016)

Organised citizens filled-in for an absent local government. This government, in fact, was perceived as the antagonist of the development of the *barrios*, many of which, inhabited by displaced people from other parts of the country, were unplanned (an unplanned *barrio* is called *invasion*, which literally means 'invasion'*)* (Tocancipá-Falla, 2014).[18] At the peak of the urban conflict, Giraldo (1992), from *Cooperación Region* describes the *Lógica comunitaria de supervivencia*, 'the community logic of survivor'. She explains how citizens lived hand to mouth because they did not know what would happen the following day (Giraldo, 1992).

Widespread poverty and limited access to services due to the absence of local government meant that young people could be easily recruited by non-

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[17] The term 'convite' refers to a community event organised by an organisation or a family to invite the community to do productive work together. The community event can be used to build a home or perform other important work for whoever organises it.
[18] This history is also vividly captured in some of the memory exercises that happened around the city. For example, see this video on the history of *barrio*s: Moravia: Un escenario de resistencia y memoria.

state armed groups, which gained legitimacy in the 1980s and 1990s (Doyle, 2016). During these decades, young people were both the perpetrators and the victims of violence in the streets of Medellin. Youth was associated with violence, killers, and gunmen (Montoya & Martínez, 2014; Rodriguez, 2012). In 1991 Alonso Salazar, thereafter mayor of Medellin (2008-2011) wrote:

> Violence is part of the reality of Medellin. We live in a city at war. A war where many powers intervene and where the protagonists are the young. They are the ones who kill and die. Performers of a script written by other hands and inspired by the tragic sense that continues to mark our history. (Salazar, 1991, p. 4)

In response to this sense of widespread insecurity and the absence of the state, local organisations, often led by young people, started to provide opportunities for people to process and cope with the experiences in the *barrios*. Local CSOs, mostly operating at the *comuna*-level, consolidated as recognised social actors, independent from the armed groups (Giraldo, 2014). These CSOs resisted the conflict by creating opportunities for the community to engage with what was happening in the *barrio*; they utilised popular education and art to make visible the "everyday" experience of people (Giraldo, 2014). In this context, the community building exercises of CSOs generated a sense of identity around shared experiences (Grajales & Galeano, 2011). This work was recognised for allowing marginalised voices to be heard; in doing so, it contributed to the creation of the social fabric and, through symbolism and ritual, brought the citizens of Medellin closer together (Giraldo, 2014).

In those decades, young people's resistance was about loudly saying, "We are not gunmen". They did so through music, theatre, and street art. They used art and culture to express their identities and claim their right to live and exist in peace. These lines from the founding letter of *Corporación Casa Mia* capture some of the raw emotions that characterised this period:

> We were born because the war hurt us a lot. Because at a young age we lost many friends, uncles, brothers, girlfriends, and the elderly. Casa Mia was born behind a weapon that did not want to be shot. Casa Mia came about when young people were defending life, with life and with death. (Founding Letter of *Casa Mia*, 1993)

To address the problem of violence, the municipality of Medellin recognised that social transformation would require the local government to reach out to, understand, and engage with local realities. This awareness has been one of the deepest drivers of development in the city. My interviewee from *Parque Explora* explained to me:

> The local government is trying to increase its presence. Medellin's transformation was made possible because of a realisation that to be present, the local government needs to go beyond providing military troops. The concept of security has been broadened to include security in terms of education, public services, health, employment, etc. We still have a long way to go." (personal communication n. 13, 18 August, 2016)

With the introduction of the 1991 constitution, which instituted the direct election of the mayor and governor, local CSOs were seen as a major ally of the public sector and they started being subcontracted by the local government to educate citizens about the political changes (Garcés Montoya, 2015).

Local government's change in attitude towards young people is well illustrated through the history of the city's Secretariat of Youth. In an interview, the Secretary of Youth explained to me that the office has evolved, tracing a changing understanding of how the local government should engage with young people. In 1994 there was no Secretariat of Youth; instead, a small office of youth was part of a Secretariat of Wellbeing. This symbolised the fact that youth were still considered a vulnerable group. "Youth were seen as dangerous. Youth policy was shallow. The municipality was concerned with finding something for young people to do in their free time," explained the Secretary (personal communication n. 7, 16 August, 2016). The office was asking: what are we going to do with all those guys in the street? The logic was that we had to *robar los jovenes de la violencia,* 'steal youth from violence'.

In the year 2000, the office became a sub-secretariat within the Secretariat of Culture. According to the Secretary, this represented a radical shift in the outlook towards youth. In this period, young people were starting to be seen more as an opportunity than a threat. The emphasis, however, was on young people representing the cultural expression of the city: they were the protagonists of the growing cultural scene in Medellin. "But young people are

not only colour, and are not only art," reflected the Secretary, "something was missing" (personal communication n. 7, 16 August, 2016).

It is only in 2013 that the Secretariat of Youth was established, which is now one of the seven secretariats under the central governing organ of the city, the Mayor's Cabinet. Today, reflected my interviewee, youth are seen as an opportunity, holistically part of the city's development, and drivers of the city's innovation. In the way several of my interviewees put it, there is an historical debt (*deuda historica),* that the local government feels towards its citizens, especially young people (Professor of the University of Antioquia, personal communication n. 32, 2 November, 2016).

Despite local government's efforts to come closer to communities, there is a deep communication gap between it and youth-led CSOs. According to the Secretary of Youth, "Young people keep repeating discourses of the past because they don't have their own" (personal communication n. 7, 16 August, 2016). She explained:

> I think young people are doing incredible things, but when they speak in political spaces they keep replicating discourses that are very old. This is to say, you hear the rhetoric of the president of a *Junta de Accion Comunal* (community action board) who is 60, and it is the same one of a young person. And there is no way that it can be the same discourse! (ibid)

She also argued that young people are not finding their ways to express new ideas because they try to mimic the discourse of the local government:

> Many of the things they [young people] are doing have a theme of spirituality or a transcendentalism. I think that these are some of the things that move young people the most. This is happening not just in Medellin but all over the world! We are looking going into ourselves and asking questions on the existence of our soul. We are going back to the basics.
>
> There is a transcendental dimension behind the work of young people, and they should not be afraid to express it in front of institutions. But this is exactly what happens – in front of institutions, they take on a discourse already learnt because we feel that speaking of something else won't be respected enough. I think that's not true. I think that beyond

doing things differently, we should find the words to talk about what we
are doing. (ibid)

The co-researchers agreed and explained they felt the need to mimic the
language of institutions to be able to access funding. They argued that, despite
the pretty and inclusive political language, the local government gives their
work very low priority. This makes it hard for them to articulate different ideas.

To explain how this communication gap with the local government
permeates their practices, they bring up the example of how youth organisations
interact with the *presupuesto participativo,* the participatory budget. This
illustrates some of the blocks that youth-led organisations encounter when
interacting with the local government. The local government is such a critical
funder of youth-led CSOs that, according to a sociologist at a local university,
when the state is not present the work of CSOs slows down:

> We saw it this first semester. What happened when the local government
> was working on the local planning? All community-management projects
> were stalled. People were working with the resources they had, with their
> volunteers and so on. In June, as soon as the development plan of the city
> was approved, the budget released, and the State started contracting,
> everything started. Now we are saturated with a thousand things because
> the municipality has to close the financial year. (personal communication
> n. 32, 2 November, 2016)

When the state provides funds, organisations are all "running around". To
the academic, this means there is a challenge related to sustainability:

> Because to depend only on the State implies not only that there is a single
> source of funding, but also that it is difficult to construct a truly dissident
> or alternative proposal. (ibid)

Findings from the cooperative inquiry provide evidence to suggest this is
indeed the reality. The co-researchers also stressed that in managing state
funding, CSOs risk falling into the trap of *se hace por hacer, y se gasta por
gastar,* 'you do just to do, and you spend just to spend' (Cooperative Inquiry,
Meeting 5, 2016). In other words, the more projects, the better the cash flows.
One of the reasons for this is that state funding allows for very small overheads.
To sustain their work, CSOs need people invested in the work – so they try to
reach a tipping point that allows them to have salaried employees (Cooperative

Inquiry, Meeting 4, 2016). To remunerate those working for CSOs, they need to stack up overheads by managing multiple projects. This, however, has risks. CSOs can overstretch themselves, and in the process sacrifice quality for quantity. What was very clear to the co-researchers is that managing more projects does not always equate with more impact (ibid).

D.1.2 La Mermelada del PP (the clientelism of the PP) [19]

Medellin has been experimenting with the *presupuesto pacticipativo (PP)*. This exercise of participatory budgeting, which co-researchers referred to as *el PP,* draws theoretically on alternative visions of democracy which are more citizen-led and intended to broaden participation and citizen-led decision making (Cornwall, 2004). First experimented in Puerto Alegre, in Brazil, participatory budgeting was well-documented as an attempt to widen political space for citizens to play more of an active role prioritising and shaping the decisions that affect their lives (Kingsley, 2012; Novy & Leubolt, 2005). Medellin has been implementing it since 2007 (Moncada, 2016). Five per cent of the public budget of Medellin is allocated to *el PP*, which is available to be prioritised and implemented directly by the local *barrios* (Schmidt, 2011). The process starts with the local assemblies (*Juntas de Acción Comunal*). During the assemblies, people elect representatives to a series of working groups around specific themes defined in the assemblies (personal communication n. 8, 7 September, 2016).

The working groups develop projects and, once the resources are allocated, implement them. These projects are implemented in the year after they are identified and developed. According to the youth office of the municipality, *el PP* is supposed to solve problems that the state, being so big, does not see. This budget has been an important instrument of participation and financing for youth-led CSOs. Yet, the co-researchers had a conflictual, frustrating, complicated relationship with *el PP*; this was a topic of extensive debate within the cooperative inquiry.

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[19] *Mermelada,* which would translate literally to 'jam', but it is utilised colloquially to mean 'corruption', 'clientalism', or 'mafia'.

The first challenge for youth-led CSOs is obtaining the funding. According to one of the municipal officers, there is a problem with *adultocentrismo*, 'adultcentrism': within the *Juntas de Acción Comunal* and the *Juntas Administrativas Locales*, the two bodies at the community level which make decision around the budget, there is a tradition of "adult" leadership that co-opts resources (personal communication n. 8, 7 September, 2016). To mitigate this, the Youth Secretary has put in place a program called PP Youth to train young people to access PP funding. Despite this, the co-researchers complained that the meetings are "too boring", and "where old people go waste time". During the fifth meeting of the cooperative inquiry, one of the co-researcher explained:

> We found a generational gap in the management of *el PP*. We participate in the meetings to prioritise resources, but we get so bored because the meetings have become a boxing ring for the discussion of elders.
> (published in *Carta abierta a las Organisaciones Sociales de Medellín*, 2016)

In sum, while young people are *invited* into this space to make decisions, the opportunity to join this space does not seem sufficient to enable young people to participate substantively. Cornwall (2014) suggests that the particular structure and discursive style of these forums risk reinforcing power dynamic: young people found themselves disempowered and disengaged.

As part of *Plata, Cultura, y Cambio*, we decided to prioritise understanding how youth-led CSOs engage with *el PP*. Carolina took the lead in compiling all the different experience with *el PP*. The extensive series of interviews and citations was finally shared in a collective analysis exercise with the whole group. The co-researchers of *Plata, Cultura, y Cambio* were asked to discuss all the data they had reviewed and represent it with a rich picture (Figure 6).
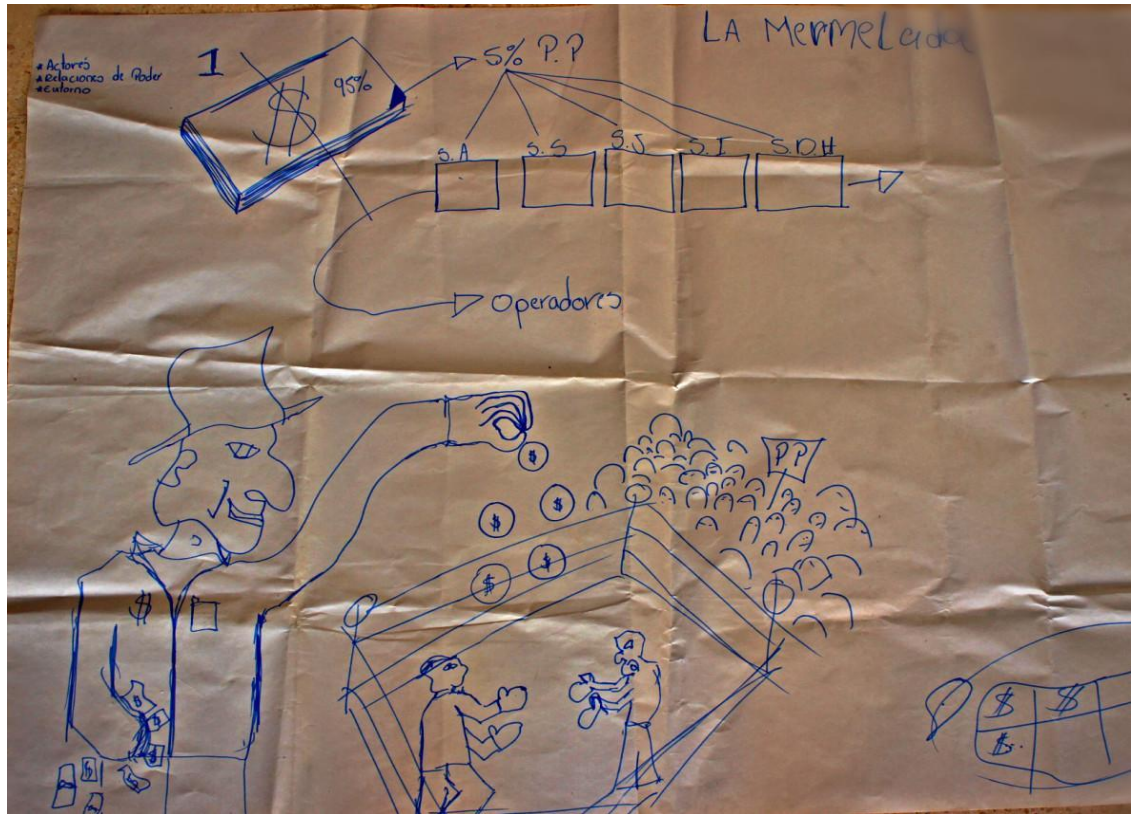
Figure 6: A rich picture drawn during Meeting 5 of the cooperative inquiry. It represents how CSOs engage with the participatory budget dynamics in Medellin.

Starting from the top, Figure 6 shows how *el PP* is supposed to work: take the municipal budget and take away half of it which goes towards repaying foreign debts. Of the second half, five per cent is supposed to be managed directly by the communities. However, local organisations do not get to design comprehensive programmes. Instead they are asked to provide some general project headings that then feedback to the specific secretariats for development. They explained that the implementing mechanisms of *el PP* made it so that the local government could retain the power over who implements projects and how. One of the co-researchers said:

> The only thing that we can do at the PP committee meeting is putting down the name of what we want and the monetary value, nothing more. We can't insert the objective, nor the activities. Because they always tell us that we cannot put anything else down, that that exercise is only to allocate resources, then we'll talk about how we are going to do it. (Cooperative Inquiry, Meeting 5, 2016)

This is very frustrating for youth organisations which care a lot about how things get done:

> When we ask, 'how are we going to do it?', it can happen that the civil servants change or get sick - something always happens, and the communication is uncertain - and at the time of planning the project it is hard to get in touch to understand what they want to do with the proposals. So, they [the operators] come up with something based on their imagination, or based on what has always been done... For them, it is easier to do a copy paste instead of asking what we want to do. (ibid)

To this discussion, Ximena added her experience:

> We recently managed to obtain resources for *Casa Mia* to implement a process with young people. But they modified our proposal so that instead of the process we designed, we are supposed to organise a series of random workshops that will lead to nothing. (ibid)

In fact, funding does not go from the state to the CSOs directly. Instead, it is mediated by *operadores*, which are private agents regarded by the state as having the capacity to manage the funds. This starts a whole "mafia" of subcontracting. As Ximena continues:

> The other problem is that they keep subcontracting the subcontracted. The *operador* takes on a part of the 400 million pesos; then they contract it to another *operador* that works with the 26 per cent of interest; then it is managed by another *operador* that works with the five per cent. Everybody takes a piece, and of the 400 million, it is a stretch if you are left with 100 million. (ibid)

Leidy summarised it in this way: "It is a subcontracting between operators, and what's left to the community are the crumbs" (ibid). Figure 7 represents how bureaucratic processes of subcontracting leave youth-led CSOs with only the crumbs of the funding cake.

Figure 7: This image, and the two below, were made by Jose, a student from EAFIT University interning with Recrear. The posters were exposed at the final treasure hunt of Plata, Cultura, y Cambio. This picture represents how subcontracting leaves youth-led CSOs.

According to the co-researchers, *el PP* has increased the competition between grassroots organisations. Instead of collaborating, different organisations are fighting against each other and having to be strategic to receive funding. The picture below represents Ximena's words: "*El PP* is like a cockpit where everybody is fighting for the same resources" (Figure 8). The co-researchers on the one hand recognised that competition was neither part of their DNA nor a value they wanted to injected in their work; on the other they acknowledged that funding dynamics had an *invisible power* (Gaventa, 2006; JASS, 2006); they shaped practices by socialising and normalising competition.

When youth-led organisations do manage to obtain funding, things do not get any easier. First of all, the paperwork associated with *el PP* is tedious. Moreover, the requirements and timelines are not realistic. For example,

Figure 8: This image represents how CSOs interact with the Participatory Budget as if they were in a cockfight: all competing to obtain the same money.

instead of managing the funding across one year, projects often have to be executed in three months (Cooperative Inquiry, Meeting 3, 2016). Funding is always late, and organisations have to rush to spend it. This means that sometimes funds get misused.

Figure 9 represents a story Carla shared during our second meeting. After about a year and a half of working with no funding, Carla's organisation, *Deditos Verdes*, obtained 5 million pesos (approximately GBP 1,300) of public funding for an urban agriculture project. They had never had that much money at once and were told they needed to spend it all in three months. After extensive discussions, they decided to make a long-term investment by buying material they would need for their urban gardening projects. Once they bought the material they realised they did not know where to store it. Finally, a friend offered a backyard to store the material. A few months later all the material was stolen.
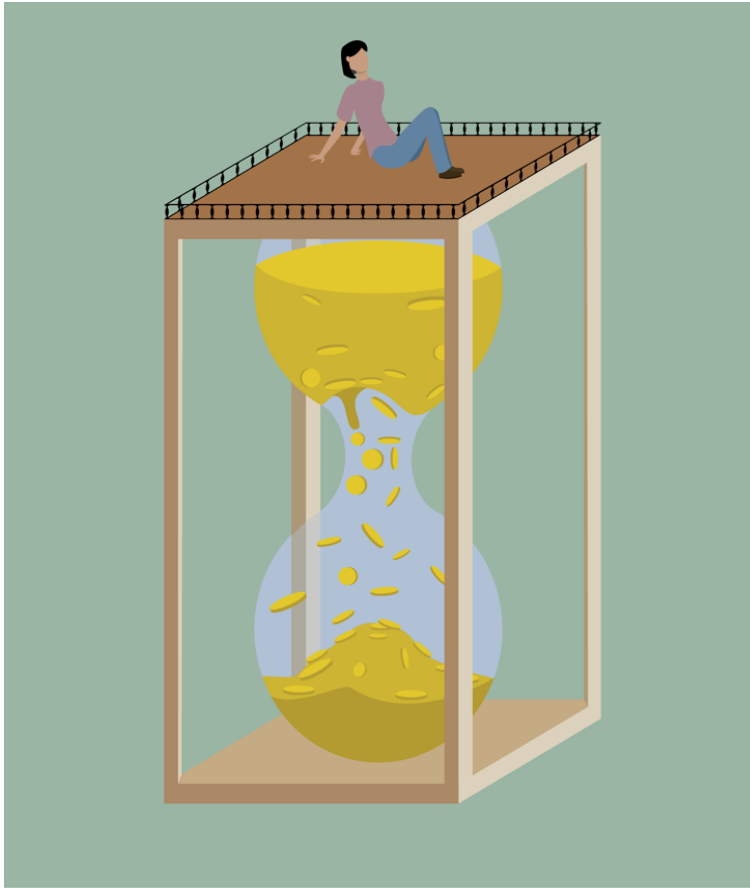
Figure 9: This image represents Carla, fighting against time to spend the money of the Participatory Budget.

While *el PP* has been an important mechanism of interaction with the state, and a source of start-up funding, Carla's story captures the challenge of working with "spare coins" on tight deadlines. For Carla, this first experience managing funding was more a lesson learned than a failure: it points out to how hard it can be for young people to work with financial resources for the first time, after having worked *de parche*. My colleagues stressed that it was demoralising to have to communicate their work with reports and indicators because their work "does not come through". The overemphasis on quantitative outcomes in evaluation practices is challenged in a recent article on youth work in the English context; de St Croix (2018) argues that the current framing of impact embraces a specific "epistemological and political faith in numbers as representative of worth" (p. 430) and risks marginalising youth-work. The co-researchers would agree; they stressed repeatedly that "they [the local government] only care about signatures and numbers, while there is no interest in the quality of the work" (Cooperative Inquiry, Meeting 5, 2016). To the co-researchers, indicators such as the number of people signed up to the workshop seemed not only shallow, but also deceiving and un-gratifying.

While this is a well-known challenge of funder-grantee relationships, dealing with bureaucracy is particularly challenging if you believe that *how* you

do things embodies the type of resistance you are committed to. Creating spaces for heartfelt communication, celebration, introspection and sharing is at the heart of many of my colleagues' brands of resistance. For example, when I asked them to share pictures that capture their organisational culture, three of them shared photos that involved sharing food as a symbol of the quality of their relationships.

Carla described a photo (Figure 10) that was taken during the first festival *de pintate* of *Deditos Verdes*:

> We did a mandala with fruit. We want to promote the logic of sharing – we also want to make sure we are coherent about the type of snacks we use during our workshops. (Cooperative Inquiry, Meeting 2, 2016)

Figure 10: A photo shared by Carla to represent the culture of Deditos Verdes.

Our collective discussions also touched upon the discomfort of utilising shallow indicators to report on the CSOs' work. They argued reporting is dry and does not capture, and is not interested in, the quality of the experience:

> We are focused on the qualitative, on the human, it does not matter that we are small. They think in terms of numbers, and they apply themselves on the reports. Instead, we don't do that (unless we are doing a project with the municipality). (Cooperative Inquiry, Meeting 2, 2016)

They argued that indicators are too narrow because the outcomes of a project might mature and bear fruits long after its termination and they are therefore hard to measure (Cooperative Inquiry, Meeting 2, 2016).

E. *What are the alternatives to local government funding?*

The previous section argued that there is a close, and complex relationship between the local government and youth-led CSOs. Yet, the co-researchers recognised that being dependent on local government funding is neither reliable nor sustainable. So, what are the other pathways they have utilised to generate financial resources? As it emerged from the cooperative inquiry, other sources of funding beyond the local government included a mix of international cooperation, private companies' donations, and self-generated funds. Below I discuss how the co-researchers engaged with these different funding sources.

E.1 International cooperation

Only 1 out of the 10 organisations was working directly with a foreign institution (they had a partnership with a university in the United States). Some of the co-researchers said they were interested in applying for international cooperation funds, but the opportunities were limited. In fact, currently, a big portion of the international cooperation funding flows through the government.

This was not always the case: in the 1980s and 1990s, the work of local CSOs was recognised and funded by the international community (personal communication n. 10, 11 January, 2017*)*. In an article from 1992, Batancur and Urán explain that, given the scarcity of resources from the private and public sector available to CSOs in Medellin, collective action "globalised" (Betancur & Urán, 2001; Payne, 1986). The director of research of *Casa Museo de la Memoria* estimates that during this period only 20% of the funding available to CSOs came from the local government; this was very minor compared to the other 80% of the funds that CSOs obtained directly from international cooperation (personal communication n. 11, 19 August, 2016).

However, the amount of direct international cooperation reaching CSOs decreased sharply over the last two decades. My interviewee from *Casa Museo de la Memoria* captures how the international funding of CSOs became

controversial with an anecdote. In the late 1990s, a group of Colombia military personnel was travelling to Germany for a bilateral meeting with the embassy and the Ministry of Exterior. In this period, foreign academics and international CSOs were documenting, in partnership with local CSOs, the Colombian state's human rights violations. This information on state crimes leaked to the German government and in this particular instance the military delegation was not allowed to land in Germany. This episode captures the Colombian government's growing preoccupation with CSOs, which through their international links, were establishing bonds and sharing information that could influence Colombia's foreign relationships.

Under the presidency of Alvaro Uribe (2002-2010), the state heavily regulated CSOs' access to foreign funding. First of all, Uribe's government spearheaded a crackdown on organisations that were thought to have ties with military groups. Then, through a national decree, the government took control of the international financing that previously reached CSOs directly. With the creation of the Presidential Agency for Social Action and International Cooperation, in 2008, all international funding was channelled to the government and then redistributed. My interviewee estimated that because of this restructuring, the funding equation for CSOs was reversed: 80% of funding came from the government, while only the 20% came directly from international cooperation (personal communication n. 11, 19 August, 2016).

Donado Rosa (2009) analyses how, within his first government, Uribe managed to re-direct international cooperation to support his fight against narco-trafficking and the promotion of internal security, a political agenda also known as "democratic security". According to Quintero (2012), Uribe's government effectively leveraged the West's anti-terrorist focus to direct international cooperation towards his agenda: emphasising the idea that Western countries have a shared responsibility on narco-trafficking given that they create the demand for drugs, his administration managed to channel international funding to fight non-state armed groups.

These policies coincided with Colombia's transition from a low-income to a middle-income country; as a result, it became less of a priority for donors. International cooperation decreased and shifted away from civil society across all of Latin America. Pousadela and Cruz (2016) found that "the bulk of

international cooperation funds in LAC [Latin American and the Caribbean] flow towards governments; a tiny proportion goes directly to domestic CSOs" (p. 609).

This trend was also evident at the local level in Medellin. In 2002, the city's commitment to internationalisation, and to controlling its resources independently from Bogotá, resulted in the creation of its own Agency of Cooperation and Inversion (ACI Medellin) (personal communication n. 17, 18 January, 2017). The agency seeks to showcase good practices to attract international investments to support the city's development agenda. As the agency's promotional video suggests, the ACI wants to "create links with the world" by "speaking the universal language of innovation, process, and hope" (ACI Medellin, 2015).

Co-researchers seemed to think that international cooperation allows for more flexibility than working with the local government. This might be more of an assumption than a reality given that, according to Pousadela and Cruz (2016), funding that arrives directly to CSOs from the international community involves "complex procedures and tend to lack continuity" (p. 609). They also felt that managing international funds allows the state to earn more. Here is an excerpt from a discussion on international cooperation during the second meeting of the cooperative inquiry:

> When we look at the calls for proposals from the local government, compared to those with foreign entities, the foreign ones are more flexible. The state does it [manages the funds] so that they can direct the funds to those under their influence. (Cooperative Inquiry, Meeting 2, 2016)

The co-researchers expected that the terms *post-conflict* and *peace* would become big buzzwords attracting international cooperation. They speculated about the post-conflict era and expressed worries about the need to position themselves to receive international funding. "Everybody will be eating out of the post-conflict," said one during a party, "imagine all the organisations that will be created just to obtain new funding available" (personal communication, 27 June, 2016). They joked that now they would have to make sure to say "peace" after every other word. One of the CSO leaders I interviewed put it this way: "We need to take advantage of this hegemonic discourse of

peace, to be able to create other spaces of relating to each other differently"
(personal communication n. 16, 1 August, 2016).

E.2 The private sector as a new actor

A staff member of the *Confederación Colombiana de ONG* (CCONG),[20]
an umbrella organisation for CSOs, explained to me that there had been a shift
in the way the private sector perceives its role in society; most large private
sector companies have developed non-profit arms (personal communication n.
3, 20 January, 2016). A researcher in the national agency for youth, *Colombia
Joven*, explained that many young people remain sceptical of the private sector
(personal communication n. 1, 26 January, 2016). A young leader I interviewed
in Bogotá, for example, told me that non-profits that emerge out of the private
sector "tend to have their priorities and do not support grassroots youth
organising" (personal communication n. 5, 20 January, 2016).

A similar perception was shared by some of the co-researchers of *Plata,
Cultura, y Cambio.* As private sector companies develop their foundations, they
come with new sets of requirements and agendas. This makes the negotiations
between youth-led CSOs and private foundations complicated. Moreover,
private companies tend to invest in well-resourced non-profits, which have a
greater capacity to capture resources. Youth-led CSOs feel excluded and
frustrated.

The co-researchers explained that you could not just ask for donations
from the private sector, because they have their own priorities (Cooperative
Inquiry, Meeting 2, 2016). To obtain funding, you need to learn how to "speak
their language". For example, when I asked a social leader how he feels about
the concept of social entrepreneurship he told me:

> Young people don't feel too connected to the term: they are trying to fight
> the capitalist logic! Do I like the term? I don't like it. But I still use it as
> an instrument if I think it's going to resonate with my audience,
> especially in the private sector. (personal communication n. 6, 1 August,
> 2016).

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[20] The *Confederación Colombiana de ONG* (CCONG) is an umbrella organisation for
CSOs in Colombia - http://ccong.org.co/ccong/

Grassroots groups are learning that instead of asking for funding, they need to understand how they can contribute to the agendas of those organisations. Often this means designing *products* that the foundations might be willing to pay for because of their *added value*. There seemed to be a sense amongst co-researchers that you need to engage with the private sector with a business-oriented mentality.

E.3 Generating their own funding: social entrepreneurship

In Medellin, it is common to meet young leaders who define themselves as social entrepreneurs, or that call their initiative a social enterprise. Three of the ten co-researchers identified with the term. Meanwhile, the co-researchers, as well as the other youth-leaders I interviewed, tended to define the term social entrepreneurship loosely as generating resources by selling products or services.

I learned that while the term has no straightforward definition in Medellin, it has strong connotations. Several interviewees from both youth-led and more established institutions were sceptical: they found controversial the idea of commercialising social change and saw that social entrepreneurship risks "glorifying individualism". For others, social entrepreneurship represents a kind of liberation, a chance to challenge the paternalistic relationship between CSOs and donors. Being a social entrepreneur is about being taken more seriously because "nobody likes to ask for money" (Cooperative Inquiry, Meeting 5, 2016).

The discussions in the cooperative inquiry stressed that selling is hard because in Medellin there is no culture of paying for social services. For example, the co-researchers explained to me that the local government had invested a lot in what, in Medellin, they refer to as the *sector social y cultural*, 'the cultural and the social sector' and therefore people are used to attending events for free (Focus group on the creative economy, 22 October, 2016). For this reason, CSOs continue turning to the private sector and the state, but with a different strategy: instead of approaching them asking for donations/grants to support their programmes, CSOs engage with public and private institutions thinking of them as clients. CSOs need to understand public and private agendas and offer their services so to contribute to them. For example, a CSO leader I interviewed explained how they define their organisation as a social

enterprise stressing that "the state is one of our major clients" (personal communication n. 21, 5 August, 2016).

Fed up with these experiences of dependency from the local government, Carla has been transitioning *Deditos Verdes* towards a social entrepreneurship model. As part of this transition, *Deditos Verdes* started to work with the foundation of one of Colombia's leading banks. Carla, whose organisation is committed to creating a different relationship with nature, offered to organise gardening days for the bank's employees. The experience of collaborating with the foundation had been very positive, she said. While she was expecting the institution to be "very corporate", she found the employees she worked with to be "very humane and approachable". Carla explained that in her experience, being contracted by the private sector came with fewer requirements than public financing. However, she remains sceptical about working with the private sector: she wants to be able to support herself through *Deditos Verdes*, while working directly for the improvement of communities. *Deditos Verdes'* mission, she explains, is not exclusively serving the employees of a bank.

F. *Conclusion: the tension with funding*

The co-researchers of *Plata, Cultura, y Cambio* understand that youth-led CSOs are "managing the crumbs" of public funding. To capture these crumbs, in their experience, they need to speak the language of the funders. The challenge is that they also speak a language of resistance and try to walk the walk of prefiguration of community: they value the experiential, rather than the technical aspects of development.

I learned that embodying different ways of being with others was, for the co-researchers, a form of resistance. Exploring the theme of resistance, I found the term refers more to an orientation to social change, an attitude rather than a defined idea. While people conceptualise it differently, resistance is a stance, a desire to change the system. It is a sort of restlessness. The co-researchers understand social transformation as messy and non-linear: they embrace the idea that social transformation manifests itself through the exercise of genuine connections, spontaneity, and in respect to the land. This, I argue, is a form of *prefiguration* of a community based on relationships which value authenticity and connections, based on affection.

This prefiguration is in tension with the structures the CSOs must interact with to obtain funding. Through their experience with *el PP*, the co-researchers showed that the practices they need to engage with in order to access and manage the public funding do not align with the way they want to work (for example, they would prefer having longer timelines, focusing more on the quality of their methodology rather than doing anything, and avoid mimicking other sectors' priority to obtain funding,). Liliana, leader of *Encuentro de Voces*, reflected that social organisations seem "bipolar":

> Sometimes we get funding from the municipality. They give us deadlines, strict timelines, reporting so absurd that we are forced to do it with mediocrity. This is one side. On the other side, we sell ourselves. In our free time we resist, and then I sell my project to Shell or Coca-Cola. Well, it's because we need resources... but then when I go to the local store, and I am chatting around, I continue with my social and political views. That seems way too bipolar to me. (Cooperative Inquiry, Meeting 2, 2016).

By using the term "bipolar", Liliana wanted to be provocative. Yet, her comment captures the feeling of inconsistency and tension I have described in this chapter. Many of the co-researchers had trouble packaging their work to fit the requirements of funding opportunities and were uncomfortable with the unreliability of funding resources.

I have learned that the path towards sustainability is neither obvious nor straightforward precisely because these organisations feel the need to embody–to live–their values, and their stance of resistance. In the cooperative inquiry, it emerged clearly that youth-led CSOs experience tension when they enact the practices necessary to obtain and manage funding from private and public institutions. There seems to be a communication gap between youth-led CSOs and the public sector: both the co-researchers and, for example, the city's Secretary of Youth, recognised that youth-led CSOs "speak a different language". They need to deal with the uncomfortable exercise of learning a logic that is not their own to obtain resources to fund their *parches*, which embody values not recognised within funding structures. What is the nature of this tension?

In the next chapter, I address this question by arguing that this communication gap stems from the different understandings of social change which coexist in Medellin.

Chapter 5: Two distinct framings of development

A. *Introduction*

In chapter 4, I argued that co-researchers engaged with social change aiming to prefigure the reality they envision; they did so by infusing love and attention into their daily activities, and through practising the belief that social transformation is rooted in the experiential. I also noticed that the co-researchers expressed a sense of tension, frustration, and incoherence in their interactions with funding agencies. Saying that organisations feel "bipolar", Liliana captured a challenge that kept emerging in our cooperative inquiry group: the co-researchers stressed it was challenging for them to achieve financial sustainability if this implied compromising their autonomy. I explained how, to them, engaging with donors' practices felt disjointed from the essence of their work.

This chapter dives deeper into the nature of this tension. Here, I discuss the main features of two distinct conceptions of social change that I identified through analysis. In this chapter, I organise the themes that emerged from the cooperative inquiry into *higher-level categories* that emerged through analysis (as suggested by grounded theory approaches). The two higher-level categories are analytical, in the sense that they attempt to systematically integrate themes from the data (Charmaz, 2006). They are also labelled *in vivo,* utilising phrases that were used by co-researchers (ibid).

I discuss the concept of social change preferred by the CSOs who took part in *Plata, Cultura, y Cambio*. I capture the co-researchers' preferred development approach with a phrase that conveys the idea of prefiguration: *la utopia hay que caminarla*, which translates loosely to 'we need to walk the utopia'. The second phrase, which was utilised by both co-researchers and other youth-leaders I interviewed is *hay que resolver lo economico primero,* 'we need to resolve the economic first'.

I argue that these sentences tap into two distinct conceptions of development, which are not mutually exclusive. I suggest, instead, that as part of a search for sustainability with autonomy, each organisation negotiates its own identity and practices through the interaction with both conceptions.

The chapter is organised as follows: Parts B and C describe the two co-existing conceptions of social change that emerged through triangulating a range of different data, including notes from the cooperative inquiry meetings, informal conversations, interviews, and participatory observations; part D draws out some conclusions.

B. *La utopia hay que caminarla - 'we need to walk on utopia'*

While describing his journey as an entrepreneur, Stiven declared "*la utopia hay que caminarla*". In his early 20s, he started a small business selling pizzas in a cone-shaped dough. The business took off – from one small stand, he started managing five stands all around the city. At some point though, Stiven could not do it anymore:

> I realised that it was not coherent with how I wanted to live. I was working with: chicken, sausage, transgenic tomatoes, transgenic corn, artificial teas, cheese, sauces, gluten, andandand disposable cups. It creates huge contamination, it exploits the environment and makes the consumer sick. Just to earn money. I felt dirty all the time; I could smell the food through my skin. I talk about my ideas very well, but what about the action? I could not do it anymore. (personal communication n. 43, 5 August ,2016)

By his mid-20s, Stiven had become the coordinator of the *Movimiento Tierra en Resistencia* (MTR), a social movement that seeks to act as an umbrella group for the youth organisations in his *comuna*, Castilla. He was also preparing to launch a social entrepreneurship project that connects farmers directly with consumers through organic food baskets sold through a network scheme.

"Walking on utopia" was a theme in the cooperative inquiry group discussions. Even if my colleagues did not use the term prefiguration, the image of walking on a utopic path is a vivid representation of prefiguration: utopia is not something unreachable in the future, but that can be 'walked' in the present. But what is this utopia for the co-researchers? What kind of future are they seeking to create?

B.1 Imagined futures in 2035

During the two-day foresight workshop, participants designed a range of future scenarios for the city of Medellin and its civil society. The scenarios were supposed to avoid utopias and dystopias. Here, I pull from selected scenarios to discuss the characteristics that participants regarded as the most desirable (Annex 3 provides the full scenario descriptions).

'Bio-connection' is a scenario set in 2035 in which technology serves human connection, and people desire to live more in-sync with nature. The urban design of the city, which leverages technology to create harmony and community living, is considered particularly ambitious and is cited as an international example. Moreover, technology is expected to reduce the amount of work people need to do, allowing more time to engage with others in non-market activities. Even in this scenario, inequality remains. Citizens with fewer financial resources have access to sufficient services and education to be able to live harmonious and dignified lives. This search for harmony seems to be "trendy" also for those who are more affluent.

In '**Democracy from Below'** the government is engaged in more direct democracy but also leaves enough space for experimentation of new ways of creating wealth within a dynamic and socially conscious private sector. Citizens express their creativity and vision through playful entrepreneurship that searches for creativity and human connection. Value generation is pluralistic, with multiple local currencies which represent different types of social ideals. Participants imagined an economic system with mushrooming small businesses; buying locally is preferred by consumers. Wealth would be created through different community-based mechanisms, and not exclusively through market forces. In 'Democracy from Below' some people are creating their employment in ways that foster personal and collective expression and community building. People need to work less to sustain themselves, and there is more space for investing in community activities, which sustain the local small and medium enterprises.

Across the two scenarios, certain elements were particularly welcomed by participants. In Bio-connection, Medellin would be an internationally acclaimed city, considered an exemplary metropolis. In fact, across most of the eight scenarios, participants imagined Medellin as being internationally recognised

for its innovations. This projection might reflect the public policy efforts but also the "branding" of the city that the local government has been crafting (Hernández-Garcia, 2013).

Another critical element was a deepening of people's relationship with nature. During the foresight workshop, Medellin was experiencing record high pollution, and participants chose the relationship with nature as a driver because they reflected that if people could change their relationship with nature, they could utilise their collective agency towards environmental preservation rather than prioritising economic interests. Along with a more conscious relationship with nature, people in this scenario are working less and favouring more harmonious living. They envision that these would provide opportunities to engage in non-market activities and people would be dedicated to the flourishing of human beings.

The idea of creating more opportunity to engage with activities outside of the market was also present in Democracy from Below. For the participants, the most exciting aspect of this scenario was the idea of more pluralistic value systems. In this scenario, people can choose their lifestyles more independently, by utilising currencies and community mechanisms that reflect their values. Humans would be in an active search for holistic and spiritual well-being, and economic systems would be attending to this human desire.

A scenario that they called "Radical Neoliberalism" was the counterpart of Democracy from Below. In this scenario, large companies control the wealth, while the government becomes too small and too co-opted by the private sector logic of wealth accumulation to create meaningful alternatives. In the Radical Neoliberalism scenario, people continue working just as hard, or even harder, than in 2016, just in different kinds of jobs. This scenario generates a stark contrast between winners and losers, with the latter imagined as being mostly unemployed young people. In this scenario, unemployment is the most urgent social problem to deal with: participants imagined that the Secretariat of Youth would be mostly concerned with employment creation.

This scenario was chosen as the least desired scenario, and it was enacted through a forum theatre skit in the afternoon on the second day of the workshop. In the skit, which was supposed to interpret the scenario, the actors acted like lifeless machines, disconnected from their activities. To change the

outcomes of the skit, participants intervened and tried to show the 'robot-like-humans' that life was fun, meaningful and colourful. The skit, as the debrief that followed suggested, highlighted a fear of social isolation and loss of community life.

The group discussions stressed that meaningful community engagement is possible when people can address their necessities and have the time and ability to prioritise their well-being. Participants feared alienation and unemployment, while they welcomed the idea that through small-scale entrepreneurship they could express themselves and find meaningful ways to earn their living.

The most challenging aspect of the scenario building workshop was envisioning the way civil society would transform in each scenario. Across all scenarios, participants expected differences between the public, private, and civil society sectors would blur even further. As the boundaries between sectors disappeared, participants were challenged to distil the meaning of civil society. If the structure of CSOs were to change radically; if in the future people might exist in whole new virtual realities; if CSOs as we know them today were to disappear – what would be left of the concept of civil society?

Across all eight scenarios, civil society was understood by participants as providing opportunities for questioning, reflecting, re-imagining and renewing social values and norms. In a discussion which addressed the question "What is the role of Civil Society?", it was suggested that civil society is a space where alternative values can be articulated, nourished, and explored. Someone argued that civil society seeks to "resist all the pressure to suppress citizens' ability to express themselves". Civil society, it was also argued, generates well-being: it seeks to work in collaboration with others, it builds strong social ties, it crafts communities. Someone summarised the discussion by stating that civil society "promotes coexistence as intrinsically important".

B. 2 Promoting collaboration

If the role of civil society is defined as: promoting coexistence as intrinsically important, it would make sense for collaboration to be a way to walk on utopia. During a group discussion on collaboration and partnership-building amongst CSOs in the cooperative inquiry, the co-researchers discussed

how collaboration arises out of personal affinity between people. They assessed that, while valuable collaboration brings forward win-win scenarios, partnerships grow with trust, love and care, which come with honesty and vulnerability. Like in a personal relationship, the give and take in a partnership is constant, non-linear, and unconditional. Positive relationships build on compromises and, hopefully, allow for mutual expansion. The group concluded that collaboration is an art – as important a part of their work and their growth as people and organisations (Cooperative Inquiry, Meeting 3, 2016; Gioacchino, 2016a).

The co-researchers described collaboration as a natural process, as intuitive as building a friendship (Gioacchino, 2016a). The way they understood collaboration was not instrumental. For a comparison with the social entrepreneurship literature, Seldon, Nelson, and Couch (2014) introduce a podcast published by the Stanford Social Innovation Review (SSIR) by sharing "the number one rule of collaboration" which, it was argued, is "don't collaborate unless you have to" (Seldon, Nelson, & Couch, 2014). According to the podcast, the two questions to ask are: "What is the goal?" and "Do I need to collaborate to achieve my goal?". If the answer is no, do not collaborate (ibid).

The SSIR podcast made use of several metaphors comparing collaboration to friendship and dating; yet, it portrayed partnership building as a strategic tool rather than a process that is intrinsically important (Gioacchino, 2016a). For the co-researchers, the goal of collaboration was to learn from each other, to build bridges between ideologies, approaches, and ways of living (Cooperative Inquiry, Meeting 3, 2016; Gioacchino, 2016a).

B.3 The quality of being together

The poem in Table 3, which was shared over our WhatsApp group before the first meeting of the cooperative inquiry, conveys an idea that repeatedly emerges among CSOs in Medellin. The objective of many of the people I worked with was to explore different ways of living with others. This might feel a very vague expression. As part of my participatory observations, I noticed that the most extraordinary community events and activities were characterised by a shift in the quality of the collective experience. It felt to me as if activities were directed towards uplifting the energy level: the outcome of the activities contributed towards raising the life force, the *prana,* of the participants. Events had an energy to them, a sense of openness.

(Original versión)	(English Translation)
Es urgente el amor Es urgente un barco en el mar. Es urgente destruir ciertas palabras, odio soledad crueldad, ciertos lamentos, muchas espadas. Es urgente inventar alegría, multiplicar los besos, los trigales es urgente descubrir rosas y ríos y mañanas claras. Cae en los hombros el silencio y la luz impura, hasta doler. Es urgente el amor, es urgente Permanecer. (Anonimo)	Love is urgent A ship in the sea is urgent It is urgent to destroy certain words, hatred, loneliness, cruelty, certain cries, many swords. It is urgent to invent happiness, multiply the kisses, the wheat fields it is urgent to discover roses and rivers and clear mornings. Silence falls on the shoulders, and light impure, until it hurts. Love is urgent, it is urgent to remain. (Anonymous)

Table 3: A poem circulated via WhatsApp by one of the co-researchers on the first day of the cooperative inquiry (Spanish original on the left, English translation by the author on the right).

In my understanding, the idea of being together differently is an encouragement to explore human nature beyond the rational. Organisations utilise a range of tools (storytelling, theatre, urban gardening, dance, games, rituals, and other artistic expressions) to create environments in which people can connect with themselves and each other in non-utilitarian ways. For

example, this abstract from my field notes, which I published on my blog, describes a storytelling gathering organised by Liliana, founder of *Encuentro de Voces*:

> In Liliana's living room there were about 25 people, all women, of all ages, mostly from the local *barrio*. She was dressed in an absurd baby pink outfit. The event started with Liliana's full range of expressive twirling, curling, and caressing, as she described the experience of woman's escapades and transgressions in a beautiful adaptation of three erotic stories from the 1950s. The erotic stories, I learned afterwards, were only an excuse, tools to create a closed space between all people in the group. I perceived it made us feel delicate and intimate together.
>
> Following the three stories, we had a circulo de la palabra:[21]each person had been asked to bring some food to share, and we passed around slimy bright orange mango slices, chocolate cookies, and some dry coca leaves. Liliana invited all the women to introduce themselves and asked each one of us, "Do you feel like a witch?". I have never been asked the question. But to answer the question, Liliana said, the only rule, was to speak from the heart and listen from the heart. I practised my best active listening, and, as I dove into the little details each person was sharing, time took on a different quality; it felt bloody and raw. (Gioacchino, 2016b)

As I describe in my field notes, this event felt like an expression of prefiguring a different way of being together. First of all, Liliana made it explicit that the gathering was intended to bring people together and create spaces of deep connection. To me, it felt daring (and almost absurd!) to gather together a group of women and ask the question "Do you feel like a witch?". Liliana created, through the stories and the rituals she introduced (such as the *circulo de la palabra*, the chewing of coca leaves, and the sharing of food), the opportunity for a different type of dialogue to take place. I felt to me as if each in a group of mostly strangers could find the words to communicate in a way that

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[21] *Circulo de la palabra*, 'circle of words' is an activity to "share from the heart the moment that each one of us is living". It is described as a method to "update ourselves emotionally with the community or friends, respectfully listening to what happens inside each of us, feeling it with complicity and learning to express what we feel and moves us in that moment of life with confidence." (Dudo, 2014)

was genuine and unfiltered. Reflecting on the moment, it seems to me that the question enabled people to express themselves in a way they might not have otherwise. For example, the stories that came out were stories of self-care, relationship with the self, and perception of society. I understood it as a cathartic question, one that permitted sharing of more profound experiences.

What happened in Liliana's living room is an example of what Scharmer (2016, 2018) calls *presencing*, a term he invented mixing the words *presence* and *sensing*. Presencing means "to connect from the Source of the highest future possibility and to bring it into the now" (Kindle locations 3091-3092). In describing the experience of *presencing,* Scharmer and Kaufer (2018) describe how the quality of collective conversation shifts so that group members feel a strong connectedness, almost a sense of collapsing boundaries.

I understood that Liliana was able to do what Scharmer (2018) would define as "creating the container" or "holding space" for that moment of *presencing.* The event she organised was carefully thought through with the intention of creating a space of intimacy. For example, she asked us to bring something to share. As food anthropologist Vélez Jiménez (2013) has described, sharing food is utilised as a way to grow trust, to build affection – I perceived that the act of sharing food was a form of ritualising and holding the space, which made it feel co-owned. She also extended an invitation to each person to speak from the heart instead of the mind. This was encouraged by the ritual of chewing on coca leaves, which is traditionally considered to *endulzar la palabra*, "sweeten the word", and "to get to know the nature of our being in communion with the order of the cosmos" (Ocampo, 2013). Everybody in the room spoke. There was nothing performative about the gathering: It did not feel like a show in which Liliana presented her stories. Instead, the storytelling was just one of the many tools, enriched with rituals and symbolism, to be together differently that I saw in Medellin. It was as if we had gathered to honour our *power within (Gaventa, 2004),* our inner-strength, confidence, and awareness of our divine feminine.

B.4 Healing through memory, nature, and territory

In the analysis, a connection between the ideas of memory, nature, and territory emerged as important. All three were recurring and connected themes

in my conversations with co-researchers and interviewees. To understand how the three concepts come together to build a narrative of social change is to understand a cocktail of history, values, and worldviews.

Many youth-led CSOs recognise the role of engaging in exercises of *memoria,* 'memory', so as to allow for the city's social transformation. The objective of this work is not only that of preserving the past; memory matters because it is alive in the present. Creating activities that re-construct memory is an awareness-raising exercise to connect with the present and protect the future. Looking at the history of the urban conflict is a way to digest and exorcise the implications of the violence that has so profoundly affected the city and, in particular, the poorest *barrios* in the valley.

When groups of people come together to commemorate history through rituals held in public spaces, they seek to heal the past by transforming events from tragic to epic (AgroArte, 2017). For this healing to happen, the co-researchers stress, memory needs to be embodied, it needs to "touch the soul and pass through the body" (Cooperative Inquiry, Meeting 2, 2016). To understand what this means, the extended epistemology presented by Reason and Bradbury (2001) and Heron (1992) is useful. To create awareness and therefore prevent the implications of violence in the city, it is not sufficient to know *about* the conflict in *conceptual* terms. People in many *barrios* in Medellin hold *experiential knowledge* of the conflict: they have had a face-to-face encounter with it, in different forms. Through rituals and artistic expressions, which promote *presentational knowing*, CSOs allow for memory to be explored by expressing its meanings and significance, to engage the senses, and to heal through moments of collective catharsis.

Several CSOs have drawn connections between the idea of protecting human life and protecting nature. For example, working in *Comuna* 13, *AgroArte* uses urban farming and hip-hop as tools to build memory, connect with the territory, and heal the community. The organisation manages a vertical garden in front of the local cemetery, where they plant to exorcise death by creating new life. Each plant is a symbol for transforming the pain around murdered young people in the *comuna*. As they explained to me:

> [Our gardens] are recuperated spaces that violence had taken from the territory. We transform empty spaces into spaces charged with memory.

We try to do this while creating social fabric, training and empowerment. (personal communication n. 20, 20 April, 2016)

Healing in the *Comuna* 13 is also being facilitated by activities that generate a sense of wider connection and forgiveness. For example, *AgroArte* also argues that social transformation needs to be embodied. One of its most powerful examples is an annual artistic performance called *Cuerpos Gramaticales* - 'Grammatical Bodies', which *Ciudad Comuna* describes as "a performative action in which 100 bodies are sowed for six hours, during which healing is generated, through the form of a collective catharsis" (Ciudad Comuna, 2015). As the staff from *AgroArte* explained, the performance is organised with the intention of talking about the lives lost in the *comuna*, so that the population does not forget the youth that went missing. *Ciudad Comuna* (ibid) writes that:

> *Cuerpos Grammaticales* is a performative action that connects artistic creation and resistance. It is constructed as part of the territory in order to commemorate and generate a connection with the other through the encounter with nature. (...) The body appears at a crossroad in which history, myth, art, and violence permanently encounter and collide. Our bodies cross the streets of Medellin, covered in cement, under which lies the earth, with our history, our knowledge and our traditions. Our memory: a space disputed with hegemonic stories that seek to silence it, erase it. In this Memory is the knowledge that many generations have developed about plants: Plants with nutritional, agro-ecological, artistic, medicinal properties, among many others. (ibid)

The logo of the event (Figure 11) captures the symbolism vividly. In this ritual, memory, territory and nature come together. Behind the idea of memory there are also ancestral connections to the land which suggest that humans have a responsibility to protect life and belong to the earth.

Figure 11: Logo of *Cuerpos Gramaticales*

This poem was shared with me via WhatsApp by the founder of *AgroArte*:

> We were born under a sky in constant movement
>
> We are plants that refuse to die under the cement
>
> (…)
>
> Our nectar of life is love, extreme nature,
>
> The stars illuminate our firm walk
>
> In harmony with the cosmos in our own unique way.
>
> (Rayo, 2017)

The poem, written in 2017, has a lot of similarities with the founding letter of *Casa Mia*, written in 1993:

> We were born, redeeming ourselves, to redeem humanity in all of its aspects: economic, political, social and spiritual. We were born to redeem the sacred mother earth. Because human beings will deserve peace, when they restore mother nature. (Founding Letter of *Casa Mia*, 1993)

Behind these lines, there seems to be an understanding of social change which erases the separation between nature and human life, based on the assumption that everything is alive and interconnected.

B.5 Trust and affection

According to a sociologist at the University of Antioquia, past generations referred to the idea of *defender el territorio* 'to defend the territory', while young people speak of *construcción del territorio* 'to construct the territory' (personal communication n. 32, 2 November, 2016). The establishment of trust is an essential element of this construction. The co-researchers explained that,

because of the perceived insecurity of the previous decades, citizens were more likely to be isolated along the lines of social classes, families, and *barrios* (Cooperative Inquiry, Meeting 1, 2016).

To respond to this lack of trust, CONFIAR, a local financial cooperative, started a Festival of Trust at the end of the 1990s as a way to address the crisis. The festival acts as a reminder that trust weaves social fabric. In the words of one of the organisers:

> We celebrate the event every year in the botanical garden, and this is our 17th year. Our objective is creating a territory of peace by showcasing the diversity in our community. (personal communication n. 33, 9 August, 2016)

Across several interviews, I realised that there is a shared understanding that affection cements trust. For example, the Secretary of Youth highlighted the importance of affection:

> Within our lines of work in this new administration we are creating relationships meditated through affection. This might sound incredible and strange coming from the state, but this is ultimately what we don't do. (personal communication n. 7, 16 August, 2016)

In fact, in 2015, the Secretary of Youth published a report stressing that affection is one of the most urgent needs for young people in Medellin (*Índice de Desarrollo Juvenil Medellín 2011-2012,* 2015). This reflects a growing sensibility for affection as an experience that strengthens trust between people and deepens community resilience. For example, here is an abstract from an interview with the coordinator of the *Exploratorio*, a new public space for collaboration in Medellin:

> Another thing that is clear to us, is that all relationships are crossed by affection. In working with young people, we have understood that they like a project first of all when they have feeling with it. What I mean is that what is being said is mediated by the person who says it. There is a sense of care from the person that is in front of you, and the basis for trust, is that affection. (personal communication n. 7, 16 August, 2016)

The focus on affection reflects a recognition that the fabric of community is strong when individuals feel seen and cared for.

C. *Hay que resolver lo ecomico primero* – *'You need to resolve the economic first'*

I heard the sentence *hay que resolver lo economico primero* in different contexts. On the one hand, I heard it as part of an argument that went more or less like this: everything goes around money, therefore, institutions and people think of economic interests first of all. According to this argument, when the logic of *resolver lo economico primero* spills over to CSOs, it has implications for the way work is prioritised and carried out. I also heard this need to resolve the economic first from self-defined social entrepreneurs and other youth-leaders: they observed the need to resolve the economic as a sober acknowledgement that to do their work they needed to be clear about how they would generate funds to implement their visions and live dignified lives.

C.1 Competition in the city of innovation

We are under a neoliberal model; more than 70% of the population of Medellin is poor because it is one of the most unequal cities of the world! With all this beauty of a place that they show us and that they sell you, you don't know what we are.

Today Teleantioquia shows that a person survives with an *arepa* and an egg a day, and this is not possible in the 'city of innovation'. This is not possible in the most beautiful city of the world, it is not possible in the city of change and transformation.
(Leader of an established CSO in Medellin, personal communication, 18 January, 2017)

Joseph, one of the co-researchers and coordinator of *Casa de Mariposas*, captured the tension between different approaches to social change when discussing the hype around innovation in the city: "In the concept of innovation there is a *crisis del afectivo* [a crisis of affection]". Innovation is part of the image of the city, a source of pride and recognition. According to the co-researchers, it is also a fake idea used as propaganda to distract people from the city's problems (Cooperative Inquiry, Meeting 2, 2016).

As part of recent urban development initiatives, the area next to the University of Antioquia was gentrified to create the district of innovation. Its

cornerstone is RutaN, a massive publicly funded technology complex established in 2011 that seeks to create "an ecosystem of innovation in the city" (RutaN, 2016). The innovation district is intended as a step towards transforming Medellin into a sort of Silicon Valley: city officials want to highlight the transition from an industrial city to a cluster of services (personal communication n. 15, 16 August, 2016).

Innovation does not have the same resonance with grassroots organisations - as Ximena put it: *La ciudad esta muy bien maquillada!* ('The city wears great makeup!'). As part of some PhD research that was happening simultaneously to mine, Gynna Brightside (forthcoming) found that the type of innovation that comes out of RutaN is leveraged to bring in international attention, while different ideas and practices around innovations that are happening at the *barrio*-level are disregarded.

The co-researchers had mixed feelings about how the innovation district influences their work. During our second meeting, there was a lively discussion about their relationship with *Parque Explora*, an interactive museum that is part of the innovation district. Carla (*Deditos Verdes*) noted that public institutions such as *Parque Explora* might have a better view of social problems because of their resources; *Parque Explora* can be useful as a space that connects macro with micro perspectives. Joseph (*Casa de las Mariposas*) commented that bigger institutions like *Parque Explora* understand their role as connectors of smaller community projects. He cited the example of the *Exploratorio*, designed to connect people and groups in a space that provides training and non-financial resources. Joseph explained that he sees public institutions such as *Parque Explora* as providing tools to strengthen youth-led organisations. In fact, publicly funded institutions provide access to training programmes and working space. However, Carla observed that these spaces often lack a sense of community and for this reason may not be sustainable. Liliana (*Voces y Palabras*) does not like *Parque Explora*: in her opinion, public institutions like this take all the funding and dictate what should matter.

In particular, the co-researchers expressed discomfort with the idea of competing with each other. They reflected that the challenge of obtaining funding leads to a mentality of scarcity and, instead of supporting others that do similar work, they often find themselves competing to access the same resources

(Cooperative Inquiry, Meeting 3, 2016). To the co-researchers, the idea of competing made no sense: it is incoherent to their vision.

Competition and competitiveness are central to the "city of innovation". An official from RutaN explained that:

> We are a development engine to improve the quality of life of people in Medellin. We do so mainly by generating employment and wealth. We do this by the creation of innovative businesses which improve life quality by applying knowledge to change or by hacking the traditional way things are done. (personal communication n. 16, 11 January, 2017)

To do this, RutaN wants to increase the competitiveness: on their website, the publicly funded agency promotes "innovation in Medellin through ideas and businesses to increase competitiveness" (RutaN, 2016).

It is not evident that competitiveness is considered a priority, especially in lower income *barrios*. A staff member from RutaN, shared an experience that captures a moment of deep introspection. She was going to a *barrio* to do a needs assessment for an open data project:

> We spoke to a woman that had a funeral home. We asked what type of data would be relevant for her; we asked if she was interested in knowing data from competing businesses. She said, no, that she did not need anything. Others might be selling well, and she is also because she sells what she needs to sell.
>
> This was a shock for us. We are used to asking ourselves how to sell more and contract more. We need for this woman to innovate because that's how a developed city should be. (personal communication n. 16, 11 January, 2017)

What if people were fundamentally not interested in competitiveness? According to the RutaN employee the problem is that different institutions engage with different discourses and "this means that there is a rupture in this bridge between the community and the public" (ibid). She explained the way "international standards" and discourses transfer from the global to the national and local level:

> We are not close to the community; we don't engage with the community to understand what it means to improve the quality of life. This is because we start from our assumptions, based on international

references - I mean that our references come from other ecosystems, like the World Bank. But at time we don't question if this is what we really think that Medellin needs. I mean, we want to be a San Francisco, but what implications does this have on our context? (ibid).

And explained further:

We work to improve Medellin, and we believe in this firmly, but we forget the human ('*nos olvidamos de lo humano*'). And I don't think that is strange because this is how the world works, we seem to be always too busy to be humans, to create social fabric. (Ibid)

Competition has long been part of the discourse of capitalism and the private sector; in recent decades it has also been inserted into the language of CSOs (Banks et al., 2015; Eikenberry & Kluver, 2004). Organisations are asked to think about their competitive advantage and urged to distinguish themselves from other organisations in order to attract funding. As a senior staff from CONFIAR, a local financial cooperative, explained: "Because of funding, organisations have to compete in various projects and interact with other groups with rivalry" (personal communication n. 33, 9 August, 2016). This is very uncomfortable for the co-researchers, who believe that collaboration is not just instrumental, but intrinsically valuable because it deepens a sense of coexistence and mutual learning.

C. 2 The evolution of CSOs: From dreams to economic logic

Social change is an industry that is born because of the inefficiency of the government and the market. The key is to treat beneficiaries as clients and deliver value.
(Tweet by the director of an established foundation in Medellin)

When '*resolver lo economico*' becomes a priority, it has profound implications for CSOs. I interviewed a well-known (ex) youth leader, now in his mid-30s. According to him, as the Colombian state started investing in social projects, there was increased interest in the social and "this means that the third sector started to be seen as a space to earn income" (personal communication n. 31, 2 March, 2016).

He described what the academic literature refers to as the professionalisation of CSOs (Markowitz & Tice, 2002; Wampler & Touchton, 2015). He reflected:

> CSOs slowly stopped seeing themselves as social organisations working towards a cause. They started thinking of themselves as businesses and they became concerned with generating revenue. (Ibid)

The most profound shift, according to him, happen in the mentality of institutions:

> The problem with this shift is that CSOs are starting to replicate the behaviours and imaginaries of other sectors. So we start thinking low cost, quantitate vs. qualitative, percentage of profit, etc. So the 'social' becomes nothing more than a capitalist industry, which understands and gives meaning to itself from within a capitalist model. That's where I disagree. (Ibid)

To demonstrate this, he explained that his critique of CSOs grew when he realised how much the directors of big CSOs in Medellin earn:

> When I compared, there is a difference of 500% with the employees who work in communities! Imagine, an employee working in the field earns 1'600.000 pesos a month. The director of the foundation might earn between 12 and 15 million pesos! Why do they pay you 12 million? The response is that the director brings contacts. That's the first logic of capitalism: The more you produce, the more you earn. The employee in the field earns little with the idea that 'I am working for others', 'I gain more than money; the earning is the peace, working towards a good cause, the heart, my emotions'. So what's up with the director? Does she have no heart? She does not have emotions? (Ibid)

He suggested that the professionalisation of the sector also brings changes in the organisation staff and culture:

> When an organisation loses its mission, who starts working for the organisation? The administrators, the engineers, those who think about how to organise the money. I saw examples of organisations growing their administrative department immensely – while their field workers were on contract, with no health insurance. So the conversations shift

from 'impact' regarding social transformation, to impact in terms of quantity. (personal communication n. 30, 30 April, 2016)

While none of the co-researchers was near the level of growth or market orientation that he described, they also indirectly suffered from the contradictions of the system. For example, they were reminded that money comes first when the funding from the state is disbursed with strict timelines of three to four months at most for projects that, to them, should take at least a year to implement. The reason why they are asked to implement projects on a strict timeline that feels unrealistic is, according to our discussion in the cooperative inquiry, because the resources allocated to community development are first re-invested in the financial system:

> The municipality has made a deal with the country's leading bank, so that the funding assigned for social programmes can generate interest in the remaining nine months of the year, instead of being invested in the communities (Cooperative Inquiry, Meeting 4, 2016).

Moreover, as a municipal employee explained to me, in order to receive funding from the state, organisations need to prove they have the "technical and operational capacity to do it" (personal communication n. 8, 16 August, 2016). According to the government, most youth-led CSOs do not have the skills to manage funds effectively; this argument justifies why a large percentage of money is managed by intermediaries (the *operadores* discussed in chapter 4). Managing money is a job that is better paid than doing direct work with communities, so the co-researchers are left with scarce resources and little power to shape the modalities of implementation of the work that often they initially proposed and designed. Moreover, because of the technical capacity to manage funding, organisations from a different parts of town might be asked to implement a project proposed by a local organisation – which creates resentment between youth-led organisations.

Money is also given priority over environmental preservation. Korten (2015) says that in the Sacred Money story: "Economic inequality and environmental damage are a regrettable but necessary and unavoidable cost of growing the GDP" (p. 60). For example, during the foresight workshop the local government provided us with lunch. Our lunches were all individually packaged in Styrofoam boxes, with two tiny tomato slices and some lettuce in individual

plastic boxes. I felt physically upset by how much trash we would produce with that one single lunch and I brought it up to the group. I was told what I have been told many times: the municipality contracts the cheapest vendors and has been relatively unresponsive to this very same complaint in the past. When I asked a public official of the Secretariat of Youth why the lunch boxes the municipality provides are so environmentally unfriendly, the response was that the municipality needs to go through a competitive process to give out contracts: those that offer the lowest prices get the contract (personal communication, 26 November, 2016; personal communication n. 8, 16 August, 2016).

C.3 Resist in your free time?

The (ex) youth-leader I interviewed became a university professor who, in his free time, mentored many young people starting their own projects. During our first conversation he explained:

> Young people start to work in the civil society sector to find a meaning to their life. Then they feel the need to move on with their life, move out of their parents', to have a family. Money is indispensable. Otherwise, organisations fail. Those that don't fail cannot live outside the logic of the market. (personal communication n. 31, 2 March, 2016)

He paused for a moment and continued, "Organisations go from dreams to economic logic like boyfriend and girlfriend go into marriage" (ibid).

The former youth leader and now professor was making the argument that organisations, to obtain financial resources, fall into the logic of the market. I felt compelled to ask, "So what is the solution?" He was quick to respond, "Well, you resist in your free time". I was puzzled by this statement. I kept thinking: can resistance be a hobby? And what happens full time?

Shortly after this interview I went to a talk by Antonio Lafuente called 'The promise of amateurs', part of a series called 'Wisdom, knowledge and resources as a common good' organised by *Parque Explora*. He suggested that "amateurs" are people that do things for love. They work at the frontier of space and time. They are motivated by curiosity and they are genuinely innovative, because "innovation is not something you plan for. Innovation includes everything, it is an art, it is a social process". He also remarked that "Amateurs

don't need to earn income out of their experience, so they have the opportunity to create new stories. They have the opportunity to unlearn". What Lafuente was arguing is that one can be freer working outside of the market.

Resisting in the free time is definitely one of the paths that young social leaders in Medellin opt for as they grow older. Even if they do not find their dream job, having stable employment still allows some time for the things they love (in the evenings and on weekends). Many of the co-researchers have opted for doing different temporary jobs to fund their projects. However, this means having less time to dedicate to their organisations: what characterised the group that took part in *Plata, Cultura, y Cambio* is that they desired doing the work they love full time. Is it possible to earn a living as an amateur?

C. 4 The realist realisation: *'hay que resolver lo economico primero'*

Until now, I have discussed arguments that are critical to the idea of resolving the economic first. However, many youth-leaders as well have come to the conclusion that they need to address their financial need to sustain their work over time. This is how a social entrepreneur explained it:

> We want to be autonomous, and we want to be sustainable, not a not-for-profit because we have expenses. Many non-profits end up focusing so much on finding money that they don't do the work that they want to do. This is why we said, no, we want to be a business that finds social solutions, but that is self-sustainable. (personal communication n. 21, 5 August, 2016)

Another entrepreneur explained his decision to consider the organisation a social enterprise:

> We are clear that we are not going to live only from the state. Instead, we are building a portfolio of services for the private sector and also for NGOs and the education sector. (personal communication n. 29, 10 March, 2016)

Even the co-researchers who do not consider themselves engaged in social entrepreneurship are coming to similar realisations. In a way, the collective reflections they had in *Plata, Cultura, y Cambio* were bringing them

closer to the awareness that they could not sustain their work with state funding or by counting on other donors- at least not exclusively.

But there is another realisation that some co-researchers were coming to: to prefigure the life they want, they also need to be able to earn (some) money. If they want to prefigure a life where they can express their creativity, and manifest within their organisations the type of relationships and dynamics they wish for themselves and others, they need to create a working culture in which people can feel safe. It is not pleasant to work with people who are not able to live dignified lives, and who are frustrated about their inability to gain independence.

This was a consideration for World Tech Maker, a social enterprise with a different feel from the other organisations represented in *Plata, Cultura, y Cambio*. Jorge, the local coordinator of World Tech Maker, was very committed to community processes and felt connected to the prefigurative nature of social change that emerged in the cooperative inquiry. The social enterprise did not have the same community roots as the others and was the most committed to *resolver lo economico*. World Tech Makers provided education for employment through coding boot camps - for example, in 2016 they had managed get subcontracted by RutaN. Paying employees was a clear objective in the business model of the enterprise because World Tech Maker was trying to address the challenge of staff/volunteer retention:

> When we started, we paid less than another organisation would pay because we did not have the resources to pay well. As we started evolving, we always thought about having enough resources to pay well. (...) Because I think volunteering is fine, but it also creates obstacles to the evolution of an organisation: people get tired and decide to leave. (personal communication n. 50, 8 November, 2016)

In fact, the issue of staff/volunteer retention was a critical challenge to all of the co-researchers. In the context of the small organisations I studied, funding became especially daunting when the livelihood of the leadership of the organisation was at risk. The lack of time available in these small organisations was a real breaking point, and high drop-out rates of volunteers was a real problem amongst the co-researchers' organisations.

Even if people remained involved *de parche*, the co-researchers recognised the importance of having key people that are committed to the work consistently. A lack of sustained and regular commitment impeded the continuity of the work (Cooperative Inquiry, Meeting 2, 2016). Based on their experience, the co-researchers discussed that organisations should have a clear strategy to manage volunteers (Cooperative Inquiry, Meeting 2, 2016). They also explained that the group should be aware of who can afford to be a volunteer and who cannot; this meant that often volunteers were granted small allowances, such as the reimbursement of transportation costs (ibid).

Most co-researchers were experts at making things happen without much money and were learning how to create meaningful opportunities for community engagement and volunteering. They were also aware that the tipping point that can lead to the extinction of a CSO is the burnout or exhaustion of its leader(s). For example, this is how Carla described a moment of crisis of *Deditos Verdes*:

> We must recognise our need to survive. No matter how much I love and feel passion for *Deditos Verdes*, I also want to live off of it. For me [to find a way to sustain myself] is the best way to ensure the sustainability of *Deditos Verdes*. Because in 2015, not having money and not having time, Lorena [Deditos Verde's co-founders] and I met to decide if we were going to end it or continue it as social entrepreneurship. Because in the way we were doing we could not anymore, putting energy into it and having other jobs at the same time is hard. (Cooperative Inquiry, Meeting 2, 2016)

In the same discussion, the representative from *Techo* also agreed:

> I also think that we need to find a balance. As organisations, we work a lot from the heart, and we don't use the rationality to realise we need economic resources (...) At times we are so determined, and we think that we can work with or without resources, but over time it is necessary to have financial resources, to have people that put energy in the work, the materials. (ibid)

The biggest challenge for the co-researchers is, therefore, to uphold together what they often perceive as contradictory conceptions of social change. It

seemed clear from my data that the youth-led CSOs argued for their necessity to walk on utopia while simultaneously resolving the economic.

Some of the literature on social entrepreneurship might stress that independence from donors can be achieved through social entrepreneurship. Yet, only 3 out of the 10 organisations that took part in *Plata, Cultura, y Cambio* referred to their organisations as social entrepreneurship initiatives. Meanwhile, some of the co-researchers and other interviewees criticised social entrepreneurship and associated it with the resolve the economic first aspect exclusively. For example, Leidy (Antares Dance) was describing to me how she manages funding creatively and I asked her whether she considered herself a social entrepreneur. Leidy responded:

> No. It is not money that moves me. I conspire to realise dreams. If there isn't money, I find solutions. I do things with or without money.
> (personal communication n. 59, 15 January, 2017)

Another young CSO leader explained:

> I don't like the term social entrepreneurship; it makes me think of those that think only of business. I think that many organisations don't like it either, because it is associated with the individual rather than with a collective process that cares about things other than producing money. But here in Medellin they use it a lot - everybody talks about 'entrepreneurship' or '*emprender'* but like a verb, not necessarily linked to business. (personal communication n. 6, 1 August, 2016)

For some, the fear of entrepreneurship is linked to the association with the word business. The verb *emprender* in Spanish suggests something completely different from business. As a verb, it means to launch, to undertake. In fact, Leidy would be an entrepreneur according to Stiven's definition of *emprendimiento social*:

> Social entrepreneurship is more about the idea of getting together and doing something. I see it more as a reaction to a sort of apathy, stillness.
> (personal communication n. 43, 5 August, 2016)

In this conversation, I asked Stiven whether he thought of the concept as being foreign to Colombia: "I am not sure about the etymology of the word," he responded, "to me, social entrepreneurship is the making of the community, the awakening of the community" (ibid).

According to Dees, Mugobo, and Ukpere (2011), the word *emprender* comes from the "French verb *entreprendre* and the German word *unternehmen*...used originally in the middle ages, implying a person who is active, who gets things done" (p. 19). I was discussing the origin of the term with an independent consultant in Medellin who helps companies and large CSOs to address their sustainability challenge. She smiled and said that in Spanish the word business, *negocio*, is composed of the prefix 'nec', which refers to negation, and 'otium', which means 'leisure' or 'free time', so literally "lacking free time". She joked that, we need to make sure to create businesses that do not negate free time. With a simple Google search on the "origin of the word business", I learned that business comes from the old English meaning 'anxiety' or 'the state of being busy'. The co-researchers would hate to *negociar*, given their passion for *parchar*.

In fact, those who fear social entrepreneurship are preoccupied with the idea that, as organisations develop entrepreneurship models, efficiency might become more important than relationships. For example, I witnessed an exchange between a local farmer and the leader of a social enterprise he was collaborating with. While the farmer was happy about earning more thanks to the partnership with the social enterprise, he commented, "When I come to your office everybody is looking down at their computer, and nobody greets me. You are all very busy!" (field notes, 26 May, 2016). Losing the quality of relationship with their constituency is seen as a risk because most of the co-researchers prioritise generative relationships that value deep human connections. After all, that is what they are seeking to prefigure!

D. Conclusion

Throughout my fieldwork, I came into contact with many CSOs who believed that the essence of social transformation is rooted in individual and collective healing. In organising and coordinating their work, each organisation has been engaging with an intentional exploration: how do we embody our evolving visions within our organisational sustainability strategies? How do we prefigure the world we want while sustaining our work and our livelihoods? These are some of the most profound and complex questions that the co-researchers were asking themselves. The breakthrough innovation for the co-

researchers would be to resolve the economic challenge while walking on utopia. I also learned that this perfect solution does not exist, at least not yet.

In focusing on the perspectives and perceptions of the young leaders I worked with, I wanted to highlight the links between organisational strategies, conceptions of development, and personal experiences. This chapter described two distinct notions of social change which help explain why the co-researchers perceive a tension when they interact with funding structures. I have argued that the conceptions are not mutually exclusive: youth-led CSOs in Medellin are interacting with both. Even if most co-researchers would associate themselves more with the idea that *la utopia hay que caminarla*, they sooner or later come to terms with the fact that funding can prevent them from realising their vision. In particular, the ability of leaders to sustain their energy and support their livelihood is determinant to the sustainability of their organisation.

With this discussion in mind, chapter 6 explores the experience of *Corporación Casa Mia*. The in-depth example is intended to inquire into the relationship between the CSOs' understandings of social change, sustainability challenges, and the evolution of their organisational culture.

Chapter 6: Money and Organisational *Buen Vivir*

A. *Introduction*

It is 11.30 pm, and I am sitting on the floor of Dorian and Ximena's apartment. Sophia the cat is stretching. My eyes run through the titles on the small bookshelf to my right. *The Challenges of Peace, The End of Work, Participatory Planning, The Mastery of Relationships, Do You Hear the Earth Cry?, Spiritual Solutions*: it is a collection of books on how to understand humans' role in the world and live well, from a variety of traditions. I pick up a book called: *Neuro-linguistic Programming: How to Live Without Fears*. What's this one about? I ask Ximena. "Ah, that's a great one. It says that to live a good life your mind needs to be on board."

Ximena and Dorian are the coordinators of *Corporación Casa Mia* (My House), based in the *Comuna* 6. They are also partners, and they share an apartment just a few blocks away from *Casa Mia's* office. I'm spending the night with them. Dorian made dinner for a few friends, and the apartment became a loud playroom as soon as Dorian pulled out a few of the wooden toys he designs. Now the other guests are gone, the kitchen is all clean, quiet, and we are just *parchando*. (field notes, 28 April, 2016)

The same loss of meaning of the term *parchar* translated into English must happen with the translation of the Quechua term *Sumak Kawsay,* in Spanish, *Buen Vivir*. I first heard the term *Buen Vivir* during my first week in Medellin, when I met Ximena. She told me she was part of a youth organisation and explained:

We work for a more affectionate world. A world in which we prioritise relationships between people and not economic relationships. One in which nature is respected as an integral part of who we are. One in which other ways of living become possible. (field notes, 11 February, 2016; cited in Gioacchino, 2016)

She also mentioned her organisation worked with the approach of *Buen Vivir*, so I made a mental note to learn more about it.

I could not forget about *Buen Vivir* because the term was regularly mentioned during the cooperative inquiry, as well as during interviews. It loosely translates as 'living well', but the term *Buen Vivir* refers to an indigenous cosmovision, which understands the human experience as holistically integrated with the rest of the ecosystem. *Buen Vivir* is discussed in the academic literature as an alternative Latin American approach to development (Thomson, 2011). Compared to the logic of growth and accumulation, *Buen Vivir* promotes the ethics of "enough", prioritising harmonious living with nature. Ximena defines *Buen Vivir* saying that instead of "having everything, at the cost of everything; *Buen Vivir* is having the necessary with everybody" (personal communication n. 37, 31 August, 2016).[22] It expands the concept of community to include the air, water, mountains, trees and animals that make up our ecosystem. During our second meeting, the co-researchers identified *Buen Vivir* as an influential approach in their work. They used the term *Buen Vivir* with different connotations: as an objective of their work ("we work towards *Buen Vivir*"), as a loosely-defined guiding principle ("we practice *Buen Vivir*"), and as a worldview involving a recognition of ancestral knowledge and the reconnection with nature (Cooperative Inquiry, Meeting 2, 2016).

Chapter 5 discussed the nature of the tension that youth-led CSOs experience when funding opportunities impose practices or evoke values that are in tension with their own. I argue that the youth-led CSOs I worked with endorsed a distinct conception of social transformation. In this chapter, I explore the questions: What is the relationship between the worldviews of youth-led CSOs and their organisational culture? What role does funding play in this equation? To do this, I look closely at the experience of *Corporacion Casa Mia,* based in Santander, a *barrio* in *Comuna* 6, in the Northwest of Medellin. Here, I am interested in how *Buen Vivir* is operationalised to shape organisational culture.

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[22] Ximena's words in Spanish were: "En vez de tener todo, a costo de todo; Buen Vivir es tener lo necesario con todos".

I chose to look closely at the experience of *Casa Mia* because the organisation has a long history (they have been functioning since the early 1990s) and has been actively experimenting with financial sustainability. This allows me to reflect on the evolution of the CSO's funding strategies over time and to explore the relationship between sustainability and organisational culture. Throughout the years, *Casa Mia* has actively developed its working philosophy and culture, becoming a referent in the youth-led work in the city of Medellin (Montoya & Martínez, 2013; Quintero & Jimenez, 2018). In this sense, *Casa Mia* is an organisation that has consolidated strong programmes and effective practices, yet continues to struggle with financial sustainability.

To analyse the culture of the organisation, I utilise Schein's framework, which outlines three levels of organisational culture: artefacts, espoused values, and basic underlying assumptions (Schein, 2016). The framework is useful to explore how deep assumptions breathe through the organisation's recognised values and are expressed in symbols and visible practices. I expect that the quality of social change that *Casa Mia* might achieve is related to the alignment between the three levels of culture. I am particularly interested in how deep assumptions about funding might become internalised within cultural practices.

The chapter is structured as follows. Part B introduces *Buen Vivir* and outlines how the concept is being understood in academic literature. I suggest the term is being appropriated in the urban context of Medellin and is adapted by some of the co-researchers beyond its indigenous roots. In particular, I explore how *Casa Mia's* community members pursue the vision of "living well together" within the urban context of Medellin. Part C analyses *Casa Mia's* organisational culture through Schein's framework, while part D concludes.

B. *Buen Vivir in the literature*

Scholars frame *Buen Vivir* as a potential Latin American alternative to development. Following the appropriation of the idea by left-wing governments in Ecuador and Bolivia, academics have paid increasing attention to how it can be applied and is being used to policy. What exactly is *Buen Vivir*, and what does it entail?

The literature points out that *Buen Vivir* might be a poor translation of *Sumac Kawsay,* in the sense that the term "unavoidably implies a loss of

semantic richness" compared to the indigenous term from which it is derived (Vanhulst & Beling, 2014, p. 56). *Sumac Kawsay* is a practice, an experience (Satrustegui, 2013; Villalba, 2013): the concept is part of a different cosmology, a way of looking at the world. In this sense, *Buen Vivir* provides an alternative worldview. The origin of the term suggests "living in plentitude, knowing how to live in harmony with cycles of mother Earth, of the cosmos, life and history, and in balance with every form of existence in the state of permanent respect" (Huanacuni Mamani, 2010, p. 32).

  Buen Vivir was popularised by indigenous and social movements in the Andes, which promoted the idea in the context of anti-globalisation and environmental movements (Vanhulst & Beling, 2014). As *Buen Vivir* gained traction in Ecuador, it was eventually incorporated into the Ecuadorian 'National Plan of Development' produced by Rafael Correa's government (Cortez, 2010). This political choice had, in theory, the potential to create an alternative development path for Ecuador. For example, the Ecuadorian government acknowledges the rights of Mother Nature, criticises the neoliberal economic model, and acknowledges the need to live in harmony with nature (Cortex, 2010; Gudynas, 2011; Merino, 2016; Satrustegui, 2013). This being said, critics have pointed to the serious paradoxes in this political appropriation of *Buen Vivir*. For example, Vanhulst and Beling (2014) discuss the tension between the Correa government's 'talk' and its policies. In fact, while promoting the idea of *Buen Vivir*, his government has also been "increasing extraction, consumption and export of natural resources" (Villalba, 2013, p. 1437). Yet, the term *Buen Vivir* is, in itself neither a political ideology nor a policy. Acosta (2017) argues that *Buen Vivir* is emergent, flexible and experimental.

  Vanhulst and Beling (2014) compare *Buen Vivir* to sustainable development. They point out that the emergence of sustainable development discourses was linked to the increased awareness of human responsibility for environmental degradation. Yet, sustainable development is still based on the view that humans are somehow separate from the environment, and "ontologically a superior entity that utilises nature insofar as it provides the goods and services needed for the satisfaction of human needs/wants" (Vanhulst & Beling, 2014, p. 58). Sustainable development remains, therefore, anthropocentric. In contrast, *Buen Vivir* intends "nature as being": it

understands humans as *being* nature, rather than *utilising* nature (Quijano, 2010).

Merino (2016) compares *Buen Vivir* to Amartya Sen's capability approach, which inspired the Human Development discourse currently endorsed by the United Nations. The capability approach critiques the idea that economic growth equals development. Instead, for Sen (1999) the enhancement of human freedom is both the objective and the means of development; thus, people's empowerment should be a policy priority. Merino (2016) points out that this shift away from the reification of economic development, however, is still very much an individual endeavour, it focuses on empowering capabilities at the level of individuals, rather than the community.

Albo (2011) explains *Buen Vivir* from the perspective of Bolivia, stressing how in the Aymara term *suma qamaña* would translate to 'living well together'. *Qamasa* is the gerund of co-habiting: it implies the energy and vital strength to live and share with others. *Suma* refers to 'lovable, beautiful, pleasing, generous'. The term suggests a positive, enriching co-existence with others—humans and nature equally—through a celebratory exchange which is "charged with affectivity and caring" (Albo, 2011).

Satrustegui (2013) compares *Buen Vivir* to the notion of de-growth, the European born post-development approach that advocates for a downscaling of production and consumerism. The approach has a lot in common with *Buen Vivir*. Both suggest the need to radically change our values around material accumulation. However, Satrustegui (2013) finds a difference in the way *Buen Vivir* places Earth as a central focus and understands nature as intrinsically part of human and community relationships, expanding the concept of community to include the air, water, mountains, trees and animals that make up our ecosystem. As such, *Buen Vivir* sees nature as a living entity with rights, in a way that is absent from the de-growth literature (Satrustegui, 2013).

Finally, Ruttenberg (2013) explores *Buen Vivir* in relationship to the emerging field of wellbeing economics. She suggests that to step away from the income-focused bottom line will require, "recognising that social needs and values are complex and context-specific, the satisfaction of which requires a more nuanced response than that currently promoted in mainstream international development" (Ruttenberg, 2013, p. 68-69). Wellbeing economics,

Ruttenberg highlights, understands the non-linear relationship between income and happiness and questions the promotion of "development of the South in the image of the North as a desirable trajectory for supporting social well-being" (p. 72-73). What is interesting about the contribution of well-being economics, furthermore, is a reference to a sense of "emptiness" and "missing something" in modern society. Ruttenberg considers the Latin American experience with *Buen Vivir* inspiring, stressing the importance of alternatives generated by Southern civil society movements.

Post-development approaches are also interested in *Buen Vivir*. Acosta (2017) recognises its significance in challenging the concept of progress which: "understood as a uni-directional global institution based on a productivist path and a mechanistic vision of economic growth, has failed" (p. 2,612). Escobar (2012) echoes this point: he discusses *Buen Vivir* as a *cosmovision* that transcends the linear idea of development, rejecting the mentality of scarcity that regards material wellbeing as the ultimate development goal. Boaventura de Sousa (2011) welcomes it as an example of Southern Epistemology, which embodies indigenous ways of knowing traditionally subsumed by the dominance of rationality in a neoliberal world. Inspired by the work of Boaventura de Sousa, Acosta's (2016, 2017) work on Buen Vivir stresses the value of the cosmovision to open dialogue and create links between modern and ancestral wisdom.

Buen Vivir is not a theoretical construct; it is to be lived. Sergio Beltrán, co-founder of a Mexican organisation called *Herramientas Para El Buen Vivir* ('Tools for the *Buen Vivir*'), shared with me how his organisation utilises the 13 principles of *Sumac Kawsay* to provide community solutions (personal communication n. 27, 2 October, 2016). These principles include knowing how to eat, drink, sleep, dance, work, meditate and think (Huanacuni Mamani, 2014). They also include knowing how to dream, listen, sleep well, and walk (ibid). Beltrán related how the organisation is exploring the principles of "knowing how to give, and knowing how to receive", as well as "knowing how to love, and to be loved" (personal communication n. 27, 2 October, 2016). In his view, these are profound principles that influence how to work with others. For example, for his organisation, this means changing the conception 'time is money', and spending the time necessary for co-creating projects with the

community, at the community's pace (ibid). According to Beltrán, in its essence, *Buen Vivir* transforms the myth that we exist separately from others. *Buen Vivir* instead starts from a belief that "I am in relationship to others, and that I am in relationship to the whole ecosystem" (ibid). This is possible if we "are willing to change our relation to money. We need to realise money is just one tool to live well, together with other tools" (ibid).

Given this discussion in the academic literature, I understand *Buen Vivir* as a practice and worldview with rich cultural connotations, that needs to be experienced to be fully understood. This being said, the way *Buen Vivir* is described in the literature resonates with the ambition of social change that the co-researchers envisioned for themselves and their communities, at least in an aspirational sense. As I have discussed in the previous chapter, a majority of the co-researchers promoted first of all the idea of learning how to live together differently, in sync with and with respect for nature. I argue that some of the co-researchers have appropriated the concept of *Buen Vivir* and are trying to practice and discover its meaning in their context.

Providing an example of this appropriation, in the next section I carry out an analysis of *Corporación Casa Mia* describing how the organisation operationalises *Buen Vivir*. In the analysis, I particularly seek to observe how funding contributes to or hinders the *Buen Vivir* of *Casa Mia*.

C. *The organisational culture of Casa Mia*

As I discussed in chapter 2, Schein (2004) depicts organisational culture as an onion with three different layers: artefacts, espoused values, and assumptions. Based on the framework, below I analyse the organisational culture of *Corporación Casa Mia*.

C.1 Artefacts - encountering *Corporación Casa Mia*

From the outside, the office of *Casa Mia* looks like any other house in Santander. The difference is that the door is permanently open. Standing at the entrance, you will see children and young people from different age groups hop in and out as if dropping by a friend's house. A large image of one of the founders, who I am told was murdered, welcomes people (Figure 12). In the

picture, he is depicted looking forward, with birds flying through his hands. Crossing the entrance, there is a small kitchen and a computer lab, where they teach literacy skills through a project funded by the local government.

The second floor hosts a "thinking room", with beanbags, a comfy carpet and a large mirror mounted on the ceiling. The mirror serves as a reminder to see the world from unlikely angles, explained Ximena during my first tour of the house. She added, "You can sit in here and meditate, hear the sound of the water, play, read, or do whatever you want" (personal communication n. 35, 6 May, 2016). The thinking room has games, an electric fountain, a projector, and a small bookshelf packed with inspiring books. One day, I was browsing through the books on the shelf and picked up one that looked like a children's fable. I opened it to find that all the thick cardboard pages had been cut out to create a circular hole. On the back cover, someone had fixed with tape a small mirror, the size of the hole. I wondered why someone would ruin a book like that, but I forgot to ask. I got the answer a few weeks later when observing a workshop where young people were asked to pick up a book and talk about a character they found within it. Opening the book, they found no words, just a mirror. Without commenting, they looked at themselves in the mirror and told their own story.

Figure 12: The depiction of one of the founders of Casa Mia. The text in yellow reads: 'How not to laugh if I am happy, how not to cry if I am sad, how not to fly if I dream, how to avoid for it to hurt me if I feel it, if I feel my people and their longings'.

Next, to the thinking room, there is a small recording studio where they capture the musical talents of the youth in the *barrio*, part of their project *Fabrica de Sueños* (Dream Productions). The top floor is an open concept workshop room. The space brings to life theatre, dance, clowning and other

creative arts. Feldman and Khademian (2003, cited in Nilsson, 2015) describe vitality as "physical or mental vigour that creates the capacity to live, grow, and develop"; stepping into *Casa Mia* I experience an undeniable feeling of lightness, energy, and vitality.

Engaging with *Casa Mia*, it is easy to notice that the organisation is reenergised continuously through engagement with other groups, training, and processes. For example, I first met Ximena because she attended a course I was delivering on action research. We met again in a class I attended on experiential learning. Then *Casa Mia* applied to join *Plata, Cultura, y Cambio*. In July 2016, during RecrearMagnify, we organised a visit to *Casa Mia* with a group of 15 international young people. On that day, they invited us to visit one of their "friend's organisations", *Casa de la Cultura*, with whom they have a close, long-standing relationship and intellectual exchange. They also invited five youth groups to the house to present themselves and talk about their work.

That same evening, they closed off the road in front of the house. While a local group of teenagers performed in the street, children entertained themselves with a range of wooden games, part of a social enterprise associated with *Casa Mia*, called *De Mentes Pensantes* (Of Thinking Minds). The enterprise was developed by Dorian, who produced many kinds of wooden games - strategy, memory, team-work and logic. He had replicated a handful of them, but a large part was of his creation. His games were tucked away in the storage room of Dorian and Ximena's house, which felt like an extension of *Casa Mia*. For example, since the kitchen at Dorian and Ximena's is bigger than *Casa Mia's*, they used the house to cook and host regular social events such as the *agape*, a ritualised community meal. This also reflects how the borders between the professional and private lives are fluid: their work has also become their life project.

Spending time at *Casa Mia*, it is easy to recognise that the organisation's concept of time is very loose. Activities tend to take a long time to start, which initially made me quite frustrated. The staff at *Casa Mia* is very talented at workshop facilitation, and they practice experiential learning – using a wide range of methodologies, from theatre to clowning, music, and games. Once activities do start, they last longer than one might expect and usually end in some celebration.

When I first visited *Casa Mia*, I noticed they had a strategic plan posted on the wall of their office: a collage of flipchart paper. Spread on the wall, coloured papers describe their objectives, each connected with a line to the specific projects which they developed to achieve them.

Casa Mia decided to join *Plata, Cultura, y Cambio* because they had been puzzling over how to sustain their work financially. In the 23 years they have been active, the organisation has gone through many financial ups and downs, and crises of different types. The organisation has been experimenting with various sources of funding, and they are yet to find a healthy balance.

Dorian estimates that about 70% of the work *Casa Mia* does is managed without any financial transactions, exclusively through alliances, friendships and partnerships (personal communication n. 34, 18 July, 2016). *Casa Mia* does receive some funding from the local government for specific projects. When funding is scarce, it influences their programming: they have to reduce their scope, reaching fewer people through formal workshops and activities. According to Dorian and Ximena, throughout 2016, about 12 people worked at *Casa Mia* in different roles (personal communication n. 38, 25 August, 2016). Only 2 people out of 12 received a regular salary. They were paid by the local government, which finances the computer lab. The organisation does not need to pay rent on the building, but it does cover all the other bills.

C.2 Espoused values

Casa Mia is highly committed to authenticity in their methodologies. For example, Ximena explains to me that what upsets them the most about working with the local government is the idea of having to undermine their methodology to carry out "isolated events without any pedagogy" (Cooperative Inquiry, Meeting 2, 2016). According to Dorian and Ximena, *Casa Mia* believes that, to live well, young people need to figure out how to recognise themselves and envision their lives. *Casa Mia* value self-exploration, and they support young people to carry out their introspection and to articulate their dreams and move towards them. To do so, *Casa Mia* experiment with and develop their methods and tools, such as the one inspired by the children's book with a mirror inside.

Casa Mia facilitates space for forgiveness, and community living. No matter what the workshop is, what matters is how young people interact amongst themselves and with others. Across interviews with current and past leaders and volunteers, there was a firm agreement about the intention of *Casa Mia*: to make young people feel protected, heard, validated and cared for. They value community care and affection. For example, the motto of *Casa Mia* is "affection is effective". Why? "When young people step out of a conflict, they come from being estranged, separated. They feel deeply alone. They need hugs, and they need someone to touch them, to trust them…" (personal communication n. 37, 31 August, 2016). Dorian writes:

> We are sure that the crisis of our society is not only rooted in inequality, poverty and violence, but rather in a wave of a crisis of value, in a loss of our sense of community, in the death of our capacity to trust one another. Our society is wounded body and soul. With urgency, we need to recompose the fabric of affection, fill it with friendship, shared work, and happiness. (Jiménez, 2016).

So, their methodologies integrate "hugging with an open heart" and remind young people that to live in harmony with their environment, they need to be able to inhabit their bodies, the first environment they have (Quintero & Jiménez, 2018). When I asked one of the volunteers what it means for affection to be effective she explained that affection is what binds the organisation together. Without it, there would be no *Casa Mia* (personal communication n. 40, 4 May, 2018).

A shared value that emerged is around the type of education that *Casa Mia* should provide. The shared sense is that education should go beyond educating the intellect. In several events, I heard volunteers talk about the concept of *Ubuntu*, which as they explain it means 'I am because we are'. They utilise this concept to speak of the idea that within us we hold an entire universe in which we experience all of our emotions, but also to recognise the intersubjective nature of human being. They believe in social education, intended as an education that can generate dialogue, resolve conflict, and create opportunities for peaceful community living (Quintero & Jiménez, 2018).

As part of their pedagogy, they value creativity and imagination. At *Casa Mia*, they believe in dreaming: indeed, they say that *Casa Mia* is a dream, which

is created by the union of different dreams (personal communication n. 34, 18 July, 2016). Art is understood as an exercise of forgetting oneself, a constant finding and losing oneself where young people can find a deeper presence within their bodies and souls (ibid; personal communication n. 41, 31 August, 2018). As a past leader of *Casa Mia* explained, art is used to "exorcise fear, pain, distress, and stigmatisation" (personal communication n. 42, 9 May, 2018). During a group conversation with Dorian, Ximena and two other volunteers, it was articulated that the work of *Casa Mia* seeks to create *Buen Vivir* through the day-to-day (personal communication n. 37, 31 August, 2016). There is no pursuit of happiness as if happiness were to be found out in the world, or in an imagined future. Instead, they propose community living as an exercise to be practised through community potlucks, dances, games, theatre etc. In other words, they believe in the need to prefigure the type of community they desire.

Casa Mia is also heavily inspired by the current of popular education (Montoya & Martínez, 2014; Quintero & Jiménez, 2018). They value critical thinking and socio-political participation. Popular education, a pedagogical approach developed initially by Paulo Freire and used widely in Latin America, sees the goal of education as freeing individuals by making them aware of their situation and state of being (Ortiz & Borjas, 2008). Ximena defines it in this way:

> Popular education suggests the need for education to step outside the schemes and learn with others. Learning is not only understood in a conceptual sense, but from the whole being. It seeks to generate reflections on the territory, on what happens at the political, economic, social, and cultural level. It pushes young people to understand the dynamics of our country. (Cooperative Inquiry, Meeting 2, 2016).

In fact, the leaders of *Casa Mia* understand that the organisation's work is intrinsically political, in the sense that through their programmes they are facilitating the development of individuals able to make decisions for their life and for their society (Cooperative Inquiry, Meeting 1, 2016).

The volunteers at *Casa Mia* who I interview, as well as Dorian and Ximena, speak soberly and realistic about their context: they know that working with young people is not straightforward. They recognise that the conflict that impacted the *barrio*, and the city more broadly, still impacts the reality of the

families they interact with. For example, one of the part-time staff and full-time
volunteers explained to me that her patience is challenged when she works with
children that can be violent, or disrespectful:

> Last year we had the opportunity to meet some parents of the children
> who attend our programmes. I realised that they are parents who still sell
> drugs - the father of one child told me: I sell drugs there. That is, they
> still come from their dysfunctional families. The mother of one of the
> children told me that the father is in jail for stealing. The mother of
> another child is a prostitute. So, you see, the cycle continues, it has not
> changed much in 20 years, that violence is no longer as direct—we might
> not be killing each other—but violence still exists. (personal
> communication n. 40, 4 May, 2018).

Learning about their family situations helped her to be patient. Her story is an
example of what affection is effective means to them: when there is a problem,
Casa Mia's volunteers are prepared to come close to the problem, to try to
understand it, to be caring, and to practice compassion (ibid).

Patience seems to be a value to the organisation. For example, I have
heard past and current volunteers describe the impact of the organisation by
saying that change takes time, and if *Casa Mia* can generate a difference and
transform the life of one person, that is enough. They value quality over quantity
and trust it will have a ripple effect. When I ask about their strategic plan on the
wall, they explain that the poster allows staff and volunteers to understand the
organisation; however, when I inquire about their future plans, I am told they
do not have a clear plan. Instead, Ximena answered, "We will do whatever is
needed to support positive change in our community. What is needed in each
historical moment might be different" (personal communication n. 37, 31
August, 2016). One of the founders said that when they started, they wanted to
mitigate the tendency in Colombia to do short term projects. To do so, they
decided that *Casa Mia* was going to be a 200-year project. Dorian says that to
imagine how reality could be different, it is important to constantly be in sync
with the environment (personal communication n. 36, 15 November, 2016).

Besides patience, they promote the value of respect. They try to strike a
balance between being welcoming and ensuring that people respect the space;
and between seeking to maintain horizontal power relationships between all

team members and participants and remaining organised. For example, *Casa Mia* faces the challenge of wanting to preserve its facilities (the recording studio, and the computer lab, for example), while making them publicly available. They discuss with the young people they work with the need to utilise material acquisitions as tools, respecting them but not being attached to them. They promote the value of non-attachment to material objects. For example, 12 team members, including the board of directors, talk about *Casa Mia* as a "non-space" (Cooperative Inquiry, Meeting 2, 2016). While the house was given to them on a lease from the municipality, they understand that the relevance of their work is independent of the space. "We are lucky to have this space, but we could do it from the street," they told me. "*Casa Mia* is not a house. It is a non-space, it is a dream" (personal communication n. 34, 18 July, 2016). Through this discourse, they try to separate their essence from the physical presence of their house, and this helps them to build their identity as something deeper, that is rooted in the imaginary.

To give direction to their work, they have developed a series of norms and tools. For example, they maintain relationships with the community through an Honour Code, a series of norms developed consensually (Montoya & Martínez, 2014). This code builds on the sense of belonging and dignity that young people might also have in criminal gangs or on the street. They practice "radical sincerity", in a society used to lies and hiding to survive. The code stresses the sacredness of life above all, which to be preserved requires compassion (which they define as shared passion), solidarity, and respect (Montoya & Martínez, 2014).

Despite being based in an urban setting, *Casa Mia* puts nature centre stage. Santander is a crowded *barrio* with very few green spaces. I carried out an interview on the roof of *Casa Mia* with one of the only founders of the organisation still alive. As he recounted its history, he pointed to the trees in the *barrio*, explaining that most of them were planted as an act of reconciliation when young people were stepping out of the conflict and giving up their weapons (personal communication n. 39, 30 April, 2018). He explained the symbolic value of that act, saying that the connection with nature helps young people to be more dignified and to recognise beauty, which is what is so hard to find during a war (ibid). Moreover, to promote a connection with nature, they

often facilitate excursions or host workshops in nearby parks. They also use walking as a pedagogical tool; they consider walking together in nature a powerful symbol and they facilitate walks with the hope that young people will recognise that we are all the same, united by fears and dreams and that they belong to their *barrio* (Montoya & Martínez, 2014). For example, two interviewees shared the story of a walk in which the young men in the local gangs were invited to each take care of two children (personal communication n. 39, 30 April, 2018; n. 41, 31 August, 2018).

To sustain itself, *Casa Mia* runs on trust- within the team and with partner organisations. For example, Ximena, who represents *Casa Mia* in *Plata, Cultura, y Cambio*, attended all the meetings of the cooperative inquiry except one. She called me the week before to say she could not make it because she had a university course, so I suggested she found a team member to substitute for her. I met her again two days later, at a talk. She told me, smiling, "I am so sorry, but we really can't make it on Saturday: I am going to this course, Dorian is delivering a workshop at *Casa Mia*, Edward is working, and Nelson's girlfriend is in town". In this conversation, I felt Ximena was being respectful to the value of our process but was also respecting the needs and positions of the staff at *Casa Mia*. Ximena stresses the need for honest communication as a strategy to deepen trust.

Casa Mia values collaboration with other groups and organisations. Ximena tells me that for them "collaboration is about building trust, about interpersonal exchange, about sharing ideas, about starting a joint conversation" (Cooperatinve Inquiry, Meeting 2, 2016). I attended the meeting of a youth-led community house in Castilla (*Comuna* 5) that was searching for a model of sustainability through collaboration with various groups. Ximena attended the meeting and generously shared the experience of *Casa Mia* – she suggested calling attention to the challenges of 'co-habiting' a space (*convivencia*), developing norms around house chores, and having a realistic system in place to ensure regular income to pay rent and bills. When it was over, I asked her impressions of the meeting. In a text, she replied, "These types of processes are complicated. I think that anything that seeks to nourish solidarity needs to be encouraged" (personal communication, 13 February, 2018).

Casa Mia struggles with different funding sources because they value autonomy and sovereignty. These values permeate the history of the organisation. For example, three interviewees told me a story of how *Casa Mia* stood up to the paramilitary who, in the 1990s, were financing social organisations all over Medellin. The story is that during a paramilitary convention which brought together all social organisations of Medellin, *Casa Mia* read out loud a letter declaring their need for independence. Because of the power of the letter, according to the story, the organisation was able to stand up to the paramilitaries and reject becoming dependent on them, financially and ideologically (personal communication n. 39, 30 April, 2018; n. 41, 31 August, 2018).

Casa Mia has come to think that public funding might hinder their independence; the challenges of managing public funds have been extensively discussed and documented over the years in board meeting notes. For example, for a few years, *Casa Mia* decided to boycott the *el PP*, which, they explained to me, "is absurd":

> We propose a project in line with our methodology and work, and the local governments cuts the budgets, and changes the project. Then they contract some big organisation to manage the budget, which subcontracts another organisation, which subcontracts us. In the end, we are left with 45% of the original budget to do 100% of what they have asked. (personal communication n. 38, 25 August, 2016).

Also, the leaders of *Casa Mia* said that they are uncomfortable with the idea of competing against other grassroots organisations to obtain public funding (personal communication n. 34, 18 July, 2016; n. 37, 31 August, 2016).

 Casa Mia generates its funding through providing services to other organisations, manging some public funding, and through *De Mentes Pensantes,* Dorian's social entrepreneurship project. The wooden games produced as part of *De Mentes Pensantes* are made available for free to *Casa Mia*, while they are made available for a fee during events. I saw the games in action during the Global Shapers Annual Meeting in Medellin – in which 160 young social innovators from around Latin America came to Medellin to coordinate the continent's voice ahead of the World Economic Forum. Dorian

hosted a recreational space during the meeting that used games as a pedagogical tool. In Dorian's words, games "stimulate inquiry, generate reflections, and formulate hypotheses that create a series of questions and answers on our life and the way we inhabit the world" (Jiménez, 2016). Dorian loves seeing people playing. He believes that "games help to stop time, making our experience magic, ephemeral, extemporal so that we can experience a moment of harmony and satisfaction that unites mind and body" (ibid). *De Mentes Pensante* is an example of the type of appropriation of social entrepreneurship that I describe in chapter 5: Dorian is trying to create a product that is infused with his passion and values.

To manage the funding scarcity, they have created some internal norms. The first one is that the salaries that they receive from projects will not be assigned to one person but will be redistributed to as many people as possible. This means that someone will have to give up part of their salary to cover the salary of a colleague who is working on a project with a limited budget. It implies the group needs to agree on who will get paid.

The second is that people put necessities on the table. For example, if someone has a moment of financial necessity, they share this with the team so that, collectively, they can find a solution. This comes from an understanding that people will have different necessities in different moments. As Ximena put it, "Not everyone is going to have the same way of living well. If we were to impose that, we would be going back to a homogenous ideology, which is not the point. We try to promote for people to find their ways of being" (personal communication n. 37, 31 August, 2016). Ximena explained that people will have to find their individual path and that *Casa Mia* is there to support this – *De Mentes Pensantes*, for example, is Dorian's dream.

C.3 Deep assumptions

Assumptions are part of the DNA of organisations; for Schein (1985, 2004), an organisation cannot change its culture without transforming the basic assumptions which lay in its subconscious. Here, I focus in particular on the assumptions that *Casa Mia* holds around funding and analyse how they relate to their construction of *Buen Vivir*.

Learning about the organisation's history provided me with rich insights to contextualise deep assumptions. There is no official history of *Casa Mia*. Instead, different people have shared with me their stories and relationships with the organisation; moreover, I organised a workshop to collectively re-construct its history.

Dorian was 14 when he moved alone to Santander. He was from *La Isla* another *barrio* north of *Santander*. *La Isla* was undergoing a brutal wave of violence, and Dorian experienced it on the streets, where, in his words, he found himself "picking up the dead bodies of my friends" (personal communication n. 34, 18 July, 2016). He decided to move out and arrived in Santander, where he met the young people of *Casa Mia*. The leaders of *Casa Mia* were older than Dorian and decided to "protect" him. Dorian lived at *Casa Mia* and became part of the community. In those years, Santander was a war zone, and the young people leading *Casa Mia* were not able to stay out of the conflict. But Dorian was able to stay in the background, a witness to what was happening (ibid).

Santander, as many *barrio*s in the city, took shape in the 1950s, populated by people internally displaced by the conflict. The *barrio* kept growing as more farmers moved closer to the city to look for better opportunities. Stuck in between narco-traffic and its wars, fast-paced urbanisation, armed insurgencies, and paramilitary counteroffensives, violence was a day-to-day experience in Santander (Jiménez, 2016). Young people were at the forefront of a many-sided conflict; Dorian wrote in an article that "our community has been obliged to co-habit with a culture of death and fear" (Jiménez, 2016).

One of founders of the organisation who I interviewed explained that when *Casa Mia* started, it was deeply influenced by both the Communist Party and the Catholic Church (personal communication n. 39, 30 April, 2018). When he was a child, he used to spend many hours in the office of the Communist Party. He explained that, just like many other young people at that time, he received a much better education with the party than in the public school system he attended (ibid).

By the time he was a teenager, Medellin was at war, and Santander was one of the most violent *barrios* in the city. What made the conflict so complex and painful was that everybody was at war with everybody. He said there were

so many different groups: various guerrilla groups, paramilitary forces, the police, the *narco-traficants*. Every single person in the *barrio* was directly or indirectly involved with one of these groups because those who fought, killed, and died were the brothers, sons, cousins of people in the *barrio*. This destroyed trust within the *barrio* (ibid). Those who started *Casa Mia* were these same young people who had been killing each other from 1985 to 1993, the most violent years for the *barrio* (ibid).

According to the founder, this participation in the war was almost mandatory, especially for young men. The armed groups created a space of belonging, and young people joined either for ideological reasons, to access cash, or to protect their family. In any case, this was a period when normal rules did not apply; there was a mentality of survival of the fittest in the *barrio*. At some point, a group of young people, still in arms, decided that they wanted to try to do something different. The church had a deep influence in the ideology of the group in this early phase. In fact, the founder tells me that there was a priest who, in the first years of *Casa Mia*, was part of the development of the organisational motto, affection is effective.

Given the absence of the state (or its active contribution to the violence in the streets), a group of young people mobilised to provide an alternative in the *barrio*. They initially met in public spaces, but the environment was so tense that it took a couple of years for the founders of *Casa Mia* to put down their weapons. They felt too insecure. *Casa Mia* was born in 1993 when they found the courage to give up their arms. The embryo of *Casa Mia* was a sense of deep frustration and desperation towards the pervasive violence, a desire to resist the violence in *Santander*. The founding group decided to do something, anything, to try to stop the bloodshed. The goal was to protect life at all costs. There was no organisational vision, only a need to stay united and ritualise this commitment to life. In an open letter, Jair, one of the initial founders who was later murdered, wrote that the organisations started with "the ritual of hugs, affection, alternative language, an honour code, and a commitment to life" (Founding Letter of *Casa Mia*, 1993). When *Casa Mia* started, according to the founder I interviewed, each single person in the *barrio* needed to redeem him or herself from the experience of war (ibid).

During the workshop to reconstruct the history of *Casa Mia*, the surviving founder said, "We thought we were trying to save the community, but in reality, we saved ourselves". Casa Mia represented an opportunity for healing for those young people who were stepping out of the conflict, an alternative, a redemption. This was especially true for its founders. *Casa Mia* became an opportunity to start fresh and give back to the community that was left depleted by the conflict; it offered a path towards forgiveness and self-forgiveness. In fact, in Santander, and it might be argued in Colombia as a whole, the most complicated challenge people have is that of forgiving. Dorian tells me "the paramilitary killed my brother," and his next sentence makes me shiver, "I practice forgiveness as a gift to myself" (personal communication n. 34, 18 July, 2016). You cannot teach how to forgive. C*asa Mia* sought from the beginning to create a safe space for forgiveness to be possible.

What these findings suggest is that the organisation was permeated from the beginning with ideas of heroically and selflessly giving back to the community. In times of war, bravery was a crucial quality (personal communication n. 39, 30 April, 2018). The need to be brave, and to resist no matter what, has endured over time, becoming an assumption. For example, Dorian and Ximena, in their master's thesis, describe the difference between being powerful and being sovereign. They write, "The self-sovereign person to us is the person that gives, that gives everything, even life itself, so that its community can live well" (Quintero & Jiménez, 2018, p. 39).

In the late 1990s, the leaders of *Casa Mia* decided to work towards *Buen Vivir*. The priority would be to ease the violence and, therefore, they took on the roles of mediators. They would facilitate young people from different armed groups to sit down and talk. This was a dangerous commitment; the leadership of the organisation was idealistic. Dorian tells me, "They were motivated by a vision to see, hear and feel the beat of a community begging for peace" (personal communication n. 34, 18 July, 2016). Dorian also said: "I saw those people that I considered my brothers for life being killed [pause] that was really hard" (ibid). When I asked Dorian: why *Buen Vivir*? Where does it come from?, he says that *Buen Vivir* was what was needed: "With all the bloodshed, it was not development that was needed – it was tranquillity, peace, a good life" (personal communication n. 38, 25 August, 2016).

Funding was a struggle from the beginning. For example, there was a period in which a lot of easy money was available in the *barrio* through drug trafficking activities. To resist taking money that was connected to the conflict was very important to maintain independence, but also challenging because the conflict was the main fuel of the local economy. *Casa Mia*, like the rest of the *barrio*, was operating under a survivor mentality. Yet, they held a deep assumption that to survive they had to be incorruptible.

Throughout the year, *Casa Mia* took some funding from international cooperation, but they also struggled with that. For example, I was told a story of a North American university that agreed with *Casa Mia* to organise a forum. However, the leadership of *Casa Mia* at the time were outraged by the amount of money they spent on the forum (experts, meals, etc.), while nothing went back to the community.

Instead, from the beginning, *Casa Mia* was an organisation embedded in community, and which practised solidarity with the community: over the 23 years of operation, the payments that the full-time volunteers at *Casa Mia* have received have been symbolic, just enough to get by. People do not work at *Casa Mia* to earn money. However, this has created conflicts and, based on the various stories I heard, working almost exclusively with volunteers does not seem to help the organisation.

When I discussed with Ximena and Dorian and other volunteers that the analysis of the organisation's culture suggested that money was seen as a necessary evil, it stimulated a rich discussion around the way *Casa Mia* struggled with funding. Dorian said that the tension around money was long standing. He referred back to one of the founders saying, "He was generous, selfless, almost like a Saint" (personal communication n. 48, 18 February, 2018). This was interesting, and I commented because the founder (who featured at the entrance of *Casa Mia*) is regarded as a "hero" in the organisation. They nodded.

Yet, for Dorian, the story is more complex. He explained that, over the course of its history, the organisation has tried, in different ways, to engage in productive activities. The problem is, Dorian reflected, that while *Casa Mia* offered alternatives to the armed groups in the *barrio* and a space for practising

community living, the armed groups were offering opportunities to earn money through criminality:

> We wanted to offer a way to generate income for the young people that were stepping out of those groups. First, we started selling eggs. We sold them at a cheaper price than the main egg providers. Then the price of eggs dropped, and we lowered our price as well. After a couple of rounds, the '*pelados*' (young people in the *barrio*) started sequestering egg tracks in the street to make sure the price of eggs would not drop. So, we stopped. Later we started to produce salami – and we were making good salami! – But we kept giving them for free when people asked us, and that also failed. We also worked on recycling for a period – but again we are not able to generate enough financial return because so many young people were involved. (personal communication n. 48, 18 February, 2018)

Dorian explains the concept of *rebusque*, the 'researching' for money that young people do in the street when they do not have a job. "The problem at the end is that people were in survival mode and while promoting a culture of solidarity, it was impossible for us to manage any surplus. So, nobody really earned money" (ibid).

The founder shared a different version of the experience around recycling. He explained that the recycling was earning well, but the other founder – his brother – who was very generous, wanted to reinvest the money in the community and created a cooperative. Money was lent to people in the *barrio*, which was never returned (personal communication n. 39, 30 April, 2018). Based on the narrative that came across in several interviews, it seemed to me that an assumption that permeates *Casa Mia* is: it is not possible to do well financially as an organisation if people in the community are struggling.

Despite this apparent failure in financial sustainability, it would be hard to conclude that *Casa Mia* is not a sustainable organisation; if intended as the ability of an organisation to continue to do its work (CIVICUS), *Casa Mia* has been continuously open and active over 23 years. Yet, the relationship with funding has generated internal conflicts and in different moments it has weakened the non-financial infrastructure that allows *Casa Mia* to sustain itself. Scarce resources meant that the number and size of projects had to be reduced

(e.g. *la Escuela de Convivencia*, the 'School of Cohabitation', had been reduced to theatre classes and dance classes given by two volunteers, whilst before there were more courses offered). When they have found themselves managing public funds with a strict timeline and large quantities of cash to spend, funding has created conflicts and ethical dilemmas. For example, some people have felt frustrated with having to share their salary, especially when it is already small. A former leader of *Casa Mia* explained:

> There is a sense of duality between the people that work at *Casa Mia*. Either I support myself, or I volunteer my time. There could be a type of volunteer that has figured out their life: they have money, and they can donate their time. We do not have this type of volunteer at *Casa Mia*. Our volunteers are people that have no money. They donate their work, and they wait and hope that at some point there will be a retribution. (…) This is really complicated. (personal communication n. 42, 9 May, 2018)

Ximena explained that the cycles of funding and lack of funding that are consequences of working with the state create tension within the team:

> We do things with or without money. But you can imagine that when a lot of people are working with no money for a long period, and suddenly some funding arrives, people would have a sense that they deserve this money. Funding creates unhealthy cycles where cash flow goes up and down constantly, and this leaves people in a state of stress. (personal communication n. 48, 18 February, 2018)

And since funds are scarce, *Casa Mia* is left with barely enough for delivering the project, and with nothing to invest in their sustainability. Ximena also explained that, over the years, different people have stolen materials from *Casa Mia*, "This is a cycle that we need to stop" (personal communication n. 48, 18 February, 2018).

Dorian and Ximena argue that these patterns are connected to a structural challenge within the social sector. Funding is scarce, which leads to competition and exhaustion. This means an organisation wants to be stronger than the others and to bring the others down. As Dorian explained:

> Many social leaders are working so hard, managing so many projects to try to earn visibility and generate some cash. But they are exhausted, and they stop being able to take care of themselves. They don't work on their

'*proyecto de vida*' (life project), and they don't nourish their being, which is what we need most if we want to give to others. You cannot give what you don't have yourself. (personal communication n. 37, 31 August, 2016)

In conclusion, they reflected that when people are frustrated and underpaid, it can generate greed, and this is very common in the social sector. Meanwhile, they stressed that when their work and life project are in conversation, this heart-felt drive can be more rewarding than money (ibid).

They also explained that they learned a lot through one of their collaborations with a small private sector company. Ximena says that the organisation, which provides courses around experiential education, does a great job employing everyone's skills and creating collaboration. This attitude of mutual support helps transcend the conflict of organisational egos: "Who has the t-shirt with the shinier logo"? What determines good collaboration is the quality of relationships between people, which is their focus when they relate to other organisations.

Dorian and Ximena continued by saying that they are now feeling that the relationship with money is improving. Not because the environment is better, but because they are different. As leaders, they can trust in the future: despite the financial insecurities, they know resources will be available. They think from a point of abundance, and they do not let themselves be consumed by economic concerns. They focus on their process, whether there is a funded project or not. They believe that their intention and energy level matter a lot: "We focus on trusting that the work that is done will bring about results, even if small, but important, for both ourselves and others" (personal communication n. 48, 18 February, 2018).

The problem that remains, however, is that money is a source of stress in the environment that surrounds *Casa Mia*. In my analysis, the relationship that *Casa Mia* has constructed around money, which has been consolidated within the complex historical context of Santander, generates a disconnect with their construction of *Buen Vivir*. *Casa Mia* has not been able to find a relationship with funding which supports *Buen Vivir*.

This has implications for their work. One of the challenges to the *Buen Vivir* of the organisation is the high turnover of volunteers. The inability to pay staff means the team members have to find income elsewhere, and this takes

time away from the organisation. Even though, in most cases, people remain loosely involved with the organisation's community, the turnover causes discontinuity in the work.

Moreover, Dorian and Ximena analysed three main reasons why young people join gangs: 1) a search of affection (the groups act as a sort of alternative family), 2) a need to earn money, and 3) power. This is partly why they want to shift the focus of power from *power over* someone to *power within* oneself (expressed as autonomy and self-sovereignty). *Casa Mia* has developed a rich methodology to create an alternative family for the young people in the *barrio*. However, it has not been able to generate economic alternatives. Plus, not being able to pay themselves decently prevents them from prefiguring a *Buen Vivir* that involves financial wellbeing and a healthier relationship with funding.

During the workshop to reconstruct the history of *Casa Mia*, it became clear how deeply painful this relationship with resources has been for the organisation. As a closing exercise, we organised a *circulo de la palabra* in which people shared moments when they felt helpless and moments when they thought they had agency. One of the past leaders spoke about the frustrations around obtaining resources for their work. He shared how he felt so helpless that he had left the leadership of the organisation to find other employment. As he said that, he started crying in front of everyone.

The analysis suggests that *Casa Mia* continues to struggle to transition to a post-conflict context. People now wish to overcome a day-by-day survival mentality and consider earning a basic salary part of their understanding of *Buen Vivir*. When the conflict in the *barrio* was at its peak, *Casa Mia* acted as a charity because that is what was needed. Indeed, the founder said that during one period people would slip their electricity bills under the door hoping that *Casa Mia* would pay them. However, given the funding scenario that I described in previous chapters, *Casa Mia* is looking to transform its relationship with the community. For example, Ximena said she is reflecting on how to stop the idea that *Casa Mia* does everything for free. Just because something does not cost money, it does not mean that there is not an investment of time and resources: "We are working with the young people to explore how to understand value better. We are thinking of creating a *Casa Mia* Coin, so we can exchange resources with the community".

One of the challenges of transforming its relationship with the residents of Santander, however, is that people expect and are used to receiving things for free. Ximena and Dorian have started working to slowly change this culture by focusing on younger generations. They have created a system to encourage children to understand the value of *Casa Mia's* work: every time children attend workshops, they are expected to help organise the space after the workshop, or give back in some form through community hours. In 2018, they have also started charging a symbolic amount (5,000 pesos or approximately £1.30) for the whole period of a course (which involve a series of workshops).

D. Conclusion

This deep dive in to *Casa Mia*'s organisational culture provides an example of how the idea of *Buen Vivir* has been appropriated and adapted in the urban context of Medellin. *Casa Mia* references *Buen Vivir* as an objective and as a practice that loosely guides it and is integral to its culture. *Buen Vivir* suggests that living in harmony can help people connect to each other, and it is this connection that allows us to thrive to as humans. In this view, belonging within a community, and to nature, is intrinsically part of happiness.

Casa Mia's leaders and volunteers refer to *Buen Vivir* as a worldview that guides their communication, their day-to-day practices, their decision-making, sense of self, and, ultimately, their impact on the community. They talk about it as a practice and an objective, as the path towards what they want to achieve, and as the achievement itself. *Buen Vivir*, to them, is not something fixed, and it is not something of theoretical interest (personal communication n. 36, 15 November, 2016). Instead, just as the selection of books on Dorian and Ximena's bookshelf, they pick and choose what will serve their quest towards *Buen Vivir*. The analysis of *Casa Mia's* culture suggested the organisation has been engaged in an exploration of what "living well together" might mean to individuals and communities. Their intimate contact with their community places them in a position to be a laboratory of *Buen Vivir*.

How does the search for financial sustainability link to *Buen Vivir*? I suggest that in the deep assumptions of *Casa Mia's* culture, there is a tension around money. Because of their philosophy, ethos, and history, the leaders of *Casa Mia*, across generations, have actively resisted being driven by money. For

example, the organisation refuses to do 'anything' (meaning doing work with no methodology and vision) to capture resources. They are continually exploring different ways of getting by while trying to avoid being consumed by the search for funds. They have infused their work with a trust that whatever they give out, will come back to them, albeit in different forms.

Nevertheless, this analysis shows how, throughout the organisation's existence, funding has taken on negative connotations. This tension manifests itself in property theft, volunteer turnover, and a sense of frustration around money. Money has become an obstacle to wellbeing, instead of being a tool for living well together.

While *Casa Mia* presents itself to the community as generous and selfless, it is now starting to think about more balanced mechanisms for giving and receiving. Charging fees is difficult because of cultural norms in the community and the expectation that things will be free.

Understanding what kind of experiences and ideas brought *Casa Mia* to associate money with stress and negativity provides insight relevant to other grassroots organisations wanting to propose an alternative way of being and doing. To understand *Casa Mia*, I found it useful to dive into its vision of the world, and how it evolved in relationship to its history and specific context. In a society where money and financial growth is regarded as absolutely central, it is understandable how an organisation that seeks to resist this logic would find itself regarding funding as a necessary evil. This association is strengthened by the experience of managing public funding which left *Casa Mia* struggling as "poor organisations managing rich projects" (Pousadela & Cruz, 2016, p. 610). This chapter shows how organisational experiences can become assimilated into deep assumptions, generating the negative association with money. It suggests that, no matter how visionary an organisation's work might be, pretending that financial sustainability does not matter creates an existential challenge.

Discussing her experience with Organisation Unbound, Tana Paddock explains, "Organisations are often concerned with the form of achieving change while being disconnected from their own experience" (Paddock, 2016). Instead, "social change is about changing our experience in the world" (ibid). Since money shapes experiences in a neoliberal society, and it is important to an organisation's constituency and staff, organisations cannot afford to ignore it.

Schein (2014) reminds leaders that if they do not become conscious of the cultures in which they are embedded, those cultures will manage them. Looking at their relationship with money is looking at the shadow of *Casa Mia*, yet it highlights their experience with money: *Casa Mia* faces the challenge of developing a healthier and more thoughtful relationship with money.

To conclude, this in-depth exploration of one organisation sheds light on the tension around money that emerged during the cooperative inquiry. It showed how funding can become a challenge in prefiguring *Buen Vivir* that youth organisations want to create. Throughout *Plata, Cultura, y Cambio*, Ximena and Dorian reflected on their relationship with funding and have identified that what needs to change are also their own emotions associated with money. The leaders of *Casa Mia* have a new commitment to reframing their relationship with funding, taking into consideration the emotions, structural challenges, and implications of an unhealthy relationship with funding in the collective consciousness of the inhabitants of Santander. In short, they are trying to bring their understanding of money within the practice of *Buen Vivir*, instead of undermining it. They are experimenting with financial management, but the idea is that management should be the servant of *Buen Vivir*. They are seeking to bring consciousness to their relationship with money. However, there is no clear pathway. Instead, for *Casa Mia*, the challenge is to keep experimenting: use all the available tools and mechanisms, while avoiding both being dependent on unstable state funding, and, losing their community orientation by having all relationships mediated by the market.

Chapter 7: The role of small, value-driven, youth-led CSOs in the civil society ecosystem

A. *Introduction*

So far, I have shown that the co-researchers were exposed to two distinct conceptions of social change. While they identified mostly with a desire to prefigure their visions, they were also exposed to the mainstream development discourse through their interactions with donors and clients. Throughout *Plata, Cultura, y Cambio* they were also becoming increasingly conscious that financial means helped them sustain their visions and organisations. Chapter 6 explored the culture of *Corporación Casa Mia*, providing a more detailed example of how one of the organisations of *Plata, Cultura, y Cambio* related to funding. I explained how across the history of the organisation, funding had been associated with conflict and exhaustion. *Casa Mia* has only recently identified the need to integrate their relationship with financial resources as part of their vision of *Buen Vivir*. In this chapter, I address the question: How do youth-led CSOs transition to financial sustainability?

Through the metaphor of a tree, in part B, I draw out my grounded theory describing the behaviour of the small, value-driven, youth-led CSOs represented in this study. I argue that these CSOs represent a particular species of CSOs which behave differently compared to larger, more established CSOs. They were not inclined towards financial growth because they were either cautious, unwilling, or unable to absorb large amounts of funding. This is because funding came along with practices and worldviews that felt out of line with their own. Instead, I explain how they were learning to absorb some funding by engaging with donors and market forces, while they managed to mobilise other types of community-embedded resources to organise part of their work *de parche*.

In part C, I conclude with the synthesis of four practices the co-researchers utilised regularly to navigate the tension between different needs and conceptions of social change. The four strategies are attempts to access funding while maintaining their authenticity and independence. They include: (C.1) remaining process oriented, (C.2) appropriating the concept of social

entrepreneurship, (C.3) (selectively) leveraging economies of solidarity, and (C.4) developing close relationships with individuals in institutions.

B. Exchanges in the social field

Through *Plata, Cultura, y Cambio*, I learned that youth-led CSOs in Medellin mould their organisational culture through the dynamic interaction between different conceptions of development: the ones that they are constantly co-creating through their grassroots experience, and the formal development narratives of the city. To look at the functioning of the specific species of CSOs which I have discussed in this thesis, imagine a single organisation as a small tree in the thicker ecosystem of a forest. Inspired by Scharmer (2016), the ground in Figure 13 represents the social field, where a number of complex mechanisms are constantly happening.

In early stages, the organisation does not need much funding to launch. The initial vision and the other nutrients available (such as: energy, enthusiasm, time, attention, and love) usually suffice for the seed to sprout. As the organisation grows, however, its need for nutrients also grows and the lack of funding becomes very detrimental to the CSO's health.

The tree absorbs different nutrients from the earth through its roots. In my analysis, the tree is grounded in a soil nourished by various mechanisms; I have learned that in Medellin the context of a youth-led CSO is moulded at least by the history of the city, the history of each specific *barrio*, legislations, the culture and reach of the public and private sectors, and culture of the youth-led and civil society sector.

Growing bigger, beyond its infancy state, the tree needs to sustain itself: its roots branch into the ground searching for nutrients. The CSOs I worked with proactively searched for funding opportunities and, as they became aware of available funding, they tried with all their capacity to stretch, bend, and twist their roots to reach those nutrients.

However, funding comes along with worldviews and practices. As the CSO absorbs funding, it also tends to absorb the worldview and practices that accompany it. The majority of the organisations I worked with were trying to absorb the money, but experienced discomfort being able to assimilate the practices and worldview associated with it.
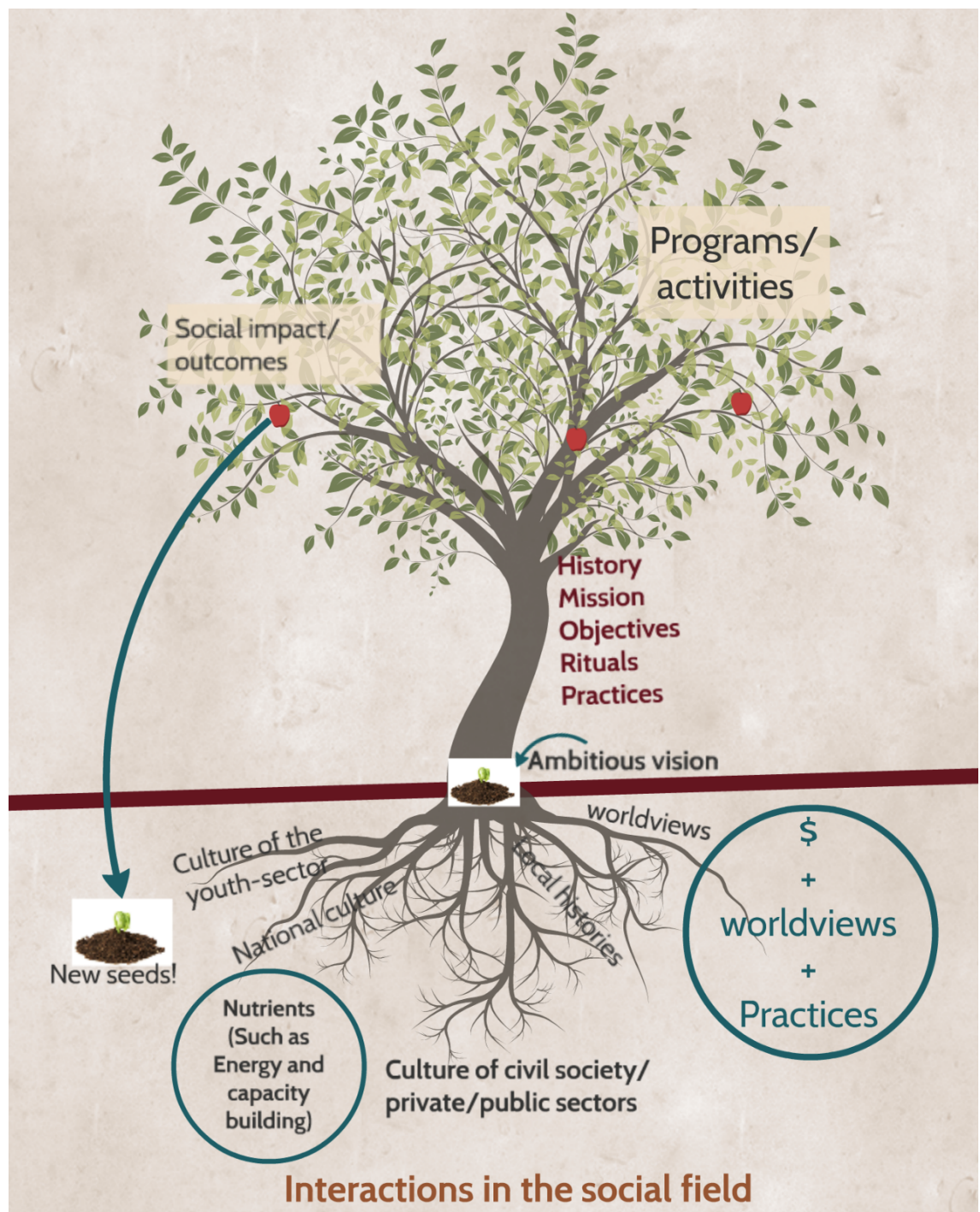
Figure 13: A schematic representation of how youth organisations interact with the social field, based on the analysis in this research.

In short, when CSOs access funding from donors (in this case mostly from public or private-public institutions) they receive with it world-views and practices that might feel incoherent to their own nature. For example, funding

comes with strict deadlines and impact-demonstration requirements that feel unrealistic, as discussed in chapter 4. Moreover, given the limited amount of funding, CSOs can become competitive with each other, which is disjointed with their worldview. The organisations that are able to grow faster financially are those that are able and willing to integrate the practices and embrace the worldviews that come with available funding. Instead, most of the CSOs in *Plata, Cultura, y Cambio* built resilience in their work by accessing alternative, non-financial nutrients (such as collaboration with other organisations and resource sharing).

When I discussed this metaphor with Carla, the young leader of *Deditos Verdes* who is passionate about organic farming, she explained that funding allows organisations to access resources more quickly, while working through collaboration and economies of solidarity takes more time and requires the development of deeper relationships (personal communication, 15 May, 2018). She compared funding to the chemical fertilisers that they put on plants.

Carla explained to me that, in the soil, there are all sorts of micro-organisms that need to interact in order to feed the plants. Chemicals are able to synthesise all those mechanisms to make it easier for the plant to absorb nutrients. However, chemical fertilisers kill those micro-organisms. This means that if you feed your plant chemicals, you are more likely to create dependency on those substances. Similarly, when funding 'synthesises' community mechanisms, experiences of solidarity and cooperation become less relevant, to leave way for market logics. However, as this happens, some invisible and essential nutrients start missing from the soil of community living. This is what the species of organisations I describe in this thesis recognises.

The additional reason why Carla does not use chemicals to grow her plants is that, in her words, "The fruit and vegetables taste so much better!". In Figure 13, the branches of the tree represent the programmes and activities that the CSOs articulate. The flowers and fruits represent the impact of the CSO which nourish those who eat them (in this case, the organisation's constituencies) but also fall on the ground and fertilise the soil. They enrich the social field with micro-nutrients that are essential; no matter how small, they provide inspiration, hope, the practice of solidarity, and the continuous exploration of alternative models.

Through collaboration and interaction, CSOs are also able to be flexible and in-touch with reality to respond to emerging challenges. A clear example is the interest for the environment, a theme that grew in relevance because of the serious challenges the city is facing with rapid urbanisation and growing pollution. The youth-led CSOs that took part in this study also interacted with other, more-established actors. We can imagine them as huge trees, which are able to capture large quantities of nutrients from different sources. Examples of these big institutions in Medellin are RutaN and *Parque Explore* (privately managed public institutions which act as mega social enterprises). When the small CSO grows around a bigger tree, there is a risk of dependency: the small organisation might find itself deprived of its own essence and autonomy.

However, as part of the interactions between youth-led organisations and more established ones, I found that cultures and worldviews are mutually exchanged. It is easier for small organisations to bend around the bigger ones, and to learn their lingo and language in order to interact and fit with the bigger institutions: co-researchers suggested that public institutions have *power over* discourses and funding allocation. Yet, bigger, better-funded institutions have also provided *invited spaces* for youth-led organisations to meet across the city through different programmes and trainings: in this sense, they allow youth-led CSOs to develop *power with* a broader network.

Meanwhile, it is also possible that smaller youth-led CSOs transmit to the bigger ones some of their way of seeing the world. As suggested by VeneKlasen and Miller (2002) and (McGee, 2016), their resistance holds *invisible power* to socialise different worldviews and that are gaining resonance in Medellin. An example of this is that the Secretary of Youth of the city spoke about the importance of affection in social processes, the appreciation of which emerged amongst youth-led CSOs. While speaking of affection might just be a strategy of the Secretary to emulate the language of youth-led organisations, as the Secretariat takes more initiative to learn from youth-led organisations (through programmes such as the neighbourhood tours) they might get a more internalised, experiential understanding of what CSOs mean by affection.

C. *Four sustainability strategies of youth-led CSOs in Medellin*

With the metaphor illustrated in Figure 16, I explained how youth-led CSOs absorb some funding and complement it with a strong community orientation that provides other types of resources. Below, I describe four strategies that the co-researchers utilised to find a balanced composition of different types of resources.

C.1 Remaining process-oriented

In talking about their work, the co-researchers used both the terms *process* and *project*. There is a significant difference between the two. A project is a proposed or planned undertaking. In its design, a project includes a timeline and resources to achieve a specific goal. Because of this, a project can be proposed and sold: it can sound good on paper, and it can be explained to someone who is not involved in the specific work.

My colleagues loved using the word *process*. What they referred to when they talked about process has very distinct implications. As I discussed, the projects that are sponsored by the government tend to have tight timelines; instead, a process is harder to frame within a strict timeline. For example, my colleagues have referred to the quality of their work as the outcome of learning processes over years. A process might not be explicitly distinguishable: a group might only become aware they have been involved in a process when they are well into it. In the way the co-researchers understood it, a process is emergent. A process is expected to have ups and downs and take unexpected turns. A process has a life of its own and it might be hard to sell in a context that values linear results frameworks.

There are processes within projects, and there are some projects, that may not generate any deeper process at all. The project might finish, and the process might not. Funding might come and go, people might come and go, yet the process might continue. A project can finish without doing justice to the processes that were started within it. A project requires management in the sense that it might require more control; a process might require steering,

facilitating, and the capacity to identify what is resonating and how experiences are acquiring meaning for each person involved.

So, what do CSOs do when they want to receive funding for their work, but want to focus on processes, instead of projects? Instead of chopped up projects which "do just to do, and spend just to spend", some youth-led CSOs have learned to step away from the focus on the project to see the bigger picture, developing the intuition to sense how the project fits into the larger process that they are generating. As the leader of a youth-led CSO in the city explained to me during an informal conversation, "We learned to focus on our processes, so that when we need to apply for funding we are not following the money, and we don't need to invent anything just to write a project" (personal communication, 16 May, 2018).

To stay focused on their own processes, youth-led CSOs invest time and resources in activities that are not funded, but that nevertheless can energise and inspire their work. When the work is not constrained by requirements that come along with funding, it can be more spontaneous, and more original. Investing time in un-funded projects is also a way for them to protect their *claimed/created* spaces, to retain *power over* such spaces, and nourish their *power within*. For example, Carla told me:

> On Sunday, while we were doing an activity with '*Las Brujas*' [a local women-led organisation], a lady passed by, who happened to be of the *Junta Comunal*. She asked us who was sponsoring the activity, to which we replied: no one. And I think that in the head of that lady, she thinks that there has to be an official resource, there must be an adult there if you invite other young people to do things. To her, it was surprising we were doing it on our own. (personal communication n. 47, 2 November, 2016)

This is not to say that youth-led CSOs do not want to obtain and manage funding. Indeed, the opposite is true. Yet, there is a desire to retain processes that are embodied, authentic, and in-tune with the experience of people, rather than motivated by the need to *ejecutar*, 'execute funding'. An experienced young activist explained:

> Money can give agility to the processes; money can buy things instead of having to build relationships to obtain anything, which of course is a

slower process. Community work lacks the agility of a business. But because of the scarcity of money it is also more effective. You have fights, you build with the other; there are loves. What I mean is that there are all kinds of relationships that change over time. (personal communication n. 6, 1 August, 2016)

Camilo described the growth path of *Los Chicos Del Siglo XX* (The Youth of the XX Century), a youth collective that works to "create artistic proposals that generate positive change in people" (abstract from the application form to *Plata Cultura, y Cambio*). He explains how, over time, the group has been shifting the balance between the *economic* and *social*:

The balance depends on the year, and how we are. When we started we were 100% dedicated to the social. By the third year 40% of our work generated funding and 60% did not, because we saw the need to earn money. The fourth year was 50% and 50%, because we started to get more work. (personal communication n. 49, 2 November, 2016)

He described a moment of crisis for the group, in which he felt "the group was becoming a business" (ibid). The crisis generated a reflection, "This year, we started to reflect on what we want, and what we are doing" (ibid). To do so, Camilo explained, they had to sit together to talk about the financial necessities of each group member. Two members were dependent on funding, while the other members could count on the support of their families. The group clarified its financial necessities and at the time of the interview Camilo said that 90% of their effort was on the social, and 10% was earning money. This also means that they started doing things together again and focusing on their vision. Camilo says,

"If we want to do it well, we need to do it calmly. So, at this moment we are looking for inspiration, to be together, to warm up, to practice the body, to recommend literature and authors" (ibid).

C.2 Appropriating and reconceptualising social entrepreneurship

During one of the group discussions on the *Presupuesto Participativo*, Stiven drew an image (Figure 14). Stiven used the picture to explain that *el PP*, just like CSOs themselves, are tools, trampolines to promote economic

development and social economies based on solidarity. His argument was that funded projects are useful when they are giving energy to larger community mechanisms that allow people to live in connection and solidarity with each other. There cannot be a community that lives in solidarity and justice without an economy of solidarity and justice.
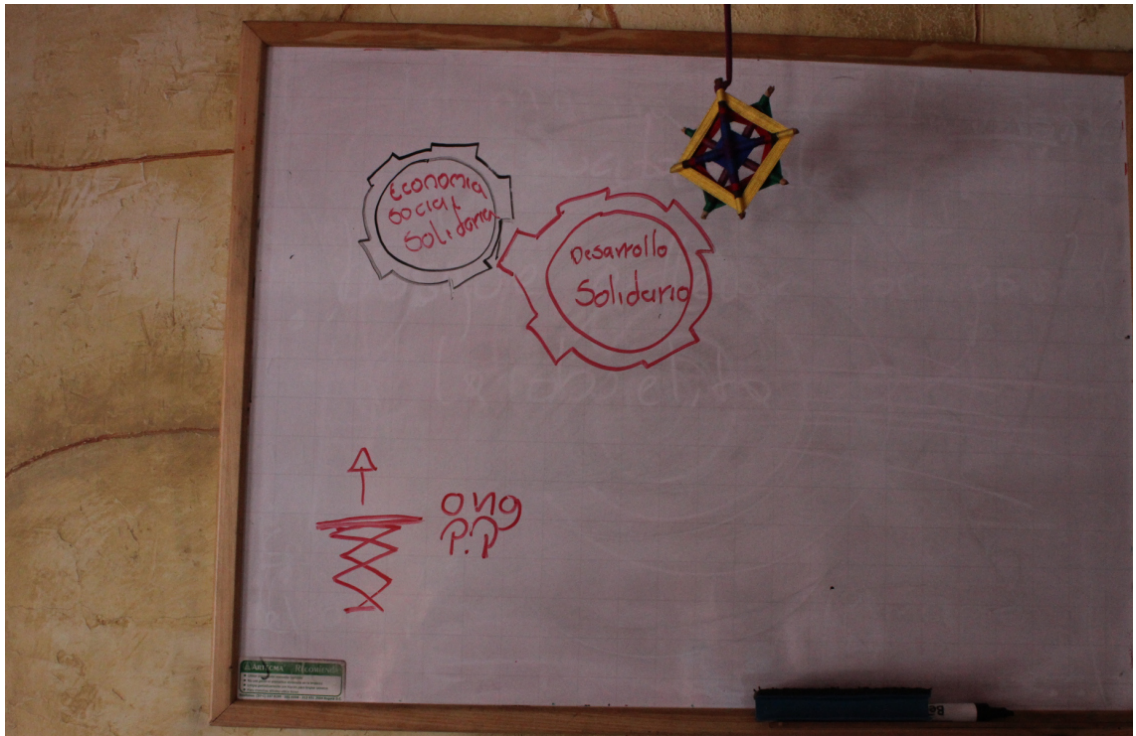
Figure 14: Drawing on the board during Meeting 5 of the cooperative inquiry.

Stiven (MTR) believes that social projects need to have economic models. "We need to move to an economy of solidarity. If we don't have a sustainable economic system," he reflected, "we will always be dependent on others" (personal communication n. 43, 5 August, 2016).

For Stiven, to be "entrepreneurial" is to challenge oneself to deal with the messiness of social transformation:

> You have to keep in mind all of the foundations: the environment, the human capital, a productive economic system. You need to keep in mind how a community can survive, because if in a community you don't have a productive system…For example, you are just focusing on education, that's great, but you are not being realistic. The simple fact we live in a

city, I mean… we need an economy to survive, to pay taxes, to pay for gas. The question is how a community can create a productive system to promote social development. (ibid)

As to the challenge of not letting this need to survive dictate the work, Stiven commented:

What I have done has always been a reflection of my state of being. As I develop as a person, so does my work, my intentions, as well as the people I surround myself with. (ibid)

In other words, as I will describe through the case of Carla and *Deditos Verdes* below, some young people are appropriating the social entrepreneurship model to pursue alternative lifestyles.

C.2.1 Carla and DEDITOS VERDES

Deditos Verdes invites urban youth to reconnect with the land. It brings together people and nature through urban gardening programmes tailored to teach about plants, nutrition, and the environment. For example, Carla teaches people how to use recycled materials to build wheels of herbs while sharing information about nutrition and the medicinal power of plants.

Before starting with *Deditos Verdes*, Carla worked with a more established non-profit. In 2013, she decided she wanted to invest her energy in her own project and started *Deditos Verdes* with a good friend of hers. When the organisation was launched, they applied successfully to a few grants, but, as I discussed in the previous chapter, they were disillusioned by the experience. Eventually, they decided to switch to a social entrepreneurship model. Their main motivation was being able to earn their livelihood from the organisation and being able to dedicate themselves to it, with no need to take other jobs on the side.

However, the co-founder did continue working her full-time job: she did not want to renounce the security it offered. This meant that Carla effectively took the lead. During the course of the cooperative inquiry, the co-founder acknowledged she had in fact taken a step back from the day-to-day of the organisation (Cooperative Inquiry, Meeting 5, 2016).

Carla explained to me that the decision to transition *Deditos Verdes* towards a social entrepreneurship model had been extremely propitious for her

(personal communication n. 47, 2 November, 2016). In taking it, she felt something had unblocked. An important moment of change was when she attended an event, at which different social businesses pitched their projects. On this occasion she managed to build a relationship with the charitable foundation of Colombia's leading bank and landed a contract to deliver a series of urban gardening projects.

Deditos Verdes is the embodiment of what Carla is passionate about. I asked Carla to describe *Deditos Verdes's* organisational culture by defining three elements: the artefacts, the values, and the hidden assumptions:

> *The artefacts:* Among the visible things we do is saying that the forest is our teacher. If you look at it carefully, you realise that the forest acts cyclically and perfectly: everything, absolutely everything, in the forest has a role. On the other side, we produce trash – as humans, we have a lot to learn from the forest. We should spend more time in the forest, to learn from it. On the other hand, I think what is really visible is my passion - I see it as a transcendental element. The fact that other people notice it generates other dynamics. I was recently in a foundation, and a lady was motivating me to continue because she noticed that I vibrated a lot with my work; and that vibration spills over to other people.

> *The values:* One thing we keep working on is teaching by example. This year I started to plant more at my house, to experiment. And now on the 12th we're going to do a mini festival all over the block. I have been working all over the city, but I realised my *barrio* has a problem with trash management, and that there are opportunities to address it. And that I have not done anything. This year I am committed to this work.

> *The hidden assumptions:* Although it's great to collaborate so much with other organisations, sometimes I feel lonely and I do not like it. (Cooperative Inquiry, Meeting 6, 2016).

Carla was searching for her own brand of social entrepreneurship. By appropriating the term, she was acknowledging her own financial needs,

without renouncing her values and dreams. However, to make her work viable, Carla ended up working alone or contracting a few people for her paid gigs. Carla says the invisible aspect of *Deditos Verdes's* culture is that she feels alone. She explained that, despite the many volunteers, she felt alone in her work as a social entrepreneur. She did not like that, she did not aspire to the heroic approach to social entrepreneurship (the 'Social American Dream') that I described in chapter 2.

To mitigate this feeling of aloneness, Carla invested a lot of time in building collaborations. Like Stiven and Liliana, Carla came from Castilla, a *comuna* in the Northwest of Medellin. Carla, in fact, has been very focused on building partnerships of all sorts around the city so that the ecosystem surrounding *Dedidos Verdes* is varied. Within the *Comuna* 5, she built links through the social movement *Movimiento Tierra en Resistencia*, with which Stiven was also heavily involved. *Deditos Verdes* was the only environmental group in Castilla, yet she was hesitant to work with the 'environmental table' group of the *comuna's* Community Board, which was, in her words, "Full of little old people with nothing to do, and I really don't feel empathy to work with them" (Cooperative Inquiry, Meeting 2, 2016). Carla explained that she does not like to get involved with formal political spaces because she gets bored: she does not feel heard, and she does not like to sit for hours to talk. She prefers to be outside, learning and creating. She did not feel she could shape those *invited spaces:* she was not engaged enough.

Instead, she worked with a regional collective of environmental groups, which provides training on permaculture. Through this group she connected to a dozen organisations and businesses of various kinds all around the city. Every 15 days, she also organised pro bono workshops in a primary school. What brings all these projects together? This is how Carla understood the meaning of her work:

> I am looking for my own way of living. My strategy is to earn money so I don't have to worry about it; and since what makes me earn money are activities that are more sporadic, which I do for a day every 15 days or so, I can dedicate myself to the other processes that I believe in, and that I can do for free. (personal communication n. 47, 2 November, 2016).

Carla explained that by having a basis of income her mind is freer. She managed to do the work she is passionate about full time, earn money from small contracts, and, with the rest of her time, carry out work that is more community-oriented and that cannot be monetised:

> Since we are not all born in the cradle of gold, we have to '*resolver lo economico*' [find a way to sustain ourselves]. I do see *Deditos Verdes* as a means for me to do what I love doing, earn some money, and dedicate myself to the processes I believe in. My goal is not to build a big company; instead, *Deditos Verdes* is my means to do the other things that I believe in with others well, and this seems more important. (ibid)

C.3 (Selectively) Pursuing economies of solidarity

Carla divides her time between income-generating activities (to resolve the economic) and collaborations that work through economies of solidarity. One of the spaces in which she '*parcha*' is the *Movimiento Tierra en Resistencia* (MTR), a coalition of different organisations coming together every eight days to articulate the different proposals of life that are developed in the *comuna* while amplifying their reach and knowledge exchange, Stiven explains. The MTR meets on Mondays, every time with a different structure to the meeting (such as a gender workshop, a conversation with a local activist, a theatre performance, etc.). Stiven says that creating alliances with other groups, youth-led CSOs grow more "radicals that allow us to capture attention and receive help (and I don't mean just economic help)" (personal communication n. 43, 5 August, 2016).

In July 2016, the group organised an overnight camping event at the local park, *Parque Juanes de la Paz*, which I had the opportunity to attend. Stiven explained to me the point of CAMPAZ:

> What we wanted to do with the CAMPAZ was invite all the organisations of Medellin; we invited everybody we knew. We wanted to show how we resist, how we build peace, how we transform, and how we dignify space. (ibid)

The event started with a tour of the *barrio*, which ended in the park where 12 different workshops were held, followed by a concert by local bands

(see a photo of the concert in Figure 15) and a series of rituals. People were invited to bring tents and camp. As the Facebook event described it:

> This is a camping site for all the organisations, collectives and public. *Vamos a parchar*, let's spend time together, have fun, chat, and share until the sunrise with a number of different activities and spaces. (Description from the Facebook event of the CAMPAZ, 2016)

Carla invited me to join one of the planning meetings for the event. The meeting was led and coordinated by youth leaders of organisations around the city; around 25 young people attended. As the meeting started, each participant introduced their organisation/group and shared how and why they were engaging with the process. What followed was a brief overview of what had already been agreed upon- the meeting I attended was going to focus on planning different afternoon workshops of the CAMPAZ. The facilitation of the meeting was very diffused; in my notes, I observed that, since five different people introduced and shared updates, it was hard to understand who the leaders were.

In the introduction it was mentioned that the local government had agreed to make an in-kind donation; other than that, each organisation listed what they could offer toward the event, and a sort of budget of resources was made. After the first hour of meeting with the wider group, three smaller groups were formed to plan the workshops around different themes: Youth Resistance and Construction of Peace, Gender Equality, and Agroecology. Overall, the meeting lasted three and a half hours (field notes, 8 June, 2016).

Stiven explained to me how the CAMPAZ was organised. First the group defined their needs:

> We needed a stage, a sound system, mobile bathrooms, an ambulance and countless other things. Everything had prices. For example, the stage and sound system cost 10 million pesos, the bathrooms had another price, and so on. But when we sat down together someone said they could put 6 million pesos in, and we began to pull resources together. The municipality supported us but not with a budget but with a sound system and a stage, that was equivalent to 10 million pesos. (personal communication n. 43, 5 August, 2016)

He also described how the group divided the work:

All the workshops were managed voluntarily. The concert was also voluntary, everyone sang for peace, for solidarity, for Medellin. The event organisation generated a sense of solidarity and cooperation and everyone decided to put in what they had and volunteer to support the logistics and trainings. Others helped with the political management. Closing that park is complicated, so, in order to ensure we had all the permissions, we created a 'political group' who sat with the Secretary of Youth, with the Office of Public Space, with the Office for Transit, and with the Police. A group was in charge of communications. Others took care of managing snacks; others took care of the toilet; others organised the workshops. (ibid)

Figure 15: A photo of the local-bands concert during the Campaz.

Around 300 people attended the CAMPAZ and the event was full of symbolism. For example, at around 1 a.m. we had a bonfire ritual. We marched with large torches that we then threw into a pile to trigger the fire. A few people gave short speeches around the fire. One speaker said, "We used fire for war, now we want to use it to come together for something bigger" (field notes, 23

July, 2016). These spaces for capacity-building, ceremony, and rituals, bring together different organisations to strengthen the prefiguration of building communities rooted in dialogue and affection and expand the capacity to exercise *power with* other young people and organisations

Stiven talked about CAMPAZ with vivid enthusiasm:

The MTR helped organise a massive event with no money. We were able to bring together many organisations that wanted to collaborate - not only did everybody work for free, but they also helped us manage the event. We organised it all together, through solidarity and collaboration. This is a new tendency - we can do so much by coming together. (ibid)

In Carla's words, "Resistance in itself is a discourse that invites young people to organise and develop activities together, just like the CAMPAZ. It is a way of making things happen informally" (personal communication n. 46, 30 June, 2016).

For Stiven these types of events are so important because:

We have to get over the idea that economy means money. There are projects that can be done without money. Because there is a sector of solidarity that is willing to solve all those needs by coming together. (Cooperative Inquiry, Meeting 5, 2016).

The challenge of this type of work is that it requires a deep level of participation from all the actors involved. Stiven explained this with a metaphor:

When you are working with others collaboratively, it needs to be like a dance. It does not matter that each person dances however they want - as long as we are all dancing. At times, we need choreographies so that we can showcase our talents fully. In those moments, if we don't dance together, we can't move forward. (personal communication n. 43, 5 August, 2016)

He also pointed out a challenge of managing economies of solidarity: because the logic of the market does not apply, people who participate need to develop new skills and new approaches to work together. For example, it is important for these processes to be transparent about where funding is coming from and how it is spent. When this does not happen, it can create friction and tension (Cooperative Inquiry, Meeting 5, 2016).

The CAMPAZ is not the only event of this type. During my fieldwork, I attended three large events coordinated by collective efforts. For example, *AgroArte* organises an artistic celebration of nature called *Orion Nunca Mas*, 'Orion Never Again'. *Orion Nunca Mas* asserts the *Comuna* 13's resilience towards the state crimes of Operation Orion, which in 2002 abducted and allegedly killed many young people in the *barrio*. The annual event brings together youth-led CSOs for a day of concerts and artistic workshops, infused with messages about the need to connect with nature. Each organisation contributes in its own way. In 2016, the event was organised through a WhatsApp group, which was utilised to plan but that also became a space to share information. Interestingly, during these processes, single leaders did not stick out. Instead, leadership tended to be diffused – it emerged as a conversation between what each person/CSOs could offer to the collective creation.

It seemed to me that youth-led organisations were learning how to function in two currencies: that of the market and that of solidarity. They might alternate moments in which they choose strategies of solidarity economy, with other moments in which they might put a price tag on their work. For youth-led organisations, finding this balance is the result of trial and error and pushing boundaries to explore what the limits are that they need to manage in order to sustain their work.

For example, Leidy, coordinator of *Antares Dance*, a CSO that works through dance to create experiences of connection and personal growth, explains:

> We have decided that we can no longer host events for free, because if someone tells us to present our work for 15 minutes, the makeup we wear costs us the same as if we perform for 30 minutes. The clothes that we wear for an hour of presentation are the same that we wear for 15 minutes. For example, our clothes cost 200 thousand COP or a bit more. One pair of shoes costs 140 thousand or more because they are special for dancers. We seek quality in what we do but also in what we use. (personal communication n. 59, 15 January, 2017)

She went on to explain that when an opportunity is interesting to them, and when there is the chance to collaborate and build synergies, they might

perform without charging. The group, for example, gave a free performance during the *Plata Cultura, y Cambio* treasure hunt. As Camilo (*Chicos del Siglo XX*) explained:

> We are aware there is no money for this type of work in the *barrio*s; we almost always decide that, yes, we want to do it, as long as we have time. We are really interested in this type of [collaborative] work. But if, for example, an environmental business calls us and asks us to work for them for a festival, there we charge because we know that there is money. (personal communication n. 49, 2 November, 2016)

C.4 Building relationships of affection with people in institutions

In spite of all the intent and action towards more independent funding, youth-led CSOs still find their biggest funder in the local government. As previously discussed, one of the challenges of managing public funding is the short-term nature of contracts, which creates irregular rhythms in the work of the co-researchers. A youth-leader pointed out to me in an informal conversation that the schedule of youth-organisations follows the cycle of public funding: when the year budget is closing, the state is disbursing funds and everybody is rushing to organise activities (personal communication, 30 January, 2018). This creates a saturated offering in the city. On the other hand, when the public sector is not contracting, organisations need to work *de parche*, and the team members might have to find part-time jobs to survive. Not to mention that political changes often imply fluctuations in the structure and types of funding available, which means youth-led organisations are indirectly implementing political agendas they do not fully understand or support.

In fact, the problem of discontinuity is also coupled with a problem of communication with the public sector. The leader of a social theatre in Medellin explained:

> At times we have so many reports to fill in that we all need to be acting as administrators, communicators, and advertises beyond our normal roles. But without these reports, this theatre would not exist. What is missing is a real accompaniment. We'd like for them [the local government agency] to visit us, to see what we are doing. But this does not happen, or very sporadically. The accompaniment here is made of paperwork, of sending the most reports and photos. And we clearly do that, but at the moment

we are overwhelmed with it, and we have to stay up late because we have performances and presentations. (personal communication n. 28, 28 January, 2016)

The problem of communicating through paperwork is that the CSOs do not feel they are seen; they feel that the state does not understand their successes and challenges. For example, the theatre leader explained to me that she believed that state funding is an important resource stream to continue developing a certain aesthetic and methodology to explore social challenges through theatre:

This is why the accompaniment cannot be only made up of paperwork. If we produce a lot of reports and photos, I can prove the theatre is functioning. But if you participate in our workshops and come to our shows, you will see another dimension of what is actually happening. (ibid)

Some of the co-researchers had successfully managed to establish a communication channel with the local government through the *enlaces territoriales,* 'territorial links': representatives from the Secretariat of Youth (and other secretariats) that work at the *comuna*-level, instead of being based in the main office. In particular, I was able to research more in-depth the work of Paola Oquendo, an *enlace territorial* from the Secretariat of Youth working across three *comunas*.

I first met Paola during a tour of Castilla. I kept meeting Paola at different community events and noticed how she appeared to be very present and engaged. She also had warm, informal exchanges with other young people: it seemed that the power distance between her as a representative of the local government, and the youth-led CSOs was very minimal. During meetings, she contributed to the conversations with some insight from the local governments: for example, she shared information about how to join relevant public programmes. She also explained the priorities of the Secretary of Youth. She did so as if she was trying to think with the rest of the group about how to leverage the work of the Secretary, while trying to be clear about the limits of the secretariat.

Most of the time, she advised, brainstormed, and participated as if she was simply another team member. In February 2018, for example, I took part in a meeting to discuss the fate of a community house in Castilla that was

considering closing down. The meeting started late in the evening and lasted several hours: a dozen people representing various organisations met to discuss the future of the house. Paola introduced herself saying that, for this meeting, she was just Paola, and was not representing the local government. She listened to the challenges and brainstormed with others a new model for the house.

During an interview, she explained to me that she understood her role to be mediating between the Secretary of Youth and the youth-organisations in the three *comunas* she covers. What she offered was a deep understanding of both sides (the community/youth side, and the Secretariat). She explained, "If I had to explain why they pay me, I'd say that they pay me to be constantly looking for opportunities for dialogue and meeting" (personal communication n. 55, 26 March, 2018).

She played a double role with youth-led organisations. On one side she represented the Secretariat of Youth. On the other, she developed authentic relationship with individuals. Most importantly, she *understood* the work young people are doing.

Paola thought her role was important because youth-organisations have *imaginarios sobre el estado,* 'imaginaries about the state', and her role was to create a more horizontal relationship with people, to give a human face to the local government, to listen.

Paola told me that she had been working at the Secretariat across three administrations with different agendas. In this sense, she represented continuity despite the political changes. She did not feel that she had a lot of power to change the system, but she had a voice both with youth-led CSOs and with the Secretary of Youth. She acted as an advocate. For example, when organisations had trouble with *operadores,* she explained, they reached out to her. She was able to air their complaints with the main office or speak to the other side.

I interviewed several youth-leaders about their relationship with Paola. They had learned to see Paola not simply as a representative of the local government but an ally, a source of information, and, at times, a friend. I would argue that by establishing a relationship of trust and affection with Paola, youth-organisations engaged in a form of prefiguring as they extended the type

of relationships they nourish within their organisations to their relationship with a representative of the local government.

Paola spoke to me about how the interactions with youth-led CSOs contributed to her own personal growth, and the construction of her own values. Because of her experiential understanding of the worldviews that some of the CSOs she worked with held, she was better-able to bring that knowledge to the Secretariat of Youth. In a way, this is could be an example of how youth-led CSOs are able to catalyse and leverage their *invisible power* to influence discourses and agendas.

Of course, not every *enlace territorial* is as present and supportive as Paola. Yet, during interviews it became clear that individuals play a big role in the relationship between youth-organisations and other institutions. For example, a young CSO leader explained to me why contracting with the state is so hard, saying, "Payments arrive with so much delay, so we have to get in debt to cover initial costs". He added: "The new *operador* (provider) is terrible, last year with the other *operador* it was much easier because Maria was very supportive, understood our challenges, and made sure to pay us on time" (personal communication n. 57, 10 April, 2018).

In short, building individual relationships of respect and affection might not be enough to overcome the systematic challenges of engaging with state funding. Yet, such relationships allow youth leaders to see a more human face of the state by engaging with someone they trust.

D. Conclusion

In this chapter I described the behaviours of youth-led CSOs through a metaphor. I argued that the co-researchers' organisations represent a unique species of CSO which is utilising only small quantities of financial resources. I then described four strategies utilised by co-researchers to strive for coherence in their search for sustainability. Across the four strategies, I emphasised that the co-researchers are learning to speak both the language of the market, and the language of solidarity and cooperation. They are experimenting to learn which language is appropriate in which context. This means that civil society leaders might opt for using the term social entrepreneurship, for example, if they feel it will give them better access.

The four strategies described do not exclude the existence of others, and within each CSO there is tremendous variation, mixing, and adapting. Throughout the research, the co-researchers acknowledged that they are far from being able to generate resources autonomously and outside of the funding system: they navigate their growth as part of their current historical moment and financial environment. Yet, the four strategies, I argue, are attempts to manage the tension with funding and strive for coherence.

Chapter 8: Exploring where the findings of this study meet theory - A meta-reflection

A. *Introduction*

The day before my Viva exam, I took a walk at sunset on the Brighton beach. The most useful advice I received in preparation for the thesis 'defence' was to avoid getting 'defensive'. My supervisors framed the Viva as an opportunity for two experts to engage with my work: I should enjoy and make the most of it. During my walk, I set the intention for the Viva to be like the sky in that moment – rich and complex, like the colours of that sunset, with birds dancing in a flock. I meditated on being alert, on noticing where questions lead me, on being kind, on being creative like that scene.

On the day of the Viva, I was shaking, but mostly out of excitement to engage with two people I respect and admire. My examiners were encouraging and engaged with my work. There was a moment, however, when the energy in the room shifted. One of my examiners asked me why I decided, in a work that questions neoliberal ideologies in its essence, to use in my conceptual framework theories of organisational culture representing a more monolithic, unitarist conception, as opposed to theories that are more emergent and embrace contestation.

The moment had a dream-like quality. I saw my examiner (metaphorically) standing on the table, as if the question came out of a place of passion, engagement, maybe even anger, which was very effective in shaking me. I observed in my body the choice of becoming defensive. I tried to keep composure and stay alert as I asked myself: 'why did I decide to use these theories?'.

I ended up answering in the way that felt the simplest and most truthful in that moment. My research question and conceptual framework reflected my personal path. As I started studying and working abroad, coming from a small town in Italy, I had become interested in how I embody within me different stories that solidify into a way of seeing the world. My interest in 'culture' spilled over to organisations as I started working with Recrear. I was curious about how an organisation could become a place that held stories, and how engaging with

resourcing could shape or transform those stories along with people's way of behaving and feeling.

My experience shaped my conceptual framework. In the search for practical knowledge that could help me develop Recrear, I had come across organisational management material that included more managerial ideas of organisational culture. It was a discomfort with mainstream ideas that created in me the impulse to spend so much time researching CSOs and their sustainability. Ultimately, I was searching for practical knowledge on how organisations could be managed in more creative ways. In other words, those approaches had been my starting point precisely because they annoyed me - they felt disjointed from my own worldview. I was determined to utilise a PAR and grounded theory approach because I wanted to avoid being too constrained by those initial theories and to make sure the research process could stay as open and emergent as possible.

The discussion during the Viva made me aware that the findings of this research meet bodies of theory other than the ones I reference as my conceptual framework. This chapter responds to an invitation made to me during my Viva to engage critically with the literature which converses with the point of arrival of this grounded theory research – in particular, the literature around diverse economies and alternative organising.

In this reflective chapter, I start with considering how the "diverse economies" work pioneered by Gibson-Graham speaks to my research (part B). This provides an opportunity to discuss how the organisations I researched with challenged, resisted, and potentially transformed neoliberal market logics through their work. Part C brings together a discussion on the ways I recognise the youth-led CSOs in Medellin as part of a 'hope movements' (Cecilia Dinerstein & Deneulin, 2012; Dinerstein, 2014) with selected literature on alternative forms of organising. I conclude with a reflection on writing and researching inspired by the exercise of reviewing the literature discussed in this chapter (part D).

B. Youth-led CSOs as performing diverse economies

Accepting the invitation to dive into the diverse economy literature, I felt both pleasantly surprised and frustrated. I felt surprised by my affinity with

Gibson-Graham's voice and discourse. In particular, I resonated with the proposal of a performative ontology and their questioning of the role of theory:

> What if we were to accept that the goal of theory is not to extend knowledge by confirming what we already know, that the world is a place of domination and oppression? What if we asked theory instead to help us see openings, to provide a space of freedom and possibility? (Gibson-Graham, 2008, p. 619)

I resonated with this invitation and reflected that it aligns very much with that of Participatory Action Research (PAR). PAR holds the epistemological assumption that research does not need to understand or explain, but it needs to, first of all, allow for transformative action. And action cannot emerge without a reframing of our understanding that enables more spaciousness and freedom to act differently and create alternatives.

Complementarily, the performing diverse economies literature expands the concept of economy, allowing for a bolder imagination of different ways of doing and being. It rejects the trap to continue seeing neoliberal logics everywhere, which ultimately strengthens their power. Instead, it proposes a way of looking at the economy as something that is not separate from ethical and moral considerations (Roelvink, St. Martin, & Gibson-Graham, 2015). It invites us to take back the economy, to see it as a space of creativity and possibility, shaped by everyday action; in this way we might start seeing ourselves as actors in the economy (Gibson-Graham, 2013). I found the diverse economies literature refreshing in its efforts to expand the imagination around what the economy is or is not. Yet, the more I read, the more I felt haunted by the question that emerged in my Viva: why did I not explore this literature?

As I kept reflecting on this question, I realised that it was not a matter of simply being distracted or not attentive: I did not encounter this literature because I did not see CSOs as overlapping with the economy. In fact, I saw CSOs as needing to maintain an independence from the economy which, in my head, equated to a 'market-driven, neoliberal economy'. This manifested, for example, in my initial scepticism towards social entrepreneurship. I am not the only one to villainize the economy within the civil society literature. For example, Mayer (2003) discusses how grassroots urban groups and movements, backed up by the discourse of 'social capital', started using terms such as *empowerment* and

inclusion to imply improving market competitiveness and forming workforces –
she discusses how social and political goals have become subordinated to
market priorities. In this way, CSOs are absorbed within the neoliberal project
(Mayer, 2003). Similarly, my starting assumptions were informed by both
practice and academic debates - I feared that as CSOs stepped into the market
economy, they might lose track of their ideals. I also perceived this fear in some
of the co-researchers: as they looked towards 'the economy' they feared
engaging with the market-driven, neoliberal mainstream manifestation of it.

By engaging with the diverse economy literature, I reflected that
imagining CSOs as separate from the economy is blind to the way CSOs provide
economic value through non-market transactions, unpaid labour, and non-
capitalist enterprises. The diverse economy literature explains how perceiving
the economy as its own domain, separate from society, is a result of a discursive
repetition which contributes to a false understanding that the economy
functions based on a unique set of rules in which moral, social, and ethical
concerns cannot be integrated (Healy, 2015, p. 104). As Dinerstein puts it:
"Capitalist reality is an ongoing process of struggle for the construction of its
own reality which subsequently becomes naturalized as a human reality" (2014,
p. 63). This critique is in line with Boaventura de Sousa's argument that a
'sociology of absence' zooms into only one aspect of reality, obliterating other
experiences and therefore reproducing this hegemony of knowledge
(Boaventura de Sousa, 2011). This pattern leaves us with an impoverished
economic imagination (Snyder & St. Martin, 2015). The diverse economy
literature proposes a counter-performative discourse to this.

The 'performative ontological project' of imagining a more inclusive
understanding of the economy, in which different market and non-market
activities co-exist, resonates with the findings of this research (Gibson-Graham,
2008). This project wants to create alternative understandings of the world and
proposes this expanded understanding as an action-oriented, theoretical
approach that blurs the gaps between theory and action (Healy, 2015). It seeks
to overcome the marginalising, ignoring and undermining of those economic
expressions that are outside of market logics. By making them visible, economic
alternatives become more credible, "more present as everyday realities that

touch all our lives and dynamically shape our futures" (Gibson-Graham, 2008, p. 618).

I believe this research contributes to this effort. In retrospect, I reflect that in this study I both set up the 'discursive repetition' trap for myself and overcame it. When I started this research, I was looking to question and criticise how neoliberal ways of doing create neoliberal ways of organisational being: in short, I was unconsciously looking to give more visibility to the same oppressive reality that is so easy to criticise. Somewhere along the road, however, it became evident that the initial assumption was not confirmed by the findings of this research. I instead found myself in an unknown space with people who worked and hoped in their own unique way, and in the same breath interacted with all of the complexities of generating value outside of the market, dealing with the power dynamics of the state, and flirting with income-generating activities - all in search of the freedom to redefine their material and spiritual wellbeing. In the thesis, I provide thick descriptions of the multiple and complex ways in which people enact the economy by explaining the negotiations that the co-researchers went through to develop a 'livelihood portfolio' (Gibson-Graham, 2014).

This being said, engaging with the diverse economy literature usefully sheds light on other aspects of the system around youth-led CSOs. For example, Gibson-Graham made visible the contribution of unpaid labour in households - non-market transactions and unpaid household work constitute 30% to 50% of economic activity all over the world (Parker, Cheney, Fournier, & Land, 2014; Skeggs, 2010). About half of the co-researchers still lived with their parents: this living arrangement meant that they had access to resources, such as home cooked meals, thanks to their mothers' unpaid labour. Family support might provide the time and space for co-researchers to dedicate themselves wholeheartedly to their community projects. In this sense, if families are supportive of their children's work in civil society spaces, which is not to be assumed, this could be considered an example of unpaid labour that instead of enabling capitalist production, enables alternative community economies. The relationship between youth activists and leaders and their family might be an interesting line of further research.

Youth-leaders' experience of becoming independent from their families might have implications to their community work - how does their time availability change once they need to take care of domestic work? How would their work be affected when they need to provide for their day-to-day necessity in a more independent way? In fact, it is the need to provide for their own livelihood that motivated the co-researchers to transition their initiatives to become more sustainable. The CSOs represented the platform for co-researchers to exchange value, develop skills, and share their own gifts. In this sense, the CSOs, and the networks around them, represented, as Snyder and St. Martin (2015) puts it, markets of "recognition, mutual dependence, and ethical consideration rather than a site of alienated and anonymous exchange" (p. 27). It is not surprising that the co-researchers dreamt of making their project their source of livelihood, intended as their 'way of life' (ibid, p. 33).

Gibson-Graham coined the concept 'community economies' as "the making of economies in which we recognise and negotiate our interdependence with human and non-human others" (Gibson-Graham, 2013, p. 54). Community here is used as an adjective to define economic practices that generate a recognition of people's interdependence and 'being in common' (Gibson, Cahill, & McKay, 2015, p. 232). Following this literature, considering community economies as spaces in which people become aware of their interdependence and are invited to negotiate and enlarge it (Werner, 2015), the CSOs in this study can be understood as sites that generated community economies. The construction of a sense of 'we' was very present in the rich discussions and explorations about how to allocate resources, such as the one I recounted in the case of Casa Mia. The cooperative inquiry discussions surfaced that co-researchers experimented with resource allocation, negotiated personal and organisational needs, took seriously the concerns for the preservation of the commons, and engaged in ethical discussions around how to consume (Madra & Özselçuk, 2015, p. 139).

What emerged through the cooperative inquiry process is that the co-researchers' capacity to articulate 'community economies' to implement community activities coexisted with a sense of scarcity experienced by individual CSO leaders. The inability to take care of their own livelihoods consumed the energy of the co-researchers and many found themselves

regularly going through cycles of exhaustion. I have asked myself to what extent making visible good examples of alternative economic practices, an exercise that I appreciate and value, risks shadowing the complexities and struggles that people might face engaging in post-capitalist endeavours. I believe this research enriches the performing diverse economy literature with a case study in which, while recognising and appreciating diverse economies, I also appreciate and explore the emotional and day-to-day experiences of the co-researchers. Giving visibility to these emotional struggles is not intended as pessimism, but rather could become an opportunity to understand the challenges of implementing post-capitalist alternatives.

I argue that the grassroots youth-led CSOs in this study represented real schools of post-capitalist ways of being and doing. Their experimenting with non-capitalist ways of resourcing (which included a mix of managing public resources, volunteering, and exchanging value in non-monetary ways), meant that their engagement with the market was permeated by ethical discussions; it was impossible to dismiss ethical consideration because a sense of reflectivity infused all the ways of being and doing of the organisation. More importantly, the CSOs seemed to have a gravitational pull towards exploring non-market alternatives, creating ecosystems in which people valued experimentation with the economy. I have observed that individuals connected to the CSOs of *Plata, Cultura, y Cambio* are experimenting with different economic practices. For example, the practice of *trueque (bartering* services and products*)* was a common practice between organisations and individuals. This happened for example with professionals who were engaged with the CSOs and offered services either free of charge or at '*parcero'* rates (e.g. Web-design, graphic design, video and photography services). Some of the co-researchers were also experimenting as individuals in alternative financing such as participating in womens' saving groups or organising family saving cooperatives. Some CSOs also organised '*gratiferias'*, marketplaces of used products in good conditions that are shared with the community. This encourages people to use and reuse products.

Such exploration came along with what diverse economies scholars refer to as the re-subjectification effect (Lee, Leyshon, & Gibson-Graham, 2010). As I described in the empirical chapters (chapters 4 to 7), the CSOs intimately

understood the interplay between personal change and systemic change. The organisations were sites where people could be allowed to transform and reclaim themselves as agents in society; they encouraged people to recognise their self-worth, divorcing themselves from a perception that they were powerlessly part of a machine that reproduced capitalist mechanisms.

The analysis presented in chapter 7 shows how the co-researchers consciously understood that the 'personal is political' (Cahill, 2007) and tried to overcome the separation between the emotional, the rational, the spiritual, and the natural. Decolonial feminist María Lugones (2010) understands the "dichotomous hierarchy between the human and the nonhuman as the central dichotomy of colonial modernity" (p. 743). The diverse economy literature has engaged with the 'more than human' and understands nature as part of the economy, emphasising that there is no community without commons (Gibson-Graham, 2013). I found that the attention on human interdependence with others and with nature emerged in the co-researchers' discourse as inspired by the *buen vivir* approach.

I stressed that in their work this notion of co-dependence was not theorised or imposed, it was searched for by individuals because it created pleasure. The diverse economy literature highlights the idea that a precondition of experimenting with community economies is desiring them (Healy, 2015). In this research, I have discussed the desire for a sense of affection and belonging which was practiced in the day-to-day. The desire was to have a platform to allow words to "weave their way into intimate experiences of self and others, which in turn affect language and practices" (Werner, 2015, p. 85).

The sense of affection and pleasure that engaging with the CSO generated was, in reality, the glue that brought people together. It created identity and encouraged collective dreaming. As Werner (2015) puts it: "Pleasure is an important current in the performance of self, including the process of premiering subjectivities that are well-suited to a post capitalist politics" (p. 87). In this research, I found a constant tension between the frustration the co-researchers experienced as they searched for ways of sustaining their organisations, and the pleasure they felt in co-creating spaces to cultivate hope and a different quality of relationships. These two aspects coexisted uncomfortably, as I will explore in the next section.

C. *Affective organising and the prefiguration of hope*

"Funding our work is hard, sustaining ourselves is hard, obtaining results and creating social transformation is even harder.

Why do we keep doing the work that we do?"

During one of our PAR trainings which I offered following the co-operative inquiry, Joseph (*Casa de las Mariposas*) shared this question as one that lingered with him throughout *Plata, Cultura, y Cambio*. Carla and Stiven jumped in, saying that for them the affective relationships they built through their work provided a sense of recognition and belonging to their community. This kept them motivated and hopeful. I argue in this thesis that the co-researchers intended the generation of affective relationships as both a feature and an outcome of their work. In this section, I bring together a discussion on prefiguration, Dinerstein's hope movements in Latin America, and selected literature on alternative organising focused on the 'affective turn' in organisational studies.

I have argued that the co-researchers practice a form of prefiguration, intended as the enactment of desired futures in the now. Yates (2015) breaks down prefiguration into five dynamics: the 'experimentation' of alternatives, the articulation of new 'perspectives' through debating and collective sense making, the creation of new norms of 'conduct', the 'consolidation' of such norms into a specific way of enacting them in the day-to-day, and, finally, the 'diffusion' of such norms beyond the group itself. By drawing out these dynamics, Yates (2015) wants to make prefiguration useful as a working analytical concept; he stresses that beyond the experimentation with alternatives as a political act in themselves, prefiguration comes along with a desire to "inspire change and diffuse perspectives" (p. 19). I have argued that the prefiguration I saw amongst youth-led CSOs in Medellin was one which focused on building connection and community in the present. These values were explored and lived amongst the groups and diffused by integrating their practices in their public and community events by enacting the experiential aspect of their work. Moreover, their work encouraged the recognition of young people's power within and with others.

It could be argued that the efforts of the co-researchers in this study are too small to be regarded as impactful or transformative. Yet, as Werner (2015) reflects, this type of criticism sees change as happening systematically and all at once. Through valuing gradual change that starts in the here and now, I explained the importance of these small CSOs: imagining them providing the social field with invaluable nutrients which, even in small quantities, contribute to the health of a system. I agree with Dinerstein (2014) in identifying hope as one of these nutrients.

I see a synergy between her description of 'hope movements' in Latin America and my findings; I suspect that the small youth-led CSOs in this study can be considered an expression of a bigger movement that is happening across Latin America. In discussing Latin American autonomous movements, Dinerstein speaks of ways of practicing prefiguration, in-line with principles of *buen vivir*, which embody a more pluralistic, non-linear approach to address the question of what it means to live well and achieve dignity. Dinerstein (2014) defines prefiguration as "a process of learning hope" (p. 2) and refers to autonomous Latin American social movements as 'hope movements' which perform a prefigurative function, bridging the present and utopia.

They prefigure utopias by experimenting with another way of being that invites the yet-to-be. She regards hope as a powerful human emotion that needs to be taught to learn how to engage with the 'not yet' as a hidden dimension of a present reality which is always unfinished. Therefore, fantasy becomes a useful tool. It should not be abandoned and regarded as irrational; instead, as Healy (2015) suggests, we might find a way to relate to fantasy so that it provides a window into engaging creatively with uncertainty.

Dinerstein remains conscious that the hope movements' ability to enact their utopia is constrained by oppressive expressions of the state, economic powers, and the law. She stresses that economic, political and legal dimensions are structures that "permanently demarcate a reality within which autonomy operates" (2014, p. 19). The struggle for autonomy is mediated by structures that seek to assimilate alternatives and make them conform to the system – we cannot avoid the materiality of capitalism (Gibson-Graham, 2006). By understanding the search for autonomy as embedded within a system, Dinerstein and Deneulin (2012) are careful not to create a dichotomy between

autonomy and the state or capital: "Pure autonomy from existing political and economic power, from the state and capitalism, is an illusion" (p. 597). Therefore, autonomous organising must deal with these forces.

Prefiguration is about finding spaces between the cracks of apparently unchanging structures. By describing the practices that the co-researchers experimented with, I highlighted the constant tension between the materiality of their context, and their search for the 'yet-to-be'. In this search, organising is fluid, it is constant becoming; it is an open process characterized by debating and exploration (Parker et al., 2014). Within this type of organising, co-researchers improvised a personal search for what it meant for them to live well. It is the convergence around this search that, in the cooperative inquiry, contributed a sense of 'we' amongst co-researchers.

The prefiguration of alternatives, which in the CSOs I worked with I found passed through, and was enabled by, the creation of affective links, has a pedagogical value. As I argued above, the co-researchers' CSOs offered laboratories of popular education. The values and approaches they engaged with are radically different from those proposed by formal education across Latin America (Motta, 2014; Parker et al., 2014). Critiquing the educational trends in Latin America, Motta (2014) explains how, in the name of modernisation, public education has been widely defunded. Meanwhile, laws encouraged the privatisation of education, and enabled private investments. This came along with a paradigm shift towards an education that is more technical, skill driven, depoliticised. A focus on preparing students to access the job market has undermined a more critical and emancipatory education; education became a tool to be used instrumentally to obtain skills to enter the global job market (ibid).

The CSOs in this study offered spaces to play with and learn how to participate in their community; they acted as youth gyms to exercise muscles which are not necessarily valued in formal educational spaces. To theorise what type of participation they invited, I find it useful to refer to Grove & Pugh's (2015) discussion on assemblage thinking and participatory development. Inspired by Deleuze's ontology, assemblage thinking brings attention to the heterogeneous nature of systems. An 'assemblage' is a process that is in constant fluctuation and thus emphasises becoming *over* being (Srnicek, 2008).

Assemblage thinking stresses that becoming is a relational process (ibid).
Deleuze refers to an 'event' as the juxtaposition of different bodies and words in
relation to each other's (Grove & Pugh, 2015). Within an event, different force
relations intersect, opening up numerous opportunities of becoming. This set of
possible relations are referred to as 'diagrams' (Srnicek, 2008). Since social
processes and subjectivities are traversed by multiple diagrams, there is
potential to be several things at once. This approach enables us to analyse
development processes in a more complex, expansive, and granular way. If
"subjectivity is a relational effect" (p. 7), the interaction with different forms of
power is not one that leaves the subject simply disempowered. Instead,
participation makes possible unexpected types of interactions (Grove & Pugh,
2015).

Grove & Pugh (2015) distinguish between an emancipatory 'performative
participation', as opposed to a more 'modernist participation'. Modernist
participation assumes that giving a voice to people will empower them to
achieve their interest. In Grove and Pugh's (2015) words, "affective relations are
reduced to acts of verbal communication and negotiating between competing
interests" (p. 5). In the performative version, instead, participation opens
possibilities because power is undertood as relational, formed through affective
encounters between bodies (Grove & Pugh, 2015). The type of participation that
is generated within the youth-led CSOs in this study is peer-to-peer, fluid, and
unimposed. While CSOs engage with external structure and power, the type of
participation they explore enables and recognises more spaciousness and
expands the possibilities of being together differently. This type of affective
participation also enabled a sense of 'we' that is not exercised within the
educational system. In Fotaki, Kenny, & Vachhani's (2017) words:

> Affect is a force that places people in a co-subjective circuit of feeling
> and sensation, rather than standing alone and independent; in this way,
> affect highlights our interdependencies. (p. 4)

Pullen and Rhodes (2014) stress that dominant approaches to
organisational studies construct *ethic* as a superimposed and instrumental
concept - distant from the lived, felt and sensed of organisational relationships.
They explain how the literature portrays organisations as informed by a desire
to formalize ethic through contracts and control, informed by a desire for

rationality. They argue for an ethico-politic within organisations which is 'pre-reflective' and emerges within what they refer to as 'corporeal generosity' (Pullen & Rhodes, 2014). This discussion resonates with the dynamics I observed amongst youth-led CSOs in Medellin. The body was used generously to create harmony and connection between people. Hugs for example, which were felt and long, were an indispensable part of beginning and ending any activity. In the case of *Casa Mia*, for example, hugging with an open heart was even 'taught'. The body was a space to construct ethical relationships.

Time was an interesting proxy to understand how an organisation could create alternative ways of being motivated by affection. I have described earlier in this work that time felt very stretched when I participated in the activities of the various CSOs. Things started late, people used that time to chat and hang out, and things also ended late, usually with a cooked meal which took time and care to prepare (unless the activity was sponsored by the state).

Johnsen, Berg Johansen, and Toyoki (2018) discuss literature on time; they understand that it simultaneously shapes day-to-day human action and is shaped by it. In their article, Johnsen at al. (2018) seek to explore the affective dimension of time. They are interested in the way time and affection weave together to create specific organisational atmospheres and dynamics impacting the way individuals within organisations exist and maintain a sense of agency over their time. I argue that a looser relationship with time is both instrumental to the type of prefiguration that the co-researchers' CSOs engage with, and intrinsically part of their take on *buen vivir*. If *buen vivir* involves eating good food, for example, it is worth putting time into cook together, if it involves relationship of affection, hanging out is not wasting time.

In this thesis, I have defined a leader as one who puts time into the organisation. I used this definition because I find that there is an interesting relationship between time, power and leadership. For example, amongst the co-researchers, horizontal leadership was reflected in the tone of every-day conversations; it was held like a value. Yet, I am not sure how it translated to practice. While all of the organisations value the concept of horizontal decision making, the different time availability determines the ability for people to take day-to-day decisions and hold knowledge. Misoczky, Dornelas Camara, & Böhm (2017) argue that holding horizontality as a horizon has value to direct and

ground organisational being, even if it cannot be fully achieved. I think it is worth exploring how horizontal leadership might be hindered or facilitated by time availability.

Meanwhile, the CSOs' dance with the system means their relationship with time needs to be constantly scrutinised and negotiated. When working on a project base, time does become pressured, and co-researchers experienced stress when engaging with bureaucracy and unrealistic project requirements. In those situations, people called upon the affective relationship in order to cope with the stress. In applying the lens of *buen vivir* to organising, it is worth questioning the tendency for young people to 'burn out', *'quemarse'*. When people become so overworked that they cannot engage with the organisation, everybody loses. Yet, what if burning out is for the common good? What if it is reached in the pursuit of sustaining their work over time? These are debates that could be informed by applying a *buen vivir* as an ethical lens to organising. Such ethical debates might guide organisations in different directions, questioning growth as a priority.

These reflections on the links between organising-affection-time were explored in a book written by Bonnie Devine (forthcoming) of the organisation 'La Múcura'. I first interviewed this youth-led organisation of researcher-musicians in 2014 and we eventually became good friends. I recently had the chance to peer-review a book they wrote in the form of a 'research narrative' inspired by a three-year road trip researching the role of art in social change amongst grassroots organisations in Latin America. The book includes a reflection on their path as an organisation, their team dynamics, and a whole chapter on the sustainability path of the organisations they visited throughout the study.

Bonnie starts the book with a discussion of how and why she chose to let go of the 'research standards' she had been holding on to and write a piece that felt more accessible and personal. She discussed the importance of democratising knowledge, writing simply and going from 'systematizing' to 'sympathizing' experiences. The book articulates beautifully something I have experienced many times in my work: that friendship enables the personal and collective healing that they had been searching for through their research, their trip, and their art. In her words (translated from Spanish):

> Even though friendship cannot be reduced to a research tool, it enriches the research process by providing access to a world of sensible information, strengthening the experiential frameworks which allow us to understand a narrative and interpret it ethically, and amplifying the possibilities to generate research actions that resonate with the community." (Devine, forthcoming, p. 20)

By establishing intimate relationships with organisations through co-habiting for a certain period of time throughout their trip, La Múcura sensed the constant tension between "*formalidad y organicidad*" (formality and organicity) that permeates the organisations they have worked with.

This is the same tension that they experience in their search for sustainability practice. The reflections they offer on this topic are enriching and complementary to this work. For example, they explain how part of their sustainability path involved 're-signifying their relationship with sustainability itself, in which the value of money is reduced, redistributing its power, revalorizing interaction and exchanges that do not pass through money" (p. 62).

Exploring their own personal path, they speak of the emotional work to disassociate their self-value from money – they found that when they displace the centrality of money, there is more space and time for creativity, relationships, trust, freedom and generosity (p. 63).

D. *Concluding feelings and reflections*

The day of my Viva, I had a sense of abundance about my PhD research. I had engaged with the PhD process with both discipline and pleasure. I felt curious throughout, I got feedback from my supervisors and co-researchers, I engaged with my data, I drafted and redrafted. I felt confident that I was finished. The Viva outcomes initially left a bittersweet taste in my mouth. I was not able to write this chapter until I dealt with the sense of failure that I felt for being asked to write an additional chapter.

Yet, I reflected that this sense of 'failure' was coming out of a structure I held around 'being a good student' which I am glad got dismantled in the final phase of the PhD. If I assume that being asked to expand my thinking is failure, I will not be the type of educator or leader that is able to honour the possibility of receiving feedback, to expand my way of thinking, and to have fun with it.

Writing the chapter became more manageable once I was able to lean into it and find joy in the writing, in being able to extend the conversation I had started through this work to other bodies of literature and other ways of seeing my work. This being said, I feel that I am still at the tip of the iceberg of a rich literature that I hope to keep exploring and contributing to with my future work. This chapter opens a door into new theoretical horizons.

I offer this personal reflection on my sense of failure as a conversation with the feminist critiques on the way management and organisational studies are carried out and expressed (e.g. Shaun, 2017). Phillips, Pullen and Rhodes (2014) discuss how rationality and a culture that values the 'scientific' has defined organisational studies giving it a managerial and masculine tone (Phillips et al., 2014). Steyaert (2015) invites researchers to go beyond the masculine vs. feminine binary by adding rich narrative as a way to blur between genre and gender. Personally, I found it confusing to find some of the literature on affect written with an academic and unemotional tone, with little first-person analysis (an observation that is also made by Fotaki et al., 2017). There was something unsettling about calling upon the importance of emotions without expressing them stylistically. I would appreciate a literature which articulates knowledge generated *as a result of affective links with others*. I argue, from my epistemological stance, that the affective bonds with the co-researchers I worked with provide some validity to this work. I would like to contribute to a literature that is more vivid and authentic, written in a way that evokes and calls upon this interconnection and sense of 'we' between the 'researchers' and the 'researched'. This will be my horizon with researching and writing.

The diverse economy literature emphasised the links between personal and collective transformation arguing that 'to change our understanding is to change the world' (Gibson-Graham, 2008, p. 615). Yet, 'understanding' here is not a mere intellectual endeavour, it is directly connected to practice. I appreciate the invitation to ask: How can I cultivate myself as a subject who can imagine and enact a new economic politics? (Gibson-Graham & North, 2008; Gibson-Graham, 2006).

This question resonates with my own personal praxis in the two years following the field work in Medellin. I have been desiring, for example, to be able to offer value in a non-market sense. This has encouraged me to pick up

singing and the ukulele, to offer moments of enjoyment, to start making earrings (an activity that my mom shared with me), to learn and experiment with urban gardening (attending several educational workshops with *Deditos Verdes!*), and to be more conscious about how my writing can be of service within and outside of academia. I have also questioned my positionality and responsibility as part of what has become my community in Medellin. In other words, I am asking myself, not as a theoretical exercise, but as a daily practice, how I wish to live in community with others.

Chapter 9: Discussion

A. *Introduction*

In this chapter, I reflect on my findings to carve out my theoretical contribution. While I tap into the knowledge that developed through the cooperative inquiry, the findings presented in this chapter are not the result of the co-researchers' explicit deliberation: my colleagues did not engage with (and often were not interested in) academic literature. As a researcher, I am therefore building a bridge and abstracting meaning to make a theoretical contribution.

Since this thesis was inspired by a question that emerged in my practice, I begin the chapter with an autobiographical reflection (part B). Building upon the four empirical chapters, part C synthesises the main argument that runs through the narrative of this thesis. In part D, I engage with existing literature and spell out my contribution to knowledge. Part E discusses some of the study's limitations. Part F presents ideas for further research.

B. *The research process – an autobiographical reflection*

My desire to carry out this PhD emerged as a response to a personal discomfort. During my 20s, I felt caught in unproductive thought patterns of frustration over not being able to reconcile Recrear's aspirations with the practical need for our organisation to sustain itself. Carrying out this research was a way of confronting this discomfort, a response to a yearning to understand how CSOs worked, and to expand my imagination about how they could work. As part of my first-person action research practice, in this section, I reflect on my personal and professional development throughout the three and a half years of doctoral work.
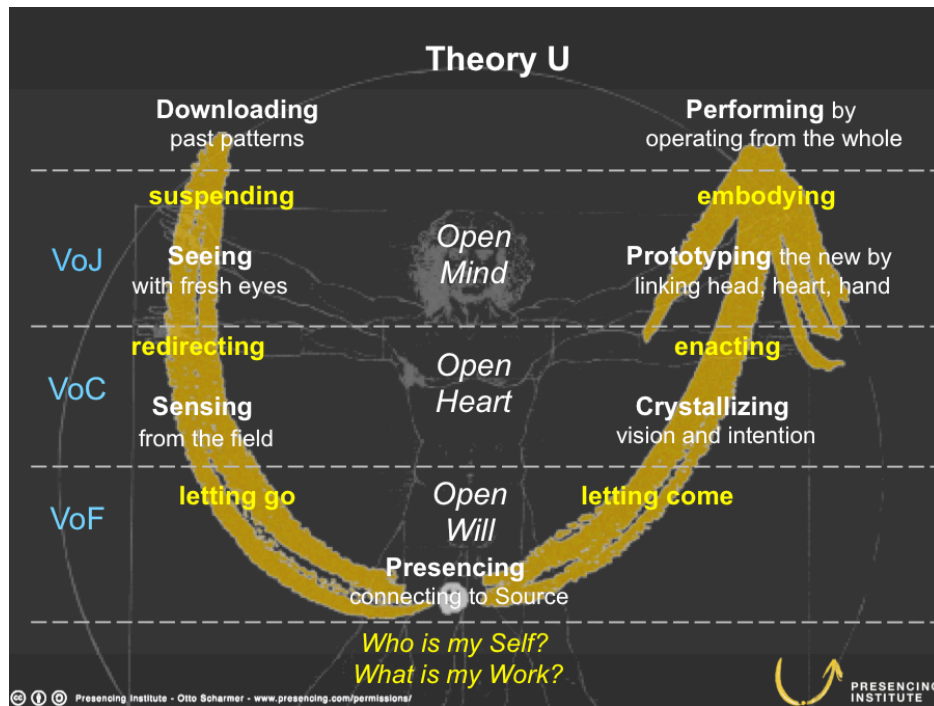
Figure 16: A visual scheme of TheoryU, by Otto Scharmer (2016)

Scharmer (2016, 2017) visualises personal and collective transformation as a 'U process' (see Figure 16). According to the model, on the left side of the U, we *let go* of old ideas and patterns to eventually reach a state of *presencing*, the connection with a more profound source of knowledge. On the right side of the U, we *let come* new possibilities and ideas, unfolding into our *emergent future self*. I feel that, throughout the research process, I went through two distinct U cycles.

During my first year of PhD study, surveying relevant literature was an exercise of *seeing with fresh eyes*. The opening I experienced was purely conceptual: I expanded my knowledge only in a rational sense. At the most visceral level, I was guided by my past experience, personal inclination, and ideas. For example, I felt critical of the social entrepreneurship literature, and towards the tendency of CSOs to be driven by market logic.

According to Strauss and Corbin (1990), as part of using a grounded theory approach, the researcher utilises the research question(s) to focus on the phenomenon of interest while avoiding entering the study with assumptions. This, however, is "difficult if not impossible, to achieve" because "we cannot ask a question without making assumptions" (Willig, 2013, p. 72). My assumptions became more evident to me the deeper I dove into the research. Dismissing

them seemed forced, unnatural. Instead, I regularly revisited them throughout the study and settled for keeping them in sight, while avoiding holding on to them too tightly.

Arriving in Medellin, I let go of theoretical discussions and redirected my attention to the context of Medellin, and to the relationship with co-researchers. In our group activities, I felt present and connected. Basking in those moments of synergy, I found myself listening to others while suspending judgment, resisting the temptation to make any connections before due time. I practiced staying suspended in the discomfort of not knowing what I was hearing, seeing, or witnessing, and to maintain that tension until something that felt like knowledge manifested to me. This was a refreshing and humbling experience for me as a researcher.

As I describe in my methodology chapter, by the end of my fieldwork, I had tuned-in with the co-researchers, and I experienced what Scharmer refers to as *presencing-* the bottom of the U (Scharmer, 2016). I felt an openness at the level of the heart, and I could sense the experience of my co-researchers, even though I was aware I could not fully understand it. I also felt a desire, a will, to be useful to make my research relevant beyond a theoretical exercise, to be able to generate practical knowledge that could serve the co-researchers.

Returning to the University of Sussex in 2017, I had the task of digesting my data, of *letting come* and *crystallizing* my research. Instead, as I started writing my thesis, I started a whole new U cycle. At the most superficial level of analysis, my data was telling me that youth-led CSOs were struggling, that obtaining funding was a point of tension. In short, I was reading my data *downloading* past ideas: I found in youth-led CSOs in Medellin a reflection of the frustration I had experienced. I was forced to *see with fresh eyes* when diving into the mosaic of data that painted the picture of the specific funding context of Medellin, which I discussed in chapter 4.

Writing the methodology chapter, I started sensing the uniqueness of the practices and ideas that characterised the youth-led CSOs I had gotten to know in Medellin. Reflecting on the research process, I could see their emphasis on creating experiences of beauty and connection, the practice of realising *buen vivir* in the now, the respect for nature, their community orientation, and their appreciation for experiential ways of knowing. My data was also clearly pointing

out that the approach to social change that emerged in the cooperative inquiry was distinct from a mainstream approach to development in Medellin, which emphasised internationalisation, growth, competition, and innovation. In short, my data analysis set up a duality. Letting go of this duality, which happened in the process of drafting and re-drafting of my chapters, particularly chapter 5, was the hardest part of the analysis.

Overcoming this idea of duality happened as I suspended my judgment: I had to become aware and let go of the notion that obtaining resources was a necessary evil. In doing so, I realised both conceptions of development that I had identified influenced the co-researchers. I started seeing beyond the dichotomy of 'CSOs vs. social enterprise' that I had anticipated when I was conceptualising the research. I learned that what influenced organisations more than the term they use to refer to themselves was how they worked together, chose to engage with funding, and tweaked the system to make it serve their alternative visions.

I analysed the way social entrepreneurship was appropriated as a tool to respond to a need to address financial obligations - the need to *resolver lo economico*. I also started paying attention to the way public institutions recognised the values promoted by youth-led CSOs (the quality of Paola's engagement with CSOs, or the way the Secretary of Youth spoke of the need of affection are two examples of this). In short, I started noticing in the data the way co-researchers danced between these two conceptions of development to find new meanings, using their organisations to experiment with their environment through trials and errors. Describing some of the ways in which this happens represents the bulk of chapter 7.

This research shifted the way I understand myself as an agent of social change. Instead of wishing structural barriers away with anger (an emotion which I do still feel from time to time), I am more willing to engage with the reality of funding and search for creative ways to transcend the dynamics that seem paradoxical. In short, I realised that *La utopia hay que caminarla*: not because this utopia might or might not be reachable, but because it feels right to do so.

Throughout my 20s, I had been ping-ponging around the world in search of learning, connection, service, and exposure. The co-researchers' commitment

to their city moved me. Working with grassroots, youth-led CSOs gave me a vantage point on a community of people that looked at itself, that was willing to experiment, that cared, and that sought to manifest a life of harmony and connection. Witnessing others commit to their community installed in me a craving for finding roots. For finding a home base for my practices to deepen.

With this idea in mind, in January 2018 my partner and I moved back to Medellin. We moved to *Castilla*, a lower-income *barrio* in the North of the city and got involved with a community house called *Casa Una Vida Tranquila*, (House a Relaxed Life), which provides young people opportunities to cook healthy food together and create bonds of affection. Between January and June 2018, I was able to reconnect with the co-researchers, discuss and review my analysis with them, and present my findings with various local institutions. I also took advantage of this time to deepen my research on *Casa Mia* through a series of interviews, participatory observations, and a day-long workshop.

The work with *Casa Una Vida Tranquila* and the further research with *Casa Mia* allowed for my last breakthrough with this research, and the one that might be the most important to me as a practitioner. As I discussed in chapter 6, I realised that, for *Casa Mia*, financial sustainability had been a historical challenge: the discomfort around earning money had become part of the organisation's DNA. The relationship with funding was charged with emotions, and the leaders of *Casa Mia* were now becoming aware of it and actively trying to transform this relationship. Similarly, I learned that the leaders of Ca*sa Una Vida Tranquila* were taking personal loans and getting in-debt to support the work of the house; I have been working with the team to heal this relationship with money to support the sustainability of the initiative.

Throughout the three and a half years of my PhD, my work as a civil society practitioner matured. I am more willing to accept the need to *resolver lo economico* to avoid exhaustion, disempowerment, and energetic blockages. I am also more optimistic that, to do so, I do not need to renounce my values. I am committed to accompanying youth organisations throughout these reflections - what I hope will be a new action cycle of this research and a form of prototyping and embodying this PhD. I realised that both, *walking our utopia* and *resolving the economic* are not pre-prescribed ideas, and they are up for constant experimentation.

Finally, I wrote chapter 8 after my Viva. Writing this chapter represented the encounter with bodies of literature that I will keep working with and that align more closely to the way I am framing reality as a result of this PhD process. Engaging with this literature also invited the reflection that, if I am to 'prefigure' in academia the world I want to work towards, I need to push the boundaries of how writing, or more broadly sharing research, can be done in a way that inspires hopefulness, connection, and healing.

I conclude this project with the awareness that a life of authenticity, a good life, of wholeness, exploration, and harmony - for myself and the people around me - feels more than ever what I want to actualise.

C. Contribution to knowledge

In this section, I discuss how this research can contribute to and enrich existing knowledge.

The argument I develop in this thesis is that, while seeking financial sustainability, youth-led CSOs in Medellin must navigate the tension between official development discourses that promote competitiveness, innovation, the creation of employment and economic growth, and their own commitment to the co-creation of meaning around spaces, ideas, and practices that help people be together, reflect on their reality, and express themselves. I further argue that while this process of navigation is challenging, it has the potential to bring forward and sustain a civil society focused on new ways of being and doing, nourishing opportunities and methodologies for practicing coexistence, with other people and with nature, as "intrinsically important".

In this thesis, I envision the organisations I researched with as a particular species of CSOs and I enrich the civil society literature by providing more texture and nuance around their behaviours and experiences. The contribution this research makes is through the central finding that among the small, value-driven, youth-led CSOs that participated in the study, there is little evidence of a simple or straightforward transformation toward market-orientation.

Civil society literature understands CSOs must evolve to deal with shrinking funding availability. The need to sustain themselves may be particularly pressing for CSOs in middle-income countries where international

aid or other donor funding (including local foundations and philanthropy) is limited (Ward, 2016). A prominent view within the literature on the future of CSOs is that, to assure their financial sustainability, CSOs need to engage with and harness market forces - reflecting what some have seen as a process of deep-marketisation that has accompanied the hegemony of the neoliberal model (Carroll & Jarvis, 2015). The risk is for such marketisation trends to permeate CSOs and depoliticise them. The findings of this study question the notion that CSOs might passively transform into private sector entities which follow the logic of deep-marketisation. The idea of a single or straightforward market-oriented pathway to financial sustainability does not adequately explain the behaviour of the CSOs in the study. The picture I draw is more complex.

The co-researchers do experience tension around funding their work. To respond to the challenges of dealing with public funding (project-based funding), which they found hard to manage and which does not invest in strengthening their institutions, they are becoming well versed in the language of the market. They are starting to 'sell' their services and products to those entities who in the past might have been their donors (such as the state). 'Selling' their services and products, allows them to generate unrestricted revenues. And since financial resources represent energy, earning income might allow for more energy, time, and autonomy to protect and nourishing other movements and ideas, which are different from the system that might give them funding. Their engagement with market logic is selective: in the same breath they are performing diverse economies, generating non-market values through community economies based on solidarity.

Deep-marketisation is not the primary dynamic at play, in large part because of the tension they recognise between strong market orientation and the critical role that prefigurative action and behaviour play in the CSOs' social and political understandings. These CSOs are experimenting with different ideas of social transformation which are inspired by indigenous ways of knowing, by a desire to discover new ways of being together, and by the opportunity for self-discovery and self-development. They seek financial sustainability by trying different strategies that can uphold their views, while learning to engage with market-forces selectively. In other words, they are responding to market forces as a necessity, while trying to uphold their

worldview and prefigurative behaviour as a way to work toward their visions; they are becoming "bilingual", learning how to speak the languages of different sectors, while discovering new practices and interactions.

This study engaged with organisations with little interest in assuring their future by becoming pure service providers and with a commitment to changing their (local) realities; it may be that the financial sustainability of these kinds of organisations is contingent on the way they fit into the broader ecosystem of a society where the boundaries between public, private, and third sector are blurring. For that to happen, youth-led CSOs need to be recognised for their social contribution: the creation of spaces in which new ideas of social transformation and development can sprout.

This work also contributes to innovating and furthering participatory action research (PAR). I contribute to PAR by experimenting with practices that further the energy and vitality of the collective research process. I found that practices such as cooking together and proposing spaces for celebration strengthen bonds between co-researchers and allow for more collective catharsis. This facilitates research that can work towards collective healing, and collaboration rooted in trust and friendships.

The intimate quality of this research allowed for the realisation that the challenge of sustainability generates and is influenced by individual and collective relationship with money. Through this study, I was able to connect with the level of frustration, burn out, and even mental health challenges that might come along with community work. I think it is important to go beyond seeing CSOs as needing to act heroically. I learned that it is so important to recognise and value the self-care and self-respect that civil society practitioners need to exercise in order to sustain their activism. Co-researchers found that to sustain their work, they need to recognise that living dignified lives is important to them, and that they do need some income to sustain their community engagement. This acknowledgement might help CSOs support their colleagues and constituencies in recognising that they, too, need to acknowledge the importance of earning a living as part of their *buen vivir*.

C.1 Contribution to PAR methodology: 'the affective is the effective'

I believe that *Casa Mia*'s reflection that 'the affective is effective' can apply to participatory action research (PAR). I contribute to PAR by experimenting with the idea that research can be fun and can generate links of affection and connection between participants. By doing so, research can dare to invite the whole person to the research process and therefore open up possibilities for the experiential to provide rich knowledge about our human nature. This type of 'playful' PAR that I practice is inspired by my work with Recrear, and I found is particularly powerful when carrying out research with young people.

Throughout the inquiry, the co-researchers recognised that at times their work got "lonely". Despite working closely with communities, as leaders of CSOs they held a great deal of responsibility and felt pressured to sustain their work. It is probably because of this desire to share the load of their work that the cooperative inquiry was utilised to share experiences, perceptions, histories, troubles, and visions. Our meetings effectively worked as a support group for the participants. *Plata, Cultura y Cambio* had a particular consistency to it – it felt light (even though at times conversation felt heavy) and vital. Its most powerful outcome might be the bonds of friendship that were generated between participants.

The inquiry represented an opportunity for this group of CSO leaders across the city to connect with each other at a more intimate level. It created a safe space to acknowledge each experience as valid, and to triangulate information. In doing so, my colleagues were able to appreciate the significance of their individual experiences. This encouraged the recognition of themselves as part of a broader movement of youth-led CSOs in Medellin.

The value of PAR is not exclusively contingent on its theoretical contribution, but on the quality of the process itself, and the concrete actions that accompany the research. In the months following the study, participating organisations partnered for various programmes. This suggests the research created a communication channel that increased trust and connection between the participants. This is evidence that a cooperative inquiry around financial sustainability practices can inform processes of organisational transformation:

it will be interesting, for example, to witness the implication of the deep reflection on their own relationship with funding that this research inspired in the leaders of *Casa Mia*. As I keep sharing the results of this study, I hope the co-researchers and I can work toward improving donors' understanding of CSOs' reality and facilitate more partnership and collaboration between CSOs (see Annex 5).

Finally, I would suggest the following recommendations to practitioners interested in using a cooperative inquiry with young people:

- Besides the formal meetings, create as many opportunities for celebrations as possible (such as dinners, informal get together, and other group activities). These activities generate deeper bonds and improve the quality of the conversation during the cooperative inquiry meetings.
- Plan for a collective action within each meeting. During *Plata, Cultura, y Cambio* cooking lunch or dinner together was a very grounding practice that helped participants relax, build trust, and share stories and perspectives informally.
- Account for the time to engage in collective action based on the findings of the study. As part of a PhD program, I would imagine that this could look like integrating an action year in the PhD program to let the thesis rest while piloting concrete actions to follow-up on the research.

C.2 Contribution to civil society literature

C.2.1 The concept of civil society as it emerged in this study

Edwards (2014a) presents three distinct civil society schools. Civil society can be understood as a part of society populated by a multiplicity of organisations, a kind of 'desired' society, and as the public sphere. In this study, the framing and methodology of this research invited me to observe individuals within CSOs, therefore exploring more closely this first understanding of civil society. Here, I briefly discuss how the three approaches to civil society manifested within the work and as part of the perspectives of the co-researchers of *Plata, Cultura, y Cambio*. I suggest that the CSOs in this study fluidly embodied the various understandings of civil society presented by Edwards (2014a).

I have argued throughout this thesis that the co-researchers did value their organisations as spaces to critically and creatively experiment with their reality. However, I observed that the boundaries between their organisations and others were very porous. The co-researchers were organically involved with a number of informal groups and movements which searched for new ways to organise with less attachment to the concept of 'organisation' as a fixed, machine-line entity. Meaningful collaboration across groups remained challenging and at times scratched individual egos. When it happened successfully, however, it looked like a jazz jamming session in which different groups had the chance to shine, improvise their solos for a moment, and continue creating music together.

What brought together the co-researchers, and more broadly youth-led CSOs in Medellin, were the values and ideas which I explored in this thesis. The concept of 'good society' that emerged amongst co-researchers is linked to values for affective relationships, appreciation of differences, and harmony with nature. The co-researchers endorsed an understanding of civil society that recognised the quality of processes, encounters, and relationships; they understood civil society as promoting the value of coexistence as intrinsically important.

Finally, I am aware that *Plata, Cultura, y Cambio,* beyond an action research process, in itself became a civil society space in the third school suggested by Edwards (2014a), as the public sphere. Within the inquiry co-researchers debated, explored, deliberated and formed their own opinions, becoming more self-aware of the meaning of their work. I found that the CSOs that I worked with understood their contribution as that of providing spaces to invite reflection and experiment with working together. They constantly hosted spaces for debate. Yet, I found that such spaces were not particularly diverse. The co-researchers struggled to find ways to confront themselves with representatives from the public sector, with private companies, or even to participate in meaningful intergenerational exchanges.

C.2.2 New ways of working between the market and the state

The literature stresses that CSOs risk getting captured by the market or the state, thus losing autonomy. In Latin America, as Pousadela and Cruz (2016)

stress, the fear is for state to use CSOs as simple contractors. In fact, since countries in Latin America have transitioned from low to middle income, the region ceased to be a priority for international cooperation: this came along with a tendency for the state to absorb international cooperation funding and redistribute it, thereby becoming the principal funder of CSOs.

This research confirms Pousadela and Cruz's (2016) finding in the context of Medellin: the local government was the primary donor to youth-led CSOs. Given the narrative of "historical debt" with young people, the local government in Medellin has been investing in youth-leadership and youth-led community development. However, the co-researchers expressed discomfort with the requirements and type of funding provided by the state: they experienced that state funding was unreliable, involves restrictive timelines, and daunting bureaucracy. Plus, in engaging with the state, CSOs found themselves dealing with private sector intermediaries that managed public funding. This is in line with literature that suggests that market mechanisms are capturing the state, with private sector logics pouring over both civil society (Carroll & Jarvis, 2015; Jäger & Schröer, 2014; Martin & Osberg, 2007) and the state (Steele & Shapiro, 2017; Kutay, 2014; Ortega & Villamarín, 2009).

In chapter 4, I described how youth-led CSOs struggle to access funding strategies that feel coherent with their identities. Because of this challenge with engaging with the state, co-researchers were keen to find ways to generate their income - proposing products, services, and methodologies. Some struggled with the concept of social entrepreneurship because they associated it with prioritising the market over social goals. Others appropriated and re-conceptualised the practices of social entrepreneurship to serve their visions. Despite the mixed baggage of the term *social entrepreneurship*, the co-researchers felt that generating their own funding was critical to ensure their autonomy.

However, given the recent investments of the state in cultural and in social initiatives, people in Medellin, especially in impoverished neighbourhoods, were not accustomed to the idea of paying for cultural and community-building activities: co-researchers found it difficult to charge for their work. To mitigate this challenge, some of the co-researchers were transforming their relationship with the government and the private sector,

understanding them as clients rather than donors. For some of the co-researchers, this was uncomfortable, while for others this was a strategy to develop a more equal relationship with traditional donors.

Through *Plata, Cultura, y Cambio*, I found that youth-led CSOs in Medellin moulded their organisational culture through the dynamic interaction between different development narratives: the ones that they are continually co-creating through their grassroots experience, and the formal development narratives of the city. Across chapters 4 and 5, I discuss the themes that emerged in the cooperative inquiry to account for how the co-researchers understood the value of their work: for most of them, contributing to social transformation meant engaging with their constituencies and partners to find new ways of providing options for people to see reality differently. I argued that the co-researchers practiced *prefiguration* as an organisational and community-building strategy: they manifested the change they wished to see in the present by creating meaning around spaces, ideas, and practices that help people be together, reflect on their reality, and express themselves.

The narrative proposed by official development discourse promotes competitiveness, innovation, the creation of employment and economic growth. It stressed the need to *resolver lo economico primero,* 'resolve the economic first'. I argue that the challenge of being financially sustainable means that youth-led CSOs need to interact with both of these narratives. In fact, when CSOs receive funding from donors (in this case mostly by public or private-public institutions), it comes with worldviews and practices. At times, these practices might feel incongruous. For example, funding comes with strict deadlines and requirements around how to demonstrate impact, which feel unrealistic. Moreover, given the limited amount of funding, CSOs can become competitive with each other, which is intrinsically disjointed from their worldview. I found that the civil society sector can represent a competitive market, which induces young people to play a game that feels frustrating, unethical, and incoherent. In between trial and error, the co-researchers were experimenting with different funding logics in search of coherent models.

I suggest that innovative alternatives to CSOs' models will come from sitting with the discomfort associated with a quest for financial sustainability and transcending the logic of all: traditional civil society, the state, and the

market. This being said, the ability for co-researchers to fund their work will also depend on their ability to engage in a genuine exchange of worldviews and visions, and to exercise *power with* other actors in the private, civil society, and public sector – including all of the hybrid areas that are popping up. Funding is one of the tools for this exchange of worldviews and practices.

C.2.3 A reflection on the future of CSOs

CSOs' independence is presented as a dilemma in the literature that asks: How can CSOs be independent, if they depend on others for funding?

The foresight workshop was a compelling opportunity to question the assumption that CSOs are independent. Stretching our imagination to the future, during the foresight exercise we explored an amplification of the blurring between different sectors that we already know as a reality today. Participants imagined CSOs in the future as changing shape and structure along with the evolution of the private and public sector. It became even more apparent that all sectors are interdependent and therefore we must 'act from the whole' (Scharmer, 2016). The exercise showed that sectors would be increasingly blurred and envisioned a society in which different social actors would be able to see and understand each other's work more transparently, so as to cooperate with and respect each other's contributions. For example, we realised that the public sector, as well as the values that motivate political will, have great power to determine the extinction or survival of different types of CSOs.

The youth-led CSOs in this study realised that, through funding, they create ties and conversations with other sectors. If sustainability is relational, it is naive to imagine that organisations will be completely independent: CSOs can only sustain themselves when they can co-construct realities with others, so as to pull together resources and energy.

If civil society is to provide a space to develop new values and ideas, it seems that healing society's relationship with money would need to be at the heart of civil society work. CSOs cannot afford to take a back seat and criticise the implications of neoliberal societies. Instead, the critical and experimental engagement that the organisations of *Plata, Cultura, y Cambio* pursued

represents, in my opinion, a creative attempt to promote different ways to generate and share value in community.

This research points out that many young people in Medellin are thirsty for different ways of being together and experiencing alternative community constructions: they are craving meaning. Consciousness, spirituality, and connection with nature were at the core of their work. By believing in and prefiguring their ideals, CSOs socialised their vision of development and social transformation. A bold civil society can create alternative framings around development that could transform society. The literature points to the fact that, in recent decades, civil society has learned from the private sector (Lewis, 2001; Pinho et al., 2014). I found that the CSOs in this study were developing their ability to also speak the language of the market as a way to expand their opportunities, comprehend their ecosystems, and contribute to shaping it.

In conclusion, the existential crisis of civil society might have a bright side. It is helping CSOs become aware that to promote communities in which people are realising fulfilling lives, and collectively pursuing their version of wellbeing, CSOs need to be able to prefigure a more beautiful relationship with the act of giving and receiving resources.

C. 3 From social entrepreneurship to community economies

In chapter 7, I discussed that CSO leaders might present themselves as social entrepreneurs as a strategy to attract funding while continuing to nourish their community work. Here, I argue that some of the CSOs appropriated the term social entrepreneurship but made it their own; the type of organising they manifested resonates with Gibson-Graham's (2013) concept of 'community economies'.

In chapter 2, I referred to three metaphors used to describe social entrepreneurship: the social-American dream, the spectrum, and the zoo. The metaphor of the social-American dream, does not seem to resonate amongst the co-researchers. In fact, participants felt averse to a tendency to focus on individuals and more likely to encourage their work to be co-owned by a group of people. For example, in her transition towards entrepreneurship, Carla described that she experienced loneliness. I suggest instead that in their

appropriation of social entrepreneurship, youth-led CSOs are trying to reframe social entrepreneurship away from the idea of the hero-entrepreneur.

Imagining the idea of a spectrum (Nicholls, 2010) with charities on one end and private businesses on the other, this research finds that this spectrum is shrinking. The co-researchers struggle to sustain their work functioning as charities. This is because of their dependency on the state, and the limited ability to diversify their funding sources. Being able to offer products and services also becomes essential because of their frustration and disenchantment with the logic of the social sector. This challenge is particularly daunting for organisations coming from underprivileged backgrounds, as the "crumbs" of funding available to youth-led processes do not provide enough overhead to generate dignified and viable livelihoods for CSOs' leaders. As the spectrum of possibilities shrinks, youth-led CSOs find themselves pushed toward the business side of the spectrum. The zoo metaphor seeks to highlight the diversity within social entrepreneurship (Young & Lecy, 2014). Yet, the metaphor does not provide much indication as to how these organisations interact with their broader ecosystem– it is clear from this research that the behaviours, organisational models, and funding structure of CSOs are intertwined within a wider ecosystem that needs to be understood.

Finally, while the three metaphors provide a lens to understand how organisations are negotiating social outcomes with market orientation, they do not usefully distinguish between the transformative vision that these organisations might produce.

I have argued that youth-led CSOs in Medellin are engaging with their constituencies and partners to find new ways of providing options for people to see reality differently. While some CSOs were appropriating social entrepreneurship, this was not indicative of how such CSOs engaged with their partners and constituencies. In my analysis, the way individuals within CSOs perceive reality, understand their purpose and visions, and share it throughout their work, acts as a compass to orient their organisational culture. In short, "the source from which people act" (Scharmer, 2016) might determine a distinct contribution to social transformation in organisations with the same funding structure. This implies that, when studying CSOs, and in order to understand their contributions, it is useful to inquire into the worldviews and visions that

organisations are working towards, instead of categorising organisations based on their funding models.

The CSOs represented in *Plata, Cultura y Cambio* promoted 'community economies' in which people recognised their interdependence in the way they thought of and practiced their sustainability strategies. In line with the performing diverse economy literature surveyed in chapter 8, I believe this research contributes to the efforts of bringing visibility to more expansive understandings of the economy which include activities outside of market logic. The application of a cooperative inquiry matched with a grounded theory approach lead the research process to surface precisely the strengths, uniqueness, and added values of the small youth-led CSOs in this study. The reality that I encountered through this study was more complicated and messy, and yet more hopeful and expansive than what I could have anticipated. Instead of seeing youth-led CSOs as resource-poor, or simply victims of an oppressive system, this study emphasises that, through non-market resources and collaboration, co-researchers' CSOs created groups that are able to enrich their peers' lives with little monetary resources and contribute to the broader ecosystem with their own unique ways of being and doing. In fact, as Carla expressed by comparing money to fertilisers, the ability to operate through non-market logics might strengthen the resilience of CSOs.

The CSOs in this study were able to mix a range of resourcing mechanisms including managing public resources, volunteering, and exchanging value in non-monetary ways. This was coupled with a real sensibility towards making sure the exchanges that happened within their organisations were ethical. By merging and mixing different strategies of obtaining resources, CSOs crafted their very own type of organisational entities.

C.4 Linking access to funding and organisational culture

The majority of studies on organisational culture have been carried out in large private sector firms in the North. Research on small, value-driven organisations is limited. Meanwhile, if it is true that goals affect culture (Handy, 1999), it might be sensible to assume that small value-driven organisations would behave differently from profit-driven private sector companies and from larger CSOs. This study focused on the organisational culture of youth-led CSOs

in Medellin to inquire into how they are digesting the changes in funding availability.

I argued that the construction of the co-researchers' organisational cultures is crafted by mixing, merging, and appropriating ideas and practices coming from different traditions of and approaches to development. In seeking financial sustainability, youth-led CSOs in Medellin needed to engage with the official development discourses that promote competitiveness, innovation, the creation of employment and economic growth; however, some managed to do so selectively while maintaining their commitment to alternative visions of community development.

A recent report on civil society in the United Kingdom found that small organisations prioritise bringing people together as an end in itself (Frost, 2018). My findings enrich Frost's observation. The type of organisations that I worked with in Medellin engaged with reality based on a search for quality interactions valued intrinsically, beyond their instrumental significance. They appreciated *being* vs. *doing* and grounded their *doing* in their unique way of *being together*. While Frost suggests that small CSOs value connection for connection's sake, I describe the specific conceptions of development that give meaning to their approach. From my analysis, the youth-sector of Medellin is shown to be rooted in an epistemology that recognises the interconnectedness between people, and between people and nature. Based on this, CSOs articulate different services and methodologies.

Studying social organisations in the United States, Ospina and Foldy (2010) question the idea that leaders determine the culture of organisations. Discussing a post-heroic approach to leadership, they suggest that leadership is shaped by relations within and across organisations. This resonates with what I found in Medellin. Because of the scarce resources, many organisations chose to collaborate to *articularse* 'articulate themselves with others', in order to pull together resources and time (see discussion in chapter 7). I found that activities and events organised in collaborations *de parche* have multiple leaders, who often come from different organisations and backgrounds. In such collaboration, leadership was diffused and co-owned. Through the cooperative inquiry, it emerged that youth-led CSOs experience a tension around funding: if leadership is relational, it implies that the shared challenges around financial

sustainability might influence the culture of youth-led CSOs in the city (within and across organisations). For example, the co-researchers argued that applying for the same scarce resources might bring along rivalry and competition.

Echoing some of the literature on civil society, I also recognised that the relationship with obtaining funding might encourage CSOs to adopt donor practices and conceptions of development (Banks & Hulme, 2012). Nevertheless, I argued that the co-researchers did not necessarily have an ideological dependency on donors. Instead, the co-researchers had developed visions that are co-constructed, reinforced, and shared within the youth-led CSOs sector through collaborative events, and their work *de parche*. Collaborative public events also allowed them to articulate their values and worldviews, amplifying their voice. Such collaboration allowed youth-led CSOs to deepen their *power with* other organisations and mitigate the risks of becoming competitive with each other.

This being said, the accumulation of tense experiences around funding can consolidate within organisational cultures, which can start to associate funding with organisational tensions, and frustration. In chapter 6, analysing the organisational culture of *Casa Mia*, I also looked more closely at how the leaders of the organisation internalised the deep tension around the relationship with financial resources. Their inability to receive dignified financial retribution for their work meant that many volunteers reached the point of feeling frustrated and burnt out, and struggled to align their relationship with funding to their other ideas about social transformation.

Casa Mia was working closely with its community, but they were not able to sustain their experiments to carry out productive activities – they would end up giving away the products to serve the people they perceived had more significant needs. They were also very exposed to the armed conflict in the neighbourhood and had to *resist* and remain independent from different armed groups - this included not taking funds from drug trafficking, for example. They were therefore an organisation that was giving a lot to the community, but that did not have in place clear mechanisms to receive the financial resources they needed to run the organisation in a sustainable way. In the current post-conflict scenario, they were trying to change this dynamic, exploring how to slowly transform the relationship around money. They were doing so by creating

systems to encourage those who benefit from their services to give back to the organisation, either by paying for their services, or by investing time and energy into the collective work, and by experimenting with social entrepreneurship.

C. 5 Teal organisations?

In chapter 2, I shared how the management literature explores different types of next-generation organisations. I discussed the theories of Laloux (2014) and Scharmer (2016). Their theory-building process, however, is based on studying larger firms, mostly in a Northern context. In this section, I refer back to their theories and compare them to what I found examining youth-led organisations in Medellin.

Laloux classifies organisations based on different organisational models, which to him mirror humans' evolution. He describes as *orange* or *achievement* organisations, those whose model is based on rationality, with a focus on growth and material success. Orange organisations value innovation, accountability, and meritocracy, and provide incentives to achieve objectives. He describes *green*, or *pluralistic* organisations, as those who are highly sensitive toward people's feelings, seeking community, preferring consensus building, and emphasising empowering people. While in the orange mind-set, an organisation can be compared to a machine, the green thinks of an organisation as a family.

Finally, Laloux (2014) describes what he regards as an emerging, teal organisational model which focuses on: self-organisation, striving for wholeness (meaning that people can 'bring their whole self to work'), and a lesser concern with strategic planning while becoming conscious of organisations' evolutionary purpose. Laloux's concept of *teal* organisations resembles closely Scharmer's (2016) "ecosystem awareness" organisations, which are characterised by a level of attention that allows for co-creation and organising around what emerges by "speaking from what is moving through" (2017, online).

The characteristics of the co-researchers' CSOs have a mix of the characteristics of green and teal organisations. For example, some of the co-researchers shared the idea of organisations as families, focus on empowering people, value processes, and seeking consensus. They also encourage individual participation and help people to take their own initiative and leadership, which is more common in teal organisations. Most importantly, the co-researchers

invite their constituencies, volunteers, and partners to "bring their whole selves to work" and intentionally integrate consciousness-raising practices into their teamwork. For example, they focus on building inner-strength as a form of profound empowerment and tap into more than rationality to discover wisdom: these are all characteristics of teal organisations, as described by Laloux (2014). The recognition of the relationship between humans and nature is also part of Laloux's description of teal organisations.

However, while the organisations described by Laloux are all large, the co-researchers did not emphasise growth. I believe this is the case because they value intimacy over growth: they might also fear the bending and compromising that they associate with growth. Instead, they are more concerned with *living well together*, which does imply some money, but also a focus on personal growth and development.

Small organisations might have more opportunities to experiment with organisational models. In fact, while youth-led CSOs display features of green and teal organisations, I have argued that, in their search for funding, youth-led CSOs need to engage with the culture of the city, which reflects the characteristics of orange organisations (focus on accountability, results, and innovation). Since I returned to Medellin in 2018, I have noticed a growing offer of training opportunities (often publicly funded) to teach youth-led organisations how to "go orange". It will be interesting to observe how youth-led CSOs might be able to utilise the different market tools and adapt them to serve their processes. This experimenting and mixing could generate innovative resourcing models.

D. Limitations

> All PAR dissertations will have to struggle with the collaborative nature of the research and the individual nature of the dissertation. (Herr, 2005, p. 2)

Following my fieldwork, I dove into my data and allowed myself to have deeper reflections on my insights and experiences. Yet, I found it hard to balance my energy between writing and my desire to continue engaging with the cooperative inquiry group in a new active phase of the research. This study would have benefitted from an additional cycle of action and reflection. I believe

that much of the potential for action in this research has not yet been reached, and I hope to dedicate myself to creating more practical methodologies following the submission of this thesis (see Annex 5 for some of the recommendations to CSOs that I wish to expand in more concrete methodologies).

I would suggest that, for PhD programmes with an action research orientation, integrating a period to act on results and then reflect on them in the final manuscript would be very enriching. The nature and structure of the PhD programmes in the UK make this hard: ideally, an action research PhD would last at least five years.

In retrospect, I believe that carrying out a cooperative inquiry was an appropriate and valuable method for this research. The meetings provided abundant data on co-researchers' thought processes and experiences, and I used individual interviews to triangulate and deepen these findings. Yet, the limited sample size meant I could not capture the perspectives of all *comunas* in Medellin. In fact, as explained in chapter 3, I decided to open a call for interest to join the research and prioritised getting together a group of co-researchers interested in the project; my sample size is in no-way representative of all youth-led CSOs in Medellin.

The cooperative inquiry also provided limited insight into the quality of internal relationships within each organisation. I was not able to gather knowledge on the power dynamics within organisations, for example. To dive deeper into the organisational culture would have required spending more time collaborating with and observing internal dynamics in each organisation. Given that each organisation had a unique experience, it would have been valuable to carry out more in-depth organisational life-cycle analysis which might have highlighted how organisations at different stages of their growth relate differently to the topic of sustainability.

Finally, I am aware that, at times, my analysis comes across as depicting a homogenous group: the fact that there was a consensus in a conversation does not imply that organisations would behave in the same ways. In short, I cannot ensure coherence between how co-researchers spoke of their work, and how they chose to act in specific circumstances.

E. Further research

In the context of the youth-led organisations I researched with, funding became necessary when the leaders of the CSOs felt the need to sustain their livelihood. While those who took on leadership roles in youth-led processes might have done so because of passion, they also acquired many skills and aptitudes that would make them particularly employable. As the leaders of youth-led organisations grow older, they are faced with the decision of how to spend their energy. Will they be nourishing their own organisation, or will they start working with more established organisations (which may hold different worldviews and cultures)? While I did not carefully look at this question in this research, I find that this would be valuable future research to pursue: What happens when young civil-society leaders start working in different institutions, searching for better income? How does their worldview change? Do they "get co-opted"? Do they bring along their worldviews and, if so, how do those influence the new organisation? How do the needs of youth leaders change as they grow older and negotiate organisational priorities and values?

In this study, I have not looked at the youth-led "uncivil society" of Medellin. CSOs are working to create alternative lifestyles to that of the non-state armed groups, the so-called *combos*. Yet, in the most underserved areas of the city, it is common for young people to join criminal groups. Given the increased investments in security in the city, engaging in criminal activities is becoming harder. Doyle (2016) argues that "violent non-state groups have become embedded as part and product of their environment, acting as coherent, logical and functional players, linked to the structural inequalities and institutional fragility of the larger society" (p. 1). Doyle argues that gangs, or to use the term she uses, non-state groups, are less likely to focus on homicide, and have instead "adopted practices such as the threat of violence and forced urban displacement" (ibid). It would be worthwhile to study the culture of non-state groups and how they interact with the funding available to civil society actors. Such research would be valuable given that the city continues to carry a deeply ingrained structure of violence. Based on informal conversation, non-state

groups do influence the work of local CSOs. There is more need to inquire into the relationship between 'civil' and 'uncivil' society.[23]

Finally, youth-led CSOs are expected to be decimated by the *Ley Tributaria*, the new tax law, which was designed in theory to mitigate corruption and tax evasion (Arenas, 2018). The law, passed in 2016 but being implemented from 2018, demands much more tedious reporting requirements to CSOs registered as non-profits. Because of the more complex requirements, and the higher direct and indirect costs of managing a registered not-for-profit entity, the reform is expected to have a profound impact on small organisations, which have less capacity to comply. CSOs will continue evolving as Colombia hiccups through a post-conflict era. It will be important to study how youth-led CSOs will cope with this legal challenge. For example, to adapt, small organisations might decide to come together and strengthen their administrative capacity. In such a delicate moment of change for civil society, an exchange of knowledge and experiences around financial sustainability between young CSO leaders across Colombia could make for a valuable action research process.

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[23] See Brown (2016) for a discussion on uncivil society in post-conflict countries.

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Annex

Annex 1: Interview Participants Table

N.	Interview Participant	Institution/ representation	Discussed topics	Sector	Place of interview
1.	Anonymous	Colombia Joven	Youth policy in Colombia	Public (national Government)	Bogota
2.	Anonymous	IDIPRON – Institute for the protection of Children and Youth	Youth-led organisations and their challenges in Bogota	Public (city-level government)	Bogota
3.	Anonymous	CCONG – umbrella organisation of civil society organisations	Civil society in Colombia	Civil Society	Bogota
4.	Anonymous	100enundia	Financing youth-led start-ups	Civil society (youth-led)	Bogota
5.	Anonymous	Young social entrepreneur	Being a social entrepreneur	Civil society (youth-led social enterprise)	Bogota
6.	Anonymous	Young CSO leader	Youth-led civil society	Civil society (youth-led)	Bogota
7.	Anonymous	Youth Secretariat	Youth-led organisations and their relationship with the local government	Public (city-level government)	Medellin, Antioquia
8.	Anonymous	Youth Secretariat	The participatory budget and youth-led organisations	Public (city-level government)	Medellin, Antioquia
9.	Anonymous	Casa Museo de la Memoria	The role of memory in Medellin	Public (city-level government)	Medellin, Antioquia
10.	Anonymous	Casa Museo de la Memoria	The history of Medellin	Public (city-level government)	Medellin, Antioquia
11.	Anonymous	Casa Museo de la Memoria	The history of civil society funding in Medellin	Public (city-level government)	Medellin, Antioquia
12.	Anonymous	Exploratorio (Parque Explora)	The role of collaboration amongst Civil Society	Public	Medellin, Antioquia
13.	Anonymous	Exploratorio (Parque Explora)	The transformation of Medellin	Public	Medellin, Antioquia
14.	Anonymous	Metro Medellin	The role of public transport in Medellin's transformation	Public	Medellin, Antioquia

15.	Anonymous	RutaN	Innovation in Medellin	Public	Medellin, Antioquia
16.	Anonymous	RutaN	Innovation and youth-led civil society	Public	Medellin, Antioquia
17.	Anonymous	ACI Medellin	*Managing international cooperation in Medellin*	Public	Medellin, Antioquia
18.	Anonymous	SiembraViva	Social entrepreneurship in Medellin	Civil society (social enterprise)	Medellin, Antioquia
19.	Anonymous	Lawyer	The legal status of civil society organisations	Private sector	Medellin, Antioquia
20.	Anonymous	AgroArte	Memory, territory, and resistance	Civil society (youth-led)	Medellin, Antioquia
21.	Anonymous	Lluvia De Orion	Sustaining social entrepreneurship	Civil society (youth-led social enterprise)	Medellin, Antioquia
22.	Anonymous	Platohedro	*Buen Vivir*, financing civil society organisations	Civil society (youth-led)	Medellin, Antioquia
23.	Anonymous	Casa 3 Patios	The orange economy in Medellin	Civil society	Medellin, Antioquia
24.	Anonymous	*Laboratorio del espiritu*	*Buen vivir*, and the work of *Laboratorio del Espiritu*	Civil society	El Retiro, Antioquia
25.	Anonymous	*Consciencia*	The *Reforma Tributaria (tributary reform)*	Civil society	Medellin, Antioquia
26.	Anonymous	*Red huerteros*	Social movements	Civil Society	Medellin, Antioquia
27.	Anonymous	Herramientas del Buen Vivir	The practice of *Buen Vivir*	Civil Society	Mexico
28.	Anonymous	Hora 25	Orange Economy and social theatre	Civil Society	Medellin, Antioquia
29.	Anonymous	Que Naranja	The orange economy and sustaining civil society organisations	Civil Society	Medellin, Antioquia
30.	Anonymous	Ex-social leader	The history of civil society in Medellin	Academia	Medellin, Antioquia
31.	Anonymous	Ex-social leader	Youth-led organisations	Academia	Medellin, Antioquia
32.	Anonymous	Sociology professor	Youth-led organisations and their work	Academia	Medellin, Antioquia
33.	Anonymous	Confiar	Building trust in Medellin	Private sector	Medellin, Antioquia

34.	Dorian Jimenez	Corporación Casa Mia (leader)	The history of Casa Mia	Civil society (youth-led)	Medellin, Antioquia
35.	Dorian Jimenez and Ximena Quintero	Corporación Casa Mia (leaders)	The work of Casa Mia	Civil society (youth-led)	Medellin, Antioquia
36.	Dorian Jimenez and Ximena Quintero	Corporación Casa Mia (leaders)	Buen Vivir at Casa Mia (part 1)	Civil society (youth-led)	Medellin, Antioquia
37.	Dorian Jimenez and Ximena Quintero	Corporación Casa Mia (leaders)	Buen Vivir at Casa Mia (part 2)	Civil society (youth-led)	Medellin, Antioquia
38.	Ximena Quintero	Corporación Casa Mia (leader)	Sustaining civil society organisations	Civil society (youth-led)	Medellin, Antioquia
39.	Anonymous	Corporación Casa Mia (founder)	The history of Casa Mia	Civil society (youth-led)	Medellin, Antioquia
40.	Anonymous	Corporación Casa Mia (volunteer/staff)	Working at Casa Mia	Civil society (youth-led)	Medellin, Antioquia
41.	Anonymous	Corporación Casa Mia (volunteer)	Working at Casa Mia	Civil society (youth-led)	Medellin, Antioquia
42.	Anonymous	Corporación Casa Mia (ex-leader)	Working at Casa Mia and leadership challenges	Civil society (youth-led)	Medellin, Antioquia
43.	Stiven Usme	Movimiento Tierra en Resistencia (MTR)	The organisational culture of the MTR	Civil society (youth-led)	Medellin, Antioquia
44.	Stiven Usme	Movimiento Tierra en Resistencia (MTR)	Civil society and social entrepreneurship in Medellin	Civil society (youth-led)	Medellin, Antioquia
45.	Claudia Gonzalez	Art-c-8	The organisational culture of Art-c-8	Civil society (youth-led)	Medellin, Antioquia
46.	Carla Bajonero	Deditos Verdes	The organisational culture of Deditos Verdes	Civil society (youth-led)	Medellin, Antioquia
47.	Carla Bajonero	Deditos Verdes	The experience with Plata, Cultura y Cambio	Civil society (youth-led)	Medellin, Antioquia
48.	Dorian Jimenez and Ximena Quintero	Corporación Casa Mia	The organisational culture of Casa Mia	Civil society (youth-led)	Medellin, Antioquia
49.	Camilo Velez	Los Chicos del Siglo XX	The organisational culture of Los Chicos del Siglo XX	Civil society (youth-led)	Medellin, Antioquia

50.	Anonymous	World Tech Maker (leader)	The organisational culture of World Tech Maker	Civil society (youth-led)	Medellin, Antioquia
51.	Jorge Jepez	World Tech Maker	The work of World Tech Maker /Social entrepreneurship	Civil society (youth-led)	Medellin, Antioquia
52.	Jorge Jepez	World Tech Maker	The experience with Plata, Cultura y Cambio	Civil society (youth-led)	Medellin, Antioquia
53.	Liliana Hortensia	Voces y Palabras	Sustaining civil society organisations	Civil society (youth-led)	Medellin, Antioquia
54.	Liliana Hortensia	Voces y Palabras	Buen Vivir in the Encuentro de voces (Montjly storytelling meeting in the park)	Civil society (youth-led)	Medellin, Antioquia
55.	Paola Oquendo	Youth Secretariat	The work of the *enlaces territoriales* (territory link)	Public	Medellin, Antioquia
56.	Paola Oquendo	Youth Secretariat	The relationship with youth-led organisations in Comuna 5 and 6	Public	Medellin, Antioquia
57.	Anonymous	Corporación Una Vida Tranquilla	The relationship with the local government	Civil society (youth-led)	Medellin, Antioquia
58.	Joseph Valencia Vera	Casa Mariposas	Social entrepreneurship practices	Civil society (youth-led)	Medellin, Antioquia
59.	*Leidy Cruz*	Antares Dance	The organisational culture of Antares Dance	Civil society (youth-led)	Medellin, Antioquia

Annex 2: Cooperative inquiry meetings topics and activities

Meeting Date	Topic	Main research activities
April 2, 2016	Introduction to inquiry; Organisational History	Introduction Activities; Agreement definition; Timetable of organisational history.
April 16, 2016	The ecosystem of civil society in Medellin	Mapping Medellin; Idea mapping – exploring important concept in Medellin's youth space.
May 21, 2016	Collaboration Vs. Competition	Forum theatre on collaboration within CSOs; Organisational culture through photo analysis.
June 18, 2016	Power in organisations	Agreeing on emerging themes of research; Theatre exercise on power; painting exercise.
September 17, 2016	*Presupuesto participativo* and social entrepreneurship	Catch up discussion: the challenges in our organisation; Collective data Analysis; Rich picture drawing on *presupuesto participativo* and social entrepreneurship.
October 15, 2016	Money and Organisational Culture	Planning of event; painting debrief; Writing open letter; Iceberg of culture.
November 19, 2016	Public presentation: Treasure Hunt	Sharing research results through interactive treasure hunt.
November 25th and 26th 2016	The future of CSOs	Two-day Foresight Workshop.

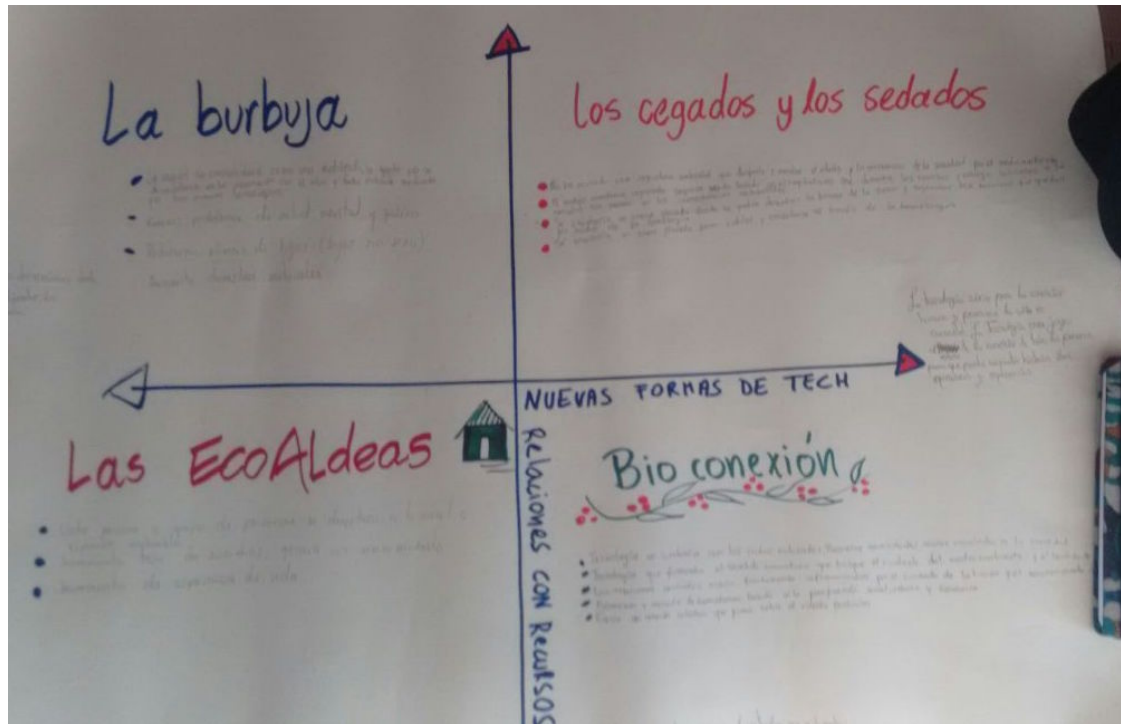## *Annex 3: Foresight workshop - Scenarios*

First set of scenarios

Figure 17: Flipchart with the first set of scenarios.

The first set of scenarios interlinked the axes of 'new forms of technology' with a 'changing relationship with natural resources'. The four scenarios that emerged were named:

- The bubble
- The cut out and the sedated
- The eco villages
- Bio-connection

The bubble
'The Bubble' emerges out of the following two axes:
- Technology creates new dimensions for individuals to realise wellbeing – mostly through digital realities. Humans are more disconnected from their bodies.
- People in Medellin continue with high consumption, felling a sense of disconnection from nature.

Scenario description:
It is 2035, and Medellin has consolidated itself as a dynamic metropolis of 5 million people. Streets are full of cars, yet they are quieter. In response to high level of pollution in the city – which reached its pick in the last decade – cars have become more environmentally friendly and electric cars are common. There is little community interaction between people in public spaces and it is rare to see children playing in the street (also because people have fewer children).

Interactions between people are mediated more and more by technology. Entertainment has changed. People go to private studios to play with advanced new technology (commercial centres are the main meeting places). In fact, virtual reality reaches deeply into people's emotion and impacts their sense of self: young people have funky avatars and spend a large portion of their time in virtual reality sets. More resources are invested in mental health awareness, which has become a growing challenge. RutaN offers trainings on gaming technologies, which offer good employment opportunities. CSOs are creating alternative education through gaming.

The cut out and the sedated
'The cut out and the sedated' emerges out of the axes:
▪ People in Medellin continue with high consumption, feeling a sense of disconnection from nature.
▪ Technology gears towards serving human connection and promotes community living. Technology is used to 'gamify' reality and to connect people to exchange stories, ideas, opinions, and experiences.

Scenario description:
In 2035, Medellin has expanded, and all the surrounding hills are covered by tall buildings. In response to an environmental crisis, new technology has been developed to recycle resources and limit environmental damage. The economic model is still based on capitalism. CSOs as we know them have been substituted by enterprises which seeks business models to improve human's comfort. A digital consulting firm, contracted by the state, is creating virtual emotional intelligence trainings for young people.

Medellin attracts lots of international attention. A new virtual hub to bring citizens together in online entrainment is being studied by Chinese, Latin American and North-American researchers.

A live channel shows news from the Satellite G, a small space community which is experimenting with self-sustainable living. Two urban agriculture experts from Medellin have relocated there.

The eco villages
The eco-villages scenario emerged out of the following two axes:
▪ People find fulfilment in their connection with nature. People are more sensible towards the environment. Sustainable consumption and renewable energy are the norm.
▪ Technology creates new dimensions for individuals to realise wellbeing – mostly through digital realities. People are more disconnected from their bodies.

Scenario description:
In 2035, Medellin is a hub for the provision of international services. The city has expanded, and some green corridors make connecting to nature possible, even within the metropolis. Within the 2016 boundaries of the city live wealthier people (because rents are high). Luckily, the air is less polluted than 2016 thanks to new legislation for clean air. Because of the legislation, in 2023 much of the city's industrial base relocated to the east of Antioquia. Many working-class people have been displaced to this cheaper part of the metropolis.

People have fewer face-to-face meetings. They engage with a small circle of family and friends. Instead, people connect through digital media and the term community mostly refers to 'digital community': they meet online with like-minded people. This means, however, that they are less likely to engage with people who might see, feel and experience completely different lifestyles.

The ultra-rich live in the countryside outside the valley. They buy organic products and travel to explore wild nature around the world. Some groups of young people are moving to the countryside and setting up self-sustaining communities.

Bio-connection:
The Bio-connection scenario emerged out of the following two axes:
- People find fulfilment in their connection with nature. People are more sensible towards the environment. More sustainable consumption and renewable energy are the norm;
- Technology is geared towards serving human connection and promotes community living. Technology is used to 'gamify' reality and to connect people to exchange stories, ideas, opinions, and experiences.

Scenario description:
In 2035, Medellin has a museum of transportation that features old cars. The local government engages in hard-hitting campaigns to encourage people to stop using electric cars while it continues to invest extensively in public transportation. The city has many bike lanes, and by 2040 *Metro Medellin* plans to launch an extensive system of escalators to encourage people the walk through the city's green corridors. Various young entrepreneurs are pitching to *Metro Medellin* multisensorial experiences to accompany the routes. Self-driving electric scooters are popular.

Architects exploit every opportunity to create spaces for urban gardens and community living. Medellin is considered an example internationally for its urban design, which takes into consideration the conservation of the ecosystem. International researchers are eager to study the way the city is using technology to live in sync with the natural cycles. In spacious digital meeting rooms, people and institutions engage in an active exchange of best practices and ideas. Medellin builds strong ties with the rest of Latin America.

People work a maximum of 30 hours a week and education encourages young people to invest time in their communities. Technology supports the social sector which in the city has specialised on creating bonds with nature as a strategy to transforming people's community relationships. Through nature-immersions, educational programmes seek to bring people closer to themselves and the world around them. Some young people are remodelling old busses as virtual cafes.

There is still inequality in Medellin, but lower income people feel connected to their communities and feel a sense of harmony with their lives; so do many more affluent people.

Second set of scenarios

Figure 18: Flipchart with the second set of scenarios.

This second sets of scenarios triangulates new forms of government with economic development trends. The four scenarios that emerged were called:
- Control Vs. Resistance
- Democracy from below
- Radical Neoliberalism
- Disguised Manipulation

Control Vs. Resistance
The 'Control vs. Resistance' scenario emerged out of the following two axes:
- Expansion of local and alternative economic systems (e.g. local currencies, time banks, etc.) - Big institutions (private sector-public alliances) manage services that are hard to access locally.
- Government is smaller and takes care of legislations. Private sector manages executive branches of the government. People pay low taxes; private sector companies establish a social contract with citizens.

Scenario description:
In 2035, few CSOs promote more accountability from the state, and argue for a livelier democracy. In general, people feel very disconnected from the local government, which is not trusted.

Private sector logics regulate power sharing in the city. The logics is still one of capital accumulation; however, companies are more sensitive to environmental issues and to creating a positive relationship with their employees. Medellin is a financial centre, and it specialised in developing alternative currencies, such as the *Cryptocoin*.

Meanwhile, small businesses represent important platforms for people to express their creativity and practice their community engagement. People value local production. However, local organic produce is expensive and only accessible to people working in larger private sector companies or small, 'trendy' companies.

Inequality in the city has increased. People look for more meaning in their life through religious and spiritual practices and connection with nature and with the territory. Few young people step out of society, living in nature and utilising technology to connect with like-minded people.

Democracy from below

The 'Democracy from below' scenario emerged out of the following two axes:

- Expansion of local and alternative economic systems (e.g. local currencies, time banks, etc.) - Big institutions (private sector-public alliances) manage services that are hard to access locally.
- Government utilises technology to reach out to people - democracy deepens through direct participation. Government provides access to political literacy through technological programmes.

Scenario description:

In 2035, new ideas of wellbeing have emerged. People value creativity and spirituality, which are promoted by both the public and the private sector.

The local economy in Medellin is dynamic and the exchange of products and services is done so to strengthen social ties; successful small businesses are those that are the most personable, and able to connect with their networks and exchange ideas and services with one another. The flourishing of the local economy has enabled people to be more aware of the ideas emerging in their communities.

A number of different interest groups have created their own currency. For example, thanks to a partnership with a network of local coders, a women network called 'la brujas' has developed its own local currency that is widely exchange between women in the North-east of Medellin.

Technology is coming up with new ways for people to enlarge their empathy with one another: for example, some Medellin practitioners have created an internationally recognised methodology to facilitate forgiveness. More public parks pop up and groups of young people are working to transform 'commercial centres' in multi-emotional playgrounds.

Technology makes monitoring corporations more practical, and organised citizens act as watchdogs to the private sector and the state (they are sponsored by a mix of private and public funding). There are still big differences between rich and poor, yet stronger social ties in Medellin make sure that people feel proud of their community.

Radical Neoliberalism

The 'Radical Neoliberalism' scenario emerged out of the following two axes:

- Government is smaller and takes care of legislations. Private sector manages executive branches of the government. People pay low taxes; private sector companies have more of a social contract with citizens
- Large socially conscious companies manage the economy - wealth in the hands of few.

Scenario description:
The environmental crisis of the 2020s has meant that in Medellin there is more awareness on pollution and environmental degradation. In 2035, private companies and the state create incentives for people to purchase new electric cars. Three large companies are managing all waste; they generate large profits from recycling and have considerably improved the environmental sustainability of the city.

The Colombian economy has grown, and large international companies hire many people around the city of Medellin. Yet, unemployment is high - in a more technologically driven economy many traditional jobs are no longer needed. What in 2016 was the Secretariat of Youth, in 2035 is a large youth employment agency. The private sector makes significant investments in the community, mostly by promoting education for employment.

Government agencies subcontract their work to specialised companies that implement public projects. Seeking to be subcontracted by these companies, small organisations propose innovative educational methods to develop skills for the changing job market.

People live less connected to nature, and more through technologically facilitated spaces. There is extensive conversation about cyber-health and depression. The use of antidepressants has increased drastically in the city. Cyber-health specialist and psychiatrists are highly requested.

A large social movement has emerged to resist the system. It managed to collect resources to build a self-sustainable community outside of the metropolis of Medellin.

Disguised Manipulation
The 'Disguised Manipulation' scenario emerged out of the following two axes:
- Large socially conscious companies manage the economy - wealth is in the hands of few.
- Government utilises technology to reach out to people - democracy deepens through direct participation. Government provides access to political literacy through technological programmes.

Scenario description:
In 2035. Medellin is covered of a CCTV system allowing for mass surveillance; violence is no longer a major issue in Medellin. Life in Medellin is mostly comfortable, and people don't have a culture of confrontation with the state. According to the survey, 55% of people trust the state, that is engages them in more direct consultations. The state and the private sector both have a strong control over information and adapt their work to address citizen's needs.

Cyber privacy is a big topic of discussion. Education is geared towards preparing young people towards the job market. It also encourages political participation as a responsibility and trains young people to cyber political participation.

The state works very closely to the private sector and active citizens try to be watch dogs. CSOs bring people together around special interests. Small groups of people are experimenting with out of the grid living.

Annex 4: Research agreement

Below is a translation of the research agreement signed during the second meeting of the cooperative inquiry:

Participating in Plata, Cultura, y Cambio: Co-researchers' agreement

The organisation _____ (Full name of your organisation)
appoints_____ and _____
(name of two researchers)
as co-researchers in:

Plata, Cultura, y Cambio: A participatory research

As agreed during our first research meeting held on April 2nd, 2016, the participants are committed to:

1.   Participation and punctuality

1.1.   Be available and participate in all the research meeting that will be held on the following dates:
1. April 16, 2016
2. May 21, 2016
3. June 18, 2016
4. September 17, 2016
5. October 15, 2016
6. November 19, 2016
7. December 2 y 3, 2016

1.2.   Arrive on time or communicate with the team in advance if unable to arrive on time;

1.3.   Be present and limit being on your phone.

2.   Work principles:
   o Sign up to help coordinate lunch arrangements during at least one meeting;
   o Promote a culture of sharing with the group;
   o Be opened with emotions. If there is a hard moment, share it, and if there is low energy propose an active break;
   o Be concise in our group discussions. We compromise to saying 'ok, now we really went on a tangent'.

Compromise to sharing the results of the research
- We can all write on the research and utilise the content of the research to support our own organisation;
- We are committed to socializing the results of the research with our networks.

3.   **Other proposals:**

Name of the organisation represented:

Signature of primary co-researcher:

Name:

Role in the organisation:

Signature:

Signature of another representative:

Name:
Role in the organisation:

Signature:

Annex 5: Recommendations

1. Recommendations to youth-led CSOs

a. Explore your personal and collective ideas around money:
The quality of the relationship with money effects the sustainability of an organisation. Negative associations with money can become part of the DNA of an organisation. Creating awareness and scrutinising assumptions around money could be the first step towards transforming such relationships. Some questions to stimulate reflection that could be answered along with your team might include:

- What is the first childhood memory you can recall having around money?
    - Pay attention to your thoughts around money for a whole week and take down some notes.
    - How often did you think of money? In which contexts?
    - What were your feelings associated with money this week?
- Individually, come up with a list of five true statements around money that you think are taken for granted in your organisation (e.g., 'We need money to pay rent', or 'money sucks'). Compare them with your colleagues. Can you come up with a list of at least three true statements together? What do they say about your organisation's relationship to money? What do you notice about these statements?

b. Recognise the importance of management, stay focused on the 'spirit' of the organisation.

The philosopher Gurdjieff compares humans to "that organisation for conveying a passenger, which consists of a carriage, a horse, and a coachman" (cited in Kulczyk, 2014). In the analogy the horse represents our emotions, which pull us in different directions. The coachman represents the mind, which tries to manage the emotions. The carriage itself is the body, and finally the passenger that is trying to get somewhere in the metaphor represents the I, the consciousness. Gurdjieff believed that the 'I', the soul of individuals, that is trying to get somewhere in most people is asleep.

Applying this metaphor to CSOs, let's imagine the horses represent the CSO's activities and projects, the coachman represents the organisation's management functions. The carriage represents the infrastructures of the CSOs, such as its office, material resources, website, etc. The horses could just wildly 'follow the money'. Only if the carriage is inhabited by a team, a community, which is reflecting on their journey, looking at the horizon, and choosing the route there can be organisational clarity and alignment. In practice, this might look like being in tune with the community needs as well as the CSO's path and utilising funded projects to contribute towards the organisation's processes. The management serves the soul of the organisation, and not vice versa.

Yet, the management is also needed, and sometimes youth-led organisations have difficulties making sure there is a coachman: Don't disregard management. Reflect on this metaphor and discuss with your team:

- Where are each of your horses taking you?
- The coachman represents the management functions of the organisation. Is there someone managing the coach? Who is doing it? How are management functions divided?
- What is the status of your carriage?
- Who is taking decisions on your directions?

C. Be realistic about how many people can be supported financially by the organisation

Working with a big team of committed people is exciting. However, if you are trying to make your work sustainable, you need to be realistic about how many people will be able to earn a livelihood through your collective work. To do so, you might find it helpful to work with some people who have another livelihood and are interested in 'resisting in their free time' and have explicit conversations about everybody's time availability and level of commitment. You might find it useful to bring awareness on everybody's life plan so that you can compensate for the lack of financial retribution with mentorship, access to opportunities (such as training), and companionship. Building an active community of prepared people will also mean you will have a larger capacity when more funding becomes available and you need to contract more people.

D. Stay process oriented - Keep doing things 'de parche'

Throughout the inquiry, the co-researchers recognised that, at times, they found their work 'lonely'. Despite working closely with communities and teams, the responsibility of generating funding might fall on the shoulders of a few people. It is probably because of this desire to share the load of their work that the cooperative inquiry was utilised to vent experiences, perceptions, histories, troubles, and visions.

Consider getting together with other organisational leaders regularly, in simple scenarios, where you can speak openly. Money comes and goes. You don't want to be utterly dependent on it or invest all your energy towards obtaining financial resources. Keep your attention to your processes, take care of your mental health – collaborating with others in things that don't involve money at all can be very therapeutic. Trust that doing things *de parche* will strengthen your resilience over time. Continue searching for new ways to add value to your community and partners.

2. A reflection for donors and policymakers: The risk of extinction

An implication of the interaction between funding and culture that I'd like to stress is a risk. It is the risk of exhaustion, or even disappearance, of the small and value-driven organisations that took part in this research. If over time the youth-led CSOs will remain unable to generate funding, if they stop being able to receive even the crumbs of the financing that generally reach the more prominent organisations, over time the smaller CSOs might die off. This is a fear that featured in the foresight scenarios references in chapter 5.

To consider this possibility observe the last part of my question: what are the contributions of these CSOs? What is the value in that contribution? These are questions that the different social actors in Medellin should reflect on.

This study contributes to a deeper understanding of how the type of organisations that featured in *Plata, Cultura, y Cambio* are shaping the social field of the city. I discussed in chapter 4 that the evolution of CSOs in Medellin was connected to social exclusion that characterised the city, particularly in the years the 1980s and 1990s. CSOs generated a value that was not coming from the state, that was not coming from the private sector, and that needed to be

citizen-led. Most importantly, these organisations have been colouring the community with an amount of beauty, energy, and life that has brought communities together. The feeling that is generated when people are coming together to explore themselves, to process their experiences, and to learn how to be together is not only instrumental to development; it is intrinsically part of a good life.

Funding is increasingly coming along with worldviews that disregards the contribution these organisations are making while emphasizing more 'technical aspects' of development. The risk is that CSOs will become more homogenous, less able to be in touch and respond to the needs they perceive in their communities.

How do we promote an ecosystem where different organisations can have various functions - where diversity is valued and understood? We can take deliberate decisions to manage the ecosystem of CSOs so to prevent different organisations to be suffocated by others. What mechanisms can promote collaboration instead of competition between these different groups?