CASE STUDY
REDUCTION OF CRIME IN BOGOTÁ:
A DECADE OF CITIZEN’S SECURITY POLICIES
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I. INTRODUCTION

The reduction of crime and, above all, of homicide in the city of Bogotá over the last decade represents an exemplary experience, not only due to the magnitude of the drop in the city’s crime rates, but also due to the novelty of the discourse and management of security-related issues on the part of the municipal administration.

The Bogota case illustrates the development of a citizens’ security policy in which strategies of different characters are applied, such as the control of risk factors like alcohol consumption and firearm possession, the strengthening of the city’s policing capacity, initiatives related to cultural changes that would tend to increase respect for life and for the self-regulation of citizens’ behavior, interventions in deteriorated urban spaces etc.

This combination of strategies and their results in terms of reducing crime and the feeling of insecurity in the city turn this experience into a good example of the various possibilities that exist to deal with the phenomena of urban criminality and of violence in particular. This case also allows one to consider the effectiveness of some interventions, as well as the process of evaluating the results of the policies implemented.

This document explains the development of this experience from the mid-1990s. The first part presents how the city’s main social and security indicators evolved over the course of the period in question. The second and third parts outline the security and coexistence policies adopted during the administrations of the last three mayors, considering in particular the hypotheses that inspired them and their approach, the main measures put in place and the costs incurred by the municipal administration to implement them. Finally, the fourth part looks at the impact of these policies, as well as the practical lessons that may be extracted from them with regards to the planning of public policies for crime and violence prevention and to the evaluation of results.
II. OVERVIEW OF THE PROBLEM

Bogota 1994-2002: Main Indicators

In the early 1990s, Bogota was considered a chaotic, violent and unsafe city. Nowadays, it is considered a model of urban government and an exemplary case of crime and violence reduction for Latin America. Unlike most Colombian cities, the capital has witnessed over the last decade a substantial decline in violence, expressed by the reduction in the number of homicides, which went from around 80 per 100,000 inhabitants at its peak in 1993 to 22 in 2004 (Graph 1 – see Annex). Hence, while Colombia continues to be one of the most violent countries in the western hemisphere and its large cities had until recently homicide rates around or above 100 per 100,000 inhabitants (Graph 2 – see Annex), its capital has a rate below the Latin American average which currently places it among the cities of the region with medium levels of violence (Graph 3 – see Annex). Furthermore, the number of deaths in traffic accidents fell by half between the peak in 1992 and 2003 (Graph 4 – see Annex), and in the late 1990s, the number of reported property crimes, such as muggings, burglaries and car thefts, also decreased (Graph 5 – see Annex).

It must be stressed that this evolution in the official crime and violence figures in Bogota is consistent with the downward trend observed over the last three years, both in victimization levels and in the feeling of insecurity (Graph 6 – see Annex). Among the main Colombian cities, Bogota stands out due the substantial increase in the perception of security on the part of its inhabitants since late 1999 (Graph 7 – see Annex).

However, the changes that took place in the city were not only related to the dynamics of crime and violence, but also to socio-economic indicators, despite the country’s bad economic situation since the mid-1990s and the rising unemployment rate, which also hit the capital city, that reached 20% in 2000. The social improvements over the last few years in Bogota are reflected in the aspects such as the lowering in the percentage of the population with unmet basic needs (UBN), which went from 20% in the early 1990s to 14% in 2002. Progress in the educational field also represents an example of these improvements: in 2002, the capital had 98.2% coverage (public and private), ten percentage points above the national rate for urban areas. In the case of public services such water and sewerage, coverage neared 100% in 2003.

On another front, the city has undergone significant reforms in the fields of management and quality of public spaces, in which important investments have been made, particularly since 1988, as will be seen.

At the same time, some notable changes have taken place in the performance of the Bogota police. Police effectiveness improved considerably over the last few years in fundamental areas such as arrests of individuals wanted by the justice system for crimes like homicides, car stealing and assaults. This type of arrests rose by an extraordinary 500% between 1994 and 2003 (Graph 8 – see Annex). Equally substantive results were obtained from the confiscations of firearms, which tripled in the period 1995-2003 (Graph 9 – see Annex). This, in spite of the fact that the number of officers posted by the National Police in Bogota remained constant, with a slight decreasing tendency, during these years (Graph 10 – see Annex).
III. THE POLICY FOCUSES: NEW RULES FOR THE GAME, CITIZENS’ CULTURE AND BUILDING A MORE CITIZEN FRIENDLY CITY

The transformation experienced by Bogota is related to the processes of change in the management of the city that took place during the 1990s. A crucial starting point was the new set of norms established to govern the city and recover its finances, pushed by the administration of Jaime Castro (1992-1994). Another watershed, specifically with regards to security issues, was the administration of Antanas Mockus (1995-1997). For the first time the local government became involved in the planning and implementation of concrete actions on the subject of urban security, and the issue of violence in the capital was given priority in his plan of government, inspired by what was called Citizens’ Culture.

The administration of Enrique Peñalosa (1998-2000), although keeping in place certain aspects of the policies initiated in 1995, redirected the efforts on the matter of citizens’ security as part of his priority of construction of the city and, in particular, of recovering public spaces to create order. Later, in the second Mockus administration (2000-2003), the initiatives related to the citizens’ culture and to the defense and ordering of public spaces taken by the Peñalosa administration were maintained.

It is important to stress that the leadership role played by the mayor on security issues in the city, from the first Mockus administration on, falls within a national process that began in the 1990s by redefining the role of civilians in the management of security issues and carrying out the required institutional and normative changes. Back then, a local government taking on a leadership role in security issues was a novelty, not only in Bogota but in the country as a whole. In this aspect, the capital is at the forefront at present, and represents a model of the existing possibilities for coordinating actions from a local level with national institutions, as is the case in Colombia with the main security and justice bodies — the police and the prosecution service, mainly.

Basically, the Bogota of today is the product of a process that began with the introduction of new rules for the game of running the city, as well as new approaches to municipal government, in particular, the management of citizens’ security in which civilian authorities take on a central leadership role. Since the mid-1990s, the continued emphasis put on the city’s security issues, as well as certain programs and their improvement by the successive administrations, doubtless was fundamental for the metamorphosis of the capital.

New Rules of the Game for the City

During the Castro administration an organic statute was adopted that reorganized the district government in five fundamental aspects. Firstly, relations between the Council and the Mayor’s Office were redefined to keep the Council from continuing to take on administrative functions and focus on issues of planning, budgeting and control, compliance and oversight of the management of the district government. Secondly, anti-corruption tools were created, among which the District Ombudsman stands out. Thirdly, administrative and procedural obstacles to local management were removed to speed up the process of decentralization of the city. Fourthly, mechanisms to modernize administrative management were put in place.

In this process, the appointment in 1991 of a civilian as Minister of National Defense — a post held for over 40 years by a high-ranking army officer — stands out. In the case of local authorities, the 1991 Constitution established that mayors were responsible for the maintenance of public order in the municipalities and were the main police authority. As a result, the National Police should obey mayors’ orders with total diligence. In order to develop this, several legal rulings were issued to regulate relations between mayors and the police.

Lastly, the statute granted sufficient fiscal autonomy to the city for it to be able to reorganize its finances. Despite the fact that the financial reorganization began in 1992 with a series of measures for actual control of public spending and of the budget, this process gained momentum from the passing of this norm. The organic statute permitted the redefinition of taxation instruments, the reorganization of the budget, the planning of expenditure, the framing of the Finance Department’s administrative reform and the reorientation of the District Treasury (Castro, 1994).

In this context of changes in the management of the city and its resources, the reorganization of the Vigilance and Security Fund, carried out in 1992, was of particular importance for citizens’ security policies. It made possible the channeling of considerable resources to the city, above all for the strengthening of the Metropolitan Police, as will be seen below.

**From the Citizens’ Culture to the Epidemiology of Violence**

The first Mockus administration sees the beginning of a new platform for governing the capital connected to the concept of citizens’ culture, understood as “the context that regulates citizens’ behavior, inasmuch as it establishes minimum common rules that make possible the relations between them and their surroundings” (Alcaldía Mayor de Bogotá, 1998a). Through this platform, which essentially attempts to harmonize the basic regulatory systems of individuals and society — the law, morals and culture —, a new political discourse was put in practice in the city, as well as a form of governing that the inhabitants of Bogota were unaware of. The leaders of this enterprise, Mockus and his team, in both his administrations, tried to change the behavior of Bogota's citizens, introducing forms of individual and collective regulation through education and communication.

The initiatives implemented during the two administrations of Mockus as Mayor of Bogota were characterized by their pedagogical foundations, as well as by the use of symbolic elements. Thus, campaigns were introduced, such as ‘vaccination days’ against violence, to raise awareness of the family violence issue, especially with regards to the ill-treatment of children, by means of the distribution of gifts to regulate citizens’ behavior. Another example was the civil resistance days against acts of terrorism, which rose in number in the city from 2000. Such initiatives, meant to modify residents’ actions in relation to one another and to the city, were very different from the civic campaigns generally used by the authorities to have an impact on citizens’ behavior.

With this conception of government, citizens’ security and, above all, the coexistence initiatives, began to have priority on the agenda. The defense of the lives of the people of Bogota became a central aim of the Mockus government, at a time when the homicide rate in the city remained very high despite the drop that began in 1994, the year before he took office as Mayor for the first time. This priority was maintained during his second term under the motto “Life is Sacred”, although by that time the city’s violence indicators were considerably lower.

Two hypotheses about the causes of the violence that had proliferated in the country from the late 1980s were at the heart of the policies adopted since the first Mockus administration. The first assumed that the homicidal violence was a generalized phenomenon that involved common citizens who, starting off from a culture of intolerance, became involved in trivial fights that ended in death due to the fact that there was alcohol and firearms in the mix. The second hypothesis stressed the fundamental role played by family violence and, above all, by the ill-

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4 Governmental initiatives in this field were meant to: a) increase respect for norms of coexistence; b) increase the ability of certain citizens to make others respect the norms in a peaceful manner; c) increase citizens’ capacity to negotiate and resolve conflicts peacefully; d) increase citizens’ capacity to communicate through art, culture, leisure and sport (Mockus, 1994 and 2001).
treatment of children, in the reproduction of what has been called the “culture of violence” in Colombia.

On the basis of these hypotheses and with the clear aim of reducing violence in Bogota, initiatives were taken under the inspiration of the so-called healthy policies, which fit Mockus’ pedagogical approach inasmuch as they were centered on interventions that attempted to prevent the factors create a propensity or lead to violent situations (Alcaldía Mayor de Bogotá, 1998a). In this case, the most widely publicized policies, not only because of the polemics they elicited but also because of the way they were implemented, were those that tried to disarm Bogota’s residents and that favored responsible consumption of alcoholic beverages. In this context, initiatives geared towards coexistence also gained momentum, in the form of the promotion of alternative conflict resolution mechanisms, both between citizens and in the family domain.

Additionally, epidemiology — an analytical approach used in public health — began to be used in order to follow up violent deaths in the city, checking locations, times, days of the week, mechanisms or types of weapons used etc, to identify the main risk factors and define preventive measures. This gave rise to a process of construction of an information system on violence and crime, which has been perfected over the last few years.

**Regeneration of Urban Spaces and Citizens’ Security**

On another front, the Peñalosa administration introduced important changes in the management of the city. His platform was based on a “human scale” model for the city, geared towards people rather than cars, in which access to quality urban environments became a priority. The previous administration had dedicated itself to the citizens’ culture, while Peñalosa’s would be dedicated to the defense public spaces and to the regeneration of deteriorated urban environments so as to create what was called “spaces of order”.

The centrality of these issues for the administration was reflected in the creation of DADEP (Administrative Department for the Defense of Public Spaces) in 1999, as well as in the implementation of drastic measures that gave rise to many polemics at the time, such as the installation of obstacles on the pavements of main roads to prevent cars from being parked and stalls from being set up by street traders. Furthermore, actions were undertaken to make shopkeepers respect the norms of external advertising and take out their refuse at the adequate times. According to the city authorities, these measures led to the recovery of over a million square meters of public space between 2000 and mid 2002 (Acero, 2003). In the particular case of street traders, while in 1999 the total number forced to work elsewhere was 222, in 2001 this rose to 952 (Acero, 2003).

This process was marked by investments aimed at regenerating major thoroughfares and areas of the city that were highly deteriorated, at building cycle routes, at lining roads with trees and, naturally, was also characterized by the start of Transmilenio, as a solution for the critical public transport problem that plagued Bogota for several years.

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5 The experience of another Colombian city, Cali, under the administration of Rodrigo Guerrero (1992-1994), affected significantly the adoption of this type of policy. In it, the public health approach was also promoted to prevent violence and interventions typical of this approach were carried out, such as the control of alcohol consumption and of firearms. See: Guerrero 1999a, 1999b and 1999c.

6 DADEP was created in 1999 with the objective of “contributing to improve the quality of life, by means of an effective defense of public spaces, of an adequate administration of the city’s real estate and of the construction of a new culture of public spaces, meant to ensure their collective use and enjoyment and to stimulate community participation.” [http://www.dadep.gov.co/historia.asp](http://www.dadep.gov.co/historia.asp)
In the realm of citizens’ security, the model pushed by Peñalosa is related to the “broken windows” theory\(^7\) and to the principle of “zero tolerance” \(^8\) adopted on the basis of the well known experience of New York during the 1990s (Alcaldía Mayor de Bogotá 2000). Doubtless, this policy focus had much to do with an administration whose central aim was to regenerate public spaces by means of interventions in deteriorated urban environments, among others. This is why the regeneration actions that took place from 1998 in certain areas of the city are emblematic: the areas chosen were in a critical state of deterioration, both physical and social. In this context, the measures meant to strengthen the capacity to control transgression and punish the perpetrators are also important. These included a substantial increase in investments to equip the Metropolitan Police, as well as to create new detention spaces and improve existing ones.

Of all the interventions, however, it was “Misión Bogotá”, the one that turned to be Mayor Peñalosa’s main program in the field of citizens’ security and coexistence. This program was inspired by the “broken windows” theory and was planned with the intention of integrating the community into actions of regeneration of the social and physical order in areas of the city where there came together problems of coexistence and inadequate use of the public space, with a high perception of insecurity on the part of the population.

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\(^7\) This theory, put forward by US criminologists Wilson and Kelling two decades ago, demonstrates the impact of social disorder and of the surroundings in the perceptions and conditions of security in communities. They state that certain characteristics of the physical and social environment, grouped together in the term *disorder* — such as refuse in the streets, derelict sites, vandalism, street fights, public scenes and the presence of certain people, such as groups of teenagers on street corners, prostitutes and homeless people — are evidence of a decline in the community order and elicit fear among residents. According to this theory, places with such characteristics are prone to crime and generate a domino effect, which implies an increase in the types of transgression, ranging from minor offences to more serious situations. See: Wilson and Kelling, 1982, Skogan 1990, Kelling and Coles 1996.

\(^8\) The principle of “zero tolerance” was developed from the “broken windows” theory and put in place by the city of New York during the 1990s. It is based on police action in response to minor offences, in order to prevent more serious ones.
IV. MAIN MEASURES IN THE FIELDS OF CITIZENS’ SECURITY AND COEXISTENCE SINCE 1995

The main citizens’ security measures put in place in Bogota since 1995 were planned on the basis of the approaches of the citizens’ culture and of the defense of public spaces. Citizens’ disarmament, the regulation of the consumption of alcohol and the interventions to regenerate public spaces in critical areas were the most representative measures of the last three administrations to reduce crime and violence in Bogota. As well as these measures, Mockus and Peñalosa made important efforts in three fundamental aspects: the strengthening of the capacity to control transgression and punish perpetrators through support to the police and the judiciary, the promotion of alternative mechanisms for conflict resolution and the creation of institutional spaces in the city for the management of security and coexistence policies.

Disarmament and Control of Alcohol Consumption

The preliminary diagnosis the emerged in the mid-1990s from the epidemiological analysis of violent deaths in the city indicated to the authorities the pertinence of adopting measures to control firearms and alcohol consumption. Most violent deaths in Bogota took place at night, with a concentration at weekends; around half the fatal victims of traffic accidents had high alcohol levels in their blood, as well as a third of victims of murder by firearms; over 70% of homicides were committed with firearms (Alcaldía Mayor de Bogotá, 1998). Hence, as a fundamental part of its citizens’ security strategy, from 1995 the Mockus administration began pushing a Disarmament Plan meant to control both legal and illegal firearms in the city. One of the most discussed measures at the time was the restriction of firearm possession during weekends and public holidays. In parallel, an alcohol consumption control policy was adopted, whose main measure, known as Ley Zanahoria (Carrot Law) or Hora Zanahoria (Carrot Hour), consisted of limiting the sale of alcoholic beverages until 1:00 am. These administrative measures were accompanied by education campaigns and police strategies.

In the case of firearms, several voluntary disarmament campaigns were held during Mockus’ two terms. The first one, named “Gifts for Guns”, encouraged citizens to hand over their guns in return for gift vouchers and was held around Christmas time 1996 with support from the Church and various companies of the private sector. This inaugurated a new way of calling on the population to take part in citizens’ disarmament. By 2001, through such disarmament campaigns, Bogota’s residents had handed in some 6,500 firearms, which were melted down (Acero 2003). Side by side with voluntary disarmament and as a result of the objective of controlling firearms, both legal — by means of restricting their possession at weekends — and illegal, police operations were enhanced. This led to a considerable increase in the number of gun confiscations, from six thousand in 1995 to sixteen thousand in 2003 (Graph 9).

In practice, the restriction of firearm possession during weekends and public holidays, used both by Mockus and Peñalosa in their efforts to prevent violence, was put in place intermittently.

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9 Although the restriction of firearm possession had already been put in place in previous years, only in 1995 did it begin to be considered by the District Administration as a fundamental element of the citizens’ security initiatives. For example, during 1994, firearm possession was restricted at weekends and on public holidays in Bogota as a result of new control measures adopted at a national level in 1993 by the Ministry of National Defense.

10 This measure was preceded in the city by a curfew for minors and a ban on sales of alcohol to them, implemented in 1994 during the Jaime Castro administration. The norm forbade the presence of minors in public places after midnight, their admission by nightclubs and the sale of alcohol to them.

11 This restriction remained in force over many periods. Firstly, this happened during one year, from April 1995 to April 1996, with a further complementary period of the voluntary disarmament campaign in...
for its regulation depended on the National Army, the institution that regulates gun ownership and possession in Colombia. Hence, although mayors were legally entitled to request such control measures, the actual decision depended on the military of each jurisdiction. In the case of Bogota, on several occasions both Mockus and Peñalosa had to deal with the military’s refusal to make the measure permanent, given that the latter considered that it reduced the possibility of defense of what they called “good people”.

Faced with this limitation, Mayor Mockus, within his pedagogical conception of government, initiated the campaigns mentioned above and, in his second term, channeled his citizens’ disarmament proposal through the program La Vida es Sagrada (Life is Sacred). In this case, the aim of disarmament was linked to a reflection and awareness-raising exercise on the value of life, above all among Bogota’s youth. With the program as a starting point, there were held several gatherings, peace pledges and disarmament campaigns that involved several types of communities at local level (Acero, 2003).

In the case of alcohol consumption control, as well as important police operations to check whether the city’s establishments were complying with the norm, major educational campaigns were held during the first Mockus administration. Among them, on the one hand, the so-called Cátedra del Alcohol (Course on alcohol) stood out with the theme “Knowing before drinking”, held from 1997 to 1998, which called on over 3,500 youngsters aged 10 and 11, in order to make them aware of responsible drinking. A survey among participants found that 79% had increased their knowledge of the dangers of alcohol consumption and 57% had changed their behavior with regard to the issue (Klevens, 1998).

On the other hand, a media campaign was put in place with the theme “Hand over the keys”. In it, the city authorities, in a joint effort with the ministries of Transport and Health, attempted to convince citizens who consumed alcohol to hand over their car keys to someone sober, hence avoiding the risk of endangering their lives and those of others. This was accompanied by an additional administrative measure adopted in early 1997 that increased the sanctions for drunk-driving — motorists could lose their license for 6 months, have their vehicle impounded and be arrested for 24 hours. According to the Mayor’s Office, in the first year this norm was enforced, some 1,700 motorists were punished and the same number of vehicles was impounded.

Although the Peñalosa administration maintained the Hora Zanahoria among its citizens’ security initiatives, a questioning of its pertinence began to take place due to the constant and significant reduction in the number of violent deaths in the capital. As a result, in early 1998, the administration allowed the sale of alcohol until 2 a.m., but this was kept up for only two months because it coincided with an apparent increase in violent deaths in the city, which led to a return to the previous restriction. In mid-2002, based on the continued reduction in the number of violent deaths in the capital and on the belief that this corresponded largely to the fact that the people of Bogota had learned to consume alcohol in more responsible fashion, Mayor Mockus changed temporarily the Hora Zanahoria into hora optimista (optimistic hour), i.e., the sale of alcoholic beverages was permitted until 3 a.m. Six months after this trial with the hora optimista, and having obtained a positive result in terms of violent deaths, the city adopted the new time on a permanent basis for the sale of alcohol in Bogota.

**Actions to Regenerate Deteriorated Urban Environments**

Among the interventions implemented by the Peñalosa administration in order to build a more citizen friendly city, the ones aimed at regenerating important public routes and deteriorated urban environments are among the most outstanding. Examples are the reconstruction of Avenida 15, a commercial axis and one of the main avenues of the north of the city, as well as December, 1996. Later, it came into force for 6 months, from January to June, 1998, for three months between September and November, 1999 and, finally, for seven months (December, 1999 to June, 2000).
the reconstruction of Avenida Jiménez, one of the main streets in the city’s historical downtown area. In both cases, the space earmarked for pedestrians was expanded considerably, with a reduction in the space for the vehicle lanes. On Avenida 15 the most important changes included the widening of sidewalks, a prohibition for parking cars on such sidewalks, as well as the elimination of kiosks and street trading. As for Avenida Jiménez, its reconstruction involved redesigning and rebuilding it, as well as restricting vehicle traffic in large parts of it. This initiative was also part of the broader aim of recovering the historical downtown area of the city, one of the areas with highest pedestrian circulation and often associated with high crime rates and numerous situations of danger and insecurity.

It’s also worth noting the intervention on Avenida Caracas, one of the city’s most important north-south routes. This avenue, traditionally considered one of the most dangerous in the capital due to the high rates of mugging (Niño et al., 1998), was completely rebuilt as one of the main routes of Transmilenio.  

On the other hand, among the interventions in particularly deteriorated places, those carried out from 1998 through the Urban Renewal Program in San Victorino and El Cartucho are worth highlighting. In the former, one of the areas with the largest concentration of street traders in the city and where illegal commerce flourished, a square was built and the neighboring buildings were adapted to receive the traders.

El Cartucho was one of the city’s most violent areas, with a critical situation of social deterioration characterized by a large concentration of paper gatherers, homeless people, drug addicts and criminal structures involved in various illegal activities such as the sale of illicit drugs, guns and stolen merchandise. This situation was reflected in the great physical deterioration of the area brought about by the poor state of the buildings and the large amounts of rubbish and other waste in the streets.

In the case of El Cartucho, whose intervention began towards the end of the Peñalosa administration and continued in Mockus’ second term, without having been concluded, the decision was to demolish the entire area to build a park of some 20 hectares and carry out urban renewal interventions in the neighboring areas. At the same time, strategies were put in place from different institutional councils to respond to the critical local social situation. These included the transfer of the storage and sale points of recyclable material that operated in the region and a social management plan, which led to the formulation and implementation of a series of inter-institutional projects that assisted over 14,000 people (Acero, 2003). On the other hand, police operations were carried out to break the existing criminal structures in the region, on which there is not much data available.

**Mision Bogota**

In its initial format, this program sought to create public spaces for the promotion of coexistence and citizen security and to reduce the causes for high insecurity levels by joining efforts among district institutions, the police and the community. The Program’s basic areas of work were: police programs and community vigilance, creation of spaces of order and coexistence programs (Alcaldía Mayor de Bogota, 1998b).

During the first stage of “Misión Bogotá”, the Program relied on supporting local security councils. These local councils, which had been promoted by the Metropolitan Police since 1996,

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12 Transmilenio or (Empresa de Transporte del Tercer Milenio) is a public transportation system created in 1999 by the Municipality of Bogotá with the purpose of offering a mass-oriented, low-cost, public transportation service for passengers.

13 This was Bogota’s most critical area in terms of concentration of homicides. Between 1997 and 1999, it had an extremely high homicide rate — 40,000 per 100,000 inhabitants (Echandía, 2000).
are community organizations whose residents are integrated, by block or sector of a given neighborhood into civic-police support networks to watch over their immediate surroundings and react when facing abnormal or suspicious circumstances, in coordination with the police of the area.\(^\text{14}\) With this stimulus from the city authorities and the police itself, by means of the implementation of its community police program in 1999, these councils played an important role in Bogota. Between 1996 and 1998, some 2,000 councils were created throughout the city. Another 3,000 were organized in the 1999-2001 period and by 2003, there were approximately 6,600 councils in Bogota.\(^\text{15}\)

When it comes to the creation of safer public spaces, it’s worth mentioning the urban renewal project, which was geared towards regenerating areas with high levels of perception of insecurity, channeling district resources to actions in public spaces and publicizing the basic coexistence norms present in the city police code. In this regard, the Peñalosa administration did major urban renewal work in the city’s down-town area. At that time “civic guides” were temporarily hired by “Misión Bogota” to carry out the task of regulating citizens’ activities in areas such as traffic, security, citizens’ coexistence, community organization and waste recycling.\(^\text{16}\) The second Mockus administration maintained this position, but the citizens’ regulation functions were expanded to include Transmilenio, the university areas, artistic, recreational and sporting events of the district and rapid regeneration areas (Sáenz, 2003).

Lastly, among the program’s coexistence actions, the most significant were those to support the at-risk population. Between 1999 and 2002, job offers were made through the civic guides positions to 3,995 people, among them youngsters, gatherers of recyclable waste, sex workers, homeless people, people displaced by violence and unemployed heads of households (Sáenz, 2003). Actions were also implemented to help the people of Bogota reclaim their city, as was the case with the \textit{Tomas de Miedo}, held from 1999, that aimed to make the citizenry go back to frequenting places perceived as dangerous or unsafe. The district administration also organized concerts of local bands and other public shows to bring people together who might not otherwise have visited such places. Finally, within this field, one must mention the youth violence reduction and prevention actions such as the work done by “Mision Bogota” with the supporters of the city’s two football teams in order to control both their rivalry and violent, dangerous behaviors inside the soccer stadium.

\textbf{More Resources for the Police and the Following up of Their Activities}

The strengthening of the Metropolitan Police since the mid-1990s, is related as much to the initiatives of the institution itself at a national level, than as to the interest of the Mockus and Peñalosa administrations in obtaining greater police effectiveness. In this sense, the improvement in the management of the city’s police mentioned earlier falls within the process of reform and modernization of the National Police that began in the early 1990s. A crucial aspect of this process was precisely the move, undertaken in the mid-1990s, towards a new model of institutional management, through which a Strategic Plan including operational targets, was adopted. Hence, the police departments began to be evaluated annually all over the country — among them, the Bogota Metropolitan Police — on the basis of indicators such as

\(^{14}\) These councils’ work according to the guidelines of \textit{Neighborhood Watch} programs, widely used in Great Britain and the USA.
\(^{15}\) Data provided by the Bogota Metropolitan Police.
\(^{16}\) Within Mision Bogota, the civic guide is considered the main social agent and educator of the program. His/her function is to encourage citizens towards self-regulation and voluntary respect for basic coexistence norms, so as to contribute to improving the perception of security in the city. Furthermore, he/she is a promoter of safe behaviour in public spaces. For more information on this program, see \url{http://www.misionbogota.gov.co/}
the 10% reduction in crimes with a social impact, the recovery of stolen vehicles, the confiscation of guns and the capture of police wanted people.\(^{17}\)

In the specific case of Bogota, this evaluation of results of the Metropolitan Police at national level was accompanied by a new method of following up crime indicators in the city, especially homicides, which took place since the first Mockus administration. Using the epidemiological approach, the district administration began following up systematically the violent deaths that took place in the city and refining the institutional instruments for planning measures and evaluating results based on more reliable information. With this effort (which will be explained more fully in the chapter about institutional reform) as a starting point, the authorities were able to play a role of greater leadership on issues related to security in the city and, in particular, to police work.

The exercising of this leadership was also translated into an unprecedented increase — as much in Bogota as in the rest of the country — in investments in the police. Hence, over the last decade, the district government’s investments in the Metropolitan Police tripled in real terms, from under US$16 million to over US$55 million at their peak, which corresponded to the Peñalosa administration (Graph 11 – see Annex).

Of the investments made from 1995 to 2002, 86% were aimed at improving the Metropolitan Police’s infrastructure and, in particular, at building and customizing police posts and CAIs (Immediate Attention Centers),\(^{18}\) at modernizing the communications system to receive citizens’ calls and send in patrols and at renewing and expanding the police car pool. These investments covered the basic needs of the city and its capacity to respond to the demands of the citizenry. For example, the time to answer calls fell from 20 to 5 minutes (Acero, 2003).

The remaining resources (14%) were invested in aspects such as acquiring equipment for intelligence gathering and criminal investigations, improving logistics and IT to link up police posts, mobile units and other district institutions more effectively, providing housing for police officers with outstanding service records and training programs. From 1996 to 2003, some 13,000 police officers of several ranks took part in these training programs, which dealt with issues of the law (police officers’ rights, human rights and international humanitarian law), concepts and strategies for citizens’ security and coexistence, community policing and community relations, judicial police (crime scene management and criminal investigations), sexual abuse of minors, adult education (pedagogy and methodology) and aspects to improve the administration (management, standardization of procedures, IT and English).

This strengthening of the Metropolitan Police and the following up of its management made it possible for the city’s last few administrations initiatives to count on the support of the police from the mid-1990s, aimed at bringing the citizenry closer to the police and to the security issue. In this context, programs such as the local security councils, community policing and the Safe Zones, linked both to the city government and the private sector, stood out.

The local security councils, as explained above, were an initiative of the Metropolitan Police from 1996 and have grown considerably in recent years. Currently, they represent the police’s most consolidated effort in community mobilization geared to strengthening the bonds of solidarity and increasing the population’s commitment to its own safety.

\(^{17}\) The reform of the New York police served as an example for the establishment of such targets. In that city, for example, the target of a 10% reduction in crime was utilized as an indicator of the management of police departments throughout the city.

\(^{18}\) The CAIs are small police outposts situated in several points of the city, by means of which there is an attempt to decentralize the city’s vigilance service, above all with regards to citizens’ calls.
The community policing program was launched with great enthusiasm in 1999 by the Metropolitan Police with the support of the Bogota Chamber of Commerce. The program adopted the community policing methodology; it was based on the Spanish ‘proximity’ police model and it was presented as a different type of “policing” service than the one traditionally provided in the field of vigilance (patrolling), characterized by a reactive and repressive approach to crime. The community mode gave priority to a preventive and proactive focus to deal with the problems of citizens’ security and was based on teamwork between the police, the community and other local authorities and organizations (Serna, 1999).

This program, despite having incorporated the local security councils (an important development for the city, as mentioned above) into its strategies, was not able to develop fully.\(^\text{19}\) It has continued to operate with low staffing levels (about 1,000 full-timers) and little coordination with other police services. That aside, the high level of acceptance of the community police in Bogota — at least according to a survey conducted during its first year of operations in the areas where it was put in place — is significant. This study shows that the community police enjoyed ample acceptance among the community, with 96.4% of respondents saying it was an effective way of reducing crime and improving coexistence.

Lastly, the Safe Zones program was initiated in 2001 with support from the district administration and the Bogota Chamber of Commerce. It was put forward as a new model of management for the security of public spaces. It aimed at developing bonds of solidarity and trust between citizens and the authorities, as well as raising the population’s feeling of security in specific parts of the city selected by virtue of their great activity (commercial, educational or for leisure) and circulation of people.\(^\text{20}\) In line with this program, 12 safe zones were created in the city with the abovementioned characteristics. In each of them the presence of motorized police was increased and a mobile unit was set up to attend to citizens’ complaints. To manage the program, a Local Commission was organized in each zone made up of representatives of local government, the Metropolitan Police, the Bogota Chamber of Commerce and civic and business associations of the region.

**Expansion of Detention Spaces and Strengthening of Criminal Investigations**

In line with the “zero tolerance” conception adopted by Peñalosa, efforts were concentrated for expanding considerably the city’s capacity to detain and keep in custody, under respectable conditions, all those guilty of misdemeanors and minor crimes. Bogota, like the rest of the country until recently, faced a critical situation in terms of the facilities for keeping such people in custody. Both the District Jail and the temporary detention spaces in the city’s police stations were full to capacity. Furthermore, most people guilty of misdemeanors and minor crimes were freed for lack of space, while those guilty of more serious crimes caught red-handed often had to wait for several weeks for their legal situation to be resolved. This situation, which lasted several years, discouraged the police from capturing delinquents, especially those guilty of minor offences.

Faced with this, the district government made a major investment (over US$11 million) between 1998 and 2002, to refurbish the District Jail and build a UPJ (Permanent Justice Unit). The District Jail, intended for those indicted for or guilty of misdemeanors or minor crimes, with sentences under 24 months, was completely rebuilt and had its capacity more than doubled — from 450 to 1,028 places. Despite the fact that this is still far from reaching the total number of detained people in the capital, the increase in places complemented the police’s rising efficiency in capturing those wanted by the justice system.

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19 About the origin and development of this program see Llorente, 2001.
20 As in the case of the community police, this program was inspired in the “neighbourhood teams” strategy developed by the Spanish police.
On the other hand, the UPJ was set up early 1999 as a transitory detention center — 36 hours, at most — to which people caught in the act of committing an offence are taken until their judicial situation is defined; same thing for those in breach of administrative norms (essentially traffic and police codes). To achieve greater institutional coordination and more rapid implementation of justice, this unit is made up by district officials, public prosecutors, legal doctors and police officers, and it operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week. This has reduced to two days the period during which the situation of those caught in the act of committing an offence is defined, a procedure that used to take several weeks (Acero, 2003). In its first two years in operation (1999 to 2001), the UPJ permitted the detention of some 142,000 people guilty of administrative misdemeanors, who could not have been punished previously for lack of a space such as the unit (Ibid.). Similarly, over 9,000 people wanted by the justice system for various offences were apprehended (Ibid.).

Lastly, within the same line of trying to improve the State’s capacity to lay down sanctions, towards the end of the second Mockus administration some city resources started being directed at strengthening the process of criminal investigation, one of the most critical aspects of the administration of criminal justice in Colombia and, to a large extent, an important source of impunity in the country. Hence, in 2002, the Mockus administration began training the personnel of the different bodies that carry out this task in Bogota — the National Prosecutor’s Office, the Administrative Department of Security (DAS), the National Institute of Legal Medicine and the Metropolitan Police’s investigation bureau — which had their procedures for handling crime scenes standardized. Similarly, a Crime Policy Committee was integrated into these bodies and the city government in order to plan in an inter-institutional fashion the strategies to be applied in the district.

Domestic Violence and Child Abuse Prevention

Domestic violence prevention had a high priority within the preventive action frameworks of the last district administrations. As part of the awareness campaigns against child abuse, at least two conferences took place in 1996 during the first administration of Mockus, which counted with the support of the Association for Child Abuse Prevention. During these events, different symbolic mechanisms were used so that abuse victims could express their feelings towards their abusers and would learn to generate hope and solidarity. In spite of the fact that the conference attendance was massive (with a total of 39 thousand people, of which 37% were adults) and that four thousand abuse cases were detected, the organizing committee concluded that the impact of this intervention did not go beyond sensitizing citizens about child abuse problems (Klevens, 1998). Precisely because the conferences had such massive response, there was no capacity in place to assist adequately cases that required some type of intervention. Therefore, it was recommended that similar events be organized, but at a lower scale.

Within the child abuse prevention area, the Peñalosa and Mockus administrations gave high priority to the so called “comisarías de familia” (family police stations). The first ones were created in Bogotá in 1991 as a contribution to the “National System of Family Welfare” and their mission was to generate spaces to guide families regarding conflict resolution, domestic violence prevention and child abuse issues. In order to address the matter in a comprehensive way, the “comisarías de familia” count on an interdisciplinary team, conforming a lawyer, a psychologist, a doctor, a social worker; they all use conflict resolution mechanism such as conciliation, protection measures and psychotherapy.

Since 1996 a considerable amount of resources have been invested with the purpose of increasing and improving the “family offices’” services. Between 1996 and 2002 around 4 million dollars were budgeted for building new offices and provide them with the necessary

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21 Among such transgressors, 250 people were found who were also wanted by the justice system for different crimes (Alcaldía Mayor de Bogota 2000).
supplies. This increased not only the amount of “family offices” from 5 to 20 within the same number of localities in the city, but also the number of working staff that received training. This practically tripled the amount of cases assisted in the same period, which went from 12,736 in 1994 to 36,149 in 2002 (Alcaldía, 2003).

Complementing the assistance of abuse cases, the “family offices” have also performed a pedagogic job within the communities where they operate: they created multipliers for the detection and assistance of domestic violence and child abuse and for alternative methods of conflict resolution.

**Alternative Mechanisms for Conflict Resolution**

Together with the emphasis put during the first Mockus administration on the observance of basic coexistence norms and the preventive treatment of phenomena that affect citizens’ security, initiatives were developed to promote the use of alternative mechanisms, such as mediation and conciliation, to resolve minor and everyday conflicts between citizens and within families. Both Mockus and Peñalosa made important investments, reaching US$15 million between 1995 and 2002, in three types of organizations that sought to promote alternative conflict resolution: mediation and conciliation units, “comisarías de familia” and police inspections.

The mediation and conciliation units were conceived for the resolution of everyday conflicts that emerge in communities. Between 1996 and 1998, twelve such units were created in twelve different localities. From 1999 to 2002, they attended almost 100,000 cases, half of them related to problems with rent, followed by civil contracts, family conflicts and conflicts between neighbors (Acero, 2003).

Police inspections, lastly, are organizations of the municipal administration that have traditionally attended to matters relating to the administrative police. They started being reformed in Mockus’ first term in order to provide a more efficient service and also to be transformed into spaces of conflict conciliation. From 1995, they received an important volume of resources to renovate the facilities of the 63 existing sites and to train up their staff on issues related to coexistence and conciliation.

**Institutional Transformations and Investments in Citizens’ Security**

The development of citizens’ security policies and measures explained in this chapter would not have been possible if reforms aimed at institutionalizing the management of these themes within local government had not been implemented. Within this line of thought, new bodies were created, such as the Sub-department of Citizens’ Security and Coexistence, to administer plans and projects, while inter-institutional coordination bodies, such as the security councils or the epidemiological vigilance committee, were used systematically. In this way, the district administration obtained the institutional capacity to deal with such matters in the city and manage the important investments made on the issue.

**Institutionalization of Citizens’ Security Management**

The institutionalization of the management of citizens’ security policies on the part of the district government is based, on the one hand, on the organization of bodies exclusively responsible for these policies at the district level. In this context, the creation of the Security and Coexistence Council in 1995, and its transformation, in 1998, into the Sub-department of Citizens’ Security and Coexistence, was responsible for the development of the plans and programs.
On the other hand, another activity that deserves to be mentioned is the systematic use of spaces for the evaluation of the city’s security situation and for decision-making, in coordination with other institutions. Starting in 1995, the District Security Council provided the main setting for decision-making on that matter. The participants are the Mayor, city officials responsible for the security issues, police commanders and those in charge of the brigade with jurisdiction over the city. Depending on the themes to be dealt with, representatives of other bodies, such as the National Prosecutor’s Office and the Administrative Department of Security (DAS) may be called upon. A broadened version of this council also meets monthly with the participation of the mayors of the localities and the city’s police unit commanders, as well as the above mentioned officials. The Committee on Epidemiological Vigilance of Injuries with External Cause, formed in 1995, meets weekly on the Mayor’s request to analyze the circumstances of violent deaths in the city and propose preventive actions.

Lastly, and as an essential complement to the above, tools were developed to collect and analyze detailed information on crime and violence in the city. These tools were gradually perfected from 1995, when the Violence and Delinquency Observatory was created. The observatory was subsequently modernized, with the investment of over US$700,000 in 1999, hence giving birth to SUIVD (Unified Information System on Violence and Delinquency). Starting off from this effort, information on the city from the main sources — the Metropolitan Police and the National Institute of Legal Medicine, in the case of homicides — was brought together. At the same time, this stimulated much academic research on topics such as the characterization of homicides in the city, sexual crimes, suicides, traffic accidents and other minor crimes.

**Budget Allocations for the Security and Coexistence Field**

Over the last few years, the volume of resources earmarked by the local government for security and coexistence has increased significantly. Between 1995 and 2002, the city channeled some US$160 million into the various plans and projects related to the issue (Graph 12 – see Annex). Most of this investment (72%) was meant for programs to strengthen and train the police, and the remainder, to coexistence programs (20%) and to the expansion of the city’s custodial capabilities (Graph 13 – see Annex). Although corresponding to a relatively low percentage of the city’s total budget (2.33%), the volume of resources is in sharp contrast with that employed by other Colombian cities in security and coexistence, as well as by Bogotá before 1995.

The restructuring of the Vigilance and Security Fund, begun in 1992 during the Jaime Castro administration, as well as the increase in city resources obtained through the capitalization of the electricity company and the access to foreign sources of financing, were fundamental in this process (Riveros, 2002). In regards to foreign financing, one must mention the loan granted by the Inter-American Development Bank (Support for Coexistence and Security), executed between 1998 and the first semester of 2004. With this US$10 million loan, matched by US$6.6 million of local money, it was possible to finance programs of great importance in the field of citizens’ security and coexistence policies, such as those promoting alternative mechanisms of conflict resolution, the SUIVD (Unified Information System on Violence and Delinquency), those targeting youth in high-risk situations and training for the Metropolitan Police.
V. RESULTS AND LESSONS OF THE CASE OF BOGOTA

Without a doubt, the case of Bogota is a good example of the multiple possibilities within reach of a local government to deal with the problems that affect the security and coexistence of citizens. It is an example that shows that there are several types of measures that can be pushed from a local level, despite the fact that there may be certain significant limits, such as the relations between the local and the national level. The district administration was able to build an important base for coordinating actions and exercising the leadership that legally belongs to it in such matters of the city.

The reduction seen over the last few years in crime rates, especially homicides, as well as in the feeling of insecurity among Bogota’s residents, demonstrates clearly that the policies adopted were for the most part on target. Unfortunately, it is not possible to conduct accurate evaluations of the effect of the different measures on the fall of crime rates to be able to determine their efficiency in cost-benefit terms. This is partly a result of the fact that many of the broad policy approaches adopted by the last few administrations were based on diagnoses of the causes of violence that have not yet been corroborated in the case of Bogota.

This is also clear from Mayor Mockus’ initial diagnosis on the violence caused by generalized violence problems, above all by citizens’ intolerance exacerbated by risk factors such as alcohol consumption, the indiscriminate possession of firearms, intra-family violence and child abuse (Acero, et al, 1998).

In this case, however, rather than confirming this diagnosis, studies based on detailed data on the geography and motives in the city during 1997-99 indicate that: 1) violent deaths were highly concentrated in certain focal points and this geographical pattern persisted over time; 2) the violence produced by the settling of scores and armed robberies leads to more deaths than that associated to domestic aggression and fights that culminate in death, with alcohol consumption as a factor; 3) there is an important geographical convergence between the focal points of intense violence and the presence of criminal structures associated with illegal markets, illicit activities and the “underworld” (Llorente et al., 2001; Formisano, 2002).

On the other hand, it is important to note that in the case of domestic violence and child abuse there is no evaluation neither in Colombia, nor in Bogota specifically, that proves that the commonly accepted assumption of linking directly this type of violence with the violence that occurs outside of the household, is right. In the case of the “broken windows” hypothesis used by Peñalosa, not only are there no local studies that allow one to determine the incidence of spaces of disorder on criminality, but also the pertinence of these theses continues to be debated, including in the case of the USA (Taylor 2000, Karmen 2001, Harcourt 2001, Sampson and Raudenbush 2001).

Another aspect that limits the possibilities of evaluating the effect of the different measures adopted in the city on the fall in crime rates is the absence of basic guidelines and information to construct adequate indicators over time. For example, in the case of the control of alcohol consumption, statistics on consumption in the city were not compiled and, furthermore, the city authorities do not have information that would allow it to at least measure the variations in consumption over time. Thus, any measurement of the possible effect of this control on the reduction in violent deaths will be incomplete (homicides and traffic accidents are fatal deaths). Something similar happens with most of the measures aimed at coexistence that sought to change citizens’ behavior in relation to the violence problem. And this encompasses many of the pedagogical interventions, for which campaigns and training processes were utilized, as well as the actions on the issue of alternative conflict resolution mechanisms, domestic violence and child abuse prevention.
However, in the specific case of the disarmament campaigns and disarmament days, there are some indicators that show the great impact on the transformation of Bogota’s citizens’ attitudes regarding firearms, especially in Mockus’ second term in office. According to surveys conducted by the Instituto Distrital de Cultura y Turismo, in 2001, 24.8% of Bogota’s residents thought it was best to have a gun to protect themselves. By 2003, this had dropped to 11.4% (Sáenz, 2003). This change can be interpreted as a result of the multiple campaigns implemented by the first Mockus administration around the disarmament issue and, in general, by the importance that such subject reached within the municipal security discourse since 1995. However, it is also possible that it could be associated to the improvement of the security conditions experimented in the city during the last decade.

Regarding the alcohol consumption issue, even though the studies conducted did not address the total population (as was the case with the firearms) and it was limited to a specific youth group, the impact seems significant. According to a survey taken by over 3,500 youngsters who participated in a course on alcohol risks called “knowing before drinking” held between 1997 and 1998, 79% reported being more aware of the risks of alcohol and 57% said they had actually changed their behavior towards alcohol consumption (E. Pulido in Klevens 1998).

There are important coincidences between the decrease of certain crimes in particular areas of the city and the massive intervention processes in the public areas by the distrital administration, just like in the case of violent traffic accidents’ deaths and the adoption of multiples measures associated with this problem. Two of the most important public space interventions during Peñalosa’s administration, resulted in dramatic reductions of street assaults and homicides. In the case of Avenida Caracas (Caracas Avenue), rebuilt in its totality as one of the main Transmilenio routes, there was a reduction of more than 60% in the homicide rate and close to a 100% reduction in the street assaults rates between 1999 and 2003. Likewise in El Cartucho area homicides and assaults fell more than 70% between 2000 and 2003. Interestingly enough, in Plaza de San Victorino (another important area in terms of public space interventions during Peñalosa’s administration), homicides did not diminish considerably and assaults actually increased after the interventions (See graphs 14a and 14b – see Annex).

Regarding the deaths caused by car accidents, even though there are no concrete studies on the impact of the different measures taken to reduce them, there was an important reversion of the ascending death toll tendency between 1996 and 1997 (Graph 4 – see Annex). This could be associated with the adoption of a set of public space prevention, control and intervention measures since 1995. First of all, there were massive campaigns to alert the citizens about the fatal consequences of drunk driving. Such campaigns were supported by administrative measures that controlled the selling of liquor (the “Hora Zanahoria” measures) and the ones that increased the sanctions to people that were driving under the influence of alcohol. To complement these measures, the “Unidad Permanente de Justicia” (Permanent Justice Unit – UPJ) was created. This Unit takes care of people who would violate the administrative measures. Finally, there were a number of interventions in various traffic routes that dealt with upgrading pedestrian areas (i.e., crosswalks, platforms, building pedestrian bridges) and, in general, with the creation of safer public spaces in traffic routes that were previously chaotic.

Despite the limitations, studies were conducted to ascertain the impact of certain measures and main political approaches. Two studies stand out. The first study (Llorente, Nuñez y Rubio, 2000), financed by the city government itself, attempts to determine the effect of the various interventions, la “Hora Zanahoria” and the gun possession restrictions on public holidays and weekends by using an econometric analysis of the city’s weekly homicide rate from 1989 to 1999. It was found that the impact of these measures had been overestimated, for they reduced homicides in the city by, at best, 8% in the case of the control of alcohol sales and by 14% in the
case of gun possession restrictions. On the other hand, it was possible to establish that the reduction in the homicide rates that Bogota witnessed from 1994 could not be explained by the implementation of these measures, since these measures were implemented more than a year after the homicides started to decrease. This decreasing tendency coincides also with a general reduction in crime at the national level.

Furthermore, the same study tried to analyze the impact of firearm confiscations carried out by the police between 1996 and 1999 in the city. It found that for each gun confiscated, there occurred a reduction of only one seventh of a homicide. This surprising result, inasmuch as at the time around 70% of homicides in the city were committed with firearms, was explained by the fact that gun confiscations were carried out without reference to the geography of violence. Hence, during the period surveyed, the areas with the highest confiscation rates did not correspond to the most violent ones.

The results of the study regarding the impact of the periodic gun possession restrictions are comparable to the results from Villaveces et al (2000) for Cali and Bogota. In that case, they measured the restrictions effects for 1993-94 and 1995-96 respectively. They concluded that while Cali’s homicide rate during restrictions times was reduced 14%, the rate for Bogotá went down 13%.

Even though this evidence is relevant, these results are very different from those obtained in controlled experiments, such as the famous Kansas City Gun Experiment (Sherman, Rogan and Shaw, 1995). After six months of strict control of illegal guns in a specific region of the city with high crime rates, the number of crimes committed with such guns fell by about half. For the sake of comparison, another equally violent area of town was studied, where illegal gun possession was not controlled. Unlike the area of the experiment, this one did not have any meaningful variation in the rates of armed violence.

In the second study, Alviar et al (2003) analyze the achievements and challenges encountered by the “comisarías de familia” (family police station) in Bogotá when trying to solve domestic conflicts. The authors analyze the effectiveness of conciliation and of prevention measures, based on a field study on four “comisarías de familia”. The study included interviews to staff, women who solicited protection, male aggressors, as well as the revision of a representative sample of records for the 2001-2002 period in the case of protection measures (N = 302) and for year 2002 for conciliation and commitment processes (N = 364).

The study recognizes that the “comisarías de familia” are more effective than what experts and even the own “comisarías de familia” staff believed. However, the study also shows that there are serious challenges regarding the handling of cases that involve physical violence. This is quite disturbing, especially when considering that it is precisely this type of incident what predominates in the “comisarías de familia”. For example, in 2002, around 40% of the cases assisted by the “comisarías de familia” involved physical aggressions (Alcaldía, 2003). The most relevant conclusion was that conciliations were not very effective when it came to stopping violence, whereas protection measures were.

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22 The objective of the study was to obtain an approximate measure of the effect of these control measures over the homicide tendency of the city, so other variables were not included in the estimates. Hence, the study does not go beyond pointing the effect of the measurements and indicates that a big part of the reduction is due to other variables that still have to be determined.

23 This measurement was based on a simple econometric model that looked for the homicide: confiscated fire arms elasticity, basically the percentage homicide fall generated by the police confiscated arms. The estimates used monthly data on homicides and confiscated fire arms during the 1996-1999 period in the nineteen localities of the city.
On one hand, the field investigation shows wide use of conciliation in violent incidents: in the reviewed records involving processes with no protection measures (i.e., those with conciliation or with commitment records), 58% involved some type of aggression. In general, there was a high amount of non-fulfilled commitments. This is corroborated by the high number of repeated offenses: about half of the records that showed adoption of prevention measures, already had previous charges. This result favors the widely accepted recommendation of the domestic violence literature, which states that whenever there is violence and domestic power difference, it is advisable not to insist in conciliation processes that have a neutral mediator.

Protection measures, on the other hand, seem to have better results when it comes to reducing aggressive acts, although not when it comes to totally eliminating violence. Not only the “comisarías de familia” staff members show a high level of satisfaction with these measures, the results of the interviews done by Alviar and his group also conclude that in many cases, these measures (together with therapy support) help renegotiate the terms of the relationship, so that there is more balance and less violence. There are some challenges, however: the study states that 99% of the cases that involved protection measures and that were followed-up show some sort of non-fulfillment of such measures. In any case, this proportion is not representative of what happens in reality because only 23% of the cases with protection measures are followed-up. A particularly critical aspect in the non-fulfillment of this activity has to do with the police that is not always willing to intervene and enforce the eviction measures. In addition, the study shows that in many occasions and even when there is fulfillment of the protection measures, there are other forms of violence such as harassment, threats, aggression in public places, lack of food support, and giving-up exercising the paternal role.

Having said this, according to another important research on conflict and domestic violence funded by the municipality (Rubino et al, 2003) and to families that have benefited from the “comisarías de familia” services, of the different public institutions that operate in the city and deal with this issue, the “comisarías de familia” show the biggest impact when it comes to improving the violence situation. In a survey to 525 families that experienced domestic violence, 34% said the intervention of the “comisarías de familia” was very helpful, whereas between 17% and 26% of the interviewed people said the same of other institutions’ interventions (Rubiano et al, 2003). Nevertheless, 45% of the “comisarías de familia” users reported that the situation remained the same and 21% said that it had worsened. On top of that, there is a perception that the efficacy of the intervention diminishes notably when the cases involve psycho-physical violence.

Finally, another study that is worth mentioning is the one from Sánchez, Espinosa and Rivas, 2003, which makes an approximation of the factors associated with the reduction of violence in the city, based on spatial analyses by locality, during the period 1994-2002. In this case, the attempt is to quantify the contribution of various measures adopted by the last few administrations to the lowering of the homicide rate in several localities, classifying the measures in four categories: 1) the “carrots” (zanahorias), i.e., measures that affect economic conditions, for which social expenditures (health, education and social promotion), the unmet basic needs index and unemployment rate are used as indicators; 2) the stick (garrote)
corresponds to the deterrence and incapacitation initiatives, for which the rate of arrests per homicide and the rate of police officers per inhabitant are used as indicators; 3) the carrot-sticks are measures that attempt to affect behaviors that cause violence, for which there are no adequate indicators (death rates in traffic accidents were used as an approximation — albeit an imperfect and rough one — of changes in the citizens’ culture); 4) the measures related to the “broken windows” theory, for which prostitution control and expenditures on roads and public spaces are used as indicators.

This study demonstrates that the four types of measures explain in some way the reduction of the homicide rates in Bogota in recent years. However, the stick measures explain this reduction in greater proportion, above all the rate of arrests of people indicted for homicides (53%), and people indicted for assaults (76%) This contribution is followed by the measures of citizens’ culture, which according to the performed measurements explain 11% in the reduction of the homicides and 12% in the reduction of assaults. Although consistent with studies on crime reduction in New York (Corman and Mocan, 2002), and despite the rigor with which the available data were analyzed, the absence of adequate indicators for the measures meant to change citizens’ behavior, reduces the impact of the conclusions.

It is also important to “tone-down” its results when designing public policy on security and coexistence issues since even though the “garrote or stick” measures have played a key role in reducing the crime indexes in Bogotá, their reach in the medium and long-term could be limited. Here it seems appropriate to cite the famous North American criminologist, Alfred Blumstein, who raised a debate on the efficacy of imprisonment and its objectives on dissuasion and disablement, as a basic strategy used in the United States to control crime.

According to Blumstein, “hard-line measures” like imprisonment might have an immediate effect in the case of violent offenders, since it disables them to hurt potential victims, but its impact is very limited when trying to dissuade criminals linked to illegal markets. Examples of this are illegal drug markets in the United States. The author notes that imprisoning offenders linked to these markets tends to promote greater activity among those offenders that are not imprisoned. Recruiting of other groups, in general younger offenders, who are more prone to use violence precisely because of the increment of the dissuasive threat of imprisonment, tends to increase as well.

This discussion about the impact of measures indicates the importance of perfecting policy evaluation mechanisms, especially when interventions are carried out with several policy approaches to start with, as in the case of Bogota. This experience suggests that there was an adequate combination of strategies in spite of one not knowing exactly the weight of each ingredient in the mix. Beyond measurements that might indicate which actions were more or less effective, it seems fundamental that there be a discourse in place regarding the protection of life that calls upon and brings together the citizenry. Without it, it might not have been possible to carry out the measures of control and sanction in the way it was done in Bogota.

Regardless of the emphasis given by the different administrations on a certain policy focus, it is important to point out two fundamental axes in this case, without which the results one currently sees in the city probably would not have been obtained. On the one hand, the central role granted to the issue of citizens’ security within the government agenda, expressed by the adoption of a specific discourse, as well as the investment of significant resources and the development of institutional spaces capable of managing the policies. On the other hand, the continuity given by the last few administrations to the initiatives and to the prominence of the security issue on the district agenda, allowed the development of an initiative formulation process that went from one municipal administration to the other and that was based on complementary approaches.

27 For a summary on this debate see Blumstein (2003).
VI. BIBLIOGRAPHY


Graph 1. Homicide Rate for Bogotá & Colombia
1980 - 2004

Graph 2. Homicide Rate per 100,000 People
Colombian Cities 2002 - 2004

Source: CIC-Policía Nacional; DANE-Proyecciones de población censo 1993
Graph 3. Homicide Rate per 100.000 People
Latin-American Cities 2002

Source: América Económica citado por Acero 2003, 24

Graph 4. Deaths Caused by Traffic Accidents
Bogota 1990 - 2003

Source: CIC-Policía Nacional
Graph 5. Main Crimes against Property
Bogotá 1990 - 2003

Source: CIC-Policía Nacional

Graph 6. Victimization in Colombia’s Main Cities
2000 - 2003

Source: FEDESARROLLO Encuesta Social, Etapas III a VIII
Graph 7. Security Perception in Main Colombian Cities 1999 - 2003

Source: FEDESARROLLO Encuesta Social, Etapas I a VIII

Graph 8. People Arrested by Crimes Bogotá 1990 - 2003

Source: Own Calculations Based on Data from CIC - Policía Nacional
Graph 9. Fire Arms’ Confiscations
Bogotá & Colombia 1990 - 2003

Confiscated arms Bogotá


Confiscated Arms Colombia

Source: CIC - Policía Nacional

Graph 10. Police Members’ Rate
Bogotá 1994 - 2003

Rate per 10,000 people

Source: Policía Metropolitana de Bogotá - Oficina de Recursos Humanos
Graph 11. District Investment in Metropolitan Police of Bogota 1992 - 2003

Source: Own Calculations Based on Data from Acero (2003, 55) & Fondo de Vigilancia y Seguridad de Bogotá


Source: Own Calculations Based on Data from Fondo de Vigilancia y Seguridad de Bogotá; Subsecretaría de Convivencia y Seguridad Ciudadana; Acero (2003, 55)
Graph 13. District Investment in Security and Coexistence Programs
(Does Not Include Investments in Metropolitan Police) 1995 - 2003

- Judicial Police (Training & Equipments)
- Strenghtens Other Security Organizations
- UPJ (Permanent Justice Unit) & Prison
- Support to Coexistence in Bogotá
- Ref Security and Coexistence Norms
- Information System (SUIVD)
- Coexistence Communication
- Units for Mediation & Conciliation
- Family Police Station
- Assistance to Youth at Risk
- Campaigns on Sec. and Citizen Participation
- Police Inspections

Source: Own Calculations Based on Data from Fondo de Vigilancia y Seguridad; Subsecretaría de Convivencia y Seguridad

Graph 14a. Homicide Evolution in Areas where Public Space has been Subjected to Interventions 1999 - 2003

Source: SUIVD
Graph 14b. Assaults Evolution in Areas where Public Space has been Subjected to Interventions 1999 - 2003

Source: SUIVD