



INNOVATIONS FOR SUCCESSFUL SOCIETIES

CONJURING AND CONSOLIDATING A TURNAROUND: GOVERNANCE IN BOGOTÁ, 1992-2003

SYNOPSIS

A once proud city, Bogotá was on the verge of ruin by the late 1980s. Its government was corrupt and dysfunctional, and the Colombian capital regularly ranked among the worst places in the world in which to live. In 1986, then-president and former Bogotá Mayor Virgilio Barco lamented, “Of that booming city that I governed, today all that is left is an urbanized anarchy, tremendous chaos, immense disorder, a colossal mess.” Beginning in 1992, however, Bogotá enjoyed a string of mayors who succeeded in turning the city around. The first of these mayors, Jaime Castro (1992-94), fought to establish the financial and political framework that would empower the mayor’s office to function as a nucleus of reform. Castro’s successor, Antanas Mockus (1995-97 and 2001-03), built on that legacy, consolidating gains in the face of entrenched opposition on the city council and bringing tangible benefits to the population in the form of improved public-service delivery. By 2002, the United Nations had selected Bogotá as a “model city” to be emulated across Latin America and by early 2010, Mockus had emerged as a strong candidate in Colombia’s presidential elections.

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INTRODUCTION

Set on a plateau atop the Andes, Bogotá lies at an altitude of 2,600 meters above sea level, or, as its inhabitants like to say, “2,600 meters closer to the stars.” The metropolitan area encompasses nearly nine million people, making Bogotá by far the largest city in Colombia and home to one in five of the country’s citizens. The city is the political, economic, and industrial capital of Colombia.

When reformist mayors Jaime Castro (1992-94) and Antanas Mockus (1995-97 and 2001-03)

took office, only the president himself was said to have a higher public profile.

Castro and Mockus, however, inherited a difficult history. Robust population growth and violent crime had overwhelmed the city’s limited resources in the 1970s and 1980s. While the capital had been spared some of the more extreme drug-fueled violence that enveloped other Colombian cities such as Medellín and Cali, widespread corruption nevertheless had eviscerated government institutions. Castro recalled, “I stepped into City Hall in June 1992.

At that moment the city as a public entity was collapsed. It did not have a future. It was neither governable nor administrable.”

A turning point came in 1991, when Colombia convened an assembly to write a new constitution. Castro, a long-time political heavyweight from one of the country’s two main parties, was one of the delegates. Decades of service in national cabinets and the Senate in Bogotá had given the 53-year-old constitutional lawyer firsthand knowledge of the capital’s dysfunction, and he championed Bogotá’s cause at the assembly.

Castro succeeded in having an article included in the new constitution that required the next mayor of Bogotá to draft an “organic law” overhauling the city’s administrative structure. As an organic law, the document would draw its authority from the national constitution itself, and its enactment would be by presidential decree. Thus, any reforms the mayor chose to include in the law would not be subject to ratification by the city council. Castro secured, in effect, an ironclad opportunity to reset the way the capital’s government worked.

Believing that he was the best man to write the law and set the reforms in motion, Castro ran for mayor of Bogotá, anchoring his campaign to his highly visible work in the constitutional assembly. As soon as he started his three-year term in 1992, he set about drafting the law, which bolstered the city’s finances and gave the mayor new powers to confront opponents within city government.

Mockus later built upon this legacy with improbable success. A former rector of Colombia’s National University with no prior political experience, he was perhaps the most high-profile example of the wave of unorthodox, anti-establishment politicians who swept to power in Colombia in the mid-1990s. As an educator, he once dropped his trousers to get the attention of an auditorium of students, and he brandished a toy sword while defending the university’s budget

before the national congress.

Eccentricities notwithstanding, Mockus spent much of his first term consolidating the new powers of the mayor’s office against a city council dominated by vested interests. Because Colombian law bars mayors from serving consecutive terms, Mockus didn’t run for re-election. He was succeeded by Enrique Peñalosa, who concentrated on upgrading the city’s public transportation system during his term from 1998 to 2000. Mockus returned in 2001 for a second term, during which he declared improvements in public service delivery his flagship initiative.

THE CHALLENGE

Bogotá’s mayors during this period faced three main challenges. First, the city was in financial straits. In 1992, Bogotá owed a total of US\$2.6 billion, and the national government was refusing to back any more debts for the city. Compounding the problem, the capital’s ability to raise revenue was abysmal; the average Bogotano was paying the same amount in taxes in 1993 as he had in the early 1960s. For the past three decades, politicians had lacked both the inclination to raise taxes and ability to collect them.

The second challenge facing any reformer was the city council. Bogotá’s council members relied on extensive patronage networks to remain in power, indebting themselves to patrons who would expect to recoup their investment in the form of sweetheart contracts and government paychecks. Such collusion was easy, given that the council was legally a co-executive entity alongside the mayor, which meant that it had direct control over human-resources systems and contracting processes. Councilmen did not have to pressure city agencies to hire their supporters; they could simply direct them to do so. Because councilmen sat on the boards of publicly owned companies, it was also relatively easy for them to steer contracts toward their backers.

Complicating matters, the Bogotá city

council was an extremely visible venue. Several former presidents had made their political careers in the chamber. With the media spotlight on them, ambitious councilmen had every incentive to raise their own profiles as much as possible. Given the media's taste for sensation and controversy, the easiest way to attract such attention was to obstruct any and all initiatives, and to do so as vocally as possible.

The third challenge to any attempt to overhaul Bogotá's government was the deplorable state of the bureaucracy. The patronage system had swollen the public payroll with generations of unqualified, poorly motivated functionaries. With money to be made in contracting and infrastructure, few Bogotá politicians had ever dedicated much time to issues of organizational efficiency. This had led to a complex and inaccessible bureaucracy that was both the cause and consequence of widespread corruption. Epitomizing the problem, Bogotá's main administrative building, the District Administrative Center, was a sprawling complex of corridors, along which citizens would shuffle on their way between being pressed for bribes at one office after the other. Bogotanos referred to the building as "the humiliator."

FRAMING A RESPONSE

Having successfully championed Bogotá's cause at the 1991 constitutional assembly, Castro quickly emerged as a frontrunner for mayor in the run-up to elections later that year. As he remembered it, "People said, 'Finally, someone is worrying about Bogotá: Constitutional Assemblyman Castro.' ... That, without a doubt, opened the door for me." Castro won handily and entered office in June 1992. Given the ban on consecutive mayoral administrations, he knew he would have only a single three-year term to turn the city around.

From the start, Castro set two primary goals for his administration: He would curtail the influence of the city council, and he would put

Bogotá back on a sound financial footing. Without such fundamental structural reforms, he believed, any other advances would be superficial. "The priority, without a doubt, was to return governability to the city and to bring the district out of bankruptcy," he recalled. The story of Castro's administration was one of carefully selected and circumscribed goals pursued at the expense of nearly all else—including his political future.

Castro knew that the organic law, which he was constitutionally obliged to write, was the key to success or failure. Because of his preparatory work in the constitutional assembly, Castro had the chance to write a law that would slash the influence and power of the city council. How he composed the text of the law revealed much about both his character and the limited resources he had to work with.

Castro impaneled no blue-ribbon commissions, nor did he hire expert consultants. "Since the first day I walked into City Hall," said Castro, "I began to take notes on small cards regarding what the statute would be, drawing on the difficulties I encountered along the way and my own observations. ... [The law] was therefore the product of my theoretical knowledge of the subject and my experience over the course of a year as mayor." At the end of the year, Castro compiled his slips of paper, sat down, and wrote the document that became law as presidential decree 1421 of 1993.

The provisions of Castro's law revolutionized how Bogotá's government worked. First, and most important, it ended the practice of co-administration by the mayor and the city council, establishing the mayor as the unambiguous executive authority and limiting the council's role to establishing norms and providing oversight. It abolished the long-standing practice of having councilmen directly involved in city contracting. The law effectively banned councilmen from sitting on the boards of public companies, stripped them of their authority to vote members

to those same boards, and removed them from the city's general contracting process.

From that point on, the mayor acted as the sole executive, while the council's role was limited to legislating.

The organic law further weakened the council by decentralizing Bogotá into 20 *localidades*. Within each *localidad*, a local administrative council that was popularly elected would submit a list of candidates from which Castro himself would appoint a "local mayor." The central administration distributed between 10% and 20% of the capital's entire budget among the *localidades*, which were in turn responsible for carrying out minor public-works projects, economic and social development programs, and public-service delivery oversight. While Castro was sidelining the council at City Hall, he was simultaneously diluting its influence over grassroots spending.

The law also changed several of Bogotá's tax regulations, closing loopholes through which the district was losing revenue. For example, Castro ensured that all goods produced within the city limits were, for the first time, considered subject to Bogotá tax, regardless of how or where they were eventually sold. He made all commercial activity taxable unless it could be proven to have taken place in a different municipality where taxes had already been paid.

On the tricky issue of improving property-tax collection, Castro similarly confined his efforts to altering the scope and scale of existing regulations. Collecting property taxes was difficult in Bogotá because of the subjectivity involved in appraising land in the rapidly developing and expanding metropolis. Castro's new law concentrated on egregious property-tax violations, mandating heavy fines for those found to undervalue their land by half or more. Importantly, none of these actions involved establishing new taxes, a process over which the council, in its role as the legislature, had veto power.

The backlash was inevitable. The

councilmen and their clients had been outmaneuvered on constitutional issues in 1991, but they were on familiar ground on the bread-and-butter issue of taxes. From the outset, council members attacked Castro for doing nothing while potholes deepened in the streets and crime continued unabated. They ridiculed him as a haughty mayor who did nothing but take notes on slips of paper. When Castro's first concrete action turned out to be a crackdown on taxes, with nothing tangible to show for it, public opinion quickly began to turn on him.

Castro's secretary of finance told him that while he would support Castro in reforming the tax system within the government, he would do so only on the condition that Castro agreed to take his place at all press conferences and public events and go on record saying that the newly tough tax regime was the mayor's idea and his alone. Castro recalled looking out of his office window over Bogotá's main square, the Plaza Bolívar, as it streamed with thousands calling for his resignation. Without the funds to launch a media campaign explaining the need for his reforms, Castro resolved to simply ignore all opposition and push on. "Political capital is meant to be spent," Castro reminisced. "You are elected so you can spend it, not so you can build more of it."

Castro's reforms had borne fruit by the time he left office at the end of 1994. Bogotá's total receipts grew 77% in real terms from 1993 to 1994. By October 1996, international credit-ratings company Standard and Poor's had given Bogotá a BBB rating, indicating medium-grade creditworthiness.

Yet Bogotá looked much as it had the day Castro entered office. The increasingly unpopular mayor had used new revenue to pay down debt rather than to build high-profile infrastructure. The balance of power between the mayor and the council had been reset, but that advance had translated into little of meaning for the average inhabitant, save perhaps a heavier tax burden.

Demonized as arrogant and authoritarian,

Castro saw himself as a solitary crusader for invisible structural reform. The cover of his memoir, *Three Years of Solitude*, shows him alone, looking out of his office window. Nearly 15 years later, he defended his strategy. “As a mayor, I worked for my successors,” he said. “But I was aware of this. I knew this was my responsibility and that if I didn’t do it, the city would definitely sink. I could not let the city crumble in my own hands.”

GETTING DOWN TO WORK

If Jaime Castro was the architect of the political and fiscal framework that would help power Bogotá’s turnaround, it fell to his successor, Antanas Mockus, to build upon that foundation.

Mockus won a landslide 62.5% of the 1994 vote to become Bogotá’s first independent mayor, more than doubling the vote total of his traditional party rival. Yet as the new mayor took office in January 1995, it was uncertain whether he would be able to consolidate the gains made by his predecessor and deliver tangible progress to a skeptical public. At that point, Mockus was still best known for his willingness to drop his trousers in public. It remained to be seen how the unconventional intellectual would fare against a city council keen to regain the power and influence it had lost during the Castro years.

A hard line with the council

Mockus did not cow members of the council; he was a political neophyte whose eccentricities smacked of weakness. The council members wanted to hear about contracts and jobs for their supporters, not about how the new mayor believed the works of economist Douglass North and philosopher Jürgen Habermas should influence social development in the capital.

Mockus recognized that his relationship with the council during the coming years would be decided within the first months. From the start, therefore, he adopted a stern position, telling the council that he would debate issues only on their

merits and would stop speaking as soon as jobs or contracts were brought into the discussion. When a councilman asked him for jobs for his clients, Mockus recalled that he would not say a word but would stare at him “as if he had vomited. ... I used just body language [as if] I was wondering how to collect back his vomit from the carpet That’s the sort of barrier that helps a lot.”

Mockus refused to meet with council members unless they filled out appointment cards specifying the exact purpose of the meeting and the issues to be discussed. If a councilman brought up any issue that was not written on the card, Mockus would end the conversation and tell him to make another appointment.

“If I felt something new was being put on the table,” Mockus recalled, “I said, ‘If you have another subject, please make another appointment and I’ll fit it in tonight or tomorrow morning. But please, I like to prepare my meetings.’ This was incredibly effective.”

The tactic allowed Mockus to keep interactions focused on strategic goals and away from diversions that might be used to wring concessions from him. Sticking to this procedure, Mockus ensured that unless a councilman wanted to go on record as having underhandedly solicited favors, all interaction would remain open and above board. As a result, Mockus said, the council learned to “never ask or expect to get in private what you would not ask or expect to get in public.”

Mockus’ first administration was zealously confrontational with the council, and his cabinet got much done by simply concentrating on issues that did not involve the council. They put very little effort into trying to find a middle ground. Unsurprisingly, this infuriated and humiliated the councilmen, who retaliated by stonewalling action on a long list of Mockus’ initiatives: a new police code, the capitalization of the phone company and a major road-improvement project. Mockus’ team left office in 1997 having stood firm against council pressure but having sacrificed much along

the way.

Mockus was barred by law from running for a consecutive term, but Bogotá's voters returned him to City Hall in 2001 with a pledge to moderate his stance toward the council. His experience during his first term had convinced him that outright confrontation with the council achieved little. Some sort of middle ground would have to be found without compromising his administration's integrity.

Mockus began to look for ways to meet the council halfway. One change was fast and easy. He focused on altering the rhetoric framing the relationship, instructing his team, as he remembered, "to be very diplomatic, to never speak about 'clientelism,' and to stay very firm but very, very kind. ... No contempt." Realizing that reaching a rapprochement with the council might be a slippery slope, Mockus balanced this new approach by banning public employees from meeting privately with councilmen, fearing that the council would go around him and his cabinet to corrupt the second and third tiers of the administration. Though Mockus had difficulties enforcing the rule at times, he nevertheless claimed it was effective.

The administration's new willingness to find a middle ground was put to the test when council approval was needed for a special assessment for road improvement. Isabel Patiño, chosen by Mockus to head Bogotá's Urban Development Institute, was responsible for bringing the issue before the council. She remembered the experience vividly.

"You get into the council, and it's like you're entering a circus, more or less," she said. "You see all kinds of people doing strange things in this auditorium, and you put together your computer and you turn on the presentation and you start to talk and nobody listens to you. Nobody, nobody. Not a single person. They walk around, they eat, they have lunch, they call friends, they chat. So you don't know what to do."

Eventually, Patiño said, she discovered how the council functioned. "In the end," she said, "somebody comes and taps you on the shoulder and says, 'Come on, come on, my friend. This is not the way you do things here. You have to sit down. ... We're going to trade positions in your institution [in return for our approval]. You have 1,200 staff. ... We need to have positions in your institutions. ... I have a nephew that just came back from Germany. He's a very intelligent engineer, and he can do supervision.'"

Patiño flatly refused to cooperate in such dealings. She returned five times to the council, improving her slideshow each time, always to no avail. Exasperated, she discussed the matter with Mockus, and they settled on privately approaching the councilman most infamous for corruption. She proposed a deal: If the councilman would persuade his colleagues to approve the assessment without special jobs or side contracts, she would publicly credit him with the success.

"Do it decently," Patiño recalled telling the councilman. "And if you do it decently, and you play this role, you and I, in the papers, in the news will be together, and I promise that I will say right into the microphone that [you] did it decently." For good measure, she also called each councilman's spouse the night before the chamber was to vote on the tax and explained why she felt it necessary and how it would benefit the city, and she asked them to intercede with their husbands.

The council passed the measure, and Patiño appeared on television with the councilman, giving him all the credit. As Patiño told it: "In front of the cameras, I embraced [him] and it was awkward because I was ... the image of transparency and he was precisely the opposite. 'I want to tell you, I want to tell the city of Bogotá, that [the councilman] did this. He started this project.' ... I don't know if he understood what he approved. I don't really care. But not one job, not one contract was traded." Public recognition was one currency in which Mockus and his team were

more than happy to trade.

OVERCOMING OBSTACLES

Whatever Mockus' relationship with the councilmen, a wholly unreformed civil service remained a serious obstacle to delivering tangible benefits to the public. Improving and deploying public services thus became a major goal of his second term.

Mockus' idea was to effect what he called a "Copernican Revolution" in the way in which citizens and the civil service interacted. He entrusted this effort to his secretary general, Liliana Caballero, whose position was roughly analogous to a chief of staff. Caballero described the central tenet as "to not have the citizens orbiting around the state begging for a favor, demanding their rights, but rather the administration orbiting around the citizen, who should be at the center." A lawyer by training, Caballero had served as Mockus' secretary general at the National University. She was passionate about the intricacies of organizational administration and immediately created the District Secretariat for Service to the Citizen within her office to manage the effort.

Caballero launched an Admirable Public Administration campaign with the goal, as she recalled, of "recovering the citizens' trust in institutions and in the administration." But the campaign initially lacked detailed planning. Reflecting on the initiative's early phases, Caballero conceded that her mission statements and strategic plans were filled with trite phrases and meaningless buzzwords. She knew where she wanted to go but not how exactly to get there. In the end, she said, the reforms progressed "by trial and error—but with very clear end goals": to increase bureaucratic efficiency and innovation, reorient bureaucratic culture, and streamline service delivery.

In-house training

Caballero began her push for increased

efficiency and innovation within Bogotá's civil service by identifying which of the thousands of civil servants spread across the district's 64 secretariats, directorates, and public companies had direct contact with the public as part of their daily routines. Drawing from this group, she created what she called "transversal teams," groups of civil servants who, despite being in different offices and having different job titles, were nevertheless working on the common issue of customer service.

These teams, as Caballero recalled, allowed members "to identify the best practices and make them transversal, applied across different offices. You generate spaces in which these people can vent, can speak the same language." Caballero soon expanded this model to cover other specialists common to multiple government entities such as lawyers, communications specialists, human-resource managers and accountants.

Caballero used transversal teams not only to universalize best practices but also to build capacity. Bringing public servants from different departments together made it easier to identify the departments that most needed training, thus saving the costs and delays associated with any sort of formal, service-wide evaluation.

The teams not only pinpointed areas of low capacities but also promised an immediate solution. Caballero did not have the resources to fund a traditional training program, so she tried to identify the strongest members of each team and charged them with overseeing their counterparts' development. Somewhere in Bogotá's sprawling civil service there was a true expert on each issue; transversal teams brought these experts to the fore and gave them a structured environment in which to help others. For someone working with limited resources, like Caballero, this cost-free training model was a godsend. Furthermore, not only was such in-house training cheaper than hiring outside consultants, Caballero also found it far more effective. Bogotá's own civil servants knew both

the abstract, technical aspects of each problem and also the details of how it played out within the specific context of the city's government.

Getting civil servants to think in ways that crossed institutional lines was not easy. This was especially so among the senior ranks, where the transversal teams were often viewed as a distraction from employees' regular duties. At this point, the teams were still part of an informal, ad hoc program. Office heads could refuse to let subordinates spend time with their teams, or they might pay lip service to the effort while assigning their workers elsewhere.

Changing this culture was a gradual process, but Caballero pointed to one idea that worked particularly well. At the end of the first year of the reform effort, she made the thousands of public employees attending the city's Christmas party wear shirts of specific colors that represented which of a half dozen strategic goals their jobs were most closely related to (such as public order, finance, transparency, etc.). Civil servants thus met other public employees from other institutions and from vastly different career levels wearing the same color shirts as they wore. Caballero said the experience fostered a service-wide esprit de corps and built an appreciation of the potential for realizing inter-institutional synergies.

Changing bureaucratic culture

A second focus of Caballero's reforms was reorienting public employees' approach to interacting with citizens, the front-office element of the administration. Caballero was acutely aware that, in an environment such as Bogotá's, "citizens understand bad service as equal to a lack of transparency." "It's happened to all of us," said Caballero. "If we go to a public office, if the process is made difficult for us, if we're asked for more paperwork, we assume that the public servant is asking for some type of bribe." In this sense, poor service delivery fueled the perception

that the civil service was corrupt and encouraged citizens to participate in the corruption.

It was therefore of critical importance to develop a culture within Bogotá's civil service that valued service delivery as strongly as it did personal integrity. This was hardly easy, Caballero recalled: "Within state entities, it used to be that to have someone attend to the public was seen as a punishment. Why? Because if you're at a normal desk, you can take the time to drink a coffee, go to the bathroom, call your children." With the current front-office staff selected largely on the basis of their lack of merit, Caballero reasoned that it would make more sense to rotate these people out rather than attempt to retrain them. She administered personality tests to front-office staff throughout the service and removed those deemed unfit for the pressures of the job.

However, it was one thing to remove people from public interaction and quite another to persuade others to take their places, at least with anything approaching enthusiasm. The next challenge, as Caballero saw it, was therefore to change the underlying culture of Bogotá's bureaucracy.

Caballero put great emphasis on terminology, reasoning that if a person repeats a certain set of words hundreds of times a day, it would be careless to assume that those words would not impact the way that person looks at his or her job. For example, she was especially opposed to the practice of referring to civil servants as *funcionarios*, a term implying responsibility for a specific function and nothing more. Instead, she insisted that all members of the administration speak only of *servidores públicos*, officials whose job it was to serve the public, whatever that might entail at any given moment. In a similar move, she had the "Claims and Complaints" office renamed to become the "Complaints and Solutions" office. Caballero was a firm believer that the way a bureaucracy frames an issue can

greatly affect the chances of success in dealing with it.

All this, according to Caballero, helped to ensure “that public servants understood that the government does not attend to ‘clients’ or ‘users,’ but to ‘Citizens’ with a capitalized, bolded ‘C.’” She rejected the terminology of the public as “clients,” then in vogue, believing it implied the wrong message. A client could choose to go elsewhere for services and could withhold payment if services were not up to standard. The public, however, did not have the choice to go anywhere else for the vast majority of state services and had already paid in advance through their taxes. In a similar vein, Caballero sent a note to all public servants with their daily pay calculated on it and a simple question: “Have I really merited getting this much money?”

Deploying accessible services

Caballero also wanted to find a way to make public services more accessible and transparent. Beginning in 1991, the Bogotá government had set up *Centros de Atención Distrital Especializados* (CADEs, or District Specialized Attention Centers). These facilities combined a half dozen district agencies’ offices in one place. Based on the reasonable idea of consolidating services, the CADEs were nevertheless functioning poorly. As Caballero described it, “When we showed up, wait times were not even measured. ... And the worst part is that those people who were using these services were people from the lowest socioeconomic class, and in order to go to these CADEs they had to miss a day of work and usually travel a long way.” The civil service’s inefficiency was hitting Bogotá’s most vulnerable citizens hardest; wealthier people paid middlemen with connections to bypass bureaucratic hassles.

Caballero immediately expanded the CADEs’ workweek and opening hours so that people would not have to take time off from work to go to them. She also found that most people were going to CADEs to make payments,

whether for parking fines, utility bills or taxes. She therefore began constructing RapiCADEs, much smaller satellite kiosks manned by specialized staffers who were experts at counting cash quickly. RapiCADEs served the sole function of receiving payments from the public. When it became easier for people to pay, delinquency rates dropped noticeably.

Because Bogotá did not have the funds to build all these RapiCADEs (there were soon over 30), Caballero encouraged private banks to build and operate many of them. She allowed the banks to hold all receipts for up to two months and keep the resulting interest. Soon, more people were getting more of their needs met closer to home or work and were spending much less time doing so. By the end of Caballero’s tenure, the average time required to pay a bill had shrunk to five minutes from an hour and a half.

While the RapiCADEs offered bare-bones services, Caballero’s other innovation, the SuperCADE, was the opposite. Each SuperCADE functioned as a clearinghouse for government services, a one-stop supermarket stocked with every bureaucratic service the people of Bogotá might want. SuperCADEs included, for the first time, officials from national institutions in addition to those from Bogotá. By charging the national institutions rent, Caballero managed to offset some of the costs to the city’s own agencies, which were already benefiting from shared overhead costs. To mark a symbolic break from the past, she set up the first SuperCADE within the District Administrative Center, which people had once called “the humiliator.”

As of late 2009, there were six SuperCADEs in Bogotá, many located adjacent to bus stations that provided easy and affordable access. The SuperCADE in Suba, in northern Bogotá, was built like an airplane hangar, with more than 35 municipal and government entities represented. The main hall was open, airy, well lit and clean, much like a supermarket. There were no offices, only desks spread out across the open plan hall,

making any illicit dealings immediately observable. Two banks were located directly outside the main entrance and collected all payments related to the services on offer within the SuperCADE. Any employee or citizen observing a transaction within the hall knew that there was no legitimate reason whatsoever for any money to change hands at any of the service counters. Service and payment were quite literally separate actions, processes in which the citizen interacted with different people in different locations.

A full-time manager from Caballero's former office was in charge of the operation, functioning as the day-to-day supervisor for all SuperCADE workers, regardless of whether the workers represented city or national institutions. The manager had the authority to enforce work hours, dress and customer-service policies. Every month, the manager would measure the time taken to perform each of the services available at the SuperCADE and address efficiency problems as they arose. Thus, a broad range of government entities nevertheless maintained a uniformly high standard of service.

Both national and city institutions were keen to place their representatives at Caballero's SuperCADEs, lured by the chance to increase their receipts and to cut costs by streamlining their operations and by sharing overhead costs. The most meaningful benefit citizens received from the system was, according to Caballero, "in one word: respect."

ASSESSING RESULTS

Ten years after Castro first entered office, Bogotá's government had become in some ways the polar opposite of its 1992 self. While there was an element of fortuitous timing involved in Castro's ability to insert the organic law-enabling article into the 1991 constitution, there was nothing easy about his stand in defense of the change. Castro expended all of his political capital defending the new balance of power between the

mayor's office and the council, effectively killing his political career in the process. Nevertheless, he ensured that Mockus was able to take a firm stance against council pressure and then, later, moderate his adversarial approach from a position of strength.

Mockus, for his part, went on to dedicate great effort to improving service delivery, establishing innovative programs of internal capacity building and greatly increasing the accessibility and transparency of the city's bureaucracy. As Paul Bromberg, a close aide of Mockus' and sometime alternate as mayor, put it: "We went from an idea, from a notion which is false—that we were the worst city in the world—to another idea, which is also false, that we were the best. This took place ... due to the improvement in services."

Still, questions remained regarding whether Castro and Mockus had to be as confrontational with the council as they ultimately were. Members of Mockus' cabinet expressed regret over the amount of time and energy they saw as wasted in battles with the council. Because the relationship was so adversarial, Mockus' administration had to limit its initiatives to those that were cheap, as the council would not approve budget increases. Many reforms were never institutionalized because the council simply refused to pass them into law. Confrontation, however principled, came at a cost.

REFLECTIONS

In the final analysis, Castro and Mockus did not accomplish all that they could have. Still, measured against the historical benchmark of Bogotá's checkered past, the changes could be called extraordinary. The way in which the government worked in 2004 would have been unimaginable to a Bogotano in 1992. Bogotá's transformation also had implications far beyond the city's limits. The capital's renaissance inspired a wave of innovative governance across Colombia, most notably in Medellín under the

administration of Sergio Fajardo (see separate memo, “From Fear to Hope in Colombia: Sergio Fajardo and Medellín, 2004-2007”). From pariah to paradigm, the turnaround was, arguably, revolutionary.

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