# THE WORLD CAPITAL OF REGGAETON: VERBAL FRAMING OF MEDELLIN IN ONLINE MEDIA DISCOURSE[1]

## LA CAPITAL MUNDIAL DEL REGGAETÓN: EL FRAMING VERBAL DE MEDELLÍN EN EL DISCURSO MEDIÁTICO EN LÍNEA

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## Resumen

Este artículo trata del *framing* lingüístico de Medellín como ciudad del reggaetón en el discurso mediático en línea, partiendo de la teoría de semántica de esquemas (*frame semantics theory*) de Fillmore (1977). Los esquemas más destacados que se aplican a Medellín son los de centralidad, casa y música, mientras su importancia global como centro musical se enfatiza con términos pertenecientes al esquema mundo. El uso de los esquemas de crimen y drogas sugiere que el pasado de Medellín relacionado con las drogas se integra en su nuevo perfil cultural. Otro componente de la imagen nueva de Medellín son los habitantes de la ciudad: los medios los presentan como seguidores importantes de los/las reggaetonero/as locales y los describen con un vocabulario claramente positivo que pertenece a los esquemas de amor, apoyo y casa. Aunque algunos de los textos analizados evocan estereotipos negativos sobre el reggaetón, la mayoría de los medios presentan la escuela reggaetonera de Medellín a través de los esquemas de éxito, poder y negocio.

**Palabras clave:** análisis del discurso, análisis del *framing*, Medellín, reggaetón, medios de comunicación en línea.

## Abstract

This article examines linguistic framing of Medellin as the city of the musical genre reggaeton in online media discourse, drawing on Fillmore's frame semantics theory (1977). The most salient frames applied towards Medellin are those of centrality, home, and music, whereby the city's global significance as a musical hub is emphasized through the terms belonging to the frame of world. The use of components from the frames of crime and drugs suggests that the drug-related past of Medellin is integrated into its new cultural profile. Another part of the new Medellin brand are the city's residents themselves, who are credited with supporting local reggaetonero/as, and are typically referred to with overtly positive vocabulary from the frames of love, help, and home. Although some texts evoke negative stereotypes about reggaeton, the media mostly present the Medellin reggaeton scene through the frames of success, power, and business.

**Keywords:** discourse analysis, framing analysis, Medellin, reggaeton, online media.

## Introducción

Within last few decades, Medellin was thrust into the spotlight of international attention for several reasons. In 1980s and 1990s, Colombian and international media described Medellin as the world's most dangerous and violent city. A name always mentioned in this context was – and still is – that of Pablo Escobar, a founder of the most powerful drug cartel in history. However, since the 2000s, Medellin has been building its cultural significance as a musical hub of Latin America and the world. In 2015, Medellin became a UNESCO City of Music due to its significant musical legacy: the city was proclaimed the Colombian capital of tango and rock, and recently it has become the world capital of reggaeton[2].

This article examines how Medellin is linguistically framed as the city of reggaeton in online media discourse produced inside and outside of the reggaeton community. I would like to start with some basic theoretical concepts.

The term 'framing' was coined by Frederic Bartlett in 1932 and has been widely applied in the social sciences, e.g. psychology, cultural studies, sociology, and political science. While a variety of definitions of the term have been suggested, this article relies on the definition of Entman (1993), who defines *to frame* to mean "to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text" (p. 52). The key notions in Entman's approach to framing are the communicator, text, receiver, and culture. He suggests that, by means of framing, the author of a text – the communicator – can activate particular knowledge of a receiver and evoke associations which are often specific to a culture (1993, pp. 52-53). In this way, the communicator guides the receiver towards an intended interpretation of the text and affects the way they construct opinions about aspects of reality (Entman 1993). Different texts may frame the same reality in different ways, and depending on the type of text, framing may be applied to its textual and/ or visual content.

This article focuses on *linguistic* analysis of frames contained in online media discourse about Medellin as the city of reggaeton, drawing on the frame semantics theory developed by Fillmore (1977). According to Fillmore, a frame is a system of linguistic choices that are linked through an associative relationship (1977). The elements of a frame are interconnected in such a way that the activation of one element retrieves the whole frame (Fillmore, 1977, p. 63).

Fillmore believes that, when processing a text, receivers are not passive recipients, but rather active participants in sense-making: they establish relations between text elements, create expectations regarding following

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2   There is no established spelling of the word reggaeton; within reggaeton discourse itself it appears as reggaeton reggaetón, reguetón and regeton (see Marshall, Rivera, & Pacini Hernandez, 2010, para. 9). I prefer the spelling reggaeton and employ it consistently throughout the article.

linguistic occurrences, and fill in the gaps in already activated frames (1981). He shows that different receivers may experience the same text differently depending on their background knowledge, cultural and linguistic background, and familiarity with a corresponding discourse. As a result, it is difficult to anticipate what frames will be activated by receivers apart from those contained in the text (Fillmore, 1981). This paper therefore examines only frames that are explicitly available in the texts, not the ones that are potentially activated in the receivers' minds, or those that might be intended by the communicators.

By employing frame semantics theory to online media discourse about reggaeton in Medellin, I seek to address the following questions: what linguistic frames are activated in the data? Are elements from the frame of drugs introduced in the texts? Does other vocabulary with negative semantics appear when presenting the topic? Are Medellin and reggaeton framed differently in texts created inside and outside of the reggaeton community?

The article is structured in the following way: Section 2 gives a brief overview of the story of Pablo Escobar and his legacy in Medellin. Section 3 outlines the history of reggaeton in Medellin and mentions its key figures. Section 4 presents the data and methods. Section 5 discusses the results of the analysis of linguistic framing of Medellin. Finally, Section 6 presents conclusions and areas for future research.

## 2. Medellin and Pablo Escobar

In the English entry for Medellin in Wikipedia, Pablo Escobar is identified as one of the two 'notable citizens' of Medellin, alongside the first woman to earn an engineering degree in Colombia, Sonny Jiménez de Tejada ("Medellín," n.d., "Notable citizens"). This reveals a strong associative link that still exists between the city and Pablo Escobar, even 30 years after his death – and there is a good reason for that.

Pablo Escobar gained worldwide infamy for founding one of the most powerful drug cartels in history – the Medellin Cartel (*El Cartel de Medellín*). The Medellin Cartel created the first cocaine smuggling routes into the US in the late 1970s and eventually came to control most of world's cocaine market. This made Pablo Escobar one of the richest men in the world; he stayed on Forbes list of billionaires for 7 consecutive years. During this period, Escobar's drug reign was marked with unprecedented violence against rival cartels, police, and government, which caused alarming homicide rates (Salazar J., 2001). Interestingly, Pablo Escobar managed to establish quite a successful political career due to a massive PR campaign that promoted his image of '*un Robin Hood paisa*' [Colombian Robin Hood] ("Un Robin Hood Paisa," 2012 [1983]; see also Bowley, 2013).[3] Through his investments into Colombian professional football

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3    The term "paisa" is actually the coloquial demonym for people of the region of Antioquia, whose capital is Medellin. The official demonym is Antioquians. [Editor's note]

and numerous social projects in Medellin, Pablo Escobar gained the gratitude and admiration of the masses, which they expressed in many ways. Among others, they voted him into the House of Representatives of Colombia (*Cámara de Representantes*) and served as lookouts to protect him from police raids (Bowley, 2013).

Pablo Escobar left an extensive physical legacy both in Medellin and its surroundings, most of which has been either demolished or transformed into publicly accessible attractions. For example, the luxurious *La Catedral* prison Pablo Escobar built for himself in 1991 has been turned into a Benedictine facility, while the 20 km$^2$ lavish estate *Hacienda Nápoles* has become an amusement park. Yet, in the media and on the internet, Medellin's ambience still retains the spirit of Pablo Escobar: numerous websites entice their guests with the possibility of gaining an insight into the cocaine king's life through participating in so-called 'narco-tourism'. The city's drug past is also actively evoked in popular culture: the story of Pablo Escobar and the Medellin Cartel has been shown with various degrees of accuracy in numerous documentaries, series, and movies.

However, the image of Medellin has been changing dramatically since the early 2000s. Over the last decade, the city has received much positive attention from the media due to its remarkable urban transformation. Major improvements in security and infrastructure brought Medellin numerous international awards, such as the title of the world's Most Innovative City in 2013 and The Lee Kuan Yew World City Prize in 2016. Medellin has also become a prominent cultural hub, with its most significant cultural output currently being reggaeton.

## 3. Medellin and reggaeton

Although reggaeton has rather diffuse temporal and geographical origins, it is believed to have emerged in the late 1990s in Puerto Rico, with considerable influences from Caribbean music and US mainstream music (Marshall et al., 2010, para. 2). Reggaeton appeared as a politically and socially charged underground musical style produced in home recording studios and distributed on burned CDs. When reggaeton came to Colombia in the early 2000s, it was the youth who adopted the genre, attracted particularly by its catchy dembow beat. Medellin became the first Colombian city to elevate the status of reggaeton: in 2001, Medellin's Rumba Estéreo radio played the first reggaeton song in Colombia live on the air – Daddy Yankee's *Latigazo*, and in 2003, the city hosted the first reggaeton concert in Colombia (Rubbini, 2019). Eventually, the genre won the ears and hearts of a wide Colombian audience, and around 2009, the Colombian reggaeton scene emerged, with Medellin at its core.

In Medellin, reggaeton gained a unique Colombian flavor: its signature dembow beat became softer and more danceable, while the explicit sexual content was replaced by moderately suggestive, rather romantic lyrics. These transformations facilitated the breakthrough of Colombian reggaeton first into the Latin American market, and eventually the global mainstream. The Colombian reggaeton scene is formed, among others, by Medellin-based

musicians J Balvin, Karol G, Maluma, Manuel Turizo, Piso 21, Reykon, Sebastian Yatra, and Nicky Jam. I include Puerto Rican artist Nicky Jam, since he moved to Medellin in 2007. The city's reggaeton landscape also includes a number of prominent producers and songwriters, e.g., Bullnene, Dayme & El High, Infinity Music, Mosty, Ovy On The Drums, Saga WhiteBlack, Sky Rompiendo, and The Rudeboyz. Medellin-based reggaetonero/as[4] became globally known for hits *El Perdón* (Nicky Jam & Enrique Iglesias), *Felices Los Cuatro* (Maluma), *Mi Gente* (J Balvin & Willy William), *Tusa* (Karol G & Nicki Minaj), and *X (EQUIS)* (Nicky Jam & J Balvin), to name a few. It is not surprising that Medellin is often referred to as the world capital of reggaeton – both within and outside of reggaeton discourse, which is evident from the data.

Despite its international success, reggaeton is still much-criticized for its *machismo* and overtly sexual dance style *perreo,* and is often perceived as lowbrow/popular music intended mostly for youth in low-income communities (see Lundgren, 2012). However, Medellin has been changing the world's opinion on the genre by significantly increasing its visibility. Not only does the city host numerous reggaeton-dedicated events every year and have various 24-hour-a-day reggaeton radio stations, e.g. *Clásicos Reggaeton 24/7*, *Radio Oxígeno Medellín*, and *Reggaeton FM Radio*, but local reggaetonero/as and city residents also actively promote a positive image of reggaeton music and reggaeton culture in general.

## 4. Methodology

This study is based on two categories of data. The first category of texts stems from outside the reggaeton community, and includes articles published online in Spanish, in Colombian and international media. The selection criterion was the presence of the words *Medellín* and *reggaeton* (in its different spellings) in the titles of articles. To gain a fair picture of how Medellin is represented in national and foreign media, the final dataset comprises 3 articles published by Colombian media companies: *El Espectador* (2012, henceforth EE), *El Tiempo* (2013, ET), and *Colombia.co* (2019, CC); and 3 by international media companies: *BBC Mundo* (UK, 2013; henceforth BBC), *El País* (Spain, 2019; EP), and *ALnavío* (Spain, 2019; ALN).

The second category of data originates from within the reggaeton community, and includes the documentary *A New Medellín: Rebirth through Reggaeton* (2019; henceforth NM), the biographical television series *Nicky Jam: El Ganador* (2018; EG), and the autobiographical podcast series *Made in Medellín* (2020; MM). While the documentary is entirely dedicated to the Medellin reggaeton scene, the series and the podcast address several themes. Therefore, the final dataset contains only relevant discourse fragments, namely the episodes "En La Ciudad del Perreo" and "Interludio I: Jowell" from the podcast, and the episodes "The Future is Paisa" and "Medellín" from the series. The three programs include utterances of Colombian and Puerto Rican reggaetonero/as about Medellin and the local reggaeton industry. The episode "En

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4    Reggaetonero/as are artists – composers, musicians, singers, songwriters, and producers – who create, produce, and/or perform reggaeton.

La Ciudad del Perreo" also includes opinions of the *gente de las calles de Medellín* on reggaeton in Colombia.

The analyzed episodes from the podcast and the series are completely in Spanish, while the documentary alternates between Spanish and English, with subtitles providing translation of Spanish fragments. In each case, only the original text was examined, whether it be in Spanish or in English. When the words are orthographically identical in both languages, the language is indicated by [ES] or [ENG] correspondingly.

The dataset comprises 3 types of texts: written (articles), oral (podcast), and audio-visual (documentary and series). Since the analysis focuses on *linguistic* representation of Medellin as the city of reggaeton, only verbal content was considered. For this purpose, the documentary and corresponding fragments of the podcast and series were first transcribed and then analyzed linguistically.

The examples of lexemes are provided in their base forms regardless of how they appear in texts; in other words, nouns are introduced in their singular form (e.g. *baile*), verbs – in infinitive form (*cantar*), and adjectives – in singular masculine form (*poderoso*).

## 5. Results

The main topic of all analyzed texts is Medellin being the city of reggaeton. This topic is introduced through the following components: the city itself, its residents, reggaeton, and reggaetonero/as. The following subsections present how these four components are framed in the data.

## 5.1. The city

Medellin is most often portrayed as the *capital* of reggaeton or, more generally, urban or Hispanic music. This reference was found in different variations in all analyzed texts except for EG. Moreover, 5 out of the 6 articles contain the word *capital* in their titles. This term activates the frame of centrality, and thereby points out the significance of Medellin for contemporary reggaeton. Other terms from the frame of centrality include *sede* (ET), *epicentro* (EP, NM), *base* [ENG, ES] (NM, MM), and *meca* (EE, ALN, EP). The word *meca* may be seen as also belonging to the frames of religion and travel. Notably, this word appears only in the media produced outside the reggaeton community. The nouns from the frame of centrality are often accompanied by the adjective *mundial* (ET, EP, BBC, NM), which draws attention to the global visibility of Medellin-produced reggaeton and the international significance of Medellin as a musical hub.

Another frame used to refer to Medellin is the frame of travel. The use of this frame in the data is rather contradictory because different texts frame Medellin as occupying different points on the reggaeton route. For example, in EG, the city is presented as

a starting point for reggaeton – its *trampolín*, whereas in CC – as the destination of reggaetonero/as, their *punto de encuentro* and *destino*. An interesting example of an inconsistent use of elements from the frame of travel is found in ET, which first refers to Medellin as a *sitio de paso* and two paragraphs later as a *punto de partida*.

The texts also tend to describe Medellin as the home of reggaeton and/or reggaetonero/as. The words *casa,* and less often *hogar* and *cuna,* are used both in Colombian and international media (ET, BBC, CC, EP) and within reggaeton discourse (NM, MM, EG). The word *cuna* appears in two texts, however, with slightly different meanings and towards different locations: ET refers to Puerto Rico as reggaeton's place of origin, while in EG, Nicky Jam refers to Medellin as the new home of reggaeton as of the year 2010. Elements from the frame of home belong to positive attitudinal lexis, and are likely to evoke positive associations from the receivers. Also, the frame of home is activated when describing city residents (see 5.2.).

However, the common thread running through all analysed texts is Medellin's close relationship with reggaeton. This relationship is described as *orgánica* (MM), and the city itself seems to *vibrar* (ET, EP, NM, MM) to the rhythms of reggaeton. The city's musical ambience is conveyed using such terms as *concierto, discoteca, emisora, fiesta,* and *radio*. The integration of elements from the frame of music into the city image enhances the main idea promoted in the data about Medellin being the city of reggaeton music.

The analysis also showed that the drug-related past of Medellin remains an integral part of its international image, and is sometimes brought up even in relation to the city's new cultural profile. References to this topic were found in 3 texts: in the articles published in the Spanish media outlets EP and ALN, as well as in communications of reggaetonero/as for the documentary NM. These texts use vocabulary from the frames of crime and drugs, which include words with distinctly negative semantics, e.g. *banda* (EP), *cartel* (ALN, EP), *criminal* (ALN), *drogas* (NM), *ganga* (NM), *narco* (EP, NM), *oscuro* (ALN), *Pablo Escobar* (EP), *sanguinario* (EP), *tráfico de cocaína* (ALN), and *violento* (NM).

Although both categories of data refer to the narco history of Medellin, there are significant differences in the way they do it. In EP, the frames of crime and drugs are also employed in text fragments which describe the success of reggaeton. Not only does this activate numerous negative associations related to the concept of crime, but it also extends these associations towards reggaeton and its artists. Moreover, the text establishes a direct link between reggaeton and drugs by describing this music as containing *narcoestética* and *mensajes afines al narcotráfico.* As a result, Medellin is presented as a place that retains a tradition of drugs, nowadays, however, through reggaeton.

Reggaetonero/as, on the other hand, draw a clear distinction between the city's *shitty past* (NM) and its current success as a musical hub. Within the reggaeton discourse, present-day Medellin is usually shown in a positive light, with particular emphasis on the city's great potential. For example, in MM, Medellin is described as the place of *progreso*, *oportunidades*, *talento*, and *energía*. The city is believed to realize its potential

due to the local reggaeton industry. Interestingly, reggaetonero/as see Medellin's essence in its residents, which will be discussed in the following subsection.

## 5.2. City residents

Residents of Medellin are featured in the majority of the analyzed texts – they are either mentioned explicitly or referred to indirectly. The reason may be that the reggaeton discourse actively promotes the idea that *medellinenses* have been contributing significantly to the city's successful relationship with reggaeton, especially in the very beginning when they were the first ones in Colombia to accept this genre. As a result, city residents have become an 'integrated [*sic*] part' of the Medellin brand as capital of reggaeton (see Braun, Kavaratzis, & Zenker, 2013, p. 20). It is therefore not surprising that most terms used towards Medellin residents in the data have an overtly positive connotation.

The texts often describe *medellinenses* with elements of the frame of love, including the words *amor* (MM, EG), *love* (NM), *pasión* (MM), and *venerar* (EP); and the frame of warmth, including words *calidad* (MM), *calidez* (EE), *caluroso* (BBC), and *fervor* (EE). Another common frame when referring to Medellin residents is the frame of home, which is represented mainly through the lexeme *acoger* and its derivatives, such as the noun *acogida* and adjective *acogido* (ET, CC, BBC, EP), as well as the lexeme *hospitalario* (MM). Moreover, the texts tend to emphasize the city residents' support of local reggaetonero/as through the use of elements from the frame of help, including words *apoyar* (EG, NM), *ayudar* (MM), *colaborar* (MM), and *respaldo* (ET). The frames of love, warmth, home, and help can be seen as interconnected here, because they are likely to appear together in various other contexts and discourses. Therefore, when activated within a single text, they reinforce each other, as well as the positive image of city residents and, by extension, of the city itself.

The most active proponents of this positive image of *medellinenses* are reggaeton artists themselves, who claim to have found the most loving and encouraging audience in Medellin. This idea is central in the story of Nicky Jam, the Puerto Rican artist who first came to Medellin in 2007 looking for work. At that time, his career seemed to be over, and he suffered from drug abuse and depression. Medellin became the artist's place of healing and musical comeback thanks to support from city residents. In both texts included in the dataset where Nicky Jam comments on this topic (NM and EG), he repeatedly uses the word *love* to describe this support.

Another reggaetonero who credits *medellinenses* for his musical success is the leader of the reggaeton scene in Medellin, J Balvin. In MM, he mentions that *todos los estratos sociales* and all the age groups – *los padres de familia, los abuelos, las abuelas* – accept reggaeton in Medellin. Notably, the texts stemming from outside the reggaeton community suggest an opposing view: 3 out of 6 analyzed articles highlight that

reggaeton is accepted primarily by young generations (BBC, ET, EP). EP goes one step further and argues that it is teenagers from "comunas más pobres, las mismas en las que las bandas de narcos reclutan a sus 'pela'os'" who listen to reggaeton. In this way, the text establishes an explicit link between poverty, drugs, and reggaeton. Such framing of reggaeton listeners is rather predictable because of the negative connotations this genre still carries, which will be discussed more in the following subsection.

## 5.3. Reggaeton

For the most part, word *reggaeton* appears already in the title of the respective media, which is the case for all of the articles and the documentary. This word activates the frame of music and creates the corresponding flow of receivers' expectations about the vocabulary in the body of text. The title of the series, on the other hand, refers to the discourse of music through the name of Nicky Jam. This reference may not be decoded by those viewers who are less familiar with reggaeton; however, the description of the series contains several elements from the frame of music. The title of the podcast *Made in Medellín* is the least indicative of musical discourse, and it is again the description that offers an insight into the topic of the program.

The frame of music contains, among others, the following lexemes: *bailar* and its derivative *baile*, *cantar* (as well as *cantante*, *canción*), *disco*, *flow*, *grabar*, *reggaeton, ritmo*, *sonido*, and the word *música* itself, along with its derivative *musical*. Music-related terms are in the majority of sentences, and the frame of music therefore remains active throughout the text, from the title to the last paragraph.

In the data, the frame of music interacts with various other frames, some of which are rather expected, while others are quite surprising. The most salient frame applied to characterize reggaeton is the frame of success, which includes such words as *alcanzar* (CC, EP), *altura* (ALN), *ascensión* (ALN), *auge* (ALN), *crecer* (MM), *cumbre* (ALN), éxito (CC, ALN, BBC, EP), *fama* (CC), *laurear* (ALN), *liderazgo* (ALN), *lograr* (EE, CC), *top* (NM), *reach* (MM), *reconocer* (ET), *sobresalir* (ET), *take over* (NM), and *triunfar* (EP). Elements from the frame of success often appear together with elements from the frame of power, for example: *conquistar* (EP, EG), *dominar* (EE), *giganteo* (NM), *imperio* (EP), *poderoso* (EP, ALN), *potenciar* (EE, ALN), and *superar* (ALN). When used within the same text fragment, these elements enhance the image of reggaeton as an extremely successful genre which dominates the popular music landscape. Moreover, reggaeton is often explicitly positioned within a global context through the terms belonging to the frame of world, such as *global* [ES] (ALN, NM, MM) and *global* [EN] (NM), *internacional* (ET, ALN, BBC, EE), *mundo* or *mundial* (ET, EP, ALN, CC, NM, MM, EG), *planeta* (EP, MM), and *world* (NM). In this way, the texts promote the idea of the global prominence of reggaeton and, therefore, of its contemporary capital – Medellin.

Another recurrent frame used towards reggaeton is the frame of commerce, which is lexically introduced through such elements as *chavo* (EG), *comercial* (ALN, EP), *consumir* (ALN,

NM), *fiebre del oro* (ALN), *fortuna* (ALN), *mercado* (ALN, NM), *negocio* (EE, MM), *peso [colombiano]* (EE), and *rentable* (EE). These lexemes emphasize the lucrative aspect of reggaeton and can be considered to be related to the frame of success. Not only journalists, but also reggaetonero/as themselves present reggaeton as commercialized music, which might reduce negative associations the term commercialized evokes when being applied towards art. Furthermore, the data tend to draw attention to various professionals and technological facilities which are behind popular reggaeton songs and music videos. The elements used for this purpose belong to the frame of musical production, for example: *bailarín* (EE, EP), *diseñador* (EP), *discográfico* (EP), *estudio* (EE, ALN), *equipo* (EE), *experto* (ALN), *grabar* (CC, EE), *instagramer* (EP), *productor* (CC, ALN, EP, NM), *profesional* (EE, ALN), *técnico* (EE), and *youtuber* (EP). The frames of commerce and musical production can be combined into a broader frame of business, in which the following words belong to as well: *agencia* (EP), *distribuir* (CC), *empresa* (EP, BBC), *factoría* (ALN), *holding* (EP), *industria* (EP, ALN, NM), *marketing* (EP), and *oficina* (EP). Interestingly, even though reggaetonero/as also describe their music as business, they also frame reggaeton as *cultura* (NM, MM). For example, in MM, J Balvin states that reggaeton "se volvió tan parte de cultura como lo es el aguardiente." In the data, such framing appears only within the reggaeton discourse.

Lexical analysis showed that it is common for the texts created outside of the reggaeton discourse to use negative wordings to describe the genre. This happens when journalists mention the underground past of reggaeton in Puerto Rico – when it was more explicit in its references to drugs, sex, and violence, but also when they criticize contemporary Colombian reggaeton. Among words with distinctly negative meaning are *crítica* (ALN), *dudoso* (ALN), *endiablado* (EP), *explícito* (ALN), *frívolo* (ALN), *incorrección* (ALN), *letal* (EP), *machacón* (EP), *mañé* (ET), *misógino* (ALN, EP), *obsceno* (BBC), *pasajero* (ET, ALN), *populachero* (ALN), *provocador* (EP), *salvaje* (ALN), *sucio* (EP), *tozudo* (EP), *veneno* (EP), *violento* (ALN), and *vulgar* (BBC). This vocabulary with negative connotations occurs particularly in Spanish media EP and ALN, which reinforce negative stereotypes about reggaeton through criticizing its lyrics, the dembow rhythm, and *perreo* dance.

Various words with negative meaning found in the data belong to the frames of fight or disease, which seem to neither be motivated by the general topic of the texts, nor by the nearby textual environment. As a result, they do not fit into previously activated frames, and therefore are unlikely to be anticipated by the receivers. The frame of fight is introduced through the following lexemes: *amenazar* (ALN), *arrasar* (ALN), *competir* (EP), *desbancar* (ET), *estallar* (CC), *explotar* (ALN), *incendio* (ALN), *pujanza* (ALN), *revolucionar* (CC), *revuelta* (ALN), and *rendirse* (EP). The frame of disease contains such terms as *contagio* (ALN), *fiebre* (ALN, BBC, EP), *infeccioso* (ALN), *inocular* (EP), *inyectar* (EE), *termómetro* (ET), *viral* (ALN), and *vitamina* (EE). Although the overall idea promoted by the text fragments containing these words is generally positive – reggaeton is a highly appealing music that fought its way up to the top – these linguistic choices may evoke negative associations from the receivers. Notably, the frames of fight and disease appear only in texts produced outside of reggaeton community.

Another interesting observation concerns how reggaeton is framed by the *gente de las calles*

*de Medellín* (MM). In the podcast episode "En La Ciudad del Perreo," *medellinenses* are invited to share their memories about the first reggaeton songs they heard. Most of them name 'old-school' songs and artists from the Puerto Rican reggaeton scene, which reveals the geographical mobility of the genre, on the one hand, and its temporal continuity on the other. The continuity of reggaeton is also referred to in ALN, namely through the use of the words *acumular*, *ancestral*, *crónicas*, *historia*, *historiadores [del género]*, and *ininterrumpido*. Generally, the idea of the genre's continuity and cultural legacy is of great importance within reggaeton discourse, whereby artists' use of certain discursive strategies can be read as heritagizing strategies (see Chalk, 2020).

## 5.4. Reggaetonero/as

In the analyzed texts, reggaeton artists are mainly mentioned in the context of their music, and therefore, the frames applied towards them largely coincide with those applied towards reggaeton. Most of the vocabulary is found to have positive connotations, and belong to the frame of success, for example: *destacado* (EP), *diva* (ALN), *duro* (EE), *estrella* (ALN, EP, ET, BBC), *excelente* (NM), *gran[de]* (EP, CC, ALN), *gurú* (CC), *icon* (NM) and *icono* (EP), *importante* (BBC, ALN), *jefe* (ALN), *leyenda* (EG), *máximo* (ET), *mejor* (ET, CC), *número uno* (ET), *prestigioso* (ALN), *superestrella* (EP), *superimportante* (NM), *talento* (BBC, EP, EG), and *validador* (EP).

Words with negative meanings, on the other hand, are very rare, and in all detected cases relate to drugs. As already mentioned in 5.1., ALN and EP use the frame of drugs not only when touching upon the drug-related history of Medellin, but also when talking about reggaeton. Furthermore, both articles present J Balvin as a *cabeza de cartel*, which is a rather predictable metaphor considering the fact that the readers' knowledge about the Medellin Cartel has already been activated earlier in the texts. The discourse of crime and drugs is also relevant to the story of Nicky Jam, which is brought up in EP and NM. However, in both cases, the emphasis is placed on the transformation he experienced in Medellin.

## 6. Conclusions: the new Medellin brand

This paper has shown that the most salient linguistic frames contained in the data are the frames of music, centrality, home, success, business, and the world. Components of these frames occur in texts originating from both outside and inside the reggaeton community, and serve to enhance the positive image of Medellin as a prominent musical hub. While reggaetonero/as draw attention exclusively to positive features of the city, its residents, and reggaeton, the media from outside the reggaeton discourse occasionally evoke negative stereotypes about Medellin and reggaeton. The analysis reveals that Spanish media *El País* and *ALnavío* use a considerable number of negatively connotated words when referring to the early history of reggaeton in Puerto Rico and the drug-related past of Medellin. Colombian media, on the other hand, tend to apply clearly positive vocabulary and focus on the present

role of Medellin as the world capital of reggaeton and the global recognition of the local reggaeton scene.

The use of components from the frame of crime and drugs indicates that there is still a strong association between Medellin and its drug-related past. Since this chapter in the city's history is impossible to forget or ignore, it has been integrated into the new cultural profile of Medellin, namely as a means of contrast to its present-day success. When thinking about the city's transformation, a parallel between the story of Medellin and that of Nicky Jam inevitably comes to mind. Both the city and the artist were able to overcome drug abuse and achieve musical success, which in the media is often referred to as a rebirth. The rebirth metaphor is used, for example, in the title of the documentary *A New Medellín: Rebirth through Reggaeton* and Nicky Jam's album *Fénix*.

The new urban profile of Medellin is inseparable from international recognition of local reggaeton and its artists. One of the main ambassadors for the new city brand (see Braun et al., 2013), J Balvin, created a slogan that asserts the visibility of Medellin-produced reggaeton within the popular music landscape: *Made in Medellín*. J Balvin uses this slogan in a variety of contexts, in his songs and as a title of his podcast of the same name (also included into the dataset), among others. The artist took the promotion of his hometown to the next level when he appeared at the Super Bowl LIV Halftime Show in February 2020 in a "Made in Medellín" hoodie.

Karol G, the most prominent female symbol of Colombian reggaeton, is notably only mentioned in 3 out of 6 texts stemming from outside the reggaeton community. This lack of acknowledgement may be due to the relative lack of visibility of women in this genre, as some scholars have posited that reggaeton has promoted gender inequalities and gender violence (see e.g. Arévalo, Chellew, Figueroa-Cofré, Arancibia-Villablanca, & Schmied, 2018). However, recently, an increasing number of female artists have started to assert their position within the male-dominated reggaeton space by subverting its *machismo* and representing female self-empowerment. One of these artists is *la guerrera del género* Karol G.

The data reveal that not only reggaetonero/as, but also city residents are actively engaged in the process of the (re)branding of Medellin. Communications about the city from both local artists and the public are likely to be significant for international audiences because they share an insider's perspective on the city. Further research could examine the strategies through which the Medellin's new image is broadcast to the outside world, with the research material including reggaeton lyrics, music videos, concerts, and reggaeton artists' activity on social media, on the one hand, and the reggaeton listeners'/city residents' online activity on the other.

Future studies could also analyze the visual framing of the city, as well as self-representations of local reggaetonero/as in Medellin-produced music videos. Preliminary analysis has shown that reggaeton music videos lay particular stress on the city's natural beauty and unique feel-good atmosphere through showing breath-taking panoramic views and distinct, vivid *barrios* with lively inhabitants. Many videos involve the motif of city residents as important supporters of the Medellin reggaeton scene, which is depicted, for example, through their

dancing with local reggaetonero/as (e.g. *Mi Cama* by Karol G), or helping them to win the attention of their love interest (e.g. *El Amante* by Nicky Jam). Allusions to the drug-related past of Medellin might be seen in the context of the conspicuous display of material possessions of reggaetonero/as (e.g. massive jewellery and expensive cars, which are also common for narco culture (Kail, 2015, p. 36)); however, more research on this topic is needed.

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