Al otro lado de la valla:
Local differences in security practices in three lower
middle class neighbourhoods of Medellín, Colombia.

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Abstract

The objective of this thesis is to understand the search for security of local actors in lower middle class neighbourhoods in Medellín, Colombia. Within these neighbourhoods a complex mix of formal and informal, legal and illegal local actors demand and supply security. Security practices, the ways local actors search for security, are analysed using a framework of urban security assemblages. Within this framework, there is a focus on how local actors connect different component parts (e.g. actors and security practices) into a "larger whole" in response to a security threat or issue. Although a lot is already written on security provision by intermingling actors, scholars within this field, which I call 'hybrid governance', mostly focus on the most marginalised parts of cities or regions, while this thesis shows how different actors and practices are assembled in lower middle class neighbourhoods, the type of neighbourhood in which the largest share of people in Medellín and other cities in Colombia live. The perspective of local actors in studies within the field of hybrid governance is also underexposed. These gaps are tackled through a focus on local actors in three bordering lower middle class neighbourhoods. Data was collected through forty interviews with, among others, residents, social leaders, and experts from academia and the local government. By identifying four types of urban security assemblages, it was found that local actors use a large variety of security practices in response to security threats or issues. There are differences found between neighbourhoods, but also between individuals in the neighbourhoods. Most residents search for formal security, but those who have connections with informal or illegal actors can also turn to those actors for security. Residents also search security beyond the state by (collectively) making use of the services of private security actors. Paradoxically, local criminal actors at times search for security from the state through informal arrangements with these same state-actors.

Resumen

El objetivo de esta tesis es comprender la búsqueda de seguridad de los actores locales en los barrios de clase media baja en Medellín, Colombia. Dentro de estos barrios, una compleja mezcla de actores locales formales e informales, legales e ilegales exigen y brindan seguridad. Las prácticas de seguridad, la forma en que los actores locales buscan la seguridad, se analizan utilizando un marco de ensambles de seguridad urbana. Dentro de este marco, se enfoca en cómo los actores locales conectan diferentes componentes (por ejemplo, actores y prácticas de seguridad) en un "todo más amplio" en respuesta a una amenaza o problema de seguridad. Aunque ya se ha escrito mucho sobre la provisión de seguridad entremezclando actores, los académicos dentro de este campo, que llamo 'gobernanza híbrida', se enfocan principalmente en las partes más marginadas de ciudades o regiones, mientras esta tesis muestra cómo se ensamblan los diferentes actores y prácticas. barrios de clase media baja, el tipo de barrio en el que vive la mayor parte de personas en Medellín y otras ciudades de Colombia. La perspectiva de los actores locales en los estudios dentro del campo de la gobernanza híbrida también está subexpuesta. Estas brechas se abordan a través de un enfoque en los actores locales en tres barrios limítrofes de la clase media baja. Los datos fueron recolectados a través de cuarenta entrevistas con, entre otros, residentes, líderes sociales y expertos de la academia y el gobierno local. Al identificar cuatro tipos de conjuntos de seguridad urbana, se descubrió que los actores locales usan una gran variedad de prácticas de seguridad en respuesta a amenazas o problemas de seguridad. Existen diferencias entre los barrios, pero también entre las personas en los barrios. La mayoría de los residentes busca seguridad formal, pero aquellos que tienen conexiones con actores informales o ilegales también pueden recurrir a esos actores para la seguridad. Los residentes también buscan seguridad más allá del estado (colectivamente) haciendo uso de los servicios de los actores de seguridad privada. Paradójicamente, los actores delictivos locales a veces buscan la seguridad del estado a través de acuerdos informales con estos mismos actores estatales.

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Introduction

My first night living in *Parques de Cataluña*, a gated community in Cataluña, a neighbourhood in the central-eastern part of Medellín, Colombia I did not sleep because of the noise of a *rumba,* a big party, on the other side of the fence.[1] Even though several of my neighbours called the police, nothing happened; the rumba went on and on until eight in the morning. When I asked the next morning why the police hadn't come, I was told that those of the local gang in Barrio Pablo Escobar, the neighbourhood on the other side of the fence, had paid the police not to interfere with their party. This process of a very loud party, residents calling the police, and the party continuing nevertheless would repeat itself roughly once every three weeks. Despite the sleepless nights, it fascinated me. The fence that surrounded our *urbanización* was initially built twelve years earlier to protect the residents of Parques de Cataluña from criminal gangs from other neighbourhoods. But apparently, not all impact of gangs could be stopped by building fences and hiring private security to guard the entrances of the urbanización twenty-four hours a day (Alcaldia de Medellín, 2013).

Although geographically only meters apart, residents indicated that the two neighbourhoods are in some aspects like different worlds.[2] Bordering these two neighbourhoods is La Milagrosa, yet a different neighbourhood.[3] The three neighbourhoods are inhabited by a mix of people that on average are neither very poor, nor rich and socio-economically, are representative for the majority of Medellín's population.[4] Residents in these three areas all face, to different extents, the security issues that arise from the presence of armed criminal actors in their neighbourhoods. As illustrated above, even in a gated community, the reality outside the gates cannot be escaped completely.

Since early 1990s, a lot had changed in Medellín in relation to security. Overall, the homicide rate decreased immensely in a continuing trend downwards since 1992, the year that Medellín had been called the most violent city in the world, with almost 400 homicides per every 100.000 citizens.[5] In the same period, although economic inequality increased in the city, the number

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[1] The name of this thesis was derived from that fence
[2] Author's interview with Carolina, Resident and Social Leader in Cataluña, 26-04-2018.
[3] See Appendix 1 for a overview photo.
[4] sixty-three per cent of Medellín's population classifies as socio-economical lower middle class according to the municipality (Alcaldia de Medellín, 2013)
[5] Medellín has had a violent past, but there has been a downward trend in homicides since the early 1990s. Three especially violent periods can be identified. Between the early 1990s, the city did see several periods of higher homicide rates. In the early 2000s and between 2008 and 2011 homicide rates went up

of people living in poverty decreased.[6] What has not changed, is that criminal organisations are still impacting daily lives of citizens, for example through extortion[7], and a monopoly on basic goods like eggs and milk (Abello Colak, 2015, p. 10). The informal economy's share, intertwined with the illegal economy is decreasing, but still estimated to be forty-three per cent (Cubillos-Murcia, 2018). Present-day Medellín is a city of contrasts, welcoming tourists and businesses on the one hand, who are attracted by its presentation as a modern cosmopolitan city, while on the other hand being home to about 350 criminal gangs that impact daily live in large parts of the city[8] (Abello Colak, 2015, p. 10).

A wide range of authors have researched cases like that of Medellín, in which the state is not the only actor able to perform governance tasks (e.g. Bagayoko, Hutchful, & Luckham, 2016; Boege, Brown, & Clements, 2009; Hagmann & Peclard, 2010; Luckham & Kirk, 2013). Although different terms exist, I use the term 'hybrid governance' as an overarching term to describe those cases in which the state is not the only governance actor. This term enables me to look at the hybridity of the governance system by going past dichotomies like state/non-state, legal/illegal, and formal/informal. Hybrid governance theorists point out that limited knowledge exists about the role of citizens. In relation to hybrid security governance, the coping strategies and agency available to local people are under-researched (Bagayoko, Hutchful and Luckham, 2016, p. 16). Luckham and Kirk emphasize that 'security in hybrid political orders remains such an acutely contested area that firm empirical conclusions are rare (2013, p. 20). There still is little knowledge about how territorial armed groups affect governance in the areas they control (Arias, 2017, p. 19). Empirically, in a literature review on violence in Medellín, Dávila (2016) identified the following trends: most research done on this subject is quantitative, and few studies were identified that provided empirical data (exceptions are e.g. Abello-Colak & Guarneros-Meza, 2014; Arias, 2017).

Furthermore, researchers within the hybrid governance field who do look at qualitative empirical data tend to focus on the most marginalised neighbourhoods (Jaffe, 2013; Abello-

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again. From 2012 onwards they have been decreasing to an all time low of around 20 homicides per 100.000 residents in 2017 (Arias, 2017).

[6] Between 2008 and 2016, the percentage of people living in poverty in Medellín decreased from twenty-five per cent to fourteen per cent. The poverty line is COP265.559 (+/- 75 euro) per month (Medellín Cómo Vamos, 2016, 16).

[7] A recent report identified 24 different types of extortion in Medellín (OSH 2018).

[8] Medellín received a lot of praise for the transformation it made regarding safety. It was named most innovative city in the world in 2013 by Wallstreet Journal and Citibank, and has hosted many important events in the last years, like the South American games and the UN-Habitat Summit of 2014 (Maclean, 2014).

Colak and Guarneros-Meza, 2014; Müller, 2015; Arias, 2017). In Medellín, Arias did an extensive study on micro-level political orders in the city's two most violent comunas, Comuna 13 and Comuna 1 (2017, p. 76). Abello-Colak and Guarneros-Meza conducted research on criminal actors in Comuna 1 (2014).[9] However, little is known about how various local actors operate in the lower middle class neighbourhoods, in which the majority of Medellín's population lives, and whether this is different from how local actors operate in the more marginalised neighbourhoods in relation to security.[10]

The lack of studies on the role of residents in cases of hybrid governance, and the lack of studies in this field on less marginalised neighbourhoods enhanced my interest in studying exactly that. To study residents in lower middle class neighbourhoods I use the analytical framework provided by Markus-Michael Müller. He analyses various security practices, the ways residents search for security, used by residents within a borough of Mexico City (Müller, 2015). His categorisation is deemed useful for this thesis as well. Analytically, he is inspired by assemblage theory and demonstrates how 'different practices of politics pursued by local actors assemble different component parts together in larger wholes' to which he refers as 'urban security assemblages.' (Müller, 2015, p. 109). A security assemblage can be described as a 'complex and multi-layered arrangement' without 'clear-cut hierarchical or vertical relationships between the different components' (Müller, 2015, p. 109). I further explain how I use assemblages in the next chapter. With 'urban security assemblages' as the analytical framework, I ask the following question:

> *What are the urban security assemblages that emerged in three lower middle class neighbourhoods in Medellín's Comuna 9 from 2013 until 2018?*

I selected three bordering neighbourhoods, Cataluña, La Milagrosa and Barrio Pablo Escobar, for various reasons. As said, while a lot of research in Medellín focuses on the most marginalised or most violent neighbourhoods, I became more interested in neighbourhoods that, according to quantitative data, are neither marginalised nor very violent, but where

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[9] Most neighbourhoods in comuna 13 are *estrato* one and two, some neighbourhoods are in *estrato* three. The municipality uses a classification system in which neighbourhoods are divided in six *estratos* from one (low) to six (high), based on the socio-economical situation in the neighbourhood. All neighbourhoods in comuna 1 are *estrato* one and two. (Alcaldia de Medellín 2013).

[10] Only thirteen per cent of Medellín's population lives in the poorest neighbourhoods classified as *estrato* one, while sixty-three per cent of the population lives in the *estratos* two and three that correspond with lower middle class neighbourhoods (Alcaldia de Medellín 2013).

empirical qualitative data does show that multiple governance actors are in place. A second reason why these neighbourhoods were selected is that despite their spatial proximity, there are also clear differences to be found between the three neighbourhoods. Cataluña consists mainly of gated communities, in which it differs from the other two non-gated neighbourhoods. Barrio Pablo Escobar is different from the others in that it is placed in a lower *estrato*.[11] While Cataluña and La Milagrosa are *estrato* three, Barrio Pablo Escobar is *estrato* two. Thus, by selecting three areas that are socio-economically similar, and at the same time are identifiable as distinct entities enables me to research differences between and within neighbourhoods. The year 2013 is selected as a starting point, since it was the year that a pact between the two largest criminal organisations in Medellín was signed, which led to the present period in which violence, according to quantitative indicators, is lower than before the pact (Abello-Colak and Guarneros-Meza, 2014).

Answering the question above by investigating the security practices of residents in three lower middle class neighbourhoods in Medellín through the analytical lens of urban security assemblages, the current study aims to contribute to existing knowledge. It aims to fill in the gaps that exist concerning a lack of studies on residents' experiences of security at the local level and a lack of studies on security in non-marginalised neighbourhoods of a city. The fact that the majority of Medellín's citizens live in these (lower) middle class neighbourhoods makes the research also socially relevant, also because residents in Medellín are feeling more and more unsafe (Medellín Cómo Vamos, 2018).

To answer the general research question, I formulate sub-questions in order to guide the analysis. Urban security assemblages emerge in response to particular security threats or problems (Müller, 2015, p. 111). The question 'what are the security threats or issues for local actors in Cataluña, La Milagrosa and Barrio Pablo Escobar?' is therefore leading in the introduction of chapter III. Next, urban security assemblages enable me to designate different, context-dependent and dynamic networks that are connecting different security actors, institutions and practices – public and private, formal and informal (Müller, 2015, p. 111). This leads to the question ''how are various local security actors and institutions present in the Comuna 9 and the three neighbourhoods?'' which I answer in chapter II. In this chapter, I also introduce different, context-dependent and dynamic networks in this chapter, which I discuss more profoundly in chapter III. In this chapter, I also answer the main question.

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[11]

I will demonstrate that despite its spatial and socio-economical proximity of the three neighbourhoods, at least four different security assemblages can be distinguished that illustrate various ways in which local actors search for security. The first assemblage illustrates that most residents go to formal state actors, despite a widespread believe that the police does not operate well. The second assemblage demonstrates examples of residents looking for security beyond the state by going to criminal actors. This assemblage is more likely to take place in Barrio Pablo Escobar and La Milagrosa than in Cataluña, but in all three neighbourhoods examples of the search for security beyond the state can be found. The third assemblage, which concerns the search for security through reaching out to private security actors, mainly arises in Cataluña, where many housing projects were transformed into gated communities. Guarding an area like this turns out to work, albeit not all security issues are solved by putting up fences and permanent security. In the fourth assemblage, the search for security of another type of local actors, criminal gangs, is discussed. It shows how, paradoxically, criminal actors turn to state actors for security from the state. The outcomes of these interactions, can be beneficial for both criminal and state actors.

In the following paragraphs, I discuss the methodology of this thesis. After that, I present the three chapters, that are representing the thesis' main part. After that, findings are shortly discussed in chapter IV.

Methodology

In this section I discuss how the research is conducted, by elaborating on the methodological assumptions, the different phases of the research, limitations and considerations. Like any study in social research, the research design of this thesis has its roots in ontological and epistemological assumptions (Hollis, 1998). Ontologically, I select a structurationalist perspective that regards individual's agency and structures as mutually constitutive entities (Giddens 1984 in Demmers, 2016, p. 127). Individuals act purposively, but are limited by the existing structures. Epistemologically, I aim to understand rather than explain the social world. This stance assumes that "the social world must be understood by seeking the meaning of individual action, ordinarily by asking those individual actors themselves".[12] As I discuss in the next chapter, quantitative studies on security in Medellín haven't been able to get a grip on this security, or on the practices that residents use to confront issues of security. A qualitative comparative research design in which I look at three distinct cases is considered best suitable in relation to the research question (Bryman, 2012, p. 74).

Research was conducted in three phases. Phase one consisted of a literature review of academic articles, reports and policy papers on security in Medellín and other cities in the Global South since the 1990s, and more broadly on concepts related to hybridity and assemblages. Phase two concerned three months of fieldwork to collect empirical data in the three cases in Comuna 9. The first month, I identified a relevant and feasible area for research, the three neighbourhoods in Comuna 9. Apart from the differences and similarities between the cases already pointed out above, these cases were selected because, through living in Cataluña, I had contacts in these neighbourhoods, which facilitated access to potential interviewees. In this month, I also started networking: conversing with academics, social leaders, and residents. After this I conducted in-depth interviews in a period of two months. I also made field notes of my observations in the period I was living in the area, which enabled me to study the spatial aspects of the different neighbourhoods. All interviews were transcribed by a native Spanish speaker. The third phase consisted of analysing the data to be able to answer the sub-questions mentioned above. I coded the data and analysed it using the framework of urban security assemblages. Patterns in the data are discussed in the following chapters.

Data was mostly collected through semi-structured interviews in the field.[13] Sampling of

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[12] Quote from lecture slides Mario Fumerton, received 3 January 2018.
[13] semi structured interviews: 'The researcher has a list of questions or fairly specific topics to be covered,

interviewees was done using the snowballing technique, in which contacts introduced me to potential interviewees (Bryman, 2012, p. 424). This enabled me to get in contact with people who were difficult to approach directly. Selection criteria to select some residents but not others were related to the period that they had lived in Comuna 9, and to the roles they fulfilled apart from living in the neighbourhood. I was especially interested in residents who were deeply imbedded in the neighbourhood, either by participating in a local community council, having a business in the neighbourhood, or being 'streetwise.'[14] I was also interested in those residents who had a background in the police force or criminal networks, due to their relevant knowledge concerning these actors. Another factor was safety, there was a lot of local knowledge in the neighbourhood about with whom it was safe to talk with, and I took into account other interviewees' advice whether or not to talk with someone. The interviews are not broadly representative of each neighbourhood but, instead, are based on the interpersonal networks of my primary contacts. Nevertheless, I generally was able to interview individuals with all kinds of backgrounds in the neighbourhoods. Almost all had lived or in their neighbourhoods for a long time and many were actively involved in local social live or politics (for example by being part of a community council). For the selection of experts, the main selection criterion was expertise regarding the topics of the research. Another criterion was availability. Experts had backgrounds in academia, the national or local government or NGOs. These interviews were less structured, as experts often had very specified knowledge over one area of the research, for example gangs. For these interviews, I prepared topic lists that were overlapping with each other yet unique for each interview.

I conducted forty interviews with thirty-eight persons.[15] These interviews took place in a three-month period from February to May 2018 and generally lasted between twenty-five minutes and two hours with most interviews lasting around one hour. Interviews started with an informal conversation after which I explained the topic of my research, the fact that everything was confidential, and I asked for permission to record the interview. All interviewees permitted this, but sometimes certain things were told "off the record." I assured the

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often referred to as an interview guide, but the interviewee has a great deal of leeway in how to reply. Questions may not follow on exactly in the way outlined on the schedule. Questions that are not included in the guide may be asked as the interviewer picks up on things said by interviewees' (Bryman, 2012) See appendix IV for the topic list used for interviewing residents and others with specific knowledge on Comuna 9.

[14] Especially in relation to youngsters, some knew quite well what was going on in their neighbourhood because they would spend a lot of time outside.

[15] See appendix III for demographic information about age, gender, the roles interviewees had (e.g resident or expert), and where residents in Comuna 9 lived. See appendix IV for an (anonymised) list of the interviewees.

interviewee that his or her identity would be anonymized. When interviewing residents of Comuna 9, I aimed to identify the different component parts of any urban security assemblage: a security threat or issue, actors and other component parts. In interviews with actors, the topics were often more general, and contributed by giving both insight in the larger picture, and - for example – in the way government officials look at issues of security. Interviews took place in houses, offices, and occasionally outside. None of the interviews were held in Barrio Pablo Escobar, due to safety concerns and research ethics. Interviewing residents in this neighbourhood would have attracted attention of the local gang and could have had negative consequences for the interviewees and myself. Twice, an interview was postponed to another date and/or location after the topic was introduced, because the interviewee decided it was safer to hold the interview somewhere else.

Limitations and considerations

Although my level of Spanish is sufficient to conduct interviews independently, I sometimes missed details of what was being said. At times, as I discovered when I read the transcriptions, I had failed to ask follow-up questions that I would have liked to ask. This issue was partly solved through follow-up interviews or by asking follow-up questions through WhatsApp. Another limitation was that access to one of the neighbourhoods, Barrio Pablo Escobar, was more difficult, and therefore only four residents from this neighbourhood were interviewed. Because the four residents did have extensive experience living in and knowledge about the neighbourhood, the quality of these interviews partly makes up for the lower quantity. Furthermore, several of the social leaders interviewed (had) worked in Barrio Pablo Escobar as well, and had extensive knowledge about security and the different actors in this neighbourhood. Access to gang members in the three neighbourhoods would also have enriched the thesis, for a better understanding of the local role of criminal actors. This was largely solved by interviewing experts with more general knowledge on this topic.

Given the sensitive topic of the research, interviewees did not always want or dare to tell everything they knew concerning topics like gang activity in their neighbourhoods, their own interactions with gangs, and possible corruption that they knew of. I acknowledge that people are used to not talk about these matters, because carelessly talking can have severe consequences. In certain cases, residents were very open in the interviews, for example by saying within the first minute that they knew who was part of a gang, that they used to hang out with them. Others were clearly holding back information or would only speak in more general terms. As Nicolas, a resident in Barrio Pablo Escobar, explained: "A saying we have

here is 'the fish dies by the mouth,' if you start talking, they [the gang] will kill you. The only thing you can do is keep quiet, and not say anything."[16] Nevertheless, most interviewees, under the conditions of confidentiality, did share information that appeared trustworthy. To tackle the issues that arise from interviewees holding back information, I have been very suspicious before making claims, and only included findings that were supported by multiple interviews and, when possible, academic sources.

Conducting research as a foreigner had its pros and cons. Being less familiar with Colombian culture might have affected interpretation at times. However, researching sensitive topics, it was an advantage that I was obviously not affiliated with any party, like the police or a criminal actor. Another advantage that enhanced trust was that most interviews were arranged through informal connections. To protect the interviewees' identities, all names of the residents participating have been changed, as well as the names of most experts. Occupations and locations have been generalized if necessary. I also did not attach real names to field notes while I was in the field, just in case I would lose my notes.

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[16] Author's interview with Nicolás, resident in Barrio Pablo Escobar, 10-03-2018

Chapter I: hybrid governance and urban security assemblages

Social research should involve a dialogue between the evidence or data found in the field, and existing theories or ideas about the phenomena that are being studied (Ragin, 1994). Theories or ideas help us to make sense of evidence, and new evidence can help us to extend, revise and test theories (Demmers, 2016, p. 14). This chapter introduces the discussion on studying assemblages. In its essence, this thesis is about interactions between different formal and informal, legal and illegal, state and non-state governance actors in the provision of security on a local level. Many scholars have delved into this theme and numerous ideas have been developed about how these interactions can be studied. It brings up questions like 'how do these interactions work?' 'Is it always possible to distinguish state and non-state actors?' and 'how can we study these interactions?' Out of the different ideas developed within what I call hybrid governance studies, I select one analytical approach, 'urban security assemblages', that I consider most suitable to use as a tool to analyse my data. After quickly introducing the broad field of hybrid governance, I discuss the concept of assemblages and its critiques after which I introduce the narrower concept of 'urban security assemblages' and explain how I use this concept.

Hybrid governance

Within politics, and to a lesser extent academia, ideas about governance and the provision of security were dominated for a long time by (the interpretation of) Max Weber's work (1978). Central in the concept of 'the state' from a Weberian perspective is the idea that the ideal-type state needs a monopoly on violence to be successful and legitimate. Weber defined the state as follows: "a compulsory political organisation with continuous operations will be called a 'state' insofar its administrative staff successfully upholds the claim to the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force in the enforcement of its order" (Weber, 1978, p. 54). Max Weber himself cannot be held responsible for the stereotypical characterisations of the 'Weberian state'. His essays on 'Bureaucracy' and on 'Politics as a Vocation' offer nuanced interpretations of the state, political authority and rational-legal organisation (Bagayoko, Hutchful and Luckham, 2016, p. 20). However, the idea that states where governments do not have a monopoly on physical force are 'failed' has been dominant with policymakers and governments in the developed world (Boege, Brown and Clements, 2009, p. 13). Though this model is still widely regarded as the ideal-type for Western states, it is not necessarily ideal nor the inevitable future for non-Western states (Hagmann and Peclard, 2010, p. 541). A large majority of the world's states simply does not have a monopoly on violence (Boege, Brown

and Clements, 2009, p. 14). Especially in the Global South, most political orders are characterized by the fact that not one institution monopolizes the means of violence or a de facto sovereign position to do so (Müller, 2015, p. 108). Therefore, many alternative ideas have been developed that can all be taken together under one 'overarching' concept: hybrid governance. The concepts relating to hybrid governance include 'twilight institutions' (Lund, 2006), 'mediated and negotiated states' (Hagmann and Peclard, 2010), 'crimilegal states' (Schultze-Kraft, 2017) 'shadow networks' (Nordstrom, 2000) 'hybrid security governance' (Bagayoko, Hutchful and Luckham, 2016) 'security assemblages' (Schuilenburg, 2017), and 'urban security assemblages' (Müller, 2015). It is beyond the scope of this thesis to discuss all these concepts, but I briefly address the central elements that connect all of them.

Scholars have been using these concepts to argue that a) the ideals of a Weberian type state are in many countries too far detached from reality to be analytically useful (Boege, Brown and Clements, 2009; Luckham and Kirk, 2013); and b) that in the neoliberal tradition, the Weberian ideal-type state which monopolizes violence is often not seen as ideal (Abello Colak and Pearce, 2015). In this regard, it is often argued that security can be provided more efficient at times when outsourced to non-state actors. The authors mentioned above agree on the idea that in many cases, there are multiple state and non-state, formal and informal actors with some form of governance, rather than just the state. According to Boege and colleagues, rather than assuming that complete adoption of Western state models is the only way forward, more focus should be on models of governance that draw on the strengths of social order and resilience embedded in community life or the societies in questions (Boege, Brown and Clements, 2009, p. 14). To understand the relation between citizens and governance actors, I make use of the conceptual division between two dimensions of governance (Harbers, Jaffe and Cummings, 2016). The first of these dimensions is the material dimension, the degree to which the governance actor plays a role in the daily life of citizens by providing crucial public goods. According to Harbers and colleagues these functions range from core functions, such as upholding the rule of law and protecting citizens from bodily harm, to the provision of services and infrastructure in health, education or environmental management (Harbers, Jaffe and Cummings, 2016). My critique on this distinction between governance actor and citizen is that in the case of Comuna 9, just like a clear distinction between formal and informal governance actors cannot always be made, a clear distinction between governance actor and citizen is also not that easily made. Citizens are involved with governance through community councils, social organisations and informal connections. Despite this critique, I believe the concept of material governance is useful to explain the case. The second dimension of

governance is described by Harbers and colleagues as the subjective dimension (Harbers, Jaffe and Cummings, 2016), which reflects the degree to which citizens are supportive of and hold positive attitudes towards the state or other governance actors. Central herein is the question whether there is a relation between the attitudes towards a governance actor and the behaviour of citizens in situations of security or services' needs. Harbers and colleagues find that citizen attitudes towards the formal and informal governance actors are independent of each other. These different actors do not necessarily compete with each other for the loyalty in citizens, and positive attitudes towards one actor does not equal negative attitudes towards the other. (Harbers, Jaffe and Cummings, 2016).

Scholars do not agree on how exactly different security actors relate to each other. For example, do they exist simultaneously, each being phenomenologically different, and each representing distinct forms of authority and politico-economic organization, as Nordstrom argues (Nordstrom, 2000, p. 36) when talking about 'shadow networks'? Or has for example the concept of 'hybrid state' by Rifke Jaffe who sees state and non-state actors as highly intertwined, more explaining value in relation to the topic (Jaffe, 2013)? In this thesis, I select a third approach, that is analytically closer related to the 'hybrid' state than to 'shadow networks', yet different from both which is named 'urban security assemblages' (Müller, 2015, p. 110). Taking this approach, I look at a core element of political orders: the provision of security.

Urban security assemblages

Müller uses the concept of 'urban security assemblages' in the context of the marginalised borough of Iztapalapa, Mexico-city. His perspective on assemblages draws on the integration of insights of Gilles Deleuze (1986) and Bruno Latour (2005) by scholars working in the realm of Urban Studies (e.g. Abrahamsen and Williams, 2009; Farias and Bender, 2010; MacFarlane, 2011). Müller's main inspiration comes from assemblage theory (DeLanda, 2013). Before discussing the narrower concept of 'urban security assemblages,' I look at the overarching concept of 'assemblage.'

The French philosopher Gilles Deleuze stated that we cannot understand social realities as a collection of loose elements (Deleuze, 2004). Rather than different loose elements adding up to a new fixed structure, 'each new mixture produces a new kind of assemblage, always free to recombine again and change its nature (Nail, 2018, p. 23). Thus, in a context of multiple (governance) actors and other components, what counts are not only these elements, 'but what

is between them, the in-between, a set of relations that are inseparable from each other' (viii Deleuze and Parnet, 1987).

Important in this regard is the etymology of the word 'assemblage'. Deleuze first introduced this term under the name *agencement*. Agencement is related to the Latin word 'agens,' which means 'governing' or 'setting in motion.' According to Schuilenburg, this governing principle expresses a process of 'arranging', 'organizing' or 'adding together', but the governing power of this process is never outside an assemblage (Schuilenburg, 2017, p. 105). On the contrary, the governing power is inside the assemblage, yet independent of the different components. Components can be people and tools, as well as images, moods, instruments, sounds, buildings, organs or forms because both people and things are able to change affairs in their environment (Schuilenburg, 2017, p. 106). Schuilenburg refers to the governing power as the self-organizing activity that lies in the relations among the components that are part of the assemblage. What does this mean? The activity cannot be reduced to its components. The activity between components, similar to how Foucault (1982) explains power, becomes clearer with the example of comparing two people. Person A can be smaller, smarter, or lazier than person B. However, being small, smart or lazy is not something inherent to person A, but depending on the relation between A and B. The 'activity' (e.g. being smaller) is thus independent of the components (person A and B). Relations are not a quality inherent to terms, impressions, or ideas but are external to these (Schuilenburg, 2017, p. 108). Where most theoretical ideas within 'hybrid governance' focus on the different actors, assemblage allows us to see the 'building blocks' more broadly, leaving space for non-human components (especially the urban environment) and to look at the relations between those component parts (the security practices). Markus-Michael Müller builds on this idea and defines assemblages as "contingent and shifting interrelations among components – institutions, powers, practices, desires' – that constantly, simultaneously construct, entrench, and disaggregate their own constraints and oppressions" (Müller, 2015, p. 109).

One critique on assemblages is that the concept's broadness makes everything (look like) an assemblage, reducing its explanatory power (Tonkiss, 2011, p. 588). A second critique concerns the indiscriminate agency of inanimate components. As pointed out above, theorists attribute 'power' or 'agency' to non-human components (Schuilenburg, 2017). But in the endlessly complex social world, what non-human components should and should not be part of the analysis? Storper and Scott argue in that regard that assemblage theory does not provide a clear framework on how to distinguish between the trivial and the important when taking

apart the components of an assemblage (Storper and Scott, 2016, p. 22). By narrowing down 'assemblages' to 'urban security assemblages' and seeing assemblages more as a tool to structure data than as a theory, these critiques are overcome. Using 'urban security assemblages' as an analytical tool simply helps to structure evidence within a categorisation of different urban security assemblages. Security assemblages have a relational focus on practices and processes through which local actors connect different component parts (security practices and actors) into a "larger whole"(Müller, 2015, p. 123). It is similar to the work of authors described above (e.g. Bagayoko et al., 2016; Hagmann & Peclard, 2010; Jaffe, 2013) in that the assemblage perspective does not privilege or prioritise any actor or institution. It traces the relations and connections between different actors and how these interactions lead to the emergence of particular assemblages responding to security issues or threats (Müller, 2015, p. 110). The 'urban' in urban security assemblages points out that urban space itself should not be regarded as static and given, and can be an important component of an assemblage.

Before I further look into security assemblages, I want to quickly address the concept of security, a central element in both Müller's work and that of several others scholars writing about hybrid governance (e.g. Bagayoko et al., 2016). Despite its prominence in his work, Müller does not clearly operationalise security. I build upon the work of Luckham and Kirk (2013), who distinguish between the demand-side and the supply-side of security. The demand-side refers to "an entitlement of citizens and more widely human beings to protection from violence and other existential risks including their capacity in practice to exercise this entitlement" while the supply-side refers to "a process of political and social ordering established and maintained through authoritative discourses and practices of power, including but not confined to organised force" (Luckham and Kirk, 2013, p. 5). These definitions are clear, but for the current research it is necessary to go beyond this dichotomy by focusing on the interaction between these two types of security. Residents, the inhabitants of the different neighbourhoods, can be both security demanders and suppliers. For example, if they are part of a gang, on the one hand demanding security and on the other hand having a share in supplying security. Security has a central position in 'urban security assemblages' because it is the search for security by a variety of actors that is central in the emergence of these assemblages. In chapter II, I further discuss security in the context of Medellín. In chapter III: urban security assemblages, I describe what the concrete security threats are that citizens in Comuna 9 face. When discussing actors like the gangs, I thus look at their security demands and possible threats, as residents of the comuna as well as their role as security provider.

Hence, how do security assemblages work? As illustrated in the introduction, they emerge "out of the desire of and intentional efforts by local actors to merge component parts 'into a larger whole' which 'operates across both state and extra-state institutions" (Haggarty and Ericson, 2000 in Müller, 2015, p. 110). In other words, they emerge out of the agency of local actors with the goal of solving a security threat. Although reacting to a specific threat, the actual outcome of an assemblage can be unplanned or may contain unexpected elements. In line with scholars like Demmers and Gould, I argue that assemblages' analytics should not aim to prove that the social world is complex and fluid since such a focus will merely mistake my premises for results (2018, p. 6). Rather, I specify *which* different security practices are assembled, *how* these security practices are assembled, and *who* is included and excluded.

Within these security assemblages, Müller states that there is an emphasis on 'making elements work together' and the 'direct dependence of an existing security assemblage configuration upon specific objectives and goals' (Müller, 2015, p. 110). Since we are talking about security assemblages, these objectives and goals relate to 'solving potential security threats'. This emphasis points towards two decisive elements of the assemblage: the flexibility and changing nature of the assemblage and its relation to a specific, decisively context dependent security problem or risk. Those two points; the assemblage is temporarily and is related to a problem of risk, are two main characteristics of any security assemblage.

Müller uses urban security assemblages to point out context-dependent and dynamic networks. These networks are connecting different security actors, institutions and practices that are assembled through practices of politics emerging from a given urban space and in response to particular security threats or problems (Müller, 2015, p. 111). Müller identifies security issues, the different components that aim to solve these issues, and the security practices that are used.

Concluding remarks

In line with the broader hybrid governance field, security assemblages make it possible to study security practices beyond dichotomizing perspectives such as state vs. non-state. I prefer it over other theorizations within hybrid governance because security assemblages also make it possible to look beyond the division between governance 'actors' and governance 'receivers' or citizens and to look at interactions between different components. Furthermore, the fluidity of assemblages is useful to point out how residents can be part of different assemblages

simultaneously or at distinct points in time. This helps me to show how different social realities exist on the very local level. Finally, I find Müller's categorization in three 'types' of assemblages useful. He describes the emergence of different urban security assemblages whose components are brought together through practices of security politics by local actors (Müller, 2015, p. 112). Müller's assemblages ('security beyond the state', 'security from state policing' and 'bringing in public security') centre around relationships between different actors, being 'residents-non-state security actors', 'criminal actors-state actors' and 'residents-state actors'. I add a fourth assemblage that focuses on 'residents-private security' interactions. The urban security assemblages are discussed for the case of three neighbourhoods in the central-eastern part of Medellín after a description of these neighbourhoods and the different actors relevant in relation to security.

Chapter II: Security and local actors in Comuna 9 and its neighbourhoods

Medellín, Colombia's second largest city in terms of population and national GDP, lays in the Aburrá Valley, which it shares with several other municipalities, together forming a metropole of about 3.5 million citizens. Throughout the 20th century, the city experienced exponential growth. The population grew from 358.000 in 1951 to more than a million in 1973 and 2.5 million currently (Martin and Martin, 2015). A reason for this growth is the influx of refugees from the countryside, fleeing Colombia's civil war between guerrillas, paramilitaries and state forces. In Medellín, refugees constructed houses on the hillsides, where land was considerably easier to obtain because construction was more difficult than in the lower parts of the city (Martin and Martin, 2015). Whole neighbourhoods, often unrecognized by the municipality, were built. A whole range of non-state legal and illegal actors gained influence in these neighbourhoods, at times providing security and public services to the population (Doyle, 2016). Nowadays, officially more than ninety-nine per cent of the households has access to water, electricity and garbage collection, provided by the semi-public *Empresas Públicas de Medellín* (EPM) (Medellín Cómo Vamos, 2018, p. 62).[17] The percentage of the residents living in the poorest neighbourhoods decreased from about twenty-five per cent to fourteen per cent and the majority, sixty-three per cent of the people now lives in lower middle class neighbourhoods (Alcaldia de Medellín 2013). In this changed context, in which the state provides services in practically all Medellín's neighbourhoods, non-state criminal actors still manage to remain present.

These criminal actors can not be seen separately from the city's violent past. Between 1973 and 2012 an estimated number of 90.000 people were killed in "a situation so extreme that it was unmatched to any other city in the region and possibly the world, excluding those cities that experience open warfare or genocide" (Martin and Martin, 2015, p. 46). In the early 1990s, with almost 400 homicides per 100.000 inhabitants, Medellín became known as the murder capital of the world (Bahl, 2012). In the 2000s, violence declined until it rose again in 2008. Since 2012 homicides declined again and dropped to 24 homicides per 100,000 citizens in 2017 (Restrepo, 2018).

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[17] EPM is Medellín's semi-state public services company, providing electricity, water and cooking gas to almost all inhabitants of Medellín (Medellín Cómo Vamos, 2017).

Regarding this quite extraordinary decrease in homicides there are two major academic debates that I want to touch upon. Central in the first debate is the question how the decrease in homicides can be explained. Some authors claim that central government policies such as the counterinsurgency operations in the early 2000s are directly responsible for the decrease in homicides (Martin, 2014; Giraldo-Ramírez and Preciado-Restrepo, 2015). Giraldo-Ramirez and Preciado-Restrepo stress that although central state interventions were crucial in producing needed changes to reduce violence, the efforts at the local level have been responsible for the changes in the local infrastructure and the sustainability of these improvements (2015, p. 1). According to Cruz and Durán-Martinez, it was not the state, but a pact between the most powerful criminal organisations initiated by Alias 'Don Berna' that brought peace to Medellín (2016, p. 204). Abello-Colak and Pearce (2015) and Doyle (2016) share this view. Others state that the implementation of large social projects, the *Proyectos Urbanos Integrales* (PUIs), that contained a large variety of infrastructural, social and cultural projects explains a part of the decline in homicides (apart from the causes referred to above) (Cerdá *et al.*, 2012). Cerdá and colleagues found that the decrease in homicide rates between 2003 and 2008 was sixty-six per cent higher in neighbourhoods in which these projects were implemented than in control neighbourhoods (Cerdá *et al.*, 2012). The corresponding decrease in reports of violent events was seventy-four per cent higher in intervention neighbourhoods than in control neighbourhoods. Apart from that, Cerdá and colleagues found that residents of intervention neighbourhoods also experienced more growth in willingness to rely on the police (Cerdá *et al.*, 2012). The decrease of homicides might be caused by the gangs' adoption of alternative means of violence such as the threat of violence and forced urban displacement, rather than because of the implementation of the PUIs (Doyle, 2016, p. 13). The fact that the homicide rate tripled in 2008 after a dozen criminal leaders were extradited to the U.S.A, also in neighbourhoods were PUIs had been implemented, also points in the direction of the importance of pacts between criminal actors. In relation to the decrease in homicides from 2011 onwards, scholars point at the arrangements made between non-state criminal actors. The most important of these arrangements is the *Pacto de San Jeronimo*, a pact between Medellín's two largest criminal organisations in 2013 (Cruz and Durán-Martínez, 2016, p. 205). Although all explanations discussed above played a role, I see the consolidation of criminal actors through pacts like the *Pacto de San Jeronimo* as the most important reason why homicides decreased. The fragility of these arrangements became clear in April 2018, when 'wars' between different gangs broke out in Comuna 7 and 13, after a shift in power, leading to a sharp increase in the homicide rate compared to a year earlier (*El Colombiano*, 2018).

A second debate focuses on the question how representative homicide rates are for the overall violence and security in Medellín and whether a decrease in homicides correlates with an increase in security. Many scholars claim the homicide rate is the best indicator of violence, as homicide is its most extreme form (Giraldo-Ramírez, 2008; García *et al.*, 2012). Although homicides decreased, it is difficult to say what this meant for the security in Medellín. The fact that perception of security decreased rather than increased in the last ten years opposes the idea that looking at homicides provides us with reliable information on security. In the perception of Medellín's citizens, security decreased in the period 2008-2017. The first of these years, from 2008 until 2011, the decrease in perceived security correlated with an increase in homicides. However, while homicides decreased again after 2011, the city is still decreasingly perceived as secure. While in 2006 only three per cent of the population felt insecure in the city, in 2017 this was twenty per cent (Medellín Cómo Vamos, 2018, p. 51). The percentage of people feeling insecure in one's own neighbourhood went from five in 2006 to thirteen in 2017. Differences in security perception between residents living in poorer, middle class, or richer neighbourhoods increased in the past three years (Medellín Cómo Vamos, 2018, p. 53).[18] Thus, the homicide rate and other indicators of violence do not necessarily correlate with the experienced security according to this quantitative study. Some scholars suggest that we should also look at other indicators, such as robberies, extortion and forced displacements to better understand the security situation. Abello-Colak identifies different forms of violence in Medellín, like violence against women in public space, which has not decreased, violence affecting young people, which is increasing every year since 2009, violence by state actors, violence against social leaders, and violence on the personal level in the domestic sphere, between neighbours or in schools (Abello Colak, 2015). These forms of violence show that homicide rates by themselves are not sufficient to capture the complexity of security issues in Medellín.

Aiming for a better representation of 'security', a possible solution is taking into account other quantitative indicators of violence, like the reported numbers of sexual violence and robberies. Quantitative data about these indicators exist, but there are limits to its value. The main problem with quantitative data of homicides and other indicators that are used in research on Medellín is that they have not been collected with the purpose of research in mind, in which researchers could provide anonymity to respondents. Contrary, the statistics available about matters like extortion, robberies, homicides and sexual violence are coming from a database

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[18] From 2015 to 2017 on a 1 to 5 scale, perceived security ratings went from 4,0 to 3,7 for estrato one and two, from 4,0 to 3,9 for estrato three and four, and from 4,0 to 4,2 for estrato five and six.

of denunciations.[19] These data might be more prone to underreporting than data collected especially for research (Abello Colak, 2012, p. 18).[20]

A qualitative study in four comunas was recently done on extortion because the researchers had concluded in previous research that quantitative data did not provide reliable information about this type of crime. The study shows that extortion is a security problem in many neighbourhoods in the city. Thirty-one types of extortion are identified, some of which are only present in some of the comunas in which research was conducted, while other types are present in all comunas included in their research (Moncada Carvajal *et al.*, 2018). Luis Felipe Dávila also concludes in his review of academic publications on urban violence, conflict and crime in Medellín that analysis of types of violence other than homicide is desirable (Dávila, 2016). Following Moncada Carvajal and colleagues (2018), I turn to qualitative data to study security. These data are by themselves of course not solving the issue that people are often too afraid to talk about issues like extortion or sexual violence. Yet, in other research, and in my field research, many people were willing to talk about issues of security (Moncada Carvajal *et al.*, 2018).

In the next part, I look at the actors active in one of these comunas where most neighbourhoods can be categorised as lower middle class: Comuna 9. I introduce various local actors and the three neighbourhoods in which I conducted research to provide a contextual basis before delving further into the different interactions between these actors and the assemblages that emerge. I aim to answer the following sub-question: 'who or what are the different local security actors and institutions in the Comuna 9 and the three neighbourhoods?'

Comuna 9 'Buenos Aires'

"Once inside these neighbourhoods, their most distinctive feature is bustling life. Pharmacies, barber salons, butcher shops, bakeries, restaurants, bars, hardware shops and informal vendors abound. Most people walk; cabs and privately owned buses loaded with people manoeuvre through; kids in uniform walk around as they come

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[19] Sistema de Información para la Seguridad y la Convivencia (SISC) This organisation analyses data on violence in the city collected from the Colombian National Institute of Medicine, Legal and Forensic Sciences (Legal y Ciencias Forenses Instituto Nacional de Medicina) (INML), National Police of Colombia, Colombian Criminal Investigation (Seccional de Investigación Criminal) (SIJIN) and the Colombian Technical Investigation Team (Cuerpo Técnico de Investigación) (CTI).

[20] Four out of every ten people claim they report it if they are victim of a crime (Medellín Cómo Vamos, 2018).

and go from school; many people are at work, repairing, constructing, selling, carrying materials; others sit, eat, drink, talk or just hang around. The primary and secondary public school system, which caters mainly to the poor, has a double shift, with half the students and teachers active from 6.00–12.30 P.M. and the other half from 12.30–7.00 P.M."(Martin and Martin, 2015).

Comuna 9 'Buenos Aires' lays in the central-eastern part of the city and is home to about 138.000 inhabitants living in seventeen neighbourhoods, roughly five per cent of the city's population.[21] Its history goes back to the time of the Spanish colonization of the Aburrá Valley. In 1908, a textile factory was built here by Colteger, one of the biggest companies in the city. Although there were already other industries such as breweries, banks and energy plants, the textile factory soon became the biggest employer of the area, which led to a migration of factory workers that wanted to live close to the place where they worked. In this period the construction of public facilities like churches and educational institutions also started, largely initiated by the residents themselves. The neighbourhood La Milagrosa was built in this period (Alcaldia de Medellín 2015).
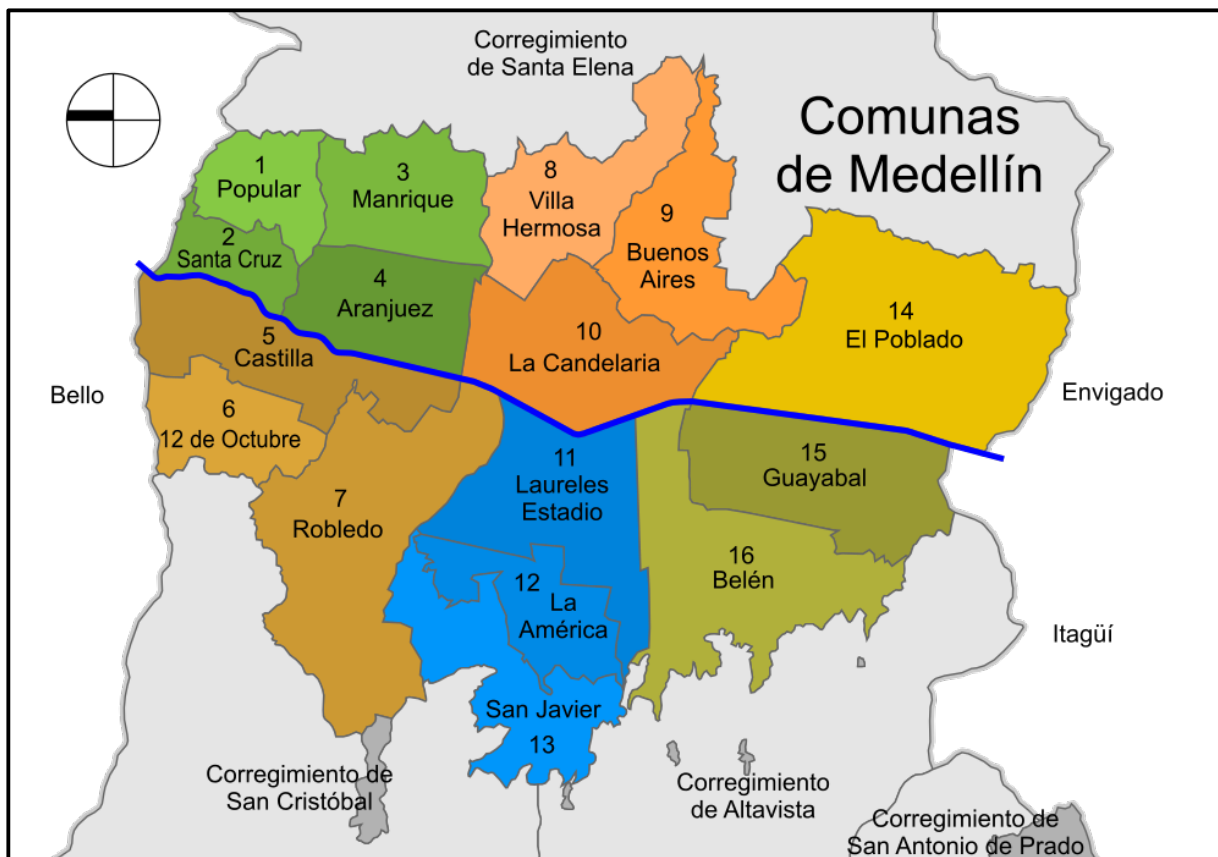

Image 1. An overview of Medellín's comunas © Wikimedia commons

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[21] For an overview of the neighbourhoods, see the photo in appendix II.

In the 1970s and 1980s a second phase of construction started. Many refugees from other parts of the country illegally built houses on the outskirts of the Comuna. In this period, Pablo Escobar also relocated people living in Moravia (another part of the city) to a neighbourhood he called *Medellín Sin Tugurius* (Medellín without slums). Although it is still the official name, residents mostly refer to this neighbourhood as Barrio Pablo Escobar. In this thesis, I choose to use the name Barrio Pablo Escobar because it is more commonly used. Pablo Escobar is for example also the name used on 'public' buses to indicate their destination. The planned neighbourhood of Cataluña was also built in this period (Alcaldia de Medellín 2015, 29–30).

It is a comuna in which most neighbourhoods are classified as socio-economically lower middle class.[22] Socio-economically, Medellín's municipality divided its territory in six different '*estratos*' ranging from low to high. In Comuna 9, sixty per cent of the population lives in the socioeconomic *estrato* three 'lower middle,' while twenty-six per cent of the population lives in the *estrato* two 'lower.' Only four per cent of the population lives in the most marginalised neighbourhoods, identified as 'low-low'. The other ten per cent of the comuna's population lives in *estratos* four to six (Alcaldia de Medellín 2015). Most houses are inhabited by families of three to five persons. According to the official numbers, Comuna 9 has an unemployment rate of nine per cent (Luis et al., 2016: 81).[23]

The state in Comuna 9

The state is present in Comuna 9 through many institutions like schools and cultural centres.[24] Police presence is manifested with a police station and two *Commandos de Atención Inmediata* (CAIs), small police posts. Both in my interviews and in a large N-study about citizen wellbeing, residents indicated that there are not enough police officers in the comuna, a problem in many of Medellín's comunas (Medellín Cómo Vamos, 2018). Furthermore, many residents in Comuna 9 perceive the police as corrupt and inefficient. Residents themselves mainly experience police corruption through acts that are not related to organised crime. An example is the bribing of police officers by individual to avoid fines.[25] Although this type of bribing is problematic, and can delegitimize the police as an institution, it is generally unrelated to the relations between gangs and the police. It does however, contribute to shaping

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[22] In estrato two or three.
[23] Other comunas score between five and fourteen per cent (Luis et al., 2016: 81).
[24] For a full list, see Plan de Desarrollo Local comuna 9 – Buenos Aires (Alcaldia de Medellín, 2015).
[25] E.g. "officer, I have 50.000 ways to help you"[25], suggesting a 50.000 pesos' bribe.

an environment in which bribing in general becomes acceptable. I further discuss bribing of the police by non-state actors as part of a security assemblage described as security through state protection.

Sources within the police force and within different units of the *Fiscalia* agree that there are not enough police officers available in the comuna. The high workload affects the efficiency negatively. and confirm that there are corruption issues within Medellín's police force, although they all stress that the problem is a lot smaller than residents claim.[26] Corrupt officers are said to supply confidential information to criminal structures about matters like arrest warrants, license plates of undercover vehicles that are doing intelligence work in the neighbourhoods, and they inform the criminal organisations about upcoming operations or checkpoints for drugs.[27] In 2016, an investigation intercepted blackberry communications through which the exact connections between government officials in the municipality and contacts within the *Oficina de Envigado,* the largest criminal organisation in Medellín, could be distinguished. A direct line between Medellín's secretary of security Gustavo Villegas and the Oficina de Envigado was discovered (Cardenas, 2017). The information Villegas provided prevented the authorities from reacting effectively against these criminal structures.[28] The case of Gustavo Villegas is an example of corruption at Medellín's highest political level, but most corrupt employees in the different state institutions have lower functions.[29] Regardless of whether a few or many officers are corrupt, only one corrupt officer can have a large impact on investigative processes which contributes to the negative image that many residents have of the police. Politicians, police officers and fiscals I spoke to all indicated that gangs had contacted them or their colleague to form alliances.[30] Valentina told how a young man, who she had known since he was a baby knocked on her door one night:

> "They made me an offer in my first campaign, it was a boy from Comuna 9, I had watched him grow up (..) he was the head of *Los Cerros* [name of both a neighbourhood in Comuna 9 and the gang in that neighbourhood], they killed him. One day he came to my house, he said: 'Dona Valentina, we are going to give you 100 thousand pesos

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[26] The Fiscalia is the institution for public prosecution, they are leading investigations against organised criminal actors, working closely with army and police force.

[27] Author's interview with Eduardo, head anti-gang unit Fiscalia, 20-04-2018.

[28] Author's interview with Eduardo, head anti-gang unit Fiscalia, 20-04-2018.

[29] Author's interview with Mateo, fiscalist working for anti-corruption department of the *fiscalia*, 30-04-2018.

[30] e.g. Author's interview with Oscar Hurtado, former member of parliament, 23-02-2018; Author's interview with Valentina, politician and former social leader in Comuna 9, 03-04-2018; Author's Interview with Andres, police officer and resident in Cataluña, 29-03-2018.

for the first thousand votes, to support you.' I looked at him and started to laugh, I thanked him, I told him (..) I do not make those deals."[31]

Community councils in Comuna 9

There are several community councils in the comuna's neighbourhoods. Most notably are the *Juntas de Acíon Comunal* (JACs), officially recognized local associate groups operating at the neighbourhood level. Each neighbourhood has one. The local JAC is the most direct channel for the ordinary citizen to interact with the municipality (Isaza-Giraldo, 2016). Each JAC consists of a board that overviews different *mesas* (committees). A mesa might for example focus on education in the neighbourhood. These groups do not receive direct budgets from the state, but can apply for funds for specific programs. This makes them interesting for criminal actors. According to Arias, these local councils are often the target of local criminal structures (Arias, 2017, p. 144). In some neighbourhoods in Comuna 9, the criminal organisations influence the JACs, in others there is not such an influence.[32] This relation can be voluntary, but it can also be the case that the members of the JAC interact with a criminal organisation out of fear.[33] Criminal groups often influence who the community leaders are, but there are generally no specific complaints against JAC members because the community does not denounce these issues(Arias, 2017, p. 145).[34]

Criminal actors in Comuna 9

Currently, the Oficina de Envigado is at the top of the criminal food chain in large parts of Medellín, including Comuna 9. Apart from the Oficina de Envigado there are several smaller independent criminal organisations in the city, like the *Oficina de Bello*. Also, the *Urabeños*, the largest criminal actor in Colombia's countryside, has control in some of Medellín's outskirts, which they obtained after signing the *Pacto de San Jeronimo,* with the Oficina de Envigado in 2013 (McDermott, 2018, p. 38). The pact included agreements about territorial division in Medellín, and rules concerning interactions between different (street-level) gangs. Homicides had to be approved at the higher level (Doyle, 2016).

The Oficina de Envigado is a federation comprised of different mid-sized criminal organisations referred to by the government as *Organizaciones Delincuenciales Integradas al*

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[31] Author's interview with Valentina, politician and former social leader in Comuna 9, 03-04-2018.
[32] Author's interviews with various JAC leaders in Comuna 9.
[33] Author's Interview with Samuel, Researcher for the municipality of Medellín, 03-04-2018
[34] Author's interview with Eduardo, head anti-gang unit Fiscalia, 20-04-2018

Narcotráfico (ODIN, Criminal Organizations Integrated with Drug Trafficking) (*El Colombiano*, 2017a). Experts estimate that there are between eight and fifteen of these midsized groups, whose leaders come together in what can be described as a board of directors (McDermott, 2018).[35] Disputes between different ODIN are often solved non-violently on this level. The groups operate like companies, with different departments for matters like communication, recruitment and bribing.[36] On this level, members are more likely to be lawyers or accountants than *sicarios* (hitmen). These members are well educated and live in luxurious apartments instead of in the neighbourhoods that fall under their territorial control.

The ODIN in Comuna 8, 9 and 10 is called Caicedo, named after one of the neighbourhoods in Comuna 9. It was led by Alias 'El Queso' until he was captured in October 2017(*El Colombiano*, 2017b). Based on what is known about these organisations in general, it might be possible that 'El Queso' is still in power and giving orders from prison, while a stooge functions as leader outside the prison. Another possibility is that a new leader has been appointed, or that 'El Queso' never was the highest in command, and that the real decisions are made by unknown leaders (McDermott, 2018).[37]

The gangs seen on the squares and street corners are called *combos*. Combos are street corner-level organisations that are usually identified by the area where the members congregate (Arias, 2017, p. 45). A combo consists of about twenty to a hundred members. A division can be made between 'full' members and the boys, called *carritos,* that hang around and are recruited for simple tasks like look-outs and transporting drugs, money or weapons. 'Full' members are mostly between 17 and 50 years old.[38] Experts estimated that there are about ten to thirty different combos in Comuna 9. Each of these combos has control over criminal activities in a part of a neighbourhood, or over criminal activities in several neighbourhoods.[39]

The *Oficina de Envigado*, the various ODIN and the combos generate revenues in different ways, for which territorial control is essential. The management demands for certain types of activities to generate revenues, and are employed in the whole territory of the *Oficina*. Combos

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[35] Author's interview with Eduardo, head anti-gang unit Fiscalia, 20-04-2018; Author's Interview with Jaime, researcher at major university, 17-04-2018

[36] Author's interview with José, social leader and ex-gang member in the Comuna 9, 13-03-2018

[37] In many cases, the ones at the top are not visible. Author's interview with Liliana, fiscal anti paramilitary unit Fiscalia, 17-04-2018.

[38] Author's interview with José, social leader and ex-gang member in the Comuna 9, 13-03-2018; Author's interview with Carlos, former combo member, 29-04-2018.

[39] Author's interview with David, baker and resident in La Milagrosa, 15-03-2018; Author's interview with José, social leader and ex-gang member in the Comuna 9, 13-03-2018.

enhance their earnings through other activities. The most important example of revenue commanded for from the higher levels are the income from the sale of drugs. A gang has a monopoly on the sale of drugs in its territory, sold mainly at certain squares and street corners. Distribution to the combo is done by the *Oficina de Envigado* by the ODIN that it is affiliated to.[40] They receive the drugs wholesale and are only allowed to sell these drugs. The police know, like most others in the neighbourhood, where the drugs are sold and by whom, but since denunciations are rare, there rarely is proof. Collecting proof on matters like the drugs sale is difficult because, apart from the unwillingness of residents to report, the gang members on the squares do not have the drugs with them. If there is a buyer, they will go to the place where the drugs are hidden, e.g. inside some bricks or in a playing ground, and get it from there.[41] *Carritos* keep guard and have a warning system for when the police are coming. Other types of income that are coordinated top-down are the production and sale of illegal liquor, and the extortion paid by drivers of buses and of trucks that come into the neighbourhoods to bring basic products like meat, bread, eggs and cooking gas (Abello Colak, 2012; Moncada Carvajal *et al.*, 2018).

The activities described above are executed similar in most neighbourhoods with gang presence in Medellín. However, activities executed by combos on the local level differ a lot from neighbourhood to neighbourhood. In some neighbourhoods, matters like extortion are almost absent, while in other neighbourhoods almost everyone pays the *vacuna* directly.[42] In some neighbourhoods, even homeless people pay a small fee if they want to sleep in the public space (Moncada Carvajal *et al.*, 2018). In other neighbourhoods, residents are not allowed to drive their motorcycle with a helmet on, because the local gangs do want to know who is entering the neighbourhood.[43]

The combos in Comuna 9 also execute a wide range of activities to earn money. I provide an example of combo activity in Comuna 9 in more general terms in this part, and neighbourhood specific combo activities when introducing the neighbourhoods. Throughout the comuna owners of gambling machines are extorted. A shop owner told me she is not extorted for the slot machines in her shop directly, as the machines are not hers. Instead, the owner of the

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[40] Author's interview with José, social leader and ex-gang member in the Comuna 9, 13-03-2018; Author's Interview with Jaime, researcher at major university, 17-04-2018

[41] Field observations, Author's interview with Claudia, resident in Barrio Pablo Escobar, 12-03-2018; Author's interview with Enrique, resident in Cataluña, 13-03-2018.

[42] Literally vaccination, refers to a sum of money that should be paid to a criminal actor, normally in exchange for some sort of security.

[43] Interview with Guillermo Duran Uribe, Personero, 03-04-2018.

machines, who owns many more slot machines around the city, pays a monthly fee to the gang to make sure that "the machines keep working".[44] This resident claimed that she was not forced to place the machines, and earned a percentage of the revenues. However, in many cases in Medellín, armed control is used to force business owners to place the machines, without the required permits and without any revenues for the owners of the establishments (Tobón Orozco & Valencia Agudelo, 2017: 94).

Different neighbourhoods, different realities?

> "it's a strange social difference, I can walk four blocks up [to Barrio Pablo Escobar] and see poverty and if I turn left [to Cataluña] I can see people with more money or houses with more amenities."[45]

I selected three neighbourhoods in the Comuna 9 that were bordering each other, yet were quite different in socio-economic terms. Below I introduce these neighbourhoods, and discuss local security actors, and similarities and differences between the three neighbourhoods in this regard.

Cataluña

The neighbourhood Cataluña is located high on the hills of Comuna 9. Its most eastern part is the natural border of the city, after which fields and forests start. More than 400 meters above the central part of the city, views are beautiful. The neighbourhood was, in contrast to many of Medellín's neighbourhoods this high up in the hills, completely planned. Low apartment blocks and houses surrounded by green spaces make up the largest part of the neighbourhood. When built, these green spaces were public and available to everyone, but in the past three decades most of the housing projects have been turned into *urbanizaciónes* (gated communities), private areas surrounded by fences, where private security companies guard the entrances. Most houses in Cataluña are more expensive than houses in La Milagrosa and especially Barrio Pablo Escobar, also because of the service costs that come with living in an urbanización. Many people living here have jobs in the formal sector, necessary to be able to cover the higher living costs.[46] Other indications of more wealth are for example that more

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[44] Author's interview with business owner in Comuna 9, 08-03-2018.
[45] Author's interview with Sebastián, resident in La Milagrosa, 21-03-2018.
[46] Author's Interview with Alejandro, Resident in Cataluña, 19-03-2018.

residents own a car.[47] It is a residential area, and state presence is mainly visible through spatial aspects like playing grounds and small soccer fields. Police can enter the neighbourhood without problems, but rarely visit the gated communities where security provision is partly taken over by private security companies. The police department indicates that there are five police officers working in the *cuadrante* Cataluña.[48]

Concerning the different actors in the neighbourhood, there are some critiques on the JAC, related to how it functions, but generally its members are not perceived as corrupt or affiliated to illegal actors. More specifically, one member of the JAC of Cataluña indicated that the council she was in was not functioning well because the president did not have a vision of community and was not seen as a leader to all in the neighbourhood. She did not think that he was influenced by criminal actors though.[49]

The neighbourhood does have its 'own' combo.[50] But this combo does not have a strong control over the neighbourhood. The spatial design of the neighbourhood, with many gated communities and few businesses, makes it difficult for gangs to extort people or businesses here directly. There still is extortion in some ways, like the extortion of delivery trucks. How one specific gated community still experiences extortion despite its gates, is discussed in the third assemblage of next chapter. Few residents in Cataluña say that they are aware of gangs in their neighbourhood. In this way, residents' experience is very different from that of residents in Barrio Pablo Escobar and other more marginalised neighbourhoods in Medellín where gangs often have a very prominent role in the neighbourhood (Abello-Colak and Guarneros-Meza, 2014; Arias, 2017). The lack of awareness does not mean that gangs do not influence daily live at all. Combos from the surrounding neighbourhoods also at times are active in Cataluña, breaking the rule that it is not allowed to steal in the territory of a combo belonging to the same larger structure. Because the combo in Cataluña is not very powerful, this can happen without consequences for the thief, something that is less likely to happen in Barrio Pablo Escobar or La Milagrosa. Nevertheless, residents all indicated that they felt very safe, referring to matters like crime and being able to leave their doors unlocked.

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[47] Field observations

[48] The police works with a system in which comunas are divided into *cuadrantes*, smaller surveillance areas often overlapping with a neighbourhood, in which four to seven officers are employed. For more information: https://www.policia.gov.co/cuadrantes

[49] Author's interview with Carolina, Resident and Social Leader in Cataluña, 26-04-2018.

[50] Author's interview with Enrique, resident in Cataluña, 13-03-2018, Interview Daniel Salesman.

La Milagrosa

La Milagrosa is a lively lower middle class neighbourhood built in the early 20th century. The centre of social live in the neighbourhood is at the park La Milagrosa, surrounded by small restaurants, shops and a large church. It has been a park for a long time, and once marked the upper eastern border of the city. People would go here to breath fresh air. When the city expanded and neighbourhoods like Barrio Pablo Escobar were built, the security situation changed. In the 1990s, the park in the centre of La Milagrosa became the central point where different gangs would meet, often with shootings as a result.[51] After the big gang wars of the 1990s the neighbourhood became more peaceful again. Residents indicate that the neighbourhood is now relatively safe.[52]

The state is present in La Milagrosa providing extensive services. There are institutions like schools and cultural centres, and public spaces like parks and sport facilities.[53] There is also a small police unit located in the central park, from which about twelve policemen operate in different *cuadrantes*.[54] The neighbourhood was always formal. There is also a military base in the neighbourhood, artillery battalion 27.

Residents in La Milagrosa have very mixed opinions about the community leaders in their neighbourhood. There is suspicion about whether they are affiliated with combos or local politicians. One community leader in the neighbourhood is widely seen as corrupt by the residents. During the elections, he was seen buying votes of both individuals and social groups.[55] Other communal leaders are also seen as ambiguous. Several residents indicated that the JAC would only help you if you were part of their clientele network.[56]

La Milagrosa does 'have' its own combo, 'El Corredor', named after a square. This square is a strategic place because it can easily be monitored. It can only be entered from two sides. One of these sides is a staircase, which is constantly being watched by *carritos*. If police or other

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[51] Author's interview with Santiago, resident and social worker in La Milagrosa, 10-03-2018

[52] Author's interview with Santiago, resident and social worker in La Milagrosa, 10-03-2018, Author's interview with Pablo, resident and social leader in La Milagrosa, 07-03-2018; Author's interview with Ana, Business owner in La Milagrosa, 14-05-2018

[53] For an extensive list see Plan de desarrollo local Comuna 9 2016-2019 (Alcaldia de Medellín)

[54] Author's Interview with Antonio, Resident and former police officer in Cataluña, 06-03-2018. For more information: https://www.policia.gov.co/cuadrantes

[55] Field observations March 2018; Author's interview with Carolina, Resident and Social Leader in Cataluña, 26-04-2018; Author's interview with Luisa, resident and social leader in Comuna 9, 15-03-2018.

[56] Author's interview with Santiago, resident and social worker in La Milagrosa, 10-03-2018; Author's interview with Ana, business owner in La Milagrosa, 14-05-2018

suspicious persons arrive, the *carritos* communicate this to the ones upstairs.[57] The exact political position of this combo is ambiguous. Some sources indicated that this combo is hierarchically directly under Caicedo and has territorial control over about half of Comuna 9.[58]

Although only four cases of extortion have been reported since 2014, the actual number of cases of extortion is likely to be a lot higher.[59] While residents mentioned anything between "I do not know if people are being extorted at the moment" and "the stores in La Milagrosa pay the vacuna," the majority indicated that some shops do pay vacuna, but not all of them.[60] It is thus likely that this combo does extort local businesses in La Milagrosa. Other types of extortion which are likely to take place are related to the 'public' buses , delivery trucks, and gambling (Abello Colak and Pearce, 2015, p. 223).[61] The extortion means that everyone pays indirectly to the gangs. As a resident put it:

> "If you ate in a restaurant here in the comuna, you paid vacuna. If you took the bus, you paid vacuna. If you bought an egg, you paid *vacuna*. You pay to a shopkeeper, but the shopkeeper pays to the gang."[62]

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[57] Author's interview with Monica, local researcher and resident, 10-04-2018
[58] Author's interview with Valentina, politician and former social leader in Comuna 9, 03-04-2018
[59] Based on research done by Moncada and colleagues (2018), who indicate that in all neighbourhoods they visited in Medellín, extortion is underreported and on various interviews with residents of La Milagrosa; Data set extortion 2014-2018. Received from SISC.
[60] Author's interview with Ana, Business owner in La Milagrosa, 14-05-2018.
[61] Author's interview with Carolina, Resident and Social Leader in Cataluña, 26-04-2018; Author's interview with David, baker and resident in La Milagrosa, 15-03-2018.
[62] Author's interview with David, baker and resident in La Milagrosa, 26-02-2018.

Image 2. Mural of Pablo Escobar, a tourist attraction which is centrally located in Barrio Pablo Escobar
© www.clarin.com

Barrio Pablo Escobar was financed and constructed by drug lord Pablo Escobar. He relocated people living on a garbage belt in Moravia, another neighbourhood in Medellín, and gave them the keys and proofs of ownership. There is a sense of gratefulness among the residents for what he did.[63] Many interviewees state that social bonds between neighbours are stronger here than in the two other neighbourhoods.[64] It is a neighbourhood in *estrato* two, and although it is bordering with Cataluña and La Milagrosa, differences between the neighbourhoods are clearly visible at first sight. Houses are generally more basic; many are not painted and have the typical roof made of corrugated iron.[65] The spatial design of the neighbourhood leaves less room for public space. There are no facilities like public squares or sports fields. For institutions like schools, residents have to go to the surrounding neighbourhoods. The police have access to the neighbourhood, although access is physically limited because there is only one road accessible for cars. The neighbourhood is a *cuadrante* appointed to five officers.[66] Security increased immensely in the past years. Until more or less in 2011, it was not safe to walk around in the dark, even for those living here, due to shootings.[67] Now, there are many

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[63] Field observations, various data February and March 2018.
[64] Author's interview with Carolina, Resident and Social Leader in Cataluña, 26-04-2018.
[65] Field observations, Feb-May 2018.
[66] For more information: https://www.policia.gov.co/cuadrantes.
[67] Author's interview with Nicolás, resident in Barrio Pablo Escobar, 10-03-2018.

bars and shops that stay open until late, and tourists even come to the neighbourhood to look at a mural of Pablo Escobar.[68]

Most prominent non-state formal institutions in the neighbourhood are the communal councils. It is likely that one of the communal leaders is part of the local combo or at least affiliated with them. For example, there was a meeting with different social leaders planned in Barrio Pablo Escobar. When two other social leaders walked into the neighbourhood to go to the meeting, men of the combo started to follow and intimidate them, so they called this leader and he sent the gang members away.[69] A resident tells how the combo respects this leader: "Without him no one can do anything because he is the president of this neighbourhood. Everyone knows him and respects him, the combo respects him."[70] Another resident tells how he does not feel represented by this JAC because with the things they do, the events and parties they organize, the ones who enjoy it the most are the *duros*.[71]

Residents indicate that there are two combos in Barrio Pablo Escobar, one that has criminal control in the lower part of the neighbourhood, and one that controls the upper part of the neighbourhood. They are most visible selling drugs at several locations within the neighbourhood. They also keep track of who enters the neighbourhood. Both combos are part of Caicedo, and generally get along well. Multiple interviewees indicated that they were being extorted by the combos. A taxi driver from the neighbourhood claimed he was charged 5000 pesos a week.[72] Nicolás, another resident told me:

> "For example, if you have a car, and you keep it in the street, there outdoors, if they tell you that they are taking care of you, you have to pay them for protection."[73]

A salesman, selling items door to door told that he had to pay to the *combos* in Barrio Pablo Escobar, among other neighbourhoods, to enter. He paid for protection. While he sells in the territory of a gang he won't be robbed. He has to renegotiate his safety upon entering every new territory, paying around ten to forty thousand pesos per neighbourhood. This often adds up to more than a hundred thousand pesos a day:

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[68] Field observations, Author's interview with Nicolás, resident in Barrio Pablo Escobar, 10-03-2018.

[69] Author's interview with Carolina, Resident and Social Leader in Cataluña, 26-04-2018.

[70] Author's interview with Daniela, resident in Barrio Pablo Escobar, 12-03-2018

[71] *Duros*: the tough ones, the leaders of a combo. Author's interview with Nicolás, resident in Barrio Pablo Escobar, 10-03-2018.

[72] Author's conversation with Camillo, taxi driver from Barrio Pablo Escobar, 16-03-2018.

[73] Author's interview with Nicolás, resident in Barrio Pablo Escobar, 10-03-2018.

"If you don't pay, you can't enter a *barrio* [neighbourhood]. [When I arrive in a *barrio*] they come to me and one of them will tell me: 'Brother, I am the leader of this sector. You have to pay me to work here, I will give you some time to collect it' (..) It is a bit complicated, because a neighbourhood can have one person in command, but it is also possible that there are multiple gangs in a neighbourhood and that every gang wants you to pay to be able to sell things in that *barrio*, I don't like Loreto for this reason."[74]

Concluding remarks

Medellín has a very violent history. However, since the Pacto de San Jeronimo between the city's two major criminal actors in 2013, the city appears to be a lot safer when one looks at the homicide rate. I illustrated that security in Medellín is broader than just the homicide rate, and that qualitative research can shed more light on what security means on the local level of a neighbourhood. Next, I aimed to answer the following sub-question: 'how are various local security actors and institutions present in the Comuna 9 and the three neighbourhoods?' I identified the police, communal councils, and combos as the most relevant local security actors in the three different neighbourhoods. Combos are most clearly present in Barrio Pablo Escobar. Their members monitor who enters the neighbourhood, and charge *vacuna* for various matters. In La Milagrosa, combos also extort businesses, but the average resident does not directly interact with them. In Cataluña, the combo is mainly active selling drugs. Since most residents live in gated communities, many are not aware of these actors in their neighbourhood. The combos in these neighbourhoods are all part of the same larger criminal structure.

Physical presence of the state in the three neighbourhoods is clearest in La Milagrosa, with its park, schools, cultural and sports facilities. In Cataluña, there are some sports fields and playgrounds, though many of these have been incorporated in the last thirty years and are now within the fenced areas of the gated communities. In Barrio Pablo Escobar, there is hardly any physical presence of the state, due to a lack of space. The police is most visible in La Milagrosa, where a CAI is located, but is also frequently seen in the other neighbourhoods, each forming a *cuadrante* in which five police officers work.

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[74] Barrio Pablo Escobar is a part of Loreto; Author's interview with Juan, door-to-door seller, 10-03-2018.

The role of the JACs and other communal councils as security providers are at times dubious. Some of the leaders are perceived to have connections with the local combos. In the case of the JAC in Barrio Pablo Escobar, it is likely that there is a link between one of the communal leaders and one of the two local combos. In La Milagrosa, one of the communal leaders has been seen buying votes during elections.

Chapter III: Urban security assemblages in Comuna 9

In this chapter, I aim to answer the main question by discussing four security assemblages that emerge out of the interaction between various formal and informal actors, security practices, institutions and spatial elements. As illustrated in the theoretical chapter, I use Müller's categorisation into three types of assemblages in my own work, since I find the way he uses urban security assemblages as a heuristic lens for assessing security-related practices of politics useful. In addition to the three types of assemblages Müller presents, I add a fourth type, highlighting interactions between residents and private security actors. I aim to illustrate how a large variety of security practices exists on a very local level, with clear differences within and between neighbourhoods.

I identify five 'actor-components' that I think are the most important within the different assemblages. These are 'residents', 'criminal actors', 'state actors', 'formal community councils' and 'private security providers.' Each of these actors plays a role in the security practices in Comuna 9, together shaping the different location-specific social realities. In each of the four assemblages, two of these actors are central. I look at assemblages in which the following relations are central: 'residents-state actors', 'residents – criminal actors', 'residents – private security actors', 'criminal actors – state actors'. This does not mean that other relations, e.g. 'residents-formal community councils' are not existing or not important. However, these relations were less clearly manifested in the neighbourhoods of my interest in relation to how was dealt with security threats. Individuals can be part of several assemblages in different roles using different security practices. Everyone living in these neighbourhoods is a resident, but at the same time they can be affiliated with an organised crime structure, with the police (and work in a different Comuna), or with a local community council.

The assemblages central in this chapter all emerge as a response to a security issue or problem. These issues or problems are partly similar for local actors in the three neighbourhoods, and partly differ both between individuals and neighbourhoods. All local actors can be part of an assemblage, which makes the categorisation go beyond the dichotomy of governing actor or governed resident. In addition to case specific security threats, I identified several general security threats to the different local actors that I discuss first to provide a better understanding of the current security situation in the three neighbourhoods.

The residents I interviewed all indicated that their neighbourhood is a lot safer than it used to

be, which is in line with parameters like the homicide rate, though not completely in line with the perceptions of residents about security (Medellín Cómo Vamos, 2018). Regarding former insecurity, residents talk about the *fronteras invisibles*, invisible borders, that existed between gang territories. Because even young children were used to spy or transport messages, no one could safely cross these invisible borders. If you were not recognized, there was a chance that you would be shot. Until the early 2000s, especially crossing Comuna 9's border with Comuna 8 was a safety risk for residents from both comunas.[75] Now there aren't real *fronteras invisibles* anymore in Comuna 9, although the entrances of Barrio Pablo Escobar are still being watched by *carritos*.[76] After accessing this neighbourhood as a stranger, there is still a big chance that you will be asked what you are going to do, or that you are extorted. However, people are not being shot anymore for simply crossing the border.[77]

Security threats and issues

As Müller states, security assemblages emerge in response to particular security threats or issues (Müller, 2015, p. 111). In this part, and throughout the discussions of the assemblages, I address the question 'what are the security threats or issues for local actors in Cataluña, La Milagrosa and Barrio Pablo Escobar?' There are large differences between the neighbourhoods regarding security. As we saw in the contextual chapter, Barrio Pablo Escobar historically has had the highest gang presence of the three neighbourhoods. The combos are still there, but physical safety increased tremendously here. Residents from this neighbourhood all told stories about how they had to lock themselves in their houses at night, while the bullets were flying around.[78] One resident used the monthly number of shootings to rate the security situation, which also indicates how relative the experience of security is.[79] In La Milagrosa and Cataluña, the security situation improved along the same chronological line as in Barrio Pablo Escobar, all three being very geographically close to each other, although these neighbourhoods had never experienced security issues and threats to the same extent as Barrio Pablo Escobar.

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[75] Author's interview with José, social leader and ex-gang member in the Comuna 9, 13-03-2018; Author's interview with Luisa, resident and social leader in Comuna 9, 15-03-2018.

[76] Author's interview with Nicolás, Resident in Barrio Pablo Escobar, 10-03-2018; field observations, various data.

[77] Author's interview with Claudia, resident in Barrio Pablo Escobar, 12-03-2018; Author's interview with Daniela, resident owner in Barrio Pablo Escobar, 08-03-2018.

[78] Author's interview with Nicolás, resident in Barrio Pablo Escobar, 10-03-2018; Author's interview with Daniela, resident in Barrio Pablo Escobar, 12-03-2018; Author's interview with Claudia, resident in Barrio Pablo Escobar, 12-03-2018; Author's interview with Mariana, Resident and Business owner in Barrio Pablo Escobar, 08-03-2018.

[79] Author's interview with Nicolás, resident in Barrio Pablo Escobar, 10-03-2018.

Many present-day security issues arise out of the illegal drug trade and distribution. Many interviewees pointed out that there is a transformation in the city, but especially in Comuna 8 and 9 regarding the degree to which drug-use in the comunas is encouraged by the combos.[80] Traditionally, the focus of criminal organisations selling drugs was on the export to other countries, like the USA (McDermott, 2018, p. 4).[81] Cocaine transport from Colombia today is higher than ever, but there no longer is one party controlling the business from A to Z (McDermott, 2018, p. 8). According to a former gang member in the Comuna 9, the criminal organisations used to prohibit the sale of drugs in schools.[82] Lower benefits of exporting drugs abroad and less power of the criminal structures made combos abandon these kind of rules.[83] Rather than aiming at a high profit with a high risk, criminal organisations in Medellín distribute more drugs than ever within the city, which might lead to lower profits, but is almost risk free.[84] Actively trying to attract new consumers within Medellín was first implemented in Comuna 9.[85] A direct risk for residents is that their children can get in touch with drugs at a younger age than before. A teacher from a school where many kids from all three neighbourhoods go to, explained to me:

> "Our sector is marked by drugs. What you see in this neighbourhood is not only that the drug dealers are the parents of some of the children, but that they use those children as *carritos*. The parents give them small envelops to bring the drugs to school. They send marihuana, cocaine, poppers or other substances, any type of drugs really. During classes, or when they are in a place without supervision, in the bathroom or during the breaks, they distribute it. (..) It is the mere fact that the children consuming drugs is already a problem and every time in minor education [students 4-11] it gets worse, first it was the eleven year olds, then the ten-year olds, then the nine-year olds, and now I have a child of four and a child of five in my class that started to use."[86]

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[80] Author's interviews with various residents and social leaders in Comuna 9, February – May 2018.
[81] Author's interview with José, social leader and ex-gang member in the Comuna 9, 13-03-2018.
[82] Author's interview with José, social leader and ex-gang member in the Comuna 9, 13-03-2018. See also McLean: "[the gangs] would take pains to point out that they never encouraged drug-use in Medellín itself, nor would they go near the toxic substance bazuco" (Filippone, 1994 in Maclean, 2014: 23).
[83] Author's interview with José, social leader and ex-gang member in the Comuna 9, 13-03-2018; Author's interview with Carlos, former combo member, 29-04-2018.
[84] Author's interview with Guillermo Durán Uribe, *Personero* de Medellín (See appendix IV), 03-04-2018.
[85] Author's interview with Valentina, politician and former social leader in Comuna 9, 03-04-2018; Author's interview with José, social leader and ex-gang member in the Comuna 9, 13-03-2018.
[86] Author's interview with Maria, Teacher, 12-03-2018.

Also problematic is the forced direct and indirect payment for all kinds of services and security to the criminal organisations, as described in the contextual chapter. More in Barrio Pablo Escobar than in two other neighbourhoods, residents risk physical violence if they for example do not pay the *vacuna* for their business or car. However, in La Milagrosa do criminal actors at times also interfere with residents' personal life, for example in the case of domestic violence.[87] Not all interviewees recognized this.[88] In the assemblage chapter more attention is paid to this paradox.

So far I discussed security from a resident perspective. However, I also examine an assemblage that emerges specifically out of security issues of criminal actors. The members of the criminal structures active in these neighbourhoods partly experience the same issues as 'ordinary' residents, while also experiencing other security threats. As explained above, the criminal structures identified in the three neighbourhoods use their territorial control to earn money, mainly through extortion and the sale of drugs. With official policies aiming at reducing their influence and power, gang affiliated residents experience a constant security threat. While the first three assemblages are best applicable to 'ordinary' residents, the fourth assemblage primarily relates to the interaction between non-state criminal actors and state actors.

Assemblage I: bringing in public security

As discussed in the introduction to this chapter, residents have to respond to a wide range of minor and major security threats, partly depending on the neighbourhood that they live in. In this first assemblage, I describe how the search for public security by residents assembles different components into a greater whole. Main components are the residents, the state actors, the security practices and the urban context.

The security assemblage

The assemblage emerges out of the search for formal public security by residents. Most interviewed residents in Comuna 9 indicated that they would go to legal state actors for security in most cases. Nevertheless, most residents made statements about the police like: "I do not think they are efficient, they seem corrupt, they allow themselves to be bribed easily",

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[87] Author's interview with Sebastián, resident in La Milagrosa, 21-03-2018.
[88] E.g. Author's interview with César, resident and social leader in La Milagrosa, 20-03-2018.

and "they are very corrupt".[89] While almost all residents interviewed said that they saw the police as corrupt, unreliable and inefficient, most of them did say they would go to the police in case of a security issue. In this sense, the current case is remarkably different from results by studies done in more marginalised neighbourhoods where many residents sought for security beyond the state (e.g. Abello-Colak & Guarneros-Meza, 2014; Arias, 2017; Jaffe, 2013).[90] In Müller's research in Mexico-City for example, this strategy of bringing in public security is often only used when residents are unable to deal with the security threats themselves, like cases of rape or homicide. In these cases, despite negative experiences with local policing, residents called for police intervention (Müller, 2015, p. 119). Contrary, in the case of Comuna 9, many residents simply regard turning to state actors as the only option for security.

The concept of subjective governance can help to explain the paradox between perceptions and behaviour. Harbers et al. found that the degree to which citizens are supportive of and hold positive attitudes towards the state and informal governance actors are unconnected (Harbers, Jaffe and Cummings, 2016). This means that negative attitudes towards the police do not imply positive attitudes towards the gangs, which is supported by my empirical data. None of the residents I interviewed saw the combos as having a lot of legitimacy, despite their governance role. Subjective governance cannot explain why citizens still ask the police for help if they regard them as inefficient and corrupt, but it does explain why citizens do not necessarily like informal governance actors if their trust in the formal actors is low. Many residents therefore do go to the state actors in case of an issue. Ana: "I teach my children to go to the police, we *try* to think that the police are good, we believe in the institution as such" (my emphasis).[91]

Concluding remarks

Concluding, in all three neighbourhoods, most residents claimed that they would go to the police in the case of a security threat or issue, but there are local differences. The fact that this is the most socially desirable option might be part of why there was such a clear pattern overall. In La Milagrosa, it seems to be the dominant security practice. In Cataluña, most residents live in gated communities, choosing formal private security over formal public

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[89] Author's Interview with Alejandro, Resident in Cataluña, 19-03-2018; Author's interview with David, baker and resident in La Milagrosa, 15-03-2018.
[90] In the second and third assemblage I discuss cases of how residents do search for security beyond the state in Comuna 9.
[91] Author's interview with Ana, Business owner in La Milagrosa, 14-05-2018.

security, as I discuss in the third assemblage. In Barrio Pablo Escobar, there are also residents that indicate that they go to formal state actors, but searching security beyond the state is also very common, which I discuss in the next assemblage.

Assemblage II: security beyond the state –bringing in criminal actors

The security assemblage

The second urban security assemblage that can be found in Comuna 9 emerges out of efforts by residents to confront crime, violence or conflicts at the local level without the involvement of state agencies (Müller, 2015, p. 112). The assemblage emerges out of family conflicts, problems stemming from petty crime or brawls involving residents from the same street or neighbourhood. The solution to these problems is then found in calling in the help of local 'moral authorities'. This could be local strongmen or family members who were asked to intervene in order to solve the problem in question (Müller, 2015, p. 113). I acknowledge that residents do turn to non-state actors like family members and community leaders, but I choose to specifically look at how some residents in Barrio Pablo Escobar, La Milagrosa and Cataluña turn to combos when dealing with a security problem for the simple reason that I found more evidence about the latter situation, than about the former.

In Medellín, scholars found similar patterns of residents solving problems without state interference to the examples that Müller provides (2015). Abello-Colak and Guarneros-Meza for example state that in the marginalised neighbourhoods where they conducted their research "from small quarrels to serious offences, many residents resort to the local gangs. Criminal actors play a major role in 'resolving' conflicts arising in homes, neighbourhoods, workplaces and schools" (2014, p. 3285). Various reasons why residents go to non-state actors for security have been identified, e.g. legal mechanisms that are regarded as time-consuming, less effective or inaccessible (Abello-Colak and Guarneros-Meza, 2014, p. 3279), a strong sense of community in which help is first sought within the own community (Müller, 2015), and unwillingness of the state to tackle security issues (Jaffe, 2013). Also, in areas with consolidated gang presence, these gangs often do not want residents to bring in state actors into their neighbourhoods to solve issues. In other words, in some situations, residents do not have a free choice when choosing a security provider.

As became clear in earlier chapters, residents in Comuna 9 are in general better off in socio-economic terms compared to the neighbourhoods in Medellín in which scholars like Abello-Colak and Guarneros-Meza (2014) and Arias (2017) conducted empirical research. While less

residents search for security beyond the state, there still are cases of residents who go to combos (or other non-state actors) to solve security issues. It is questionable whether the reasons mentioned above for going to a non-state actor for security also have explanatory power in the richer neighbourhoods of Comuna 9.

Residents' relations with combos in this comuna varied largely, from residents claiming they would tell the boss of a combo what they could or could not do to residents claiming they had never encountered someone from a combo. Since most, but not all, residents claimed they would go to the respective state actors in case of a security issue, there seems to be some sort of individual choice, partly depending on the gang presence in a neighbourhood. In general, combo presence is historically strongest in Barrio Pablo Escobar, lower in La Milagrosa and lowest in Cataluña.

Hence, what did lead some people to go to a combo for help, while most others did not search for this type of security beyond the state? Similar to residents in Müller's research, and earlier theorized by Hilgers, some residents 'consider patron-client exchanges a strategic mechanism for achieving physical and economic security' (Hilgers, 2009, p. 51; Müller, 2015, p. 123). Most residents who did turn to combos were young and had friends or at least acquaintances from school or other parts of their social life that were part of a combo. Young people in general often knew others who were in a gang, mainly because recruitment for a large part takes place in a school setting:

> "It's very simple, after school's out, there are boys who are a little older than those who are studying at school, they influence those who are in school, they would show them expensive things, telling them indirectly that they can also have that kind of thing [if they join the gang]. On a Saturday, if they go to a bar or a disco, they see that with these people they can have the girls who they have seen their whole life since school but who do not pay attention to them because they are poor, so they see that [by joining a gang] they will get these things much easier. They will look better because they are not going with their friends anymore carrying their backpacks, they no longer walk on foot. Instead, the recruiters take them on their bikes. All those things are part of a friendship that does not exist and they start getting into those criminal gangs, that's the most obvious way, that is what happened in my school, that's what I have seen."[92]

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[92] Author's interview with Sebastián, resident in La Milagrosa, 21-03-2018.

Another student, Frank, told me how schools can unintentionally make it easier for their students to get in touch with the gangs and drugs outside of a school. At his school, a strictly catholic one, students who were late had to wait outside the school gates for two hours, which often let to contact between them and the members of the gang who were standing around the corner: "it was risky for the students, because next to the school there were people [from a gang] selling and using drugs. Some of the students who were late would become friends with them and started to buy and use as well. Parents complained about this so they changed this rule and this partly solved the problem, but the gang is still outside my school."[93]

Contacts with members of combos are not exclusively maintained by young people of course, but they are the ones who get in touch with them most easily, even if they themselves do not engage in illegal behaviour. The residents that went to these gang members for security did not trust the police and regarded criminal actors as more efficient than going to the police when searching for security.[94] Interestingly, almost all other residents interviewed also indicated that they saw the police as inefficient, yet they did not react by searching security by asking criminal actors for support. Individuals' relations to persons within combos enable some to look for security beyond the state. Others who do not have these relations, despite their limited trust in state actors, do not have alternatives in regard to their security provision.

Below, I provide different examples that shed some light on the relations between 'ordinary' residents and combos regarding security. These relations do not only take the form of residents asking combos for help, as we will see in the examples. The following cases present a glimpse into how security beyond the state is assembled in different ways by different people. The main argument is that 'social relations' are essential in determining whether residents go to criminal actors when dealing with security issues or threats.

Case I: Forced security beyond the state

Once criminal actors are involved in the security provision, unwritten rules often cease to exist in their territory.[95] Of course, unwritten rules can be found anywhere, but the unwritten rules

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[93] Author's Interview with Frank, Resident in Cataluña, 10-03-2018.
[94] Author's interview with Enrique, resident in Cataluña, 13-03-2018, Author's interview with Sebastián, resident in La Milagrosa, 21-03-2018; Author's interview with Marta, resident and social leader in Cataluña, 08-04-2018; Author's interview with Nicolás, resident in Barrio Pablo Escobar, 10-03-2018.
[95] e.g. the rule mentioned in the contextual chapter that in some neighbourhoods in Medellín it is not allowed to wear a helmet because the local combos want to see who is entering the neighbourhood.

made by criminal actors are generally contradicting the state laws. Also, there is a clear hierarchical direction in which more powerful individuals or groups impose these rules on a territory. In research on marginalised neighbourhoods, these unwritten rules are often encountered (e.g. Abello-Colak & Guarneros-Meza, 2014; Arias, 2017; Jaffe, 2013).

In Comuna 9, the unwritten rules about what is appropriate behaviour and what is not, seem to apply to some groups of residents in the three neighbourhoods, but not to all. Inappropriate behaviour is potentially followed with the intervention of a powerful person like a local criminal boss. Sebastián, a resident in La Milagrosa, gave the following example of the local combo maintaining order through informal rules of what is appropriate behaviour and what is not:

> "(..) let's say you had a problem in your house, a family problem, that happens a lot here, that suddenly they hit their women, they will try to keep it quiet but if people find out about it, then they have a problem. Those combos are supposed to maintain a certain law in the neighbourhood, which means there should not be that kind of problems. If they consider that the person who hit his girl, or something like that, was wrong, then that person is called *estar caliente* which means that 'you are hot in the neighbourhood'. When you are in this position it is better to leave, because they are going to hit you or they will kill you. (..) You have to go until things calm down, until you manage to talk to the leaders so that you are no longer *caliente* and they charge you a fine of one million pesos so that you don't hit someone again or don't steal, and so they don't kill you. This happens to the one who is *caliente*, recently it happened to a friend of mine."[96]

The quote above shows that the combo in La Milagrosa can be very influential on the local level, interfering deeply with one's personal live through political and coercive power, although in this example the person involved in the conflict did not call the combo himself. He was reported by other people, who informed the combo. This might indicate that there is a high level of social control within some groups of residents (such as people watching if others do not beat their family members inside their own houses). It seems that within certain groups of people, this form of conflict resolution 'beyond the state' is deeply embedded in the social structures. A big difference between similar cases in more marginalised neighbourhoods, and

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[96] Author's interview with Sebastián, resident in La Milagrosa, 21-03-2018.

the case I described above, is that these unwritten rules only apply to some groups of people, and not to others.

I heard similar stories about informal gang rules from residents in Barrio Pablo Escobar. The order maintained by local combos is more clear in that neighbourhood, with combos actively watching the entrances, being very visible to the residents.[97] In Cataluña, where most people live in gated communities, informal rules imposed by non-state actors exist but generally only apply to gang related activities, and do generally not influence personal lives. There are for example regulations on where you can consume the drugs you buy from a gang.[98] Other rules relate more directly to the safety in the whole comuna:

> "For example, the hooligans from Medellín and Nacional [the two professional soccer teams], they are told they cannot fight in the Comuna 9. The combos tell them to fight in the city centre, this neighbourhood is very organized in that. (..) Another rule is that if you buy drugs you cannot smoke them there, they have their patches where they sell drugs normally, if you buy marijuana you cannot smoke it there, you are going to smoke it somewhere else, because it makes them angry.[99]

It is thus not allowed to consume drugs near the place where you bought it, which is a measure that reduces a combo's visibility. The sentence "because there are children around" implies that good relations within the neighbourhood are also important for a combo.[100] Most informal rules thus seem to apply to behaviour that is not performed by a lot of people either. This might explain why some interviewees indicate that the combo's rules apply to everyone, while most people claim they are not aware of the existence of these rules.

Case II: Acting prior to theft due to connections

A second example of how various actors and practices were assembled in the search for security beyond the state is the story of Enrique, a resident in Cataluña who sold his motorbike after he was informed by a combo that it was going to be stolen. Although combos generally

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[97] Author's interview with Nicolás, resident in Barrio Pablo Escobar, 10-03-2018; Author's interview with Daniela, resident in Barrio Pablo Escobar, 12-03-2018, Author's interview with Claudia, resident in Barrio Pablo Escobar, 12-03-2018, Author's interview with Mariana, resident and business owner in Barrio Pablo Escobar, 08-03-2018.

[98] Author's interview with Enrique, resident in Cataluña, 13-03-2018; Author's interview with Marta, resident and social leader in Cataluña, 08-04-2018.

[99] Author's interview with Enrique, resident in Cataluña, 13-03-2018.

[100] Author's interview with Sebastián, resident in La Milagrosa, 21-03-2018.

uphold an order which includes that they do not steal in their own neighbourhood, individual members do break that rule at times. In this case, a friend of Enrique was part of the combo and knew what was going to happen, so he told Enrique's mother that Enrique should sell his motorbike:

> "I had a motorcycle, and it turned out someone I knew from school who was in the gang met my mom, and told her: 'tell your son to sell his motorbike, because guys from my combo want to steal it'. Then I had to sell the motorcycle. If they would have stolen it, I would have gone to them to ask them to return it, or else, I would have gone to the police. (..) I know them, so when I tell them that those of a certain combo have stolen something, many times they can recover it. You can also go to the police but it is not so efficient, it is not so effective."[101]

This is interesting because it shows how complicated the local reality is. In general, there is an unwritten rule that combos do not steal in their own neighbourhood. However, other combos at times do come to the neighbourhood to steal, and individual members of the combo do at times also break these rules by stealing in their own neighbourhood. And then, in the case a member does have personal relations with the potential victim, it turns out that he may warn him, despite the personal danger of informing about their activities that are illegal according to the unwritten laws of the combo itself. Although Enrique indicated that his first option if they had stolen the motor when it was still his, was to go to the combo, he did not see going to the informal actor as his only option. This is also interesting because it means that he was not so afraid that he would not dare to confront them. In other words, the combo also operates between certain boundaries of what is perceived as appropriate and wat is not. This resident told that his cousin, who also lived in Cataluña, was unluckier. When his motor was stolen, his cousin went to the combo in Cataluña to ask if they could help recover it, but they told him it was not stolen by them: "but my cousin had bad luck, they who stole it were from another comuna, so they [combo in Cataluña] could not do anything."[102]

Case III: Confronting local criminals

A third example of residents searching for security beyond the stat through bringing in criminal actors is through confronting local criminals. This strategy was for example used by Claudia, an older woman in Barrio Pablo Escobar to make sure that family members could

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[101] Author's interview with Enrique, resident in Cataluña, 13-03-2018.
[102] Author's interview with Enrique, resident in Cataluña, 13-03-2018.

visit her without having to pay to the combo for access to the upper-part of the neighbourhood. It shows the agency that people have even if there are gangs impacting their daily life.

> "I have told them, the guys from the combo, and even to one of their bosses: 'you know what, I will ask you a favour, please. I am among Pablo's [Escobar] family (..) Please be more careful. My sons don't live here. They live somewhere else, in other neighbourhoods. But as it is common, my kids come and visit often, every two weeks or so. So please be careful. If someone enters the neighbourhood first notice, and look where they are going, which house they enter, who they are. And if they are getting in a house, it is likely because they are family. So please ask them, but don't just grab people and extort them, and kill them when they don't want to pay. No, that is unacceptable. Make sure you first know who is who (…) I have talked to the boss of the guys who are down here, downstairs, I have spoken to him personally (..) And they listened. They respect me. Because they know I have been in the neighbourhood for a long time."[103]

The members of these combos normally live in the neighbourhoods where they are operating. As mentioned before, they are also related to a lot of the other residents, through friendship or family ties. This points again to the idea that the boundaries of what is 'appropriate criminal behaviour' are limited by social rules and depend on the neighbourhood.

Concluding remarks

I discussed examples of how residents search for security beyond the state by going to combos. Whether residents would do this largely depends on whether they have the necessary social relations with criminal actors. By making use of criminal actors as security providers these residents contribute to informal forms of political order that enables the emergence of security assemblages operating 'beyond the state.' Especially in Barrio Pablo Escobar, where gang presence historically has been highest, and to a lesser extent in La Milagrosa, where there is a combo and many residents feel ignored by state actors regarding their security demands, this assemblage emerges.[104] These types of solutions can be more efficient than turning to state actors for security (Abello-Colak and Guarneros-Meza, 2014, p. 3278; Müller, 2015, p. 115). These solutions do however come with constraints. A big constraint is that the security

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[103] Author's interview with Claudia, resident in Barrio Pablo Escobar, 12-03-2018.
[104] Author's interview with David, resident and baker in La Milagrosa, 15-03-2018; Author's interview with Sebastián, resident in La Milagrosa, 10-03-2018.

practices always work in both directions. Although ordinary residents may be able to make use of the more efficient problem-solving capacities of criminal actors, this also affects the informal rules that these criminal actors can impose on ordinary citizens. As Ana, resident in La Milagrosa, explained, going to combos has consequences for your relations with them:

> "when you ask for help from the combo, from whoever has armed power in the neighbourhood, [from that moment onwards] you simply belong to that combo, you are accepting what they do."[105]

Assemblage III: security beyond the state – bringing in private security

The third assemblage emerges from efforts of residents to be secure through privatisation. Residents do not only rely upon other actors for their security, but at times take measures without depending on the state or criminal actors. Widely spread throughout Medellín (and countless other places around the world) individuals take measures like putting bars in front of windows and doors. If this is not sufficient, residents can call in private security actors. In La Milagrosa, for example, you see private security companies guarding bigger businesses like the supermarket. In Barrio Pablo Escobar, formal private security is rarely seen. In Cataluña, there are many gated communities, guarded and fenced sectors, called *urbanizaciones* or *condominios*. I want to highlight one specific case, the urbanizacion *Parques de Cataluña*, to illustrate how an urban security assemblage emerged as a reaction to security threats from Barrio Pablo Escobar.

Parques de Cataluña

Parques de Cataluña is a sector in which around 1200 people live in 350 houses. The main entrance is guarded day and night by two guards. The two other entrances are monitored with cameras from the *porteria* (guardhouse) at the main gate, and can only be opened from the outside after permission of the guards. Inside the urbanización there are several small playing grounds, three small shops and several small businesses run by residents from within their houses (e.g. selling empanadas, making photocopies or selling ice-cream). There is also an office of the administration and a community hall operated by Inder, Medellín's public sports organisation. Houses are generally owned by the residents, although there are also landlords who rent their houses to people living in the urbanización while not living there themselves. Until about twelve years ago, this was not a gated community, but an 'open' neighbourhood.

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[105] Author's interview with Ana, Business owner in La Milagrosa, 14-05-2018.

Specific security issues in the past that the assemblage aimed to solve were for example robberies of motorbikes and extortion.[106] Before the urbanización was closed, it would happen that gang members from Barrio Pablo Escobar would knock on the doors at night and 'ask' for a contribution in the form of money because they had to bury a dead person. A resident explained:

> "Then we all had to give to finance the funeral. It was very common; they would come on Thursday or Friday evenings and then we all had to give. It is a rare form of extortion. They told us specifically that they came from Barrio Pablo Escobar, so we all gave out of fear. It was not a lot, 2.000 or 3.000 pesos, but we all gave."[107]

The security assemblage

Securing the neighbourhood happened in phases. All the measures were initiated and paid for by the residents themselves. The first measure people took to increase their safety was to install bars in front of their windows and doors. A second measure taken in the neighbourhood was to hire private guards. This did not solve the problems that residents experienced, as it turned out that some of the guards were having their own alliances with combos, allowing the robberies and extortion to continue.[108] After that the gates were placed. However, in the first years of the fence, motorbikes were still robbed every once in a while. The next measure that was taken was to install cameras:

> "What still happened two years after we closed the *urbanización* is the robbery of motorcycles. They would come from Pablo Escobar and they would steal the bikes. They would just come with a pick-up truck and load the bikes on the truck and drive away."[109] "Now there are cameras, the parking is monitored, there is the *porteria* (guardhouse). Small things, but it helps, before they would simply grab the bike and leave."[110]

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[106] Author's Interview with Antonio, Resident and former police officer in Cataluña, 06-03-2018; Author's Interview with Elena, administrator in Parques de Cataluña, 06-03-2018.

[107] Author's interview with Carolina, Resident and Social Leader in Cataluña, 26-04-2018.

[108] Author's interview with Carolina, resident and social leader in Cataluña, 26-04-2018.

[109] Author's Interview with Andres, police officer and resident in Cataluña, 29-03-2018.

[110] Author's interview with Carolina, resident and social leader in Cataluña, 26-04-2018.

Another resident confirms this, saying it is much calmer and he can go to one of the neighbourhood stores leaving his door open, something that would have been risky before.[111]

So far, this case illustrates that citizens can take security in their own hands by negotiating their security position with the state and take both individual (bars, cameras) and collective protective measures (gates, private security, cameras). Collective measures were only possible because the spatial dimension allowed it. *Parques de Cataluña* was a planned neighbourhood, borders were clearly defined, and there was physical space to build fences. A similar security strategy would for example not have been possible in La Milagrosa, where houses are built right next to the street. The state did not pay for the securitizing of the urbanización and gave away its responsibility for the maintenance of the formally public ground (e.g. roads, parks, playing grounds) within the urbanización. In this way, it can also be seen as an example of the neoliberal trend in the Global South of privatising security (Pearce, 2010, p. 296). Residents do not just pay for private security, but also for maintenance of the formerly public spaces that only they have access to.

Effects on social life

The fences changed social rules within the urbanización. A property administrator was hired who changed formal rules within the urbanización. For example, in relation to the three hole in the wall shops:

> "Before we closed the *unidad* they stayed open until the time they wanted, because the stores are in the houses. So, Doña Marta normally closed around 12 at night, Doña Inés closed her store at 10 and Don Hernando closed at 11. But when this neighbourhood turned into an *urbanización,* the administration came and the council of owners decided that all shops have to close at 10 o'clock at night."[112]

Another rule is that each house is only allowed to use one parking space, to make sure that people who arrive late from work can still park their car. Thus, the assemblage also impacted matters that did not directly relate to solving the security threats. The fences shaped an environment in which more social rules could be imposed upon the residents. This also led to friction, as the administrator received multiple threats, for example because residents did not

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[111] Author's Interview with Antonio, former police officer and resident in Cataluña, 06-03-2018.
[112] Author's interview with Carolina, resident and social leader in Cataluña, 26-04-2018.

agree with the parking rule of one car per house. The administrator said she did not know whether the source of the threat was an individual or a group.[113]

Remaining security problems

All residents mentioned that Parques de Cataluña is a lot safer now than it was before it was turned into a gated community. However, the security assemblage did not stop all influence of the combos and even attracted other forms of criminality. Some residents for example are still being extorted, although it in different ways than before. Direct extortion no longer takes place within the urbanización. It is also unlikely that the three shops within the urbanización are extorted. All residents are however, whether they realise it or not, affected by indirect extortion. An example is cooking with gas. Although many residents are connected to the gas network of *Empresas Públicas de Medellín* (EPM), some people still depend on bottles of gas that are delivered by trucks. On their way to Parques de Cataluña, these trucks have to go through Barrio Pablo Escobar where the truck drivers are being extorted. This makes the gas more expensive:

> "Gas is another type of problem here. A gas tank that normally costs 25 to 30 thousand pesos ends up costing me 60 to 80 thousand pesos because the combos prohibit the man who sells the gas from entering without paying them. He has to go through Barrio Pablo Escobar and they monitor the roads."[114]

Similar to gas, extortion is paid for many other products, such as eggs and bread, when they are transported to shops (Moncada Carvajal *et al.*, 2018). Living in an urbanización does not change this, of course.

The case of Parques de Cataluña as a security assemblage also illustrates why the theoretical division between security suppliers (e.g. police, combos, etc.) and residents as security demanders is problematic. In Parques de Cataluña, the former and the latter are overlapping categories. A leader of one of the combos in Comuna 9 lived in the urbanización until he was killed in 2015:

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[113] Author's interview with Elena, administrator Parques de Cataluña, 06-03-2018
[114] Author's interview with Carolina, resident and social leader in Cataluña, 26-04-2018.

"He lived here, the leader of that combo, he was *el duro*. He ran their intelligence network here inside the urbanización. Drugs were also stored in his house. They killed him two years ago.[115] He used to recruit a lot of young people to sell drugs. Those children were not from here; they were from the street. Some of them were my childhood friends (..) He took advantage from living in this urbanización. They generally like to live in the urbanización s because there they are far from the police; it is more private."[116]

Although the gates are meant to protect residents from crime, the (leaders of the) combos also use the protection of the gated communities themselves. They keep a low profile living in the urbanizacións, while at the same time they are running their business from within these privatised, guarded areas. Living in a gated community simply provides more stability for their families and businesses.[117] In the example above, police members who were also living in the urbanización were aware of gang members being their neighbours. But the fact that they live there makes it more difficult to report these cases, because of possible reprisals against their family. This is also an example of how police officers use different security assemblages depending on their role as either resident or officer.

Yet another way in which members of a combo were active in the urbanización was in the business of money lending. Two persons offering this illegal service lived in *Parques de Cataluña*. Generally, they provided loans with an interest rate of twenty percent per month. Before they had very easy access to offer their services but now, since two or three years, they do not live there anymore.[118] Similar to findings of Abello-Colak and Guarneros-Meza, people used these services if they could not afford the costs of for example electricity or water (Abello-Colak and Guarneros-Meza, 2014).

A final manner in which the security is possibly threatened despite the assemblage is through influence of a combo on the administration of the urbanización. It is very likely that the administration also pays for security outside its gates (Moncada Carvajal et al., 2018).[119] I

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[115] Probably this homicide was three years earlier, on 2-20-2015 (based on matching data by SISC). Data obtained through received data set on homicides comuna 9 2014-2018 from SISC.
[116] Author's interview with Enrique, resident in Cataluña, 13-03-2018.
[117] Author's Interview with Andres, Resident and Police Officer, 29-03-2018.
[118] Author's interview with Carolina, Resident and Social Leader in Cataluña, 26-04-2018.
[119] Author's Interview with Samuel, Researcher for the municipality of Medellín, 03-04-2018.

cannot confirm whether this is happening in Parques de Cataluña, though it should be noted that right outside of the gate, about fifty meters to the right, there is a car washing place that is ran by a gang.[120] This legal business, that was illegally obtained, is used to earn money, as a façade for their illegal businesses and as a strategic point, on one of the main roads through Comuna 9 and at the entrance of Barrio Pablo Escobar. It is possible that the administration of Parques de Cataluña pay this combo for the security of its residents.

Image 3. *The border between Cataluña and Barrio Pablo Escobar* © google earth pro. The houses at the left are part of urbanización *Parques de Cataluña*, the houses at the right of the tree are part of Barrio Pablo Escobar. The shed under the three is a car washing business run by a combo from Barrio Pablo Escobar.

Concluding remarks

Tackling security threats through private security is widespread in Medellín. Most common are the bars in front of windows and doors. In Cataluña, houses and shops in areas like *Parques de Cataluña* also have measures like bars in front of the doors and windows. Next to these measures, there are fences and guarded gated. In different phases in the past thirty years, the residents negotiated with the municipality to get their urbanización closed off from possible threats through private protection. We can conclude that putting a fence around a formerly unfenced area can largely solve security issues. It did in the case of *Parques de Cataluña* however

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[120] Author's interview with Enrique, resident in Cataluña, 13-03-2018; Author's interview with Carolina, Resident and Social Leader in Cataluña, 26-04-2018; field observations, various data.

not work immediately, and in some ways combos are still able to influence daily lives within the gated area from the outside.

Assemblage IV: criminal actors' protention from the state through state actors' protection

In the fourth assemblage I would like to point out emerges from efforts to be protected from state security and law enforcement, which paradoxically often involve the active participation of state agencies and political actors (Müller, 2015, p. 116).[121] Contrary to previous assemblages, 'ordinary' residents do not fulfil a central role in this security assemblage. Rather, in Medellín's Comuna 9, as in Müller's case in Mexico-city, interactions between state actors and criminal actors are central in the security practices in this assemblage.

The security assemblage

Why would criminal actors engage with state actors for security? Tilly argues in regard to 'criminal actors-state interactions' that trust networks, interpersonal connections with shared values and resources that emerge in response to unsatisfactory governmental performance won't survive over time via predation, but through the gradual interrelationship with the state (Tilly 2005 in Abello-Colak & Guarneros-Meza, 2014). Abello-Colak and Guarneros-Meza point out that through Tilly's idea of trust networks, it is possible to understand the mutual dependence between state and criminal actors. On the one hand, the state is important to maintain criminal order and on the other hand criminal actors are important to maintain domestic order (2014, p. 3273).

Assemblage theory states that assemblages relate to a specific, decisively context dependent security problem or risk (Müller, 2015, p. 110). In this case, security issues and threats arise out of the illegality of the combos and their behaviour. Criminal actors strategically approach local police officers, political brokers and bureaucrats in order to assemble a network structure that provides them with protection from official law enforcement (Müller, 2015, p. 116). This happens on all levels of governance in Medellín, from a combo seeking connections with a local police officer to the management of large criminal organisations cooperating with highly placed individuals within the mayor's office.[122] In many of Medellín's marginalised

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[121] Müller calls this assemblage 'security from state policing.' I decided to name it security from state protection because the state actors sought in relation to security are not only the police, but also, for example, governance actors within the municipality.

[122] For example, the case of the secretary of security Gustavo Villegas mentioned in chapter II.

neighbourhoods, combos pay the police to be allowed to sell drugs.[123] A former gang member from Comuna 7 explained to me:

> "The police receive money. Every eight days they go to all the squares to collect the money. They will arrive at the square where the drugs are sold and go to the *Jibaro* [local boss], who is in charge of the square (..) If the jibaro does not pay them, they will handcuff him and take him to jail. I had to pay up to a hundred thousand a week to the police, that's for them and if you do not pay them, they will take you to the jail. So everyone pays to be left alone"[124]

For the three neighbourhoods in Comuna 9, I cannot prove that combos bribe the police at specific places on specific moments, but there are strong indications that in Barrio Pablo Escobar and La Milagrosa, the combos do pay the police to be left alone.[125] In Cataluña, it is less likely, yet possible, that this type of bribing also occurs. Several residents in these neighbourhoods talked about arrangements between combos and the police similar to the ones mentioned above.[126]

In their search for protection of the state, criminal actors at times turn to these actors in dealing with security threats and issues. Combos pay police officers for things like looking away; not visiting the square where they sell drugs. These arrangements were often called pacts.[127] These pacts are not official, neither do a lot of citizens know about them, and their existence is denied by higher government officials. Interestingly, although police officers on the one hand misuse their formal position to benefit financially from pacts like this, on the other hand, they can use their ambiguous position to improve the efficiency of their formal policing. Andres, a police officer told me about how police officers use the informal pacts with combos in Barrio Pablo Escobar:

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[123] Author's interview with José, social leader and ex-gang member in the Comuna 9, 13-03-2018; Author's interview with Carlos, former combo member, 29-04-2018; Author's Interview with Andres, Resident and Police Officer, 29-03-2018.

[124] Author's interview with Carlos, former combo member, 29-04-2018.

[125] Many residents, experts, and police officers interviewed said this happened, but none of them had been involved in one of these deals.

[126] e.g. Author's interview with Sebastián, resident in La Milagrosa, 21-03-2018; Author's interview with Enrique, resident in Cataluña, 13-03-2018; Author's Interview with Jaime, researcher at major university, 17-04-2018.

[127] e.g. Author's Interview with Andres, Resident and Police Officer, 29-03-2018, Author's interview with Valentina, politician and former social leader in Comuna 9, 03-04-2018; Author's Interview with Jaime, researcher at major university, 17-04-2018.

"If there is a problem in this neighbourhood, and the police go to the troublemaker, this person will often not listen to the police, because they are used to not doing that. The police have to enforce normal behaviour. However, if there is a lot of noise by a disco, or people are drunk in the streets, they will not listen to the police. So the police have to look for the leader of the sector, and they tell him to collaborate. If he does not want to help the police, the police will stay all day at their vice plaza [square where they sell drugs] to damage their economic activity, since they cannot sell as long as the police is there. That is a pact."[128]

Arias finds similar pacts between combos and the police in Medellín's Comuna 1 (2017, p. 114). In the example above, it was not clear whether the police had been paid, but it was clear that they were aware of the drug squares of the local combos in Barrio Pablo Escobar. When facing an unrelated issue in the neighbourhood, they can hit the combo financially by occupying their drug squares. As long as gangs make sure that there is not too much violence in a barrio, they can do whatever they want and the police will not show up.[129] As discussed in the second assemblage, combos introduce informal rules like restricting public violence by prohibiting hooligans from fighting in the comuna. Only in cases of behaviour that cannot be tolerated, the police temporarily occupy the squares. The result is that consumers go to another place to buy drugs. These mechanisms, in which the police allow combos to maintain order through informal rules, but within certain limits, can be seen as outsourcing of security governance to combos.

Remaining issues and threats

Even though this type of security assemblage solves certain security issues, also for 'ordinary' residents, it also creates new problems and contributes to the reproduction of local power relations and informal political structures. The main problem is that trust in formal actors like the police is further eroded. As already illustrated in the previous assemblage, the police as an institution is perceived by many residents as very corrupt. As a resident from La Milagrosa explained:

"I think the police is very corrupt. Let me put it this way: Down there is El Corredor [La Milagrosa's most important drugs square], everyone in the neighbourhood knows that

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[128] Author's Interview with Andres, Resident and Police Officer, 29-03-2018.
[129] Author's Interview with Jaime, researcher at major university, 17-04-2018.

they sell drugs there, everyone knows, the police must know this as well. Why don't they do anything?"[130]

It is likely that some kind of arrangement has been made in relation to the square mentioned above, especially because others claimed that this particular square is strategically important for the combos, due to its central position in the Comuna 9. Nevertheless, these arrangements are not everywhere, and residents can be quick to judge that something is a case of corruption. Andres explains:

"Many times the police is criticized by an ignorant point of view because they say: 'Agent, they sell drugs there.' But if you go and find nothing, then what do you do, except for alerting those at the vice plaza (..) The police do its work, if you see the statistics, you see that they seize many kilos of marijuana, coke, other drugs every month. Every month criminals of these gangs are captured. But we are not going to end it like that, because as long as there is someone to buy it, there will be someone to sell it."[131]

Concluding remarks

To conclude, in their search for security from the state, criminal actors can involve those same state actors. This happens through arrangements or pacts between the different actors. Whether there are pacts between criminal and state actors is different in each neighbourhood. In Cataluña, it is deemed unlikely such arrangements exists, but for La Milagrosa and Barrio Pablo Escobar there are indications that pacts between combos and police officers are existing. These arrangements can be beneficial for both the criminal actors and the state actors. Criminal actors are able to run their illegal economies without many security threats, while police officers benefit economically. Through these informal practices, police officers can also do their formal work more because issues in the neighbourhood are solved non-violently by negotiating with the combo leaders. This is in line with ideas from authors like Boege and colleagues (2009) who were introduced in chapter I and showed that hybrid forms of security can work. It is likely that these pacts are, like several experts and residents indicate, one of the reasons that violence in Comuna 9 is very low. Residents live in a neighbourhood that is significantly safer in terms of homicide rates and other quantitative indicators than other lower

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[130] Author's interview with Sebastián, resident in La Milagrosa, 21-03-2018.
[131] Author's Interview with Andres, Resident and Police Officer, 29-03-2018.

middle class neighbourhoods in Medellín, but are at the same time victims of the illegal economies and extortion of the criminal actors (Jaramillo and Gonzalez, 2012).

Chapter IV: Discussion

This research aims to understand how different actors, mainly residents, local criminal gangs, police officers, private security providers and communal council members, interact with each other in relation to the search for security on a local level, in a type of neighbourhood that has not received a lot of attention in earlier academic work. I aim to answer the following research question: *'What are the urban security assemblages that emerged in three lower middle class neighbourhoods in Medellín's Comuna 9 from 2013 until 2018?'*

To answer the question, I use the concept of urban security assemblages as proposed by Müller (2015), distinguishing four urban security assemblages that emerge in three neighbourhoods in Medellín's Comuna 9. There are differences between neighbourhoods, but also between individuals in these neighbourhoods, in relation to a local actor's search for security. The four urban security assemblages each emerge out of a collection of different components, most notably a variety of actors, security practices, and spatial elements. Assemblages are temporary and a local actor may be part of a certain security assemblage in one situation, and be part of another security assemblage in another situation. Müller concludes, in relation to the security assemblages that they "undeniably contributed to the governance of specific (in)securities and risks. However, they also reproduced local power relations and informal political structures that dominate local urban politics" (2015, p. 122). My findings are partly in line with Müller. Especially regarding the second assemblage, 'security beyond the state by bringing in criminal actors' and the fourth assemblage, 'protection from the state through state protection' it can be said that these assemblages work in the sense that they contribute to governance or solutions to (in)securities and risks. Also, in accordance to Müller's findings, the assemblages reproduce local power relations and informal political structures. However, these relations and structures do not *dominate* local urban politics. Criminal actors are present in the neighbourhoods, to different degrees, and have influence on local politics, as was illustrated in the second assemblage. Nevertheless, especially in Cataluña, presence and influence of criminal actors is limited and the first assemblage, bringing in public security, is dominant. Although most residents see the police as inefficient or corrupt, many of them still go to them in case of a security issue or threat. In this sense, the outcomes of my research appear to differ from those studies done on this subject where searching for security beyond the state, for a variety of reasons, is the dominant practice (e.g. Jaffe, 2013; Müller, 2015). Those residents who do search for security beyond the state, do so by taking individual measures like placing bars in front of windows and doors, hiring private security guards, or by turning

towards illegal and informal actors, most notably the local gangs. If the space allows it, as in Cataluña, it is possible for residents to collectively contract a private security company. In Barrio Pablo Escobar, more residents seem to look for security beyond the state by reaching out to criminal actors, although many indicate that they do go to the police.

In various ways, residents and criminal actors also interact with each other in relation to security. The complex reality that emerges includes informal rules that are disputed by the gangs, yet are limited by certain social norms. Respected residents tell members of gangs if their behaviour is inappropriate according to local norms. A final assemblage emerges out of the interactions between criminal actors and state actors in criminal actors' search for security from the state. Combos and police make arrangements with each other. Although it remains unclear how specific local arrangements exactly work, it is likely that these arrangements exist in Barrio Pablo Escobar and La Milagrosa. The combination of low police presence, low official violence rates, and consolidated criminal organisations points in this direction.

This thesis contributes to existing knowledge in several ways. I researched a type of neighbourhood that had not received the scholarly attention it deserves yet. The current research shows how varied security practices within a small space can be. It is therefore important to take into account local variety when trying to understand how these security practices work. The gap that exists in regard to studies on experiences of local residents is also partly filled. Furthermore, this thesis contributes to existing knowledge by expanding and modifying Müller's categorisation and theoretical approach of urban security assemblages.

A question that remains is, should we call all these examples assemblages? Or should we only speak of an assemblage if it is dominant in a neighbourhood? I think we can call all these examples assemblages, meaning that the security practices used can differ from individual to individual and from situation to situation, leading to different security assemblages. In the end, the exact term used is not of great importance, other terms fit the data as well. The term 'assemblage' by itself might not be specified enough, but as we distinguish several types of urban security assemblages, the terminology aids to categorize the empirical data. It is thus useful as an analytical framework by providing guidance in explaining the data.

To conclude, I demonstrate how local actors interact with each other in relation to security in lower middle class neighbourhoods, using the terminology of urban security assemblages. None of these assemblages work perfectly in the sense that the security issues they aim to

tackle are not completely solved. In the line of thought of many scholars within the field of hybrid governance, one could argue that this is a case of successful neoliberalism practices, in which security is outsourced to a variety of legal and illegal actors. Seeing security in the three neighbourhoods in this way, one could defend that security provision in Cataluña, La Milagrosa and Barrio Pablo Escobar works, despites the obvious flaws of the reproduction of the informal systems of which criminal actors profit. The cases of Cataluña, La Milagrosa and Barrio Pablo Escobar demonstrate that researching the security practices of local actors in lower middle class neighbourhoods is relevant if we want to expand our knowledge on cases of hybrid governance. As a final comment, I therefore suggest that future research in this field should focus on security in other (lower) middle class neighbourhoods in Medellín and other cities in the Global South. Both socially and academically this is desirable, with most people in Colombia's cities living in lower middle class neighbourhoods (Medellín Cómo Vamos, 2017). Furthermore, research on this topic tends to focus on large cities. Paying attention to mid-sized cities or suburbs would be relevant as well. These places, outside the intense light of media and political attention often provide criminal organisations a comfortable position to carry out significant economic and political projects (Arias, 2017, p. 249).

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Appendixes

Appendix I: List of interviewees

Residents

Name	Position	Date	Where (living/ working):
Carolina*	Resident and social leader in Comuna 9	26-04-2018	Cataluña
Enrique*	Resident and student	15-03-2018	Cataluña
Andres*	Resident and police officer	29-03-2018	Cataluña
Frank*	Resident and student	10-03-2018	Cataluña
Alejandro*	Resident and student	19-03-2018	Cataluña
Antonio*	Resident and former police officer	06-03-2018	Cataluña
Elena*	Administrator	06-03-2018	Cataluña
Manuel*	Resident	16-04-2018	Cataluña
Marta*	Resident and social leader in Comuna 9	08-04-2018	Cataluña
Sebastián*	Resident and student	21-03-2018	La Milagrosa
David*	Resident and baker	26-02-2018 / 15-03-2018	La Milagrosa
Santiago*	Resident and social worker	10-03-2018	La Milagrosa
Ana*	Business owner	14-05-2018	La Milagrosa
Pablo*	Resident and social leader	07-03-2018	La Milagrosa
César*	Resident and social leader	20-03-2018	La Milagrosa
Nicolás*	Resident	10-03-2018	Barrio Pablo Escobar
Claudia*	Resident	12-03-2018	Barrio Pablo Escobar
Daniela*	Resident	12-03-2018	Barrio Pablo Escobar
Mariana*	Resident and Business owner	12-03-2018	Barrio Pablo Escobar
Matias*	Police officer	08-04-2018	Comuna 9
José*	Social leader and ex-gang member	13-03-2018	Comuna 9
Luisa*	Social leader	15-03-2018	Comuna 9
Maria*	Schoolteacher	12-03-2018	Comuna 9
Juan*	Door-to-door seller	10-03-2018	Comuna 9

*Name has been changed for anonymity

Experts

Name	Description	Date
Valentina*	Politician and former social leader in Comuna 9	03-04-2018
Camillo*	Expert of an NGO that works with victims of the local conflict	13-02-2018 26-04-2018
Oscar Hurtado	Former Member of National Parliament	23-02-2018
Jaime*	Researcher on criminal organisations at one of the major universities in Colombia	17-04-2018
Mateo*	Former Judge, currently part of anti-corruption department of the *Fiscalia* Medellín	12-04-2018
Guillermo Duran Uribe	*Personero* de Medellín. Head of the *personeria*.[132]	03-04-2018
Diego*	Local politician	17-03-2018
Samuel*	Researcher for the municipality of Medellín	21-03-2018
Eduardo*	head anti-gang unit Fiscalia	20-04-2018
Jaime*	Researcher on criminal organisations, major university in Medellín	17-04-2018
Carlos*	Former combo member in another comuna	29-04-2018
Jairo*	Psychologist in Comuna 9, worked with victims of conflict	17-03-2018
Liliana*	Fiscal anti paramilitary unit *Fiscalia*	17-04-2018
Monica*	Researcher at a NGO focusing on organised crime	10-04-2018

*Name has been changed for anonymity

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[132] The *Personeria* is an institute created for the protection of the human rights of the population of Medellín, and to monitor public servants. The *personeria* has the power to discipline public servants, it can remove them from their positions sanction them for up to twenty years so that they do not return to exercise public office, which means that the *Personeria* has significant power. Author's interview with Guillermo Duran Uribe, 03-04-2018

Barrio Pablo Escobar

La Milagrosa

Parques de Cataluña

Cataluña

The area in which research was conducted. Without drawing lines, the borders between the neighbourhoods are visible. At the bottom, we see Cataluña, with its neatly organised houses, apartment blocks and green spaces. La Milagrosa distinguishes itself with its grit-structured roads. In Barrio Pablo Escobar, we see many houses crammed against each other, without a clear structure and barely open space.
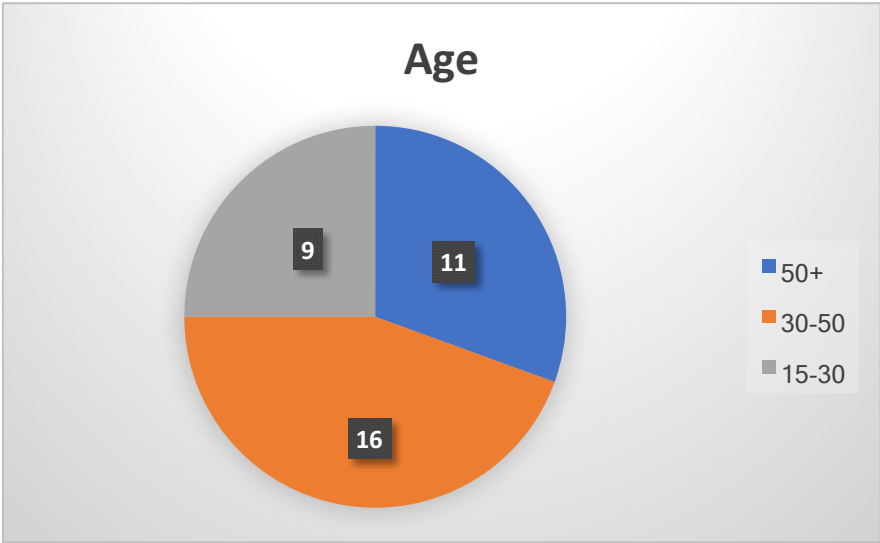
Figure 1. division of the interviewees in three age groups.
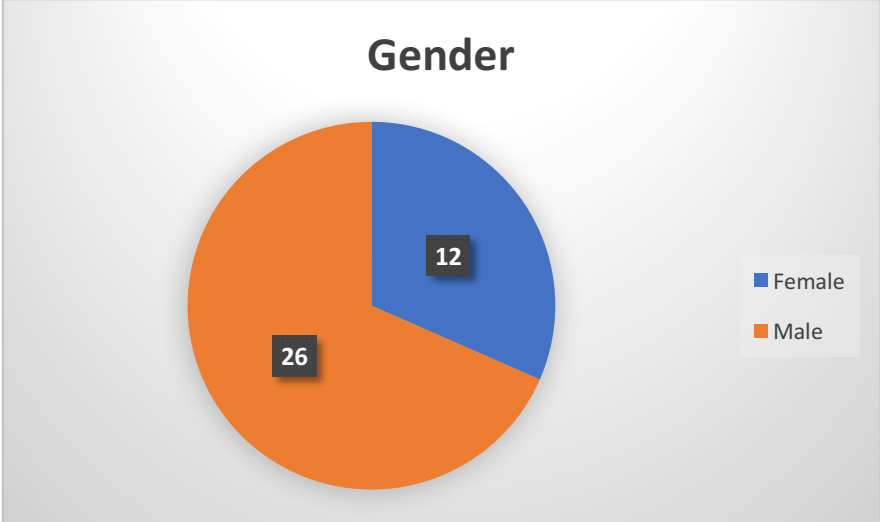
Figure 2. Gender of the Interviewees.
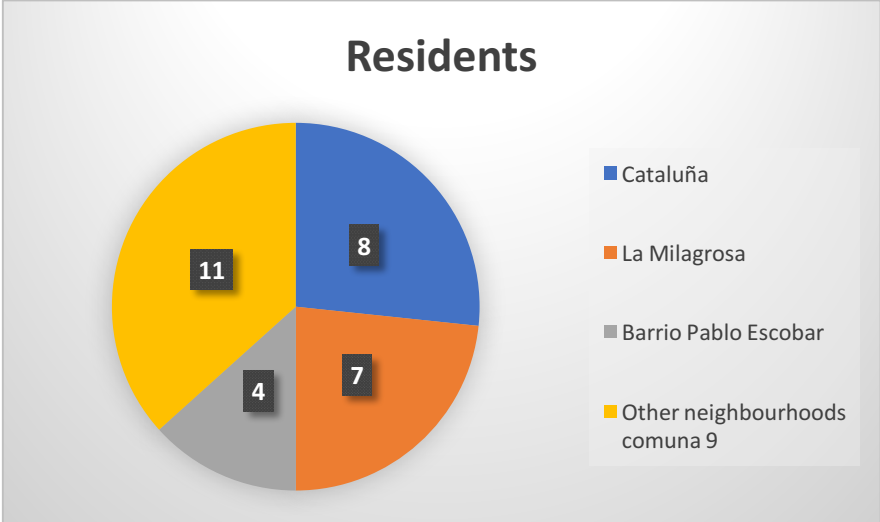
figure 3. Interviewees who lived or had lived in Comuna 9.

General introduction

- topic of the research project

- asking for allowance to record interview

- anonymity

About the interviewee

- demographic information (name/age/occupation)

- personal history in the neighbourhood (lived where/how long)

About the neighbourhood

- socio-economic situation of the neighbourhood

- socio-economic situation in comparison to the two other neighbourhoods

About security providers in Comuna 9 and the neighbourhood

- municipality   (presence/activities/efficiency/reliability)

- police   (presence/activities/efficiency/reliability)

- community councils/JAC   (presence/activities/efficiency/reliability)

- criminal actors   (presence/activities/efficiency/reliability)

About security threats/issues

- security threats/issues in general in the neighbourhood

- security threats/issues for interviewee

- where do people in the neighbourhood generally go in case of a security threat
    o example: in the case of theft of a motor
    o example: in the case of domestic violence

About interactions in Comuna 9 and the neighbourhood

- what is known about interactions between the different actors mentioned above