



CASE STUDY

Medellín | University, Enterprise and State Committee

# A Shared Vision for Transformation

**W**hat can non-government institutions do to promote innovation in their city when the government has its hands full with other pressing concerns? In Medellín, the academic and private sectors joined hands to set up a committee that unites stakeholders and coordinate development efforts, strengthening trust between citizens and the city.

## The Challenge

In the 1980s, urban development in Medellín was disrupted due to violent crimes brought about by cartels and the armed forces. The capital of Colombia's Antioquia state was torn between drug traffickers who were trying to control strategic corridors, and economic and legal reforms proposed by the American government to combat the growing narcotic problem.

To make matters worse, the media portrayed the city as a source of violence, guns and crime—a perspective still sensationalised by the media industry today. State resources were stretched

as funds were channelled towards re-establishing security and safety within the city. Thus, Medellín's progress to a liveable and sustainable city was slowed down. Public trust in the government was low and many citizens had lost hope.

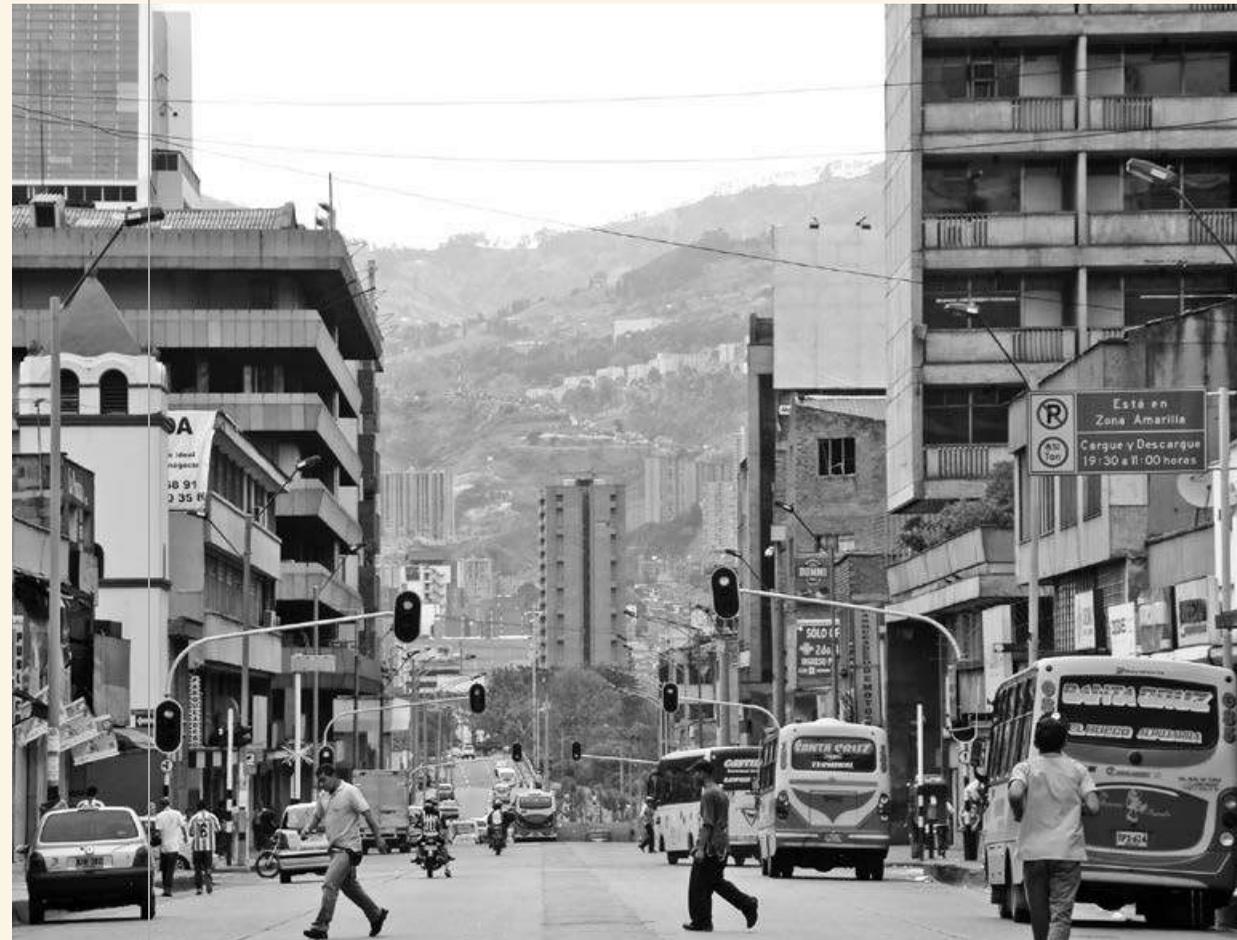
To improve the situation, a group of local academics and entrepreneurs came together to devise local solutions. This University, Enterprise and State Committee (CUEE when abbreviated in Spanish) aimed to inspire citizens towards a period of recovery by bringing together various sectors of society and providing a platform for their voices to be heard.



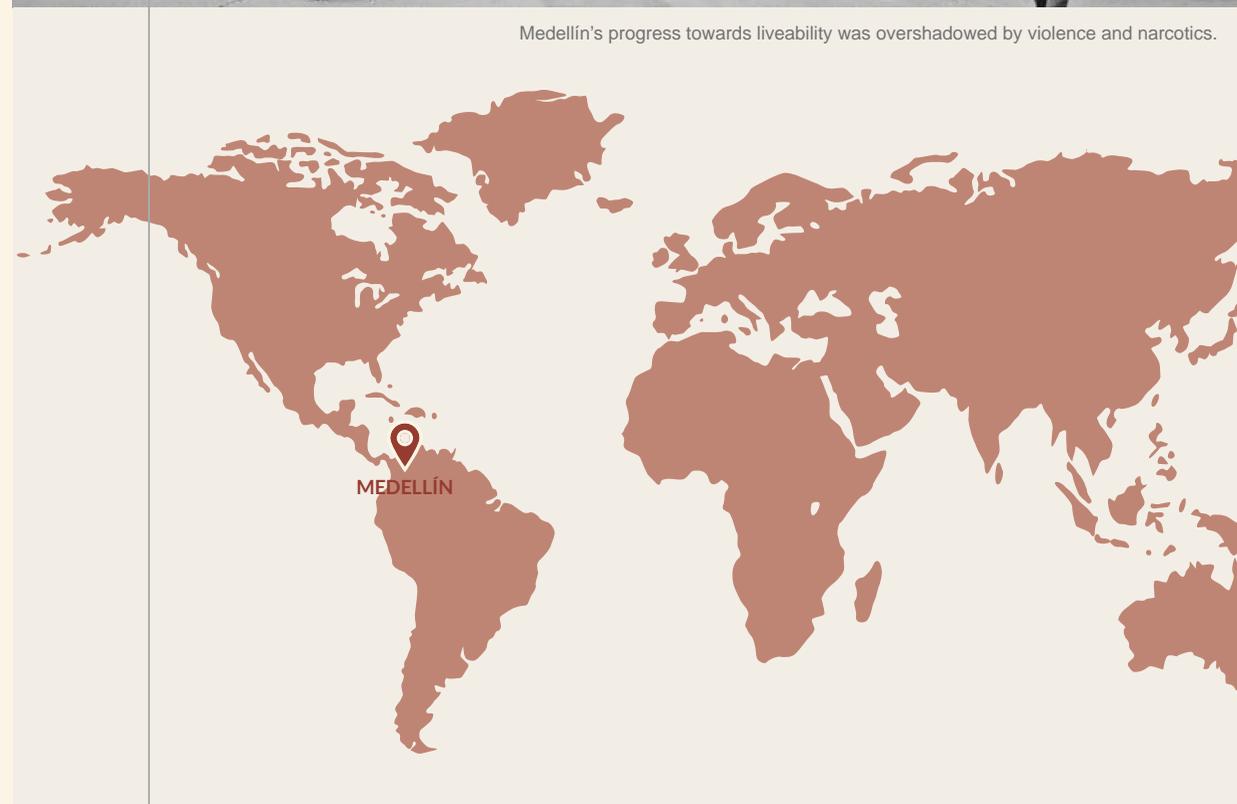
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Medellín's progress towards liveability was overshadowed by violence and narcotics.



## The Solution

The Committee adopted a triple helix framework where scientific, economic and political systems work together to increase collaboration between stakeholders. Between the 1980s and early 2000s, different stakeholders promoted legislation and clearer channels of communication to formally establish the Committee in Medellín in 2003.

Most importantly, the Committee aimed to promote innovation and development by establishing a dialogue and agreement strategy, where stakeholders meet monthly to discuss ideas to improve the city. The Committee's executive members monitor progress and give strategic guidelines and suggestions to generate socio-economic growth based on science, technology and innovation.

This cooperation promotes creativity, entrepreneurship, research and innovation as essential strategies to improve productivity in key sectors of Medellín's economy. Besides boosting productivity in existing sectors, the process of integrating academic research with private sector interests generated new and better products and services to strengthen Medellín's industries.

The close working relationship has also led to a shared set of norms, beliefs and values for all members of the Committee, establishing a high level of trust among members and confidence in the Committee's mission.

Building on this, the University of Antioquia chairs the Committee to ensure technical knowledge from research is transferred to businesses and can in turn benefit citizens. The university acts as an interpreter and translator of scientific knowledge to



practical outcomes for businesses, and ensures the Committee's form and purpose are geared towards the citizens of Medellín.

The Committee's former President Luis Carlos Uribe Jaramillo notes that it "crystallises society's aspirations by getting universities to contribute through research, improving the competitiveness of companies, and contributing to socio-economic development and the well-being of society". This is crucial to reinforce trust between the citizens and the city.

**“Transparency in the discussion promotes trust between the citizens, businesses and universities.”**

01 The Committee convenes stakeholders ranging from city officials, research experts, local business leaders and citizens to discuss pressing urban issues.



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The Committee incorporates the citizens' needs into long term proposals by opening the monthly discussions to all citizens. This encourages them to participate in dialogues ranging from economic development to social inclusion. Those who miss the sessions can access the information at the University of Antioquia. The transparency in the discussion promotes trust between the citizens, businesses and universities.

The state has also supported many of the Committee's initiatives. The Mayor's Office signed the Medellín Innovation Grand Pact to invest 1% of Antioquia's GDP in science, technology, and innovation activities, as part of a partnership with Ruta N, a corporation set up by the Committee to promote innovation and business.

Under this agreement, public agencies such as the Government of Antioquia and the Chamber of Commerce of Medellín collaborate with businesses and academia to drive growth and generate jobs for citizens.

Other collaborations include discussions between the Mayor of Medellín Federico Gutiérrez, the President of EAFIT University Juan Luis Mejía Arango and CUEE representatives to identify development pathways for Medellín to become more inclusive and equitable.

Despite these close partnerships with the state, the Committee remains an independent entity that is separate from the government. Hence, it does not respond to interests set out by political parties, which change regularly. This independence allows it to consider the citizens' long-term interests, build consensus among stakeholders and direct research and innovation to benefit them—thereby providing continuity in policy and planning. This has strengthened public confidence in the Committee in the long run.

“The Committee remains an independent entity that is separate from the government... thereby providing continuity in policy and planning.”



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01 Members of Ruta N, Medellín's centre for innovation and business, attending a Committee meeting.

02 Ruta N collaborates with local universities and partners to conduct fairs on Medellín's services and institutions.



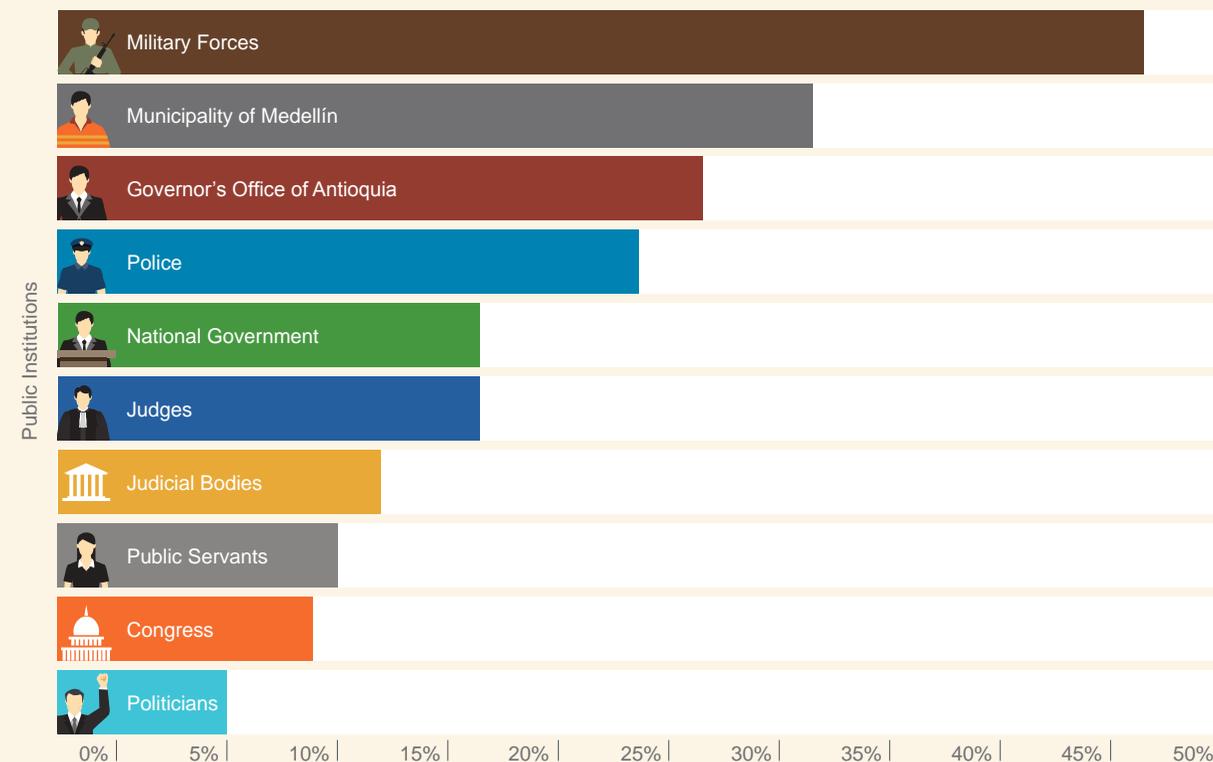
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### Trust in Public Institutions

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### The Outcome

By bridging the gap between government, academia, businesses and citizens, the Committee helped to ensure that plans for Medellín were carried through in spite of upheavals and political changes. The coordinated approach ensured that resources are channelled wisely, thus increasing citizens' trust in the city. The Citizen Culture Survey showed that the Municipality of Medellín, which includes the Mayor's Office and members of CUEE, as one of the top three most reliable government institutions and national bodies.

Building on the foundation of credibility and trust it has established, the Committee is now entering its second phase. This Committee 2.0 focuses on socio-economic growth based on science, technology and innovation and has three working groups—developing human talents and resources, managing finance, and building platform systems to integrate science, technology and innovation companies. Initiatives include an Entrepreneurship Park to promote the incubation of technology-based companies, and a new institution called Tecnova to commercialise university technology and research.

The Committee's success is also testament to the importance of close collaboration between stakeholders, from the private to public sectors.

Beyond Medellín, the Committee is also promoting its model through pilot programmes in Oriente, Urabá, North and Bajo Cauca, so more cities can benefit. ○

- 01 & 02 The Flor de la Vida (Spanish for 'Flower of Life') system was implemented by Gaia Servicios Ambientales together with Ruta N. Collected rainwater is purified through activated carbon filters, ultrafiltration and ultraviolet light. It has the capacity to provide 1,200 litres of potable drinking water to the local community, sports teams and schools.
- 03 The local Citizen Culture Survey measured citizen confidence and trust in public institutions.