

Panel: Del liderazgo protagónico a la responsabilidad compartida: hacia un balance de los impactos de nuevas formas de gobernanza en el espacio de lo público

Decentralization and democratic governance in Bogotá: all for the people, without the people?

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Introduction

“En ciudades como Bogotá hay algunos sectores de su perímetro que son tan extensos que en la práctica son ciudades dentro de la ciudad (...). Es necesario dotar esos sectores con un órgano político que exprese sus necesidades especiales y resuelva problemas que generalmente no son resueltos por la burocracia, el exceso de trámites, y las grandes distancias entre los ciudadanos y las oficinas centrales”

L. Villar Borda (Presidencia de la República 1969)

Bogotá, the capital of Colombia, is the chosen arena for this study. It is an amazing city full of contrasts where the pre-modern rural Colombia meets the post-modern digital city. In Bogotá, one may step by a piece of any other major city in the world, a quality that, I believe, all cities share, they are holographic; the whole is contained in every individual piece. The problem under investigation is the impact of decentralization in democratic governance, specifically the emergence of new players, if any, and changes in the rules of the game, if any. The aim is to contribute to the quest for good governance and democracy.

Cities are the distinctive space for humanity on the twenty first century; looking ahead, to the end of the century, more people will be crowded into the urban areas of the developing world than are alive on the planet today; undoubtedly, this is meant to be the urban millennium (HABITAT 2001). Nowhere is this statement more noticeable than in Latin America, which, of the developing areas in the world, is the one that experienced the fastest process of urbanization.

Latin America went from being predominantly rural to predominantly urban between 1950 and 1990. By 2001, Latin America's population was 75 per cent urban, and most of the world's 100 largest cities were housed there. By the year 2020 its urban population will approach 539 million or 81 percent of its projected total population of 665 million (UN-HABITAT 1996; HABITAT 2001a).

The characteristics of Latin America's process of urbanization and its socio-political structures manifest in poorly ordered cities in which economic growth has been unable to offer a proportionate increase in the quality of life of their populations. Data from the United Nations Economic Council for Latin America and the World Bank, shows that the absolute number of urban poor in the region increased from 44 to 126 million in the last 20 years (Morley 2001; World Bank 2000); moreover, Latin America has the highest level of inequality in the world (HABITAT 1997; HABITAT 2001).

Additionally, it has been established that Latin America's administrative systems reflect the region's prevalent problems, persistent dependence, the perpetuation of rigid and particularistic social structures, chronic economic vulnerability, weak and unstable growth, social marginalization, low

institutionalization and acute social polarization (Peters and Pierre 2003, pp.531-532)

The contradictions between the values of modernity, prevalent in the region's political discourse, particularly in cities, and the practice of exclusion, created profound tensions that have been identified as major threats for the region's political stability, and its social and economic development (Carrillo-Flórez and Binetti 2004; O'Donnell 1996; Ippolito-O'Donnell and Markovitz 1996). In Latin America, the quest for good governance must include the enhancement of democracy by creating coherent discourses and inclusive environments.

Recognizing the central role that cities play in development and its escalating complexity, and in response to the increasing number of urban poor despite economic growth, the United Nations Human Settlements Program, UN-HABITAT, launched in the year 1999 the Global Campaign on *Urban Governance*. The campaign sums up and supports worldwide initiatives aiming at improving governance as a means to achieve sustainable development, and is a follow up to the 1996 report in which it was stated:

Making full use of the potential that cities have to offer requires good governance (UN-HABITAT 1996, p.240).

The campaign summarizes many initiatives that assume that the improvement of good governance will bring major economic and social gains very much needed in cities of the world, and particularly in cities of the developing world (Satterthwaite 1999). In addition, it is at the local level that they citizens are closer to the government; therefore by improving local systems of governance it is expected to strengthen and enhance democracy, as this level of governance is associated with popular power and the real roots of democracy (Restrepo Botero 1992).

The relationship between democracy and good governance is somewhat circular; good governance is expected to improve democracy, and the other way around, as it is claimed that principles of democracy are the most appropriate for building good governance¹. The relationship between good governance and decentralization is a derivation of the previous argument; as it is commonly argued that decentralization is a key policy for enhancing democracy, it necessarily has to enhance good governance.

Decentralization reforms marked the last three decades of the twentieth century for countries in the east and the west, the north and the south; its characteristics seem to fit everyone's expectations, as arguments supporting the reforms came from positions substantially different (Manor 1999; Stren 2001).

Neo-liberals promoters viewed decentralization as a means for reducing the state's intervention on private business (Udehn 1996; Buchanan and Tollison 1984; Buchanan, Rowley, and Tollison 1987; Buchanan and Musgrave 1999; Buchanan 1988, 1986; Angell, Lowden, and Thorp 2001).

Those in search for equity and disappointed by the performance of the state in securing a fair distribution of wealth, saw decentralization as a possibility for re-distributing power (López-Murphy 1995; Litvack, Ahmad, and Bird 1998).

Those that condemn the centralized government for its impotence and waste, and that identified corruption, clientelism and political alienation as natural by-products of a distant bureaucracy; advocated the decentralization of political authority and public resources to sub-national levels of government as a general cure for these ills (Faguet 1997, p.2).

Finally, International organizations claimed that decentralization was the mean for filling the gap and finally achieving both growth and development (Reilly 1995; Escobar and Alvarez 1992; Cochrane

¹ To the extent that, the concept of good governance is used, in literature and in practice, as interchangeable with the concept of democratic governance (see for example, Jewson and MacGregor 1997, Institute on Governance 1998, 1999, 2000; Fukasaku and Hausmann 1998; Rodríguez and Winchester 1997; Domínguez and Lowenthal 1996).

1983). What is certain is that by the early 1990s, most countries were engaged in decentralization reforms (Stren 2001; Freire and Stren 2001).

Decentralization forced the emergence of new mechanisms of organization and representation of interests; as its implementation demanded a complete rearrangement of the governmental structures and the relational patterns among those involved in public matters. In consequence, decentralization has a lot to do with the emergence of a new set of definitions of what is public and what is private, aiming at understanding and incorporating these changes (UNESCO-MOST 2002).

Undoubtedly, decentralization has great impacts on the systems of governance, as this concept refers to the relationship between governments and state agencies, on the one hand, and communities and social groups, on the other (Stren and Bell 1994). What is not so clear is the quality and quantity of these impacts, and the reasons underlying differences and similarities of in the outcomes of the reform.

For once, it is claimed that there is not enough empirical evidence to support that decentralization enhances democratic governance, and on the other hand important questions regarding its “good” impacts have been raised (CLAD 2000, 1998; Dethier 2000). Certainly, despite the many studies conducted for evaluating results of the decentralization reforms, the debate is very much alive (CEPAL and PNUMA 2001).

Additionally, the literature and research review revealed that further exploration of three elements might be critical for understanding impacts and limitations of the decentralization reforms in regards to (good) governance; those are:

- Pre-existing conditions of governance and how they affect the implementation of decentralization; for example it is not the same to implement a decentralization reform in a newly democracy than in a consolidated federal republic.
- The level of governance in which decentralization is implemented; for example, it is different to decentralized from the national to the regional or local level, that within a local unit of governance, as in this case.
- The process of implementation itself; each context demands accommodations and flexibility from the original recipe in order to succeed.

This study aims to contribute to this debate by presenting and analyzing the impact of the decentralization reform in Bogotá’s system of governance, with emphasis in the players of this reform, and the pattern of interactions among them.

The main questions are:

- Are there any new players in the system of governance?
- What consequences have the entrance of new players in the public arena?
- Has decentralization positively affected the design, implementation and evaluation of public policies?
- Are there significant changes in interactions among the diverse players?

This study presents a piece of a major research study in which a combination of qualitative and quantitative research strategies was used. A compilation of existing documents, regarding the process and the data required, was conducted; thirty one interviews with key informants were recorded, and times series, covering the last two decades of the twentieth century, built for at least five indicators for each of the three variables selected for assessing changes in (good) governance: participation, equity, and efficiency. The focus of this paper is participation.

The first part of this study presents a brief review of process set in motion by the New Constitution of 1991. The second part defines the practical terrain for this study, Bogotá, the capital of Colombia.

Finally, part three presents some findings regarding the impact of the decentralization reform on participation, and some recommendations that Bogotá, and ideally any other city in the developing world, may possibly use for enhancing good governance.

1.0 The New Constitution

Pocos momentos como la Constituyente de 1991 han congregado más anhelos de los Colombianos. (...) Sin embargo, como era de esperarse, en el salto del papel a la vida la participación real ha encontrado desarrollos y obstáculos variados.”(Velásquez C. and González R. 2003, p.13)

Maybe the most important political milestone of the last decades in the twentieth century was the endorsement of a New Constitution in 1991. The need for institutional reforms in Colombia was self-evident; the social contract was (is) threatened by growing social unrest, and several failed trials to endorse peace agreements had proven that without deep changes in the country's political structure, peace and development wouldn't be possible (Alesina 2000).

In 1988, the constitutional reform was submitted to the consideration of the two houses of Congress that dismissed it after two debate sessions. The response to the Congress came once more from the civil society; this time a student movement, which came to be known as the *séptima papeleta*², promoted a campaign for electing a constitutional assembly with the authority to rewrite the constitution.

The students called voters to include an extra ballot in the March 1990 Congressional elections, meaning that they supported the creation of a constitutional assembly; close to two million of such ballots were deposited (Angell, Lowden, and Thorp 2001; Kline 1995). The political elites did not have other choice than include a formal ballot for a plebiscite in regards to the creation of a constitutional assembly empowered to change the constitution. On May 27 1990, the day of the presidential election, 4,991,887 Colombians voted yes on the question (Kline 1995, p.68):

In order to fortify participatory democracy, do you vote for the convocation of a constituent assembly with representation of social, political, and regional forces, integrated democratically and popularly, to reform the Constitution of Colombia?

The constitutional assembly was popularly elected on December of 1990, and for the first time in history, all significant political forces came together to create a new constitutional chart. The 74 seats of the assembly were distributed as follows: the liberal party was granted 25 seats; the Alianza Democrática M-19 (a reinserted urban guerrilla movement) 19; the Movimiento de Salvación Nacional (conservatives) 11; the Partido Conservador (conservatives) 5; the Independent Conservatives 4; and 10 were granted to smaller groups and minorities' forces. The assembly has three joint presidents, which were: liberal leader Horacio Serpa, AD M-19 (a former guerrilla movement) leader Antonio Navarro, and Conservative Alvaro Gómez (Angell, Lowden, and Thorp 2001, p.28).

It is agreed among academics, members of the assembly, and politicians, that the formulations of the New Constitution reflected a complicated bargaining process among disparate factions (see for example, Zalamea 1991; Matías Camargo 2001; Angell, Lowden, and Thorp 2001; Revéiz 1997). The New Constitution was promulgated on July of 1991. It is worth to present Kline's description of the event:

On July 4, 1991, there was a rush of euphoria as the Constituent Assembly presented the New Constitution. After the signing, as the national orchestra played Handel's 'Hallelujah Chorus,'

² Alluding to the extra ballot that was added to consult the citizens about reforming the constitution.

television viewers saw members of the assembly-men and women, former guerrillas and kidnapping victims, indigenes and members of the oligarquía, Roman Catholics and representatives of the evangelical movement- embracing each other. (Kline 1995, p.137).

The New Constitution's most important concerns were enhancing democracy, decentralization and participation. Colombia was defined as a decentralized nation and several articles granted a new degree of political and financial autonomy to local governments. It established popular elections for governors. It promoted the creation of new territorial entities, such as regions (groups of Departments), Provinces (groups of municipalities), Special Districts, Metropolitan Areas and Indigenous territories, among others. The New Constitution, formally decentralized the State, as mentioned by Campbell (2003).

For further enhancing democracy, the New Constitution arranged the development of what is called 'Human Rights of third generation'³. Additionally, it strengthened the administration of justice with the provision of a new accusatory system, similar to the American, for replacing the previous Napoleonic model. It created the *Fiscalía General de la Nación*, similar to the U.S. national prosecutor, who is to coordinate all law enforcement in the country; and also the *Defensor del Pueblo*, similar to the U.S. Ombudsman (Kline 1996; Angell, Lowden, and Thorp 2001).

For enhancing participation the New Constitution introduced new mechanisms for citizens to participate, as local referendums, consultation and open town meetings, the right to remove mayors and governors from office, public watch boards, and a seat in the municipal planning council (Velásquez C. 1994).

Finally, the New Constitution included special provisions for Bogotá, with the aim of closing the gap between the city's growth and its institutional development. The status of the city was changed from D.E. *Distrito Especial* (Especial District) to D.C. *Distrito Capital* (Capital District) in search of granting the city its political, administrative and economic autonomy; decentralization was considered a the model for a new city (Zubiría Samper 1994; Castro C. 1991).

The results of the New Constitution, as the constitution itself⁴, are a source of debate in the country. In fact, the arguments for explaining the level of achievement, are enough contradictory to illustrate the debate and the many questions that remained unanswered; these are:

- The process of legislating the Constitutional ruling has been capture by those interested in keeping the power concentrated (Velásquez C. 1994, p.34);
- the legislation has been inconsistent, regarding distribution of functions and resources and policy guidelines (Correa and Steiner 1999, p.240);
- the New Constitution created an economic structure inconsistent with an efficient and impersonal modern economy (Edwards 2001, pp.54-55);
- the persistence of the institutional crisis, even after reforming the institutions, have proven that what needs to be changed is the Colombian political class (Revéiz 1997, p.83);
- the fiscal deterioration faced by the country in the 1990s, is a consequence of changes introduced by the New Constitution in regards to amount of transfers from the central government to the regions and municipalities (Alesina, Carrasquilla, and Echavarría 2000);
- The fiscal deterioration has been caused by the excess of centralism and the resistance to cede power. The central state bureaucracy has grew from representing 28 per cent of the national current income in 1987 to 35 per cent in 1995 (Castro, Jaramillo, and Cabrera Galvis 2001; Jaramillo Pérez 2001);

³ Human rights of third generation are more systemic, Vasak mentioned five related rights—the right to development, the right to peace, the right to environment, the right to the ownership of the common heritage of humankind, and the right to communication (Vasak and Alston 1982).

⁴ For a serious evaluation of the New Constitution's positives and negatives see Alberto Alesina's , *Reformas Institucionales en Colombia* (Alesina 2001).

- There is a vacuum of accurate information regarding the results of the process, and there is not enough systematic research regarding it (Maldonado 2000).

It is likely that the process is just beginning, as mentioned by Velázquez (1997); or perhaps, as mentioned by Angell, Lowden and Thorp (2001, p.39), the intensity of the national debate shows that in fact the political reform is beginning to make a difference. In any case, a good summary of the current feelings, after all the expectations created by the political reform, is this phrase by Edwards:

What is clear, however, is that the reformist enthusiasm and euphoria of the early 1990s are no longer there and that, as a consequence of a combination of factors, Colombia has seen its political, economic and social circumstances greatly deteriorate. (Edwards 2001, p.89).

Bogotá appears to be eluding this description as there is a certain shared perception of success in regards to the city (see for example, Echevarría S., Rentería, and Steiner 2002; Jones 2002; Rojas 2002). In 1996, Bogotá was the first city in Latin America in signing a credit with the World Bank; in June of 2000, it was awarded the Stockholm Challenge Prize for Environment; in October 2002, the World Health Organization recognized its efforts in the reduction of violence; and in 2003, it was awarded a prize as model city from the UN.

Fernando Cepeda, a prominent Colombian lawyer and politician, wrote about Bogotá as follows:

A beautiful landscape that could be the envy of the world's best cities, a chain of mountains that frames the city, an ideal weather, superb sunsets, rivers and streams crossing the city and the land, an awe-inspiring vegetation with a great variety of flowers... What else could one ask for? Is this perhaps the paradise? It could be, but no, it is almost hell⁵ (Cepeda Ulloa 1995)

A first look into the city's process of urbanization, its economic performance, and its path to reforms may provide some clues for understanding its complexity and contradictions, and serve as an introduction to the research findings.

2.0 Bogotá: A City Close to the Stars, or, Just Far From Hell?

Transitory article No.41 of the New Constitution mandated the Congress to legislate the new regimen by June of 1993; as the Congress did not accomplish this goal, a presidential decree promulgated the Régimen Especial para Santafé de Bogotá (the city's new especial regimen), on July 21 of 1993. A new statute for the city was approved, and a new tier of governance was introduced, the *Juntas Administradoras Locales*-JALs (Local Administrative Boards), along with major changes in the political and programmatic roles of the *alcaldes locales* (local mayors).

Many believe that Bogotá is the most successful example of decentralization in the country; others, that it is the only one, and others that the process did not start at all⁶. According to Pedro Santana, a Colombian researcher, the city is a microcosm of the political and administrative challenges affecting all of Colombia's cities (Santana R. 1997).

The case of Bogotá is undoubtedly a very interesting story of political and structural change that provides empirical evidence for contributing both to the literature in (good) governance and decentralization. Overall Bogotá is a city of the twentieth first century that illustrates the complex

⁵ A free translation from the author.

⁶ All these positions were illustrated in the interviews conducted for this study, and in public debates regarding decentralization. For more on the debates visit: www.univerciudad.net

challenges faced by most cities in the world, and particularly in the developing world.

The city is divided in 20 *localidades* (administrative and political units); from which, in 2002, the most populated was Kennedy with 951,330 inhabitants; and the least, La Candelaria with 27,450 inhabitants by 2002 the (Fundación Corona 2003, p.34). Figure 1 presents a map of the city with its 20 *localidades* and their populations.

Bogotá is a multicultural setting, with high levels of migration, big social differences, and coexisting modern ideas with not very modern power structures. It presents most of the general characteristics of cities in Latin America; yet it presents, additionally, interesting deviations from the region's pattern, making Bogotá a rather interesting case, as mentioned by Gilbert and Davila (2002, p.52).

First, Bogotá entered very late into the regional pattern of the capital's primacy. It is only until the second half of the twentieth century, that it became the primate city in the country; its growth, demographic and economic, granted its predominance over other major regional cities. According to data from regional accounts from 1980 to 1995 the country moved to a period of urban primacy in which Bogotá established as the country's main economic center (DAPD 1999, p.138). Nevertheless, Bogotá still has to compete with a number of regional rivals that control important political power in the Congress. Thus, Bogotá shares primate characteristics with cities like Buenos Aires or Mexico D.C., but it also shares some with secondary cities as Guayaquil or La Paz.

Second, Bogotá's steady pace of population growth is unlike most other large Latin American cities, Bogotá quadruple its population between 1951 and 1973. Its annual population growth rate was 7 percent between 1951 and 1964, and 6 percent between 1964 and 1973 (Dureau et al. 2002, p.336). Between 1985 and 1990 the city registered a demographic growth rate of 3.0 percent per year, while the country's population growth was only 2 percent (Puyo Vasco 1992, p.245). Bogotá is as dense as New York City with more than 100 people per hectare (Mohan 1994, p.40).

Third, regarding the city's management, it is claimed that the Bogotá has had the advantage of having strong economic interests groups, that have not allowed the political parties and factions to obstruct the city's development; at least its infrastructure. According to Gilbert and Davila, Bogotá's economic interests have been protected by an undemocratic and technical bureaucracy, that was effective in improving the city's services (Gilbert and Dávila 2002, pp. 52-57). The city has had a very centralized government with a history of functional decentralization.

Fourth, regarding the city's finances, Bogotá has had access to enough resources to finance major development projects; it has had the option of borrowing money from abroad since the early 1970s. Between 1971 and 1976, credits financed about 60 to 90 percent of investments. The availability of resources has been a critical element for preventing or at least keeping under certain control the political and social struggles; from 1986 to 1995, the public debt of the city grew 687.4 percent (Contraloría Distrital 1996, p.13)

Nevertheless, as mentioned, Bogotá was the first Latin American city in signing a credit with the World Bank, and it has received several awards that indicate the contradictory visions that the city generates. Historically people have climbed the mountains to come to Bogotá in search of protection, and, in relative terms, the city has been safer than any of the other main cities, particularly in the last two decades of the twentieth century (Gutiérrez, Guzmán, and Jiménez 2000).

Nevertheless, in regards to safety the city presents once more interesting contradictions; as mentioned by Gilbert and Davila, high rates of crime and violence possibly are among the most prominent problems in the city (2002, pp.29-30). Criminality grew and average of 5 percent from 1985 to 1994, although the city's homicide rate presents significant improvements if compared with the country. In 1993 Bogotá had 4,452 homicides, in 2001 less than 2,000, and in 2002 1,902. Bogotá ranks far better than other major cities in the country, in particular Medellín and Cali, but worst than most Latin American cities (DABS; PUJ 2003, p.37)

The last wave of migrants, the *desplazados*, added many pressures to the city. They created a significant increase in services' demand, that the city may not have been prepared to fulfill, and all these youngsters without education or training for the city, are easy prey for delinquency, either suffering or enlarging it (Gutiérrez, Guzmán, and Jiménez 2000). The worsening conditions in the country brought Bogotá closer than ever to the country's problems, which appeared to have been safe and isolated.

New and already existing aggravating factors, that undermine the minimum identity required to constitute a polity, appeared or became visible in the city: the decline of civic organizations, capable of canalizing social conflicts and demands; the profound socio-economic divisions deepening; and the growth of poverty despite the city's economic performance (Segovia Mora 1994). The city has invisible frontiers: the north is in general wealthy and safe, it is where the rich live; the south is in general poor and the south east is particularly poor; *el centro*, downtown, is the government basis during the day, and the *marginales*⁷ land in the night. The access to the welfare of the city changes as one goes from north to south (Salazar J., Useche A., and López I. 1998; DAPD 1996; Campos and Ortiz 1998)

By 1985, Bogotá concentrated 35 percent of the industry, more than 50 percent of the financial market, and its participation in the national GDP was 21 percent (Secretaría de Hacienda Distrital 2003a., pp.9-10). By 2003, Bogotá was the sixth largest market in Latin America, it generates a quarter of the national GDP, and concentrates a quarter of the national labor market (Cámara de Comercio de Bogotá 2003). The economic primacy of Bogotá was substantiated by the economic census of 1990; its data showed that the city concentrated 49 percent of the industrial national income, more than 50 percent of the financial market transactions, 28 percent of the commerce wholesale market, and 23 percent of the retail market. Bogotá also concentrated the higher education market; more than 40 percent of the country's college and university students, and more than 65 percent of the graduate students, from which 79 percent attend private schools and 21 percent public schools; finally, most of the research centers are also concentrated in Bogotá (Gouëset 1998, pp. 285-291).

It is no doubt a growing economy, not necessarily a strong one; its dependence on the internal market makes it very susceptible to changes in the country's economy, and its reliance on the third sector makes it unstable (Cámara de Comercio de Bogotá 1999). It has been also claimed that this rate of economic growth will collapse the city's infrastructure, and that the concentration of the country's economy in just one "Tibetan" place, entails a lot of risk for the country and the city (DAPD 1999, p.142).

Finally, although the city is known today as the country's major financial and cultural center, and the largest industrial city; this status is not quite consistent with its level of unemployment, and informality. The level of unemployment has steadily risen; by the year 2000, the unemployment rate was 20.3 percent. Women's unemployment rate has always been higher than men's have; between 1995 and 1999, it was 13.9 percent for women, compared to 9.5 percent for men. The most educated have presented traditionally the lowest rates of unemployment; nevertheless, between 1986 and 2000 the biggest increase of unemployment registered was for those having 11 or 12 to 15 years of education, more professionals joined the unemployed pool (Gutiérrez, Mejía, and Díaz 2000, pp.9-12).

The rate of informal employment in Bogotá grew from 49 percent in 1996 to 57.8 percent in 2000; most of the new jobs in the city, as in Latin America, were created in the informal sector. It is estimated that between 1984 and 1988, 62.9 percent of the new "employment" was provided by the informal sector. The level of informality, from 1988 to 2000, remained relatively steady (Maruri 2001, p.29). Informality in Bogotá is associated with marginal and quasi-illegal activities, even though it has proven rather difficult to trace boundaries between illegal and legal activities and therefore between the formal and informal economy. In Colombia, informality conveys a social status worst than not being employed, to the extent that there is a word to name those activities, *el rebusque*; referring to someone that would do almost anything to get some income (Henao V., Rojas D., and Parra R. 1999; Secretaría

⁷ As a reminder, *marginales*, are those that live in the margins, and there are many types of margins.

de Hacienda Distrital 2003)

Those working on the informal sector do not have access to the benefits associated with formal employment. It has been calculated that more than 73 percent of them do not have health insurance, or any other benefit usually accessible to formal employees; and that more than 60 percent of them earned less than two minimum wages (Maldonado and Hurtado 1997, p.136).

The raising level of unemployment and informality, and problems associated with the number of *desplazados* arriving to the city, has multiple consequences; increased in the number of poor, deterioration of the income distribution, and new pressures on the city's government. Side to side with these changes the decentralization reform was set in motion, as mandate by the new constitution. Although everyone seems to believe in it, the results do not seem to fit anyone's expectations.

3.0 Participation

The argument regarding the relation between decentralization and governance, that is of interest for this study is derived from the claim that the principles of democracy are the most appropriate for building good governance. Democracy is the ideal type of political system and the one in which good governance can flourish (Fukasaku and Hausmann 1998; UN-ESCAP 2004; Montero and Samuels 2004). As decentralization enhances democracy, it necessarily does the same to good governance. Participation, a common indicator of both good governance and democracy, is an expected outcome of political decentralization. This was and still is an important argument for the promotion of decentralization in Latin America; decentralization is a key strategy for democratization, and in consequence for promoting *good governance* (García Delgado and Borja 1989; Lovan, Murray, and Shaffer 2004; Cunill 1990). Decentralization was seen as the perfect strategy for promoting real participation and real democracy (Nohlen 1991; Borja 1989; Nickson 1995; Morris and Lowder 1992).

Participation refers to the possibility for men and women to have a voice in decision-making, directly or through legitimate intermediate institutions that represent their interests. Participation is built on freedom of association and speech, as well as capacities to participate constructively (UN-HABITAT 2000). Participation gained a new status in the political and economical discourse as it is claimed that is a central element for economic and social development and an indicator of the quality of a political system (Sachs 1992, pp.116-131). It is also very important to examine the quality and scope of participation, for understanding if its utilization implies or not real changes in the structure of power (Rondinelli and Cheema 2003).

3.1 Elections as Political participation

3.1.1 Alcaldes

In the three mayoral elections following the New Constitution three elements call for attention, one is the reduction in the number of candidates, the second is the level of abstention in the city, the third is the consolidation of movements and candidates without an explicit political affiliation; this last element is even clearer in the city's council elections.

In 1988, there were 22 candidates. 2 conservatives, 7 liberals, 1 UP (Unión Patriótica, a coalition mostly from the left), 1 Anapo (an originally populist party), 1 meta-politic, and 10 others. From which 4 were women.

In 1990, there were 17 candidates; 2 conservatives, 1 liberal, 2 left, 2 M-19 (an ex-guerrilla movement), 1 meta-politic, 1 civic, and 8 others. From which 1 was a woman.

In 1992, immediately after the new constitution was promulgated, there were 11 candidates. 1

conservative, 2 liberals, 1 IZ-UP, 1 M-19, 1 meta-politic, and 5 others. From which 2 were women. In 1994, they were 3 candidates, 1 conservative, 1 liberal and 1 independent. Without women. In 1997, there were 14 candidates. 2 conservatives, 6 liberal, 1 independent, 1 M-19, 1 civic, and 3 others. Without women.

The two previous elections were the first direct election for mayor in the city and the country and it appears that this reform attracted a lot more the electorate that the decentralization reform within the city if consider the level of abstention.

40.18 in 1988,
52.08 in 1990
73.75 in 1992
70.23 in 1994
57.27 in 1997

It is claimed that the expectations created by the direct election of the city's mayor were not filled, as the traditional parties maintain control over the political space and the preferred form of management, clienteles, remained unchanged (Instituto para el Desarrollo de la Democracia Luis Carlos Galán 2001; Otálora Castañeda 2002). Interestingly enough, traditional parties decided to seal themselves under new labels, though not necessarily new ideas, being "independent", which in many times was identified with non-political, became a fashion. The traditional political practices deteriorated the field so badly that being a politician or being in politics was equivalent to be corrupted, inefficient, and inappropriate. The lack of legitimacy of traditional parties gave legitimacy to those that claimed to not belong to any; people preferred forms that are anti partisan, anti-politic, and value a lot the personality and individual charisma of the mayoral candidates (Peña 1995). It is as if the candidate for mayor were not part of a political process and a political structure.

Finally, traditional forms of doing politics, as managing clienteles were changed but not for more democratic and inclusive forms of relationships, but to enhance the marketing approach. How do we sell our candidates?

Table 1 presents a summary of the mayoral elections from 1988 to 2000.

3.1.2. Concejo

There are no significant changes in the city council elections; it appears that traditional forces have reshaped in order to regain control. The only significant new force is the Christians, which obtained 2 seats in 1992 and 3 in 1998.

Although minorities are not significant enough it is important to notice that after the New Constitution for the first time 3 indigenous lists were presented in the Council's election of 1992 and for the first time they got a seat in the council.

The efficiency of the electoral process if considered by the relation between number of seats and inscribed lists has two different interpretations. One side views the fragmentation of the traditional parties as their strategy for survival (Pizarro Leongómez 2002; while others see it as a signal of its debilitation.

Figure 1, presents the participation percentage by party or movement from 1986 to 1998. Gender participation, represented by the percentage of women in the city's council, enhanced as follows:

10 percent in 1986-1988,
5 percent in 1988 to 1990
10 percent in 1990 to 1992

17.86 percent in 1992 to 1994
22.86 in 1995 to 1997
15 percent in 1998-2000.

3.1.3 Juntas Administradoras Locales

This is the most significant new player in the city; it is the new layer of governance introduced by the new constitution and it was expected to be the replication of the city council in the local level. In fact, the level of participation for JAL's is higher than in the mayor or council elections and presents the only significant tendency to increase. What does this mean? The evidence points to the fact that traditional parties and practices were able to canalize the sub-local electorate very fast and easy. A study conducted in two *localidades* showed that people compromise their votes according to immediate benefits; otherwise, they will not vote. Additionally, and very importantly, there is no relationship between political and communitarian activities. Strong community organization, recognized by the people will not have many chances on the elections, as they do not have "anything to offer" to the clientele. A study conducted on occasion of the 1997 elections, showed that even though there is freedom of vote there is no freedom of election (Pedro 1998); there is not yet enough power on the side of new movements to overcome the control mechanisms that were in place before the reform.

The sub-local level is more important than before as they are now the base for building clienteles that will be mobilize for the local, regional, and national elections. Before, the clientele was structure by a top-down approach that has been inverted by the reform. When the top-down approach dominated, *Juntas de Acción Comunal* were the main players articulating the national, regional and central level to *the sub-local level, la localidad* (see i.e. Gutiérrez Sanín 1998). Gutiérrez Sanín made an important contribution by dispossessing the clienteles' system of a negative valuation; it is but an intermediation system in place that has functionalities.

Table 2 presents the taxonomy of the first two local elections.

3.2 Formal political participation

3.2.1 Participatory planning

During the 1990s, the 20 *localidades* of Bogotá were summoned to participate in participatory planning meetings in 1995, under Antanas Mockus, and again in 1998, under Enrique Peñalosa. Important changes were introduced in the legislation pertaining civic participation, showing its vulnerability.

Undoubtedly, the process of participatory planning brought closer citizens and government, but the benefits of this interchange were unequally distributed. The government learned about the city, and its sub-local territorial and political units and this knowledge provided for enhancing coordination among different central units of government and to some extent for improving its efficiency. Nevertheless, the participatory planning exercise was control and directed by public officials that have a predetermined format to work with and that did not recognized neither the potential nor the limitations of the local subjects. Additionally, the format for proposing a project, that the administration brought to the communities were extremely complicated, and that excluded many of participating (Pedraza 2001).

Local organizations were delegitimized as any one could present a proposal independently of its representative capacity; as a result, 13174 projects were presented in the 1995 planning meetings. The political culture prevailing promoted the atomization of projects and resources, loosing the macro perspective of the local. The result is a dispersion of an already limited local budget.

3.4 Non-formal political participation

Protest was a very rooted form of political participation in neighborhoods of Bogotá; as this level was traditionally ignored by an over-centralized government tied to regional and national political

networks. The existence of *paros*, strikes, blockages, marked most of the relation between government and citizens in Bogotá. This has to do with the inexistence of political space where citizens could participate, but participation is not enough; it is the impact of such participation which is important. In that sense all mechanisms used by the people appeared more effective than those utilized by the government. From the design to the implementation, but particularly to the results, the gap between government and citizens has not been enough reduced.

Between 1991 and 1999, people mobilized for protesting 364 times and prepared to an additional 96 times. In average, 51 per year and 4 per month; representing an increase of 180 percent in relation to the decade of 1978-1988, which were 252, but for the whole country. An advantage of the protest over formal mechanisms of participation is its flexibility and inclusiveness. A disadvantage is that because it occurs in one and only one occasion it does not promote articulation or aggregation among the many actors involved.

4.0 Conclusions and recommendations

- It is clear that, previous and new forms of governance coexist in tension (García Sánchez 2003), and that the success or failure of the reform, has a lot to do with how the system incorporates pieces of both.
- It is also clear that pre-existing social and political conditions deeply influenced the results of the reform; nevertheless, they were ignored.
- There are significant and interesting adjustments in Bogotá's system of governance, though their sustainability is unclear. There is still to see whether pre-existent political institutions will absorb them, or if the system will remain open to new players and new rules.
- Although there are new players in the system, they are not strong enough to produce a change in the rules of the game.
- Citizens perceived decentralization as a positive element for democratization and inclusion, disregarding how much this is supported by empirical evidence. The promise of a government more accessible, closer to its constituencies, and a more equitable distribution of power appears enough for convincing the citizens about decentralization's virtues; at least for now.
- The forms and structures of organization and participation that pre-existed the reform were not incorporated into the public policy process; therefore, there is possible that the two structures overlapped for some time.
- The social capital created by pre-existing forms of organization and participation may be lost if unrecognized.

A general perception is that there are not real changes in the city's system of governance, it still is *democracy without the people; more accurately, it is a liberal regime without the people*⁸. The reforms appeared insufficient to change the political and cultural histories of the city and the country. The city's political system, as the country's, traditionally has excluded any political expression outside the two dominant parties; according to Zambrano the system, few years after the reform, regained its capacity to neutralize the emergence of new political players or movements closer to the people. *This is what just happened at the local elections; the liberal party swept away the JALs' elections*⁹.

What is certain is that in facing a widespread offer of mechanisms for political participation citizens seem to be not interested. My hypothesis is that the offer is not perceived as proper and did not have the minimum trust required. Following my own experience and evidence from the process, I dare to say

⁸ Interview with Fabio Zambrano, Nov. 2003

⁹ F. Zambrano refers to the local elections held on November of 2003.

that the decentralization reform has been excessively centralist in its approach. The proposal was not discuss with citizens, did not search for, recognized, or celebrate, forms and structures of organization and participation that existed within the city; additionally expectations of those promoting the reform did blind them from recognizing the needs, values, ideals, and potential of the people. All for the people, without the people.

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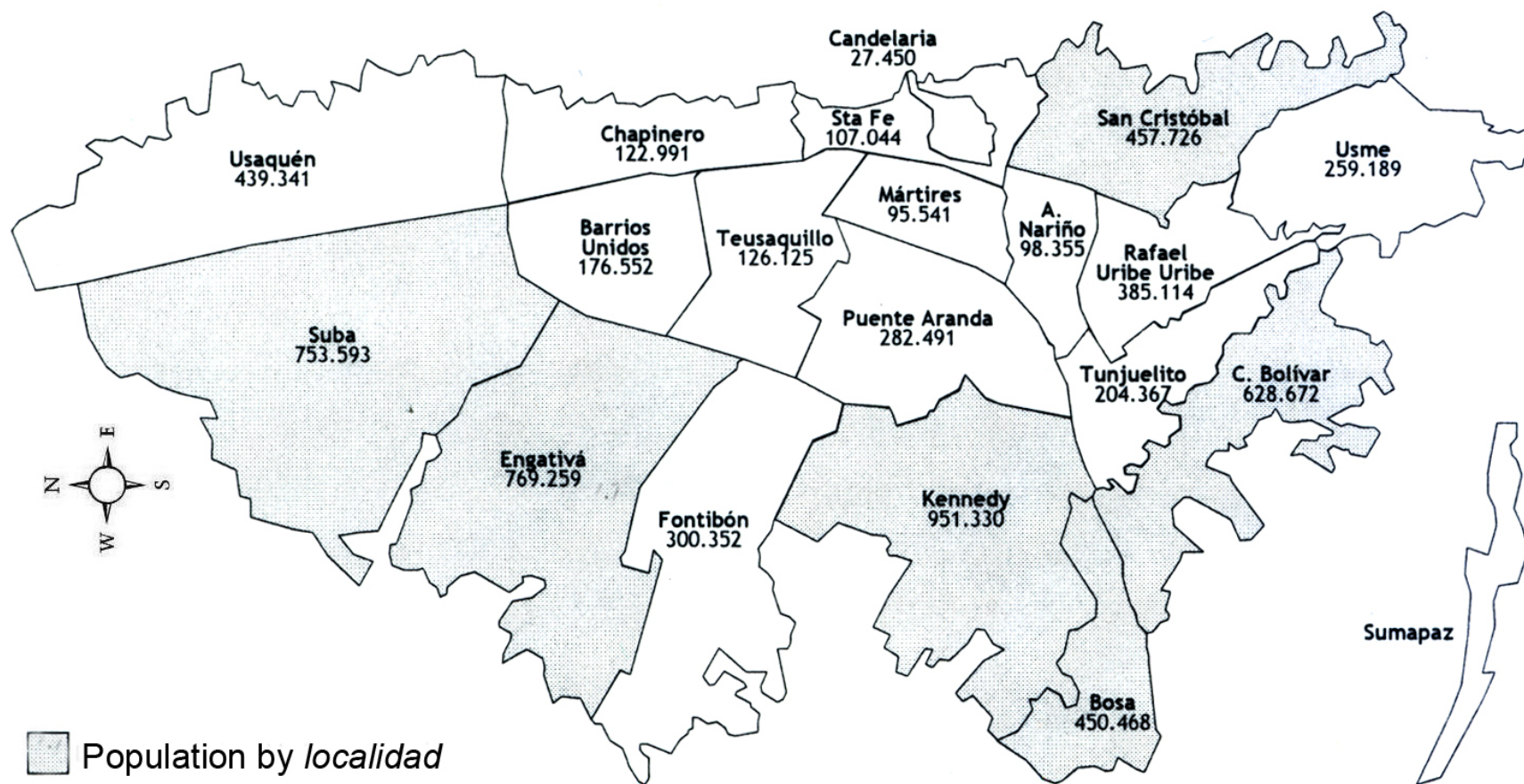


Figure 1: Localidades y población

Table1. Taxonomy of elections for mayor in Bogotá 1988 - 2000

Year	Elected Major	Political Affiliation	Number of candidates	Number of women	Political parties	Total votes	Abstention* (%)	Major party votes (%)
1988	Andrés Pastrana	Conservador	21	4	2 conservadores, 7 liberales, 1 izquierda-UP, 1 anapo-cívico, 1 metapolítico, 10 others.	943,990	40.18	34.82
1990	Juan Martín Caicedo Ferrer	Liberal Colombiano	11	1	2 conservadores, 1 liberal, 2 izquierda, 2 M-19, 1 metapolítico, 1 cívico, 8 others.	915,406	52.08	65.25
1992	Jaime Castro	Liberal Colombiano	17	2	1 conservador, 2 liberales, 1 izquierda-UP, 1 M-19, 1 metapolítico, 5 others.	582,749	73.75	53.68
1994	Antanas Mockus	Independiente	3	0	1 conservador, 1 liberal, 1 independent.	789,874	70.23	62.50
1997	Enrique Peñalosa	Liberal Independiente	15	0	2 conservadores, 6 liberales, 1 independent, 1 M-19, 1 cívico, 3 others.	1,318,661	57.27	46.95

Source: Comportamiento electoral en Bogotá 1982-1997. Instituto para el desarrollo de la democracia Luis Carlos Galán.

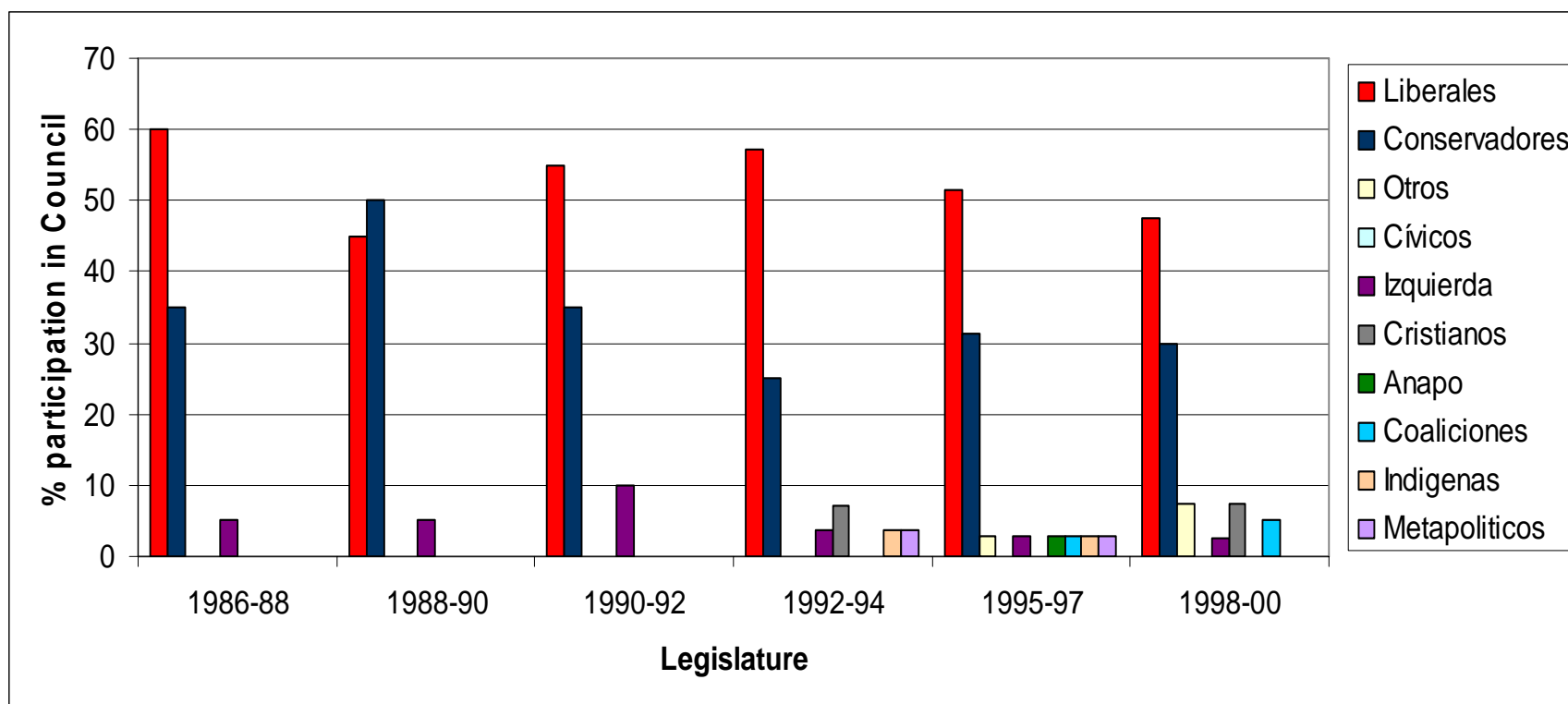


Figure 2: City Council political participation

Table 2. Taxonomy of elections for JALs										
Year	Number of lists	Number of seats	List Effectivity (%)	Reelections (number)	Reelection (%)	Number of women	Potential electorate	Total votes	White votes	Total partisan votes %
1992	1319	184	13.95	n.a	n.a	n.d	1917673	554046	28.08	71.92
1994	1579	184	11.65	61 (21 liberales, 7 conservadores, 2 izq, 1 cristiano, 2 coaliciones, 1 civico & 28 otros.	33.15	n.d	2182574	711981	14.15	85.85
1997	2393	184	7.69	72 (37 liberales, 17 conservadores, 3 izq, 4 civicos & 11 otros.	39.13	n.d	2449104	1232836	12.76	87.24

