



INNOVATIONS FOR SUCCESSFUL SOCIETIES

AN INITIATIVE OF
THE WOODROW WILSON SCHOOL OF PUBLIC AND INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS
AND THE BOBST CENTER FOR PEACE AND JUSTICE

Series: Governance Traps/City Management

Interview no.: J4

Interviewee: Jaime Castro Castro

Interviewer: Matthew Devlin with Sebastian Chaskel

Date of Interview: 6 October 2009

Location: Bogotá
Colombia

Innovations for Successful Societies, Bobst Center for Peace and Justice
Princeton University, 83 Prospect Avenue, Princeton, New Jersey, 08544, USA
www.princeton.edu/successfulsocieties

**Interview conducted in Spanish with consecutive translation.

MATTHEW DEVLIN: We're in Bogotá, Colombia. Today is 6 October and we are with Jaime Castro (Jaime Castro Castro), who was Legal Secretary to the Office of the Presidency (Secretario Jurídico de la Presidencia de la República) from 1970 to 1973, Minister of Justice and Law (Ministro de Justicia y Derecho) from 1973 to 1974, Senator from 1974 to 1982, Minister of Government (Ministro de Gobierno) from 1984 to 1986, member of the 1991 National Constitutional Assembly (Asamblea Nacional Constituyente de 1991), and recently mayor of Bogotá from 1992 to 1994. Thank you very much for meeting with us. To start and to contextualize your experience for an international audience, I'd like to ask you to tell us a bit about the Office of the Mayor in Bogotá, the state you found it in when you first arrived as mayor, and the relationship between the Office of the Mayor and the Concejo de Bogotá. How, say, did the Office of the Mayor work with the other institutions that surrounded it?

JAIME CASTRO: *Well, I took on the Office of the Mayor in June of 1992. At that moment, the city as public entity was collapsed. It had no future. It was neither governable nor administrable as a result of a process that had been taking in place for several decades. So I decided to make profound decisions that gave back to Bogotá the governability that it had lost. Fortunately, there were certain constitutional regulations issued in 1991 that allowed for issuing, by way of decree, the Organic Statute of the city (Estatuto Orgánico de Bogotá), which, from a political, fiscal, and administrative point of view, splits the recent history of Bogotá in two. First there is the Bogotá prior to 1993, when the statute is issued, and second, there is the Bogotá that rises from that moment on. I say this with authority, because for the first part of my thirty months as mayor—there were two and a half year-terms back then—for the first fifteen days, I governed and administered without the statute, and the last fifteen days I made use of the regulation. The difference was very significant.*

In political science terms, during the first stage of the city was not governable, it did not have governability. In the second stage, decisions could be made that would put the city on a new path. I said that Bogotá as a public entity was devastated, it had no future. The same thing was happening from a fiscal point of view. The city was bankrupt. The resources it produced were not even enough to cover its running expenses. It came from a process of very high internal and external indebtedness that had led the credit organisms to deny Bogotá any further loans. A loan for road works that had been underwritten but not yet disbursed was even suspended. The World Bank issued a warning that if finances were not settled, it would suspend the loan it had authorized to the company charged with the construction of the aqueduct. The national government sent a letter to the mayor informing him that the central government, the nation, would no longer guarantee any loans. Without that guarantee, all financial doors would close for the city. So the situation was one of complete bankruptcy. That's what I found in 1992. As I said to you, fortunately, there are authorizations or faculties that allow for the issuing of the statute, and the statute became Bogotá's lifesaver, so much so that sixteen years after being issued the statute has not been amended. It is still the roadmap for Bogotá. It is what allowed me to govern and administrate in the final stages of my term, and my successors would say the same thing.

DEVLIN: Perhaps you could explain to us in a bit more detail what the relationship was like with the Cundinamarca Department around Bogotá

CASTRO: *No, from an institutional point of view, Bogotá-Cundinamarca relations did not exist, because beginning in 1954 it was stipulated that the decisions of the governor of Cundinamarca were not applicable to Bogotá. The decisions of the Departmental Assembly of Cundinamarca (Asamblea Departamental de Cundinamarca) are not applicable either. So there is a political-institutional separation in place. Until 1991, Bogotá was part of the Cundinamarca electoral district. Senators and representatives were elected by combining the votes from Bogotá and Cundinamarca. So Bogotá practically had no direct representation of its own in congress. Beginning in 1991, Bogotá became an electoral district separate from Cundinamarca. So Bogotá-*

Cundinamarca relations do not count for or against the issues at hand. It is a completely neutral subject.

DEVLIN: And what about the national government?

CASTRO: *The national government had always been and still is indifferent towards Bogotá. Governments have never supported the capital. Central governments have a kind of complex. They are afraid that the rest of the country will call them centralist if they invest in Bogotá. So no mayor has had the decisive and definitive support from the central government to make progress in Bogotá. Lately, the national government makes contributions to our mass transit programs but only because it is mandated by law. That allowed for TransMilenio to get off the ground, and it is what could make the subway happen if the subway is finally built. But in any case there has never been support from the national government for Bogotá. There is that sort of complex. The central government fears that if it invests in Bogotá, that if it lends a hand to Bogotá, the rest of the country will say: "It's because it is a centralist government".*

DEVLIN: And the relationship between the Office of the Mayor and the Concejo de Bogotá?

CASTRO: *Well, that is a very important subject because when I arrived to the Office of the Mayor, there was a kind of joint administration in place. The Concejo participated in city government and administered. For instance, council members or delegates of the Concejo attended board meetings of public service companies and participated in contract allocations and appointments of officials. There was also a central board meeting on contracting that council members would attend. They also would attend meetings where urbanism, building, and even tax liquidation permits were issued. That is to say, there was a joint administration. That was one of the causes behind the city's deterioration: that council members always acted on political reasons or responding to patronage pressures. There was even talk about how the origin of corruption lied there. There was, I insist on this term, a joint administration. The leaders of the voting blocks of the Concejo had, in fact, a status almost comparable to that of the mayor. They had many functions without any accountability. The 1993 statute makes a very clear separation between the mayor and the Concejo. This separation of powers results in the mayor governing and administering, with the Concejo controlling, overseeing and performing a vigilant role. That is to say, Bogotá adopted the scheme that the national government had: separation of powers. So if the mayor wants to deal with council members and have them participate in government, that is his business. But if so, he would do it willingly, not out of obligation.*

[INTERRUPTION]

So, a separation of powers is instituted. Before the statute, the mayor was obliged to deal with the Concejo to make certain decisions. After 1993, he is no longer mandated to do so. If he wants to run a joint administration with the Concejo, that is up to him; the statute doesn't forbid it. But he is not forced to do it.

DEVLIN: When you began as mayor, let's say, on your first day, what did you envision as the priorities or the first things you had to work on?

CASTRO: *The priority, without a doubt, was to give back to Bogotá the governability that it had lost. I insist very much on that. And to take the district out of bankruptcy. And I believe that that was my fundamental achievement: giving governability to the city by giving the mayor instruments so that he could govern and make decisions. The community was also given such tools, because that was another important point of the statute: a decentralized regime was adopted within the city. Localities, administrative committees and local mayors were created to guarantee citizen and community participation in the city's public affairs. That is the first great point of the statute: governability. The mayor can govern well or badly, but at least he has the instruments to do it. If they want to, citizens and communities can participate in government and*

in public administration, because they have the tools to do so. The statute also took Bogotá out of bankruptcy by enabling fiscal decisions that I made at high political cost for me. Between 1993 and 1994 I increased the city's tax income approximately 130% or 140%. Such an increase is a unique and exceptional case. Even though I did not create any new taxes, I implemented that reform at high political costs. The reform involved redefining taxes and collection procedures as well as combating evasion. And so those who used to evade taxes, the contributors who did not pay, began to ask for my resignation. They screamed "The mayor must leave." The political cost was so high. Yet it was clear to me that with a steady hand and a lot of clarity I would have to make decisions that were very unpopular but that, over time, would lead to the completion of my project. That is what has happened, and it has been recognized. At one time, the people of Bogotá, practically without exception, and the media saw me as a mayor who did nothing, who did not fulfill his responsibilities, because a political-institutional reform is something you do not see. It is not like breaking ground on a public works project or inaugurating a bridge or a public transport system. It is something immaterial that only a specialist can evaluate and measure; something that brings about results later. As mayor I worked for my successors to reap the fruits. I did it conscientiously and in awareness that it was my responsibility. I knew that if I did not do it, the city would definitely sink. It was clear to me that the city could not crumble in my hands, in my own hands. I acted with a steady hand despite the unpopularity and high political cost. The political elites that had Concejo seats and were about to lose the joint administration prerogative also punished me politically for a long time. But if you ask the citizenry today, they say: "Well, fortunately there was a mayor who had a vision, who paid a political price but that changed the direction of the city just in time". Some say that I am the architect of the new city. Not too long ago someone was telling me: "You gave Bogotá its citizenship card". He meant that I had made the city come of age, enter modernity.

DEVLIN: Yes, yes. So you are telling us about two very important changes. First, and please correct me if I am mistaken, the first change was issuing the Organic Statute of Bogotá in 1993. And then there were the fiscal reforms...

CASTRO: *That is a chapter in the statute. The statute has 200 articles, not 20 or 30. The statute, as its very name suggests, approaches the matter in a holistic manner. It is about the political, administrative and fiscal matters.*

DEVLIN: How was it that you had the capacity to do something that previous mayors had not been able to do? Is it because the Constitution of 1991 gave you the possibility to do this in Bogotá by way of decree or...?

[INTERRUPTION]

DEVLIN: When good public policy materializes, we always wonder why it happened when it happened, what the relevant factors were. In this case, I understand that the Constitution was a very important factor, but I'd like to know if there were other factors.

CASTRO: *No. The constitution opened doors, because, for the first time, constitutional norms dealt with Bogotá. There are three or four articles that I authored as a member of the constitutional assembly. Those articles defined the new way of government and administration in the city. I initiated my relationship with Bogotá from the Constitutional Assembly, although I was not elected to join that body through the city. Bogotá was orphaned. It had no one to speak for it, no one to represent it, no one to take care of it. I did it because as a professor and a scholar on regional matters, I had found that nobody else took interest in Bogotá. The city was abandoned at birth, orphaned, left to its own devices. So I took over the task of representing it, and that is what propelled me to become a mayor. The city can say "at last there was somebody to take interest in Bogotá: Constitutional Assembly Member Castro". And I defended the articles on Bogotá before the Constitutional Assembly, arguing that they would allow the country capital to overcome and get out of the current situation. I transformed what used to be called a Special District (Distrito Especial) into a Capital District (Distrito Capital). And when people asked me "what is the*

difference between the two?," I would say "it is a new form of government and administration". I left the Constitutional Assembly and without intending to do so or taking explicit steps, I began my campaign for the mayor's office. The topic was in the air. The people of Bogotá believed that someone who spoke about a new form of government and administration would have to make it a reality as a mayor. That put me in the race and set me apart from other candidates. You ask if my predecessors did not have access to that important and valuable instrument. That is true; they didn't have access to that instrument, but bear in mind that there is a personal factor to it as well. I alluded to it when I mentioned that I was a scholar on the matter, that I wasn't a politician coming in to ask what had to be done or how to do it. In an academic setting, through newspaper and magazine articles, I had begun to deal with the subject. That said, I should add that without the statute, who knows what would have been the fate of the city.

DEVLIN: So there were basically two factors.

CASTRO: *The constitutional factor had to do with the tools granted by the Constitution as it mandated "Let a statute be drafted within two years." The personal factor was best defined by my successor in the mayor's office, Antanas Mockus (Antanas Mockus Šivickas), who was asked some time later "Who was mayor first, Jaime Castro or Antanas Mockus?" And he answered "Jaime Castro was first, fortunately for the city, because if Antanas Mockus had been mayor before Castro, he would not have drafted the Organic Statute. I don't know about that, I know how to do other things." And he added: "The city knew how to go about things. It realized that first it had to elect somebody who could do the Organic Statute, and Castro was the right person for the job. When I came in the statute was in force, so I could worry about citizen culture."*

DEVLIN: By then it was possible to govern. When it came to doing reforms, I imagine that there was resistance, from the Concejo and other people, for instance.

CASTRO: *There was resistance from congress and from the Concejo. In 1994 there were congressional and presidential elections just as the statute came into force, especially on taxation. The statute was issued in mid-1993 but it only went into effect on 1 January 1994, right in the middle of the electoral campaign. The congressional candidates for Bogotá and even the presidential candidates themselves—showing great irresponsibility and lightheartedness—offered to change the taxation chapter of the statute. It was pure political and electoral opportunism.*

DEVLIN: Would they have been able to change it?

CASTRO: *They could have changed it, but by the time the congress members and the President took office, the statute was beginning to deliver results, so they did not dare. You know that campaign promises are one thing, and acts in office a very different thing. Campaigns are written in verse but you govern in prose. They had promised to reform the statute, especially concerning taxation matters, but by the time they took office taxes had been collected and the statute was proving to be the entry point. So they left it untouched.*

DEVLIN: I'd like to ask you how you dealt with the opposition. I'm asking because often when we see reforms being implemented around the world we are told that it couldn't be done before because the political capital was not there, or because resistance was far too strong.

CASTRO: *Well, that's an important point. As I told you, I was aware that it was what needed to be done, that the city had no future if those decisions were not made. So I went ahead with clarity and responsibility. I knew that there was a political price. The taxation aspects of the statute, as conceived in technical terms, were a contribution of the Secretary of the Treasury (Secretario de Hacienda), who was a specialist in the subject. When he took my offer to enter office, he said "I accept your offer; I will be your secretary, but on two conditions. First, I will defend the technical part of the tax reform, but you must take responsibility for the political part. You have to face the media, Congress, the Concejo, the taxpayers. Do not send me to press conferences. I will come with you to press conferences in case anything technical comes up, but*

let it be clear: the political part is on you.” As for his second condition, he said “I will appoint every high-ranking employee in the Secretary of the Treasury. You will appoint nobody at that level.” I said to him, “You will appoint every staff member in the Secretary, not only the high-ranking ones. You will be accountable for the Secretary’s internal performance and you must have the instruments that allow you to work. You will also be accountable for the technical aspects of the reform. So choose the people you will work with.” Now, why did he impose on me the condition that he would make high-ranking appointments? Because the way things had been was that mayors appointed every employee in response to council members’ recommendations, and the secretary would not have people he could trust to do his job. So I told him that I accepted both conditions. I would accept any political responsibility. I would go to Congressional and Concejo debates. I would appear before the media. I would take any blows that came from those arenas, I mean, any of the criticisms that are often loaded on the back of the accountable functionaries. I think that deep down the citizenry was of two minds before what was happening. On the one hand they thought that both mayor and secretary were knowledgeable on the subject matter and knew what they were doing, but on the other hand, they thought that we were wrong, that we had lost our grip on reality. The latter perception prevailed, and that explains why the criticism was so severe and harsh.

DEVLIN: So they recognized that you were a technical authority on the subjects at hand.

CASTRO: *I was the authority on political and administrative issues. On fiscal matters, the secretary was the authority. But even though our expertise was generally recognized, there was a hostile climate and public opinion. “They are knowledgeable on these issues, but this time they are wrong. Their formulas will not solve the problems of the city.” That was the general consensus. In private, I had a few supporters. I had cold friends and incensed enemies. Among those private supporters there was one who was invaluable to me. I’m referring to the former Colombian president Carlos Lleras Restrepo, who knew the problems of the city very well. In an occasional meeting one day, he told me: [“I don’t know if you chose the time to become a mayor, but you got the worst time in recent city history. Go on doing what you are doing, because you are on the right path. I know the statute and I think it is very good. None of your many and ferocious critics could do a better job.] In due time, your work for the city will be recognized.” That kind of support encouraged me, but it would not lessen the downpour. The enemies of the reform—bear in mind that we were in the middle of an electoral campaign—joined every initiative to make the mayor fall or change his taxation measures. They arranged for a public demonstration in the main square calling for my resignation. They gathered signatures for my impeachment. They used against me a strike of the public sanitation workers’ union, as if it proved my incompetence, when in reality I set in motion an improved garbage collection system that is still in use 20 years later, at no fiscal cost for the city.*

DEVLIN: So did you need the support of anyone in order to make this happen?

CASTRO: *No. [My support came from the 1991 Constitution].*

DEVLIN: Was it really not necessary?

CASTRO: *[It was in the political arena, but none of the primary actors would have lent that support. They didn’t believe in the project. They knew it was unpopular.] I had to weather the storm completely on my own.*

DEVLIN: Were there any moments when you thought that there was a chance that you might be taken down for what you were doing?

CASTRO: *There was a legal debate on the possibility of impeaching me. The matter was settled when the Constitutional Court found that it could not be done. That put everybody’s mind to rest in the administration—mine included. I remember that a journalist came to shadow me during an entire day. As his work came to an end, he commented “I thought I would find you*

under a table, hidden, missing in action, nervous and scared. Instead I see you calm, as if nothing were happening in the city." I told him that I was so calm because I knew that I was doing what had to be done, and even though public opinion could not understand it at the time, eventually they would.

DEVLIN: And was there any kind of public campaign to seek more support?

CASTRO: *No. I organized no public campaign, and neither did I have the resources to market the decisions I was making. [I couldn't use public funds for that end, because the critics would have reacted even more harshly.] The M-19 (Movimiento 19 de Abril), a political movement that had disarmed and entered the political game, was calling for demonstrations against me, demanding my impeachment, all in advance of the upcoming electoral campaign.*

DEVLIN: Yes. And what were the steps taken to issue the decree?

CASTRO: *Well, I knew that the decree had to be issued in mid-1993. From the first day after I took office, I began to write down in small index cards, in small pieces of paper, what the statute was going to be like. My notes would document the difficulties I ran into, my every-day observations. I always wrote down what I would have to take into account on the day when the statute were finally drafted. I took those notes to my apartment and ordered them myself, because back then there were no computers. So when the term expired and we had to draft the statute, what I did was just sit down and write—I didn't have to think much about what needed to be done. I had been thinking about it for over a year. The statute was then the product of my knowledge and my experience of slightly over a year in the mayor's office. If I had hired local or foreign experts who didn't have the insider's point of view, they would have been unable to draft a statute this complete. I was able to do it because I added experience to my theoretical knowledge of the subject. Every day I filled out one or two index cards, wrote down one or two comments that I would take into account for the statute. That is why I was able to draft it in a week or two: I had ready material; I didn't have to come up with anything. The mayor office secretaries that received the document for review were wondering in amazement at what hours and how had I managed to do all that.*

DEVLIN: And did you know from the beginning that it would take a year to issue the statute?

CASTRO: *Although it could have been issued in 1992 or early 1993, I knew that it would not be issues until the special powers were about to expire in mid-1993, because that is the Colombian way.*

DEVLIN: In addition to that reason, were there others reasons to delay drafting?

CASTRO: *There were other reasons that mattered, too. A very important one was the time it took for the Congress to approve the project. You must bear in mind that the statute had to be passed as law by Congress. If the Congress would not do it, the government could pass it by decree, which is what happened in the end. But as we had to start with Congress, it was clear that the first step would take months. During the debate in Congress I was able to participate and bring my experience as mayor, which I did to no avail because nobody paid attention to my observations. The Congress members who dealt with the issue were former Concejo members, and they decided to impose their point of view.*

DEVLIN: Did you know from the beginning that your experience would inform the statute?

CASTRO: *Yes, because of what I said earlier. [I will confess to you something that became known later on through some friends in Congress. Don't forget that I had been a Senator. I filibustered so that Congress would not approve the project, so that the term would expire and the*

government could be in charge of drafting the statute. It was the best for the city and it was the right time to put my experience to use in composing the statute.]

DEVLIN: Was there a technical team that helped you draft it?

CASTRO: *No. [I didn't need one] I remember that I drafted it and I gave it to the 15 directors and managers of the city administration. I asked them for comments and observations. After studying it in a working meeting, they provided me with minor comments. Everybody agreed. They voiced the surprise I described earlier.*

DEVLIN: Yes.

CASTRO: *The statute project I submitted to the government was much more comprehensive than what was issued later. I remember that the national government suppressed part of the tax reform that I presented. The Minister of the Treasury said that Bogotá could not encroach upon the taxation space of the nation, which was also in the process of passing a fiscal reform, and taxpayers did not have the capacity to accommodate both adjustments simultaneously. They also suppressed some powers I requested for the mayor in security matters and the simplification of expropriations proceedings that were instrumental for public works.*

DEVLIN: And speaking about this whole process, if you had to do it again, would you do anything differently?

CASTRO: *I think I would do the same in general terms. The statute served the city very well. It saved the city. It has been in force for almost 20 years and it has shown its advantages and effectiveness. It has one shortcoming: it does not take into account the regional dimension that is so important for the city and its surroundings today. It didn't deal with that issue because the constitutional powers to do so were not in place. Today the topic must be dealt with. Some situations and problems are not unique to Bogotá; they are shared by 25 or 30 neighboring municipalities, and they must be addressed by a single authority. [For instance, security, environmental conservation, soil usage, mobility, public service delivery and the adoption of a common taxation policy.] All these issues require unified treatment. That is why we have to organize the first City-Region of the country, in the same way that the Capital District was organized. The sustainability and improvement that Bogotá has seen in the last few years require that this City-Region be created.*

DEVLIN: You mentioned a few times the difference between the Special District and the Capital District. Could you tell us more about this?

CASTRO: *The Special District status was adopted in 1945, but it remained on paper only. There were no legislative processes that could differentiate the city from other municipalities. Bogotá continued to be just a large municipality, the largest in the country. Decrees 3640 of 1954 and 3133 of 1968, passed to organize the Special District, are comparable to the first organic statutes of the city, but they were not clear on the status issue. They didn't define well what it meant to be a Special District. They gave rise to contradictory judicial positions among experts and tribunals. For that reason, and in one of those paradoxes common in our public life, the city began to live in a political and institutional limbo: nobody knew what regime was applicable. From that point of view, its condition was worse than that of other municipalities and cities in the country. That is one of the reasons for the loss of governability of Bogotá. We left behind that inconvenient lack of definition with the 1991 Constitution that elevated it to Capital District status, establishing the primary norms for government and administration. Moreover, like we said, it set a deadline for Congress to pass the organic statute. The solid constitutional bases of 1991 account for the fact that the statute has been in force for almost 20 years without inviting the least political or juridical controversy. It took Bogotá out of the place it found itself in, giving it back governability.*

DEVLIN: What were the most important changes?

CASTRO: *We said it earlier. It terminated the joint administration. The office of the mayor was now in charge of governing. It is the supreme authority. The Concejo took on normative functions, such as development and territorial ordering planning, annual budget drafting, credit limit establishment. The Concejo was also tasked with overseeing the mayor's administration and exerting political control. The tax reform I explained earlier was also important. Decentralization was established within the city. Localities and popularly elected local councils were created, and resources were allocated to them.*

DEVLIN: How was the matter handled before the Constitutional Assembly? Was there resistance or opposition from some Assembly members or city council members?

CASTRO: *No, there wasn't, because the majority of the Assembly members were unconcerned with the subject. They were indifferent towards Bogotá. And the Concejo did not foresee that their responsibilities would fundamentally change. It just didn't realize. Some members proposed minor improvements on the existing situation. Perhaps the only thing they proposed was that the city should reclaim its colonial name: Santa Fe de Bogotá.*

DEVLIN: Did the Concejo members oppose once the Constitution had been amended?

CASTRO: *Indeed. Once they realized what had happened, they lobbied actively before Congress to direct the content of the statute. They didn't need to do much in any event, because the Bogotá representatives in Congress were old Concejo members who still thought as if they were Concejo members, without fully assuming their role as Congressmen. For that reason, the statute project passed by Congress in early debates satisfies Concejo members' interests fully. The text of the 1991 Constitution was barely touched upon. The taxation issue was not even mentioned. Fortunately that project failed and the statute was drafted by the government. The last resistance from Concejo members came when they asked that the statute not be drafted by the government. They wanted the issue to remain in the hands of Congress. They knew that if it was to be issued by the government, it would be conceived and drafted by the mayor. The city lucked out, because that was what happened in the end.*

DEVLIN: Yes. You spoke to us briefly about your Secretary of the Treasury (Secretario de Hacienda). I would also like to ask you a bit about how you went about hiring your secretaries, where you found the talent you were looking for. Were they all of a technical nature?

CASTRO: *I put together a technically-savvy team. They were highly qualified from a professional point of view. The Secretary of the Treasury I was talking about had been Director of National Taxes, and while working with me he was appointed Director of the Civil Air Force (Director de Aeronáutica Civil). Another manager I had was appointed Development Minister; another one was called to fill a high-ranking post at the World Bank and later appointed president of Ecopetrol, which is our oil company. [I followed the same criteria for the appointment of directing members in the boards of public service companies like energy, aqueducts, telecommunications. Once I was at a work luncheon with the President and those boards, and he told me he would appoint those board members as his Government ministers, because they were highly qualified and honest people. Somebody who would later become Bogotá mayor himself once said that my team was the best the city had ever had. Fortunately that standard has been maintained. Bogotá has had great secretaries and managers lately.*

DEVLIN: Yes. And was that problematic in the beginning given the way things had been done in the past?

CASTRO: *Another problem in the city was that the administration was politicized and under the influence of patronage. Secretaries and managers, as well as a significant part of the bureaucracy, were part of the "quota" for a given Concejo member. They were in office because*

they had been recommended by council members and kept their job while they had council members' support and backing. Thanks to the statute the situation began to change, because the mayor's office no longer depended on Concejo decision as much—it had independence and autonomy to govern. It no longer had to please council members by appointing their friends for District posts. That very important change began with me. I acknowledge that I appointed a few people on council members' recommendations, but not for posts that could define the future of Bogotá or compromise the process of change I was committed to. They were in a position to change the course we had chosen.

DEVLIN: So there was a way, shall we say, of pleasing those political interests by giving them offices that were not of consequence?

CASTRO: *There were appointments that did not have leading roles, and I could choose the best among the candidates that the council members recommended, leaving them relatively satisfied.*

DEVLIN: Interesting. And was there any other kind of negotiation of that nature with the political interests, in order to achieve what you achieved?

CASTRO: *No, that kind of negotiation did not take place because District life was of no interest to many. The investment budget was rather poor. It depended on what loans could be secured, and when we had access to such loans, they came with conditions. I was institutionalizing a new form of government and administration, but what I was doing was not well understood. And when it was understood, it would not be accorded the importance it deserved. [For that reason, the other political actors we discussed never came to my office. The parties were never present. Nor were the parliamentary blocks. The private sector unions did not have back then the weight they carry now.] Besides, everybody thought I wasn't doing anything. They asked "where is the mayor? When will he take office?" The book Three Years of Solitude narrates the history of the process we lived through.*

DEVLIN: Thank you very much.

CASTRO: *It is a report a journalist wrote on me. Here you can find the story I have just told you. There are parts that contain my biography, which are of no interest to anybody, but the interesting parts explain the political bargaining that went on and the scope of the changes we introduced. You should look for another book, one that was published by the Property Market Association of Bogotá (Lonja de Propiedad Raíz de Bogotá) in its 60th anniversary. There you can find another interview I gave that should help you comprehend what happened.*

DEVLIN: You mentioned that many of your secretaries went to the World Bank or to the national government...

CASTRO: *As ministers.*

DEVLIN: Was that also a challenge, the fact that, in a way, the talent that you had been looking for left, shall we say, to other places, and that you had to look for it again? Did it create any problems of continuity in the mayor's office?

CASTRO: *I remember that someone that was mayor after me, Peñalosa, (Enrique Peñalosa Londoño), once told me before he became a mayor "In the history of Bogotá, the first one to appoint a very high-quality cabinet was you, Jaime Castro". The first important cabinet the city had was mine. That, by itself, already built something. Now you can find very good cabinets. I already told you that I appointed former ministers, former Bogotá mayors and even a former director of the National Bank as members of the boards of the telephone, aqueduct and energy public companies. That amounted to a break with what was there before. [Replacing those who*

left did not create a problem at all. The new appointees were chosen on the same criteria. I had a saying: functionaries change, but not policies].

DEVLIN: And in order to keep those in the boards and the secretaries interested and passionate and in order to keep them in their positions of leadership, did you do anything to make that happen or...?

CASTRO: *[I had nothing special to offer them nor was there a need to make such offers, because as the process went on they realized that we were doing something important that would give Bogotá the future it deserved. They remained at their posts because they loved the city and it contributed to their professional development.]*

DEVLIN: I don't know if there is anything else that you would like to share with us...

CASTRO: *We have covered the most important things. We discussed the hard drive for change. Many more things were done, which also carried political costs, but there is no time to go into that now.*

DEVLIN: Do you have any recommendations for government officials who may be in situations similar to the one you were in, who may be facing difficult decisions that imply political repercussions?

CASTRO: *I think as a government official one has to go around and spend the political capital with which one arrives. You cannot aspire to increase that political capital, because then you make mistakes and begin to govern to please the polls and be popular at any cost. A statesman, whether at the local, regional or national level, has to act with a vision for the future and be aware that, if he serves according to that vision and with a sense of responsibility, his political capital will decrease. He must be brave enough to accept the popularity costs of stepping on people's toes, of defying interests and rebelling against the status quo. To become popular he cannot be in the business of conciliation and consensus at any cost. De Gaulle said a wise thing. "He who governed and exercised power and was left with friends afterwards is a fortunate man". The statesman who exercises power is consuming his political capital, but that is his duty: to exercise power for reform, for the great changes that the society that elected him needs. You have to work to fulfill your vision, with a sense of generosity, with a heightened sense of responsibility, knowing that you pay the price of momentary unpopularity but will be left with the satisfaction of a mission accomplished. I have served in many capacities in my public life, but nothing has brought me as much satisfaction and self-realization as being the mayor. My only*

DEVLIN: Yes. One last question. Do you think that the fact that immediate reelection of mayors in Bogotá is not possible, that that could be, shall we say, something important for maybe allowing mayors to spend their political capital, as you were suggesting?

CASTRO: *No. Immediate reelection has not been necessary in the case of Bogotá. If you look at Bogotá today, it is the product of four administrations, each one with its own characteristics, each one with its own profile, but complementary to each other. In chronological order, we know what I have done. Antanas Mockus brought the Cultura Ciudadana, the sense of belonging, the identity established between the inhabitants and the city. Peñalosa brought the public space, urban furnishing, management, and Luis Eduardo Garzón worked on social matters. Each one did his part. They did not come to an agreement beforehand, but all of that ended up adding up, it ended up being complementary. In the case of Bogotá, then, the advantages of immediate reelection are not evident. Also, it is very possible, Colombia being the kind of country that it is, that the mayor has the chance to reelect himself, to abuse power in order to reelect himself, in Bogotá or in any other municipality in Colombia. I am an ardent enemy of immediate reelection. A while ago a taxi driver told a passenger—many of our taxi drivers are university professors. The driver didn't know his passenger was a friend of mine. He said "Castro has been the best mayor of Bogotá in recent history. He planned. He scheduled everything that is*

being done today. He is the architect of the new city. He left the resources. He left the money for those purposes. He has been the best mayor, but he is the worst former mayor". And my friend was surprised and he said to the taxi driver: "How so? What do you mean when you say he was the best mayor and the worst former mayor?" He said: "The worst former mayor because he has not been able to get himself reelected." The taxi driver's reflection is a valid one. He was not talking about immediate reelection, but deferred reelection.

DEVLIN: Well, thank you very much for your time.

CASTRO: Thank you for your visit.