

Cultural Norms & Active Citizenship

I will argue that active citizenship can be achieved in an urban context through the intensification of interactions between strangers in the urban public space. This will be illustrated by the innovative and astonishingly successful strategies enacted by Antanas Mockus in Bogotá, Colombia. First I will mention some of the difficulties of active promoting active citizenship.

{1} The Active Citizenship Puzzle

Traditional notions of national citizenship have faced a growing crisis in the XXth century. One of the reasons for this is the increasingly huge size of modern societies (Dagger 2000: 30-32): in a community of millions, each citizen tends to feel that her vote only affects the political process in a minuscule scale. Huge populations also tend to demote collaborative behavior and promote selfish conducts, because in a huge society each illegal action is increasingly hard to monitor and less influential in the overall context. When particular illegal actions are added up, of course, they are not unnoticeable anymore. If a significant amount of citizens perform illegal or free-riding actions, and assume a passive political attitude on the grounds that one individual's behavior is unimportant in the overall context, then those behaviors add up and become trends that endanger the public good and weaken democracy —and this often is the case in modern societies.

Since an active citizenship is necessary for democracy to work (since the very idea of a democracy implies that the political power is somehow determined by citizens), and given the crisis of national citizenship, urban theorists and philosophers have developed new conceptions of citizenship,

centered in urban communities and in a sense of commonality that emerges from interactions between strangers in the city's public realm: in a city —these theorists argue— people have a chance to realize that they share some problems and concerns (transportation, security, public services) with strangers they face in the street, the parks, the transportation system... Urban public spaces therefore allow citizens from all origins and tendencies to recognize both their differences and their common struggles, thus inviting them to express their concerns and participate in common causes. Urban public spaces thus make active citizenship and a stronger, more tangible democracy possible.¹

However, partly for the reasons stated above, individuals in contemporary communities seldom constrain their own interests to join common political projects, and find it difficult to give meaning to the traditional democratic activity —voting— in mega-societies where the power of one vote is practically infinitesimal. Given this context, ¿how could the passive and selfish 'citizens' be inspired to become actively enrolled in democracy through their interactions in public spaces? For their passive attitude —very common in modern societies— reveals that they do not find enough motivations within themselves to engage in activities that seek common, rather than private, interests; and forcing them from the outside would make no sense if the goal is to promote their own independent

¹ Dagger's view of citizenship as a public vocation, Beauregard & Bounds' urban citizenship, and Young's notion of differentiated solidarity among anonymous citizens were designed to meet the challenges posed on democracy by modern societies. These new conceptions point to the conclusion that we must «reform and redirect our cities» (Dagger 2000: 40) to make a more active citizenship possible. They also emphasize the democratic possibilities of public spaces: it is there that everyday life happens, and people debate their shared concerns (Beauregard & Bounds 2000: 248-249; there, strangers can meet and recognize each other, and even get a sense that they have common issues and interests. All of this would be impossible if the city did not have them (Young 2000: 213-214).

initiative. Even if a city provides public spaces, the interactions among citizens that they make possible can be superficial and meaningless from a political point of view.² So, again, ¿how could active citizenship be motivated through interactions in public spaces, if no internal (moral) or external (legal and coercive) incentives seem to do the work?

Cultural interactions may hold a key to this puzzle. For besides morality, instrumental calculation, and the law, *cultural norms* also shape individuals' behavior. If this cultural normativity — as I will argue— is an autonomous source of motivation for citizen's cooperative behavior, then citizens could inspire each other to become active citizens and behave in the common interest, given an adequate context.

I suggest looking at cultural regulation in search for an answer to the active citizenship puzzle inspired by Antanas Mockus' successful experience as a mayor of Bogotá, the capital of Colombia. In what follows I present some of the (considerably *huge*) problems that Bogotá suffered at the outset of the Mockus administration, and the theory and practical strategy devised to tackle them. Along the way, I make some theoretical remarks on the autonomy of cultural regulation, and on the light that this experience sheds on the active citizenship puzzle.

² Even if we accept that public spaces are a necessary condition for a strong democracy, they are not a sufficient condition for one. As Sennett says (2003: 386), making the experience of public space stimulating for citizens has become a challenge: it is normal for people to go through them and remain untouched. And in the political aspect, even if manifestations of social movements, acts of public deliberation and mutual recognition of citizens take place in them, it may also happen in other places, or not happen at all (Cunningham forthcoming). Moreover, public spaces can even be used for anti-democratic purposes (Beauregard & Bounds 2000: 248). So, although the public realm has a democratic potential, other factors are necessary for it to be actualized.

{2} The Context: Bogotá in the Early 90's³

Life in Bogotá during the 1990's took place in a constant background of risk, chaos and aggressiveness. Many causes can be adduced for this. Some of the fundamental ones are: decades of clientelist, inefficient administration that consistently lacked clear plans and direction; a national context of violent political and drug-related conflict that flooded the city with fear of terrorist bomb attacks and street violence; and the urban landscape shaped by traditional Latin American social inequalities.

The mediocre administration and the concentration of income generated a transportation infrastructure oriented toward the private car owner, and a poorly monitored and regulated public transportation system that provided chaotic services while serving, rather than public, private interests (i.e. the owners'). If corruption in transit authorities was added to this panorama, the unavoidable outcome was a high rate of risk in traffic-related interactions.

Other consequences of the negative decades of management of the city were a grave deterioration of public spaces, like parks and sidewalks, and the abandonment and decline of the historical and cultural center of the city, which became a center of vice and delinquency. More than places for encounter between strangers, public and historical places were sites avoided for the danger that interactions between strangers represented. This also applied to most parks and main streets. The deteriorated state of the public realm corresponded with a deteriorated state of the interactions between citizens.

³ This section of the paper is based on Martin & Ceballos (2004) and personal experiences of life in Bogotá during these years.

One clear sign of the corrosion of Bogotá's social fabric during the first half of the nineties was the *homicide rate*, which climbed to a historical peak of 80 murders per 100.000 inhabitants in 1993. The average between 1991 and 1994 was an equally horrifying 67,2 murders per 100,000 inhabitants (López 2008).⁴ The high rate of *traffic-related fatalities*, which in 1995 was 1,387 [748 of them pedestrians], or 25 casualties per 100,000 inhabitants (Martin & Ceballos 2004: 117) was a sign of the danger that interactions between citizens in public spaces represented for citizens themselves.⁵

Quite roughly speaking, that was the social landscape of the city by the time Antanas Mockus entered the mayor's office. One of the main reasons he was elected was that people considered him an honest person: he was an academic —a philosopher and a mathematician— with no political background other than having been the director of the National University of Colombia. He was also famous for his use of unconventional methods to cause extreme results, like the time when he mooned at an auditorium full of university students who were not paying attention to what he was saying —an incident that caused his dismissal from the National University's director position, but made him known at a national level, which eventually allowed him to run for mayor.

The policies enacted by his administration were guided by theories about democracy, citizen participation and the motivational sources of social behavior developed by Mockus himself and his team. In what follows I will summarize those theories and mention some of the ways in which they were put in practice in Bogotá.

⁴ For the sake of comparison, Toronto's average homicide rate during the same period (1991-1994) was *three* murders per 100,000 inhabitants, and its peak was in 1991, when the number reached 3,9 (CGC 2003). The rate in Toronto during 2005, the 'year of the gun,' was two murders per 100,000 inhabitants.

⁵ Again, comparison may result useful. In 1995 there were 22 traffic-related fatalities in Toronto, which amounts approximately to 0,9 casualties per 100,000 inhabitants.

{3} Mockus' Analysis: the Problem, the Strategy, and the Policies

(3.1) The Problem: A Divorce Between Culture and Law

Motivations for cooperation between citizens are usually thought to come from one of two normative sources: *the law*, with its explicit set of codes and rules, directed at regulating behavior for the sake of the common interest, with the institutions and civil authorities organized to enforce it; and *morality*, the deep convictions and emotions that individuals hold about 'the good,' 'the right thing to do' for each situation, and the obligations they have towards each other. These two systems of motivation draw a line between approved and rejected behavior in each social context; they also determine systems of incentives that motivate individuals to perform acceptable activities and refrain from performing unacceptable ones: the law rewards the individuals who abide by it and punish those who do not through institutions such as the police or the judiciary system; an individual's moral intuitions provide meaning and satisfaction to the lives of those who act in accordance with them, and generate guilt and a sense of lack of direction to those who do not. In that way, morality and the law endow an individual with rules that lead her toward pro-social activities, even in cases where selfish instrumental behavior could provide her with more profits, utilities or satisfaction.

But ¿what happens in contexts where individuals systematically choose to act against their morality and against the law? (This is a common case among convicted criminals: if asked, they seem to share all or most of the core moral beliefs with the rest of the population, and those beliefs are usually in line with the law —still, they engage in anti-legal and anti-moral behavior [Heath 2008: 601-602].) ¿What could explain the systematic inefficacy of both regulatory systems in these cases?

This was the theoretical problem that Mockus faced when looking at citizen's attitudes toward one another in Bogotá: a society with a modern democratic constitution, filled with people whose moral

sense (often shaped by a strong Catholic tradition) fundamentally agreed with the law; a society in which, nevertheless, people were ready to make exceptions to their moral intuitions. Mockus found an explanation for this disharmonious behavior in the idea that a third kind of regulatory system —rather than no regulation at all— generated a widespread deviation from morally and legally accepted behavior: it was a matter of *culture*. According to his analysis, in Colombian society many illegal or immoral activities were considered culturally valid, and many legal or moral activities were considered culturally illegitimate.

The lack of consistency between cultural regulation of behavior and moral and legal regulations of behavior is expressed in Colombia as flourishing of violence, delinquency and corruption; as illegitimacy of institutions, as weakness of the power of many cultural traditions and as crisis or weakness of individual morality (Mockus 2001: 9 [all translations from Spanish texts are mine]).

¿Why citizens who would agree that human life deserves utmost respect, were willing to carry weapons in public spaces and use them against strangers as soon as they felt threatened? ¿Why were they willing to drive recklessly and aggressively, oftentimes drunk, thus endangering the lives of strangers in the street, of loved ones sitting in the car, and their own? It is possible for individuals to engage in activities that oppose the morality that they themselves otherwise endorse because the cultural regulation of such situations considers such behavior as valid (e.g. if someone offends you, you should not let him get away with it, unless you want to be considered a coward; you have a right to use weapons to defend yourself and your honor from whomever endangers you; there is risk in drunk driving, but you can handle it, and you don't want to be considered a party-pooper). In cases where there is a divorce between different regulatory systems, the stronger one wins. And in aspects like security and transit behavior in Bogotá, culture seemed to lead the parade.

(3.2) ¿Is Culture Really Autonomous? —A Theoretical Discussion

Mockus' diagnostic of the problem depends on the, probably suspicious, supposition that culture holds autonomy from morality and law. This is worth assessing. ¿Is culture an autonomous regulatory system of behavior, as Mockus holds? ¿Or is it reducible to morality and law? ¿Should it be considered the sum of the two?

The first clue that points to the autonomy of culture is the explanatory value of this claim: it provides an explanation as to why people within the same community would systematically act against their own moral intuitions and break the law: culture, in some sense, seems to be that other motivational system consistently driving them away from moral and lawful behavior.

But an alternative explanation is available, namely that people are simply acting selfishly, according to instrumental rationality. Thus, individuals carry guns in public spaces because of their interest to defend themselves in case of a threat, and they drive in a way that optimizes their own time and energy, even if that is interpreted as rude or generates (an apparently manageable) risk for other individuals and for oneself. Even drunk driving could be interpreted as a case of mere instrumental (mis)calculation: individuals want to have both the fun of drinking and the convenience of driving, and they mistakenly consider the risk to be too small to stop them from having both; so they do both.

Here are some independent reasons for conceptually distinguishing cultural normativity from moral and legal normativities (amplified from the notes in Mockus 1994: 50-55): culture differs from law and morality in its [I] form of transmission, [II] scope of application and [III] system of incentives.

[I] Law is often established and transmitted through written documents produced by a political institution (e.g. a state, a city government, a scientific society). Moral principles exist in an implicit form in each individual, although they can acquire an explicit, verbal form when the individual is questioned or tries to communicate moral matters to others for purposes of education or discussion. Although cultural rules are also implicit (i.e. their existence does not depend mainly upon being

textually written somewhere), they exist in as much as they shape the activities and habits of a group of individuals; since they do not exist principally in a written form, they differ from legal regulations; and they would not be called cultural if only one individual shaped her behavior through them, and in this aspect they differ from moral regulations.

[II] Legal norms apply within a politically demarcated territory. The application of cultural norms, on the other hand, depends on various social contexts, so it need not extend to all inhabitants of a political community; they apply everywhere the relevant social contexts are present, inside and outside of the political unit (e.g. the cultural rules governing the behavior of people in a rock concert do not apply to all inhabitants of a city, but similar cultural rules apply to those who participate in rock concerts in many cities around the world). The morality of an individual, however, applies anywhere she goes, regardless of political or cultural transformations in the scenario.

By going from one national territory to the other, the law to which we should submit changes.

In a similar fashion, by going from one socio-cultural context to another (even within the same nation), we usually know that the limits of what is culturally acceptable can change. However, morality [...] accompanies the individual wherever he goes: in principle, he is demanded to have integrity in the moral dimension, i.e. to try to reach coherence among his behaviors, to be consistent above the diversity of temporal and spatial circumstances. Currently, the right to double nationality is acknowledged, and biculturalism is a defensible option. But this does not imply that a double morality is accepted (Mockus 1994: 51).

Thus the geographical applicability of moral, legal and cultural norms varies. Perhaps the reason is that the entity from which the legitimacy of the rules derives is different in each case. With respect to legal regulation, the legitimating entity is the political institution that issues the laws; with respect to culture, a culturally unified group legitimizes the norms; with respect to morality, the individual's own conscience is the source of legitimacy. This variation in legitimating entities can

explain why geographical applicability differs in each case, for it seems that whenever the legitimating entity is present, its respective regulation is applicable, and whenever it is absent, the corresponding norms become inapplicable.

[III] To further explore the relation between morality, culture and the law, it is also worth mentioning that each regulatory system employs different systems of incentives, i.e. systems of sanctions and gratifications.

When an individual breaks the law (in an ideal case), she receives a punishment that has been explicitly established in legal documents (time in jail, fines, hours of community work, etc.); when an agent performs culturally unacceptable activities, she faces shameful rejection and discrimination from the cultural community whose laws she has violated; when the agent acts against morality, feelings of culpability or inner tension appear.

Rewards vary accordingly. The coherence between an individual's moral system and her activities generates feelings of meaningfulness and moral satisfaction in the agent. Agents whose acts are in harmony with cultural norms receive acceptance, attention and congratulation on the part of the cultural community, and develop a sense of belonging in relation to it. Legal rewards include economic rewards (e.g. tax cuts) and honorary titles or mentions.

This shows that the agents who administer the incentives are also different in each case: legal incentives are administered by people in a position of authority with respect to the individual who receives the incentive (the police, the judiciary, the scientific community, teachers, etc.); cultural incentives are administered within peers, or by people in as much as they are peers (e.g. fellow citizens, fellow rappers, fellow members of the indigenous community); and moral incentives are administered by the individual and to the individual herself.

The fact that the form of existence and transmission, the scope of application and the system of incentives are notoriously distinct for law, morality and culture indicates that they are three autonomous

systems of motivation. —Which is not to say that they act independently, or that no relation at all exists between them. As a matter of fact, one single issue may have both legal and moral aspects (like abortion or euthanasia), or even all three aspects (like the issues of violence and behavior toward strangers in public spaces that are the focus of our attention here). This interaction generates conflict or synergy between the systems. Moreover, there may be causal connections between them (e.g. the cultural context may generate some moral beliefs in an individual; or some moral principles can be reflected in particular laws).

After having stated the arguments for considering culture an autonomous system of motivation, let us return to Mockus and Bogotá. The problem is the divorce between culture, on the one hand, and law and morality on the other. ¿How can it be solved?

(3.3) The Strategy: *Cultura Ciudadana*

If the origin of the city's problem lies in its culture, the natural thing to do would be to try to modify culture itself. But ¿to modify it in which direction? Mockus has an ideal in mind, which is worth exploring because it functions as a guiding principle for the policies about to be described.

(3.3.1) The Ideal Society

According to Mockus, in the ideal democratic society the three regulatory systems of behavior are in a broad harmony. There must be room for some divergence if the society is to be pluralistic, for several cultures and moral positions must coexist within a single legal framework; but this divergence should not imply a cultural or moral acceptance of illegal activities. Therefore, in the ideal democratic society the set of culturally valid activities is a subset of what is legally valid, and the set of morally valid activities is a subset of what is culturally valid; morality is thus stricter than culture; and culture, stricter than the law.

(3.3.2) Change Culture through Intensifying Interaction

¿What should be done in order to make culture in Bogotá come to a closer agreement with law and morality? The legal way would be to intensify enforcement by hiring more cops and improving their performance, strengthening public institutions, making punishments heavier and the penal system harder to escape for criminals. The moral way would be developing moral education in order to make individuals more effectively self-regulatory, by devoting more and better school classes to topics like democracy, empathy and cooperation, and making media campaigns on moral issues. The cultural way is also available: creating a context in which citizens regulate their fellow citizens' behaviors toward the law, i.e. giving signs of approval to legal actions and signs of rejection to illegal actions.

The cultural strategy may have some advantages with respect to the others. On the one hand, external punishments and rewards would not change culture (i.e. it would not make legal activities appear as culturally valid, but merely as forbidden), but only restrain it; on the other hand, the divergent culture would be a permanent obstacle to the government's strategies of moral growth (the authorities asking people to do the right thing, the peers rewarding the ones who do the wrong thing) and greatly diminish its efficacy. Besides —and surely most importantly—, if the generation of an active citizenship is the final goal, then the best way to motivate cooperation would be that citizens actively regulate one another, rather than that they passively receive legal reprimands and moral exhortations.

However, ¿how could citizens go from endorsing illegal behavior to promoting legal activities? ¿How could, in other words, the currently inexistent desired interactions come to be?

—Or maybe they do exist, but they are too superficial. According to Mockus, violence can be understood as an interaction in which citizens manifest their conflicting interests to each other and stop communicating before stages of comprehension of the other's views or self-criticism arise. So the

relevant kind of civic interactions —viz. manifestations of differences among citizens— exist, only that they are too superficial to arrive at the goal —viz. the recognition of a common project or struggle—. If interaction can be intensified in a way that takes communication to more fruitful stages while avoiding violence, then the violence-engendering culture might be transformed into one that solves conflicts of interests in a peaceful way. Rather than boosting legal enforcement or providing lessons on morality, the proper activity of the government to transform culture should be generating contexts in which the right kinds of interactions can be intensified in the right way.

Mockus (1999: 9-10) distinguishes three types of citizen interaction: communicative action, strategic interaction and expressive interaction. Citizens engage in (Habermasian) communicative action when they talk to each other honestly, offering reasons for their claims and genuinely listening to the other's arguments and criticisms, generating responses to them, reevaluating and sincerely trying to come to an agreement. Strategic interaction occurs when a citizen's particular interests conflict with those of another citizen, and they must face each other to defend for their own interests. Expressive interaction occurs when citizens manifest their emotions of pain, anger and resentment, or satisfaction, peace and thankfulness toward other citizens through symbolic actions.⁶

When set in the wrong context, a clash between citizens whose interests are in conflict can easily become a violent confrontation. However, if such strategic interaction is properly situated, it may continue and give rise to deeper levels of communication.

⁶ Sennett (2003: 384) criticizes Habermas and Arendt's conception of public interactions because they privilege rational, self-interest-free communication among strangers over emotional communication among intimates. Mockus (2001: 10-12) makes similar criticisms of Habermas, but tries to have it both ways: the relevant conception of interaction should include both the dispassionate rational dialogue, the defense of one's private interests, and the expression of one's emotions.

If strategic interaction is intensified, there are more opportunities for differences of interest or perspective to be expressed, for conflicts to appear on time. Both things can lead to an early reference to rights, and to the weaving of a *continuum* between moral argumentation (private or circumscribed to a particular 'us'), the other's argumentation (a struggle for cultural legitimacy) and legal argumentation (a struggle to be right in front of the law) (Mockus 2001: 12).

Depending on each case, in order to generate contexts in which intensified interaction between citizens can occur, the political authorities would perform all or some of the following functions: (1) amplifying citizens' capabilities of communication and expression; (2) clearly and intensely expressing the meaning and reasons that support the law, through symbols or argumentative speech, and inviting citizens to do the same with each other; (3) enforcing security during the interaction, so that citizens can feel free to express their opinions and emotions.

But ¿is this not contradictory? For functions (2) and (3) seem to be precisely what the authorities are *not* supposed to do, namely teaching morality and boosting law enforcement. There is no contradiction because functions (2) and (3) are not proposed as direct means for cultural transformation, but means to generate proper contexts for interaction intensification. In other words, moral communication and legal enforcement are not expected to change culture, but to set the stage in which citizens' interactions transform it.

It comes to light now that the main characters of intensified interaction are *not* the authorities. They do play a role, as communicators or as protectors of the communicative environment; but the main characters of the interaction are the citizens themselves: they are the ones who express their interests, their emotions and their reasons to each other; the ones who are led to reevaluate their position. In a word, the authorities make the assumed culture the subject of awareness and debate, and citizens themselves are in charge of assessing it, contrasting it with law and morality, and inviting each other to modify it.

The goal of interaction intensification programs is to take citizens to formulate precisely that mutual invitation, i.e. to set them in a context in which they become agents of «interpersonal regulation», thus mutually motivating each other to act in accordance with the law.

(3.3.3) Putting Interaction Intensification into Practice

Mockus' central program was called '*cultura ciudadana* [*citizen culture*, or *civic culture*]' . The program's goal was transforming the divergent aspects of urban culture, into a *cultura ciudadana*, which produces actions that «generate a sense of belonging, facilitate civic coexistence and lead to respect for common patrimony and to recognition of civic rights and duties» (Mockus 1995: 3).

The goal of Mockus' team with the *cultura ciudadana* program was to amplify the sense of citizenship in Bogotá from merely living in the city to having a common project and being an active part of its realization. Retrospectively, Mockus said in an interview:

We defined *cultura ciudadana* as the cultural regulation of citizens' behaviors, and although self-control was sometimes emphasized, the main issue was the mutual support to achieve consistency. To achieve this, our plans were: increasing voluntary rule-following, increasing people's capacity to kindly influence each other, to kindly correct each other in order to abide by the rules, [...] and, finally, increasing the capacity of expression and communication. Violence is in part a communication breakdown: creating good communication thus helps in reducing violence. But we also tried to generate the idea that order is important in the city [...], that order is a co-responsibility that belongs to me and you, that if we help each other, if you correct me kindly and on time, and if I correct you kindly and on time, then the city evolves in the right path (Negrón 2004).

(3.4) Some Policies

In order to see how *cultura ciudadana* and interaction intensification were put in practice, I will now mention four campaigns enacted by the Mockus administration, two related to violence reduction, and the others directed at improving traffic behavior.

(3.4.1) The Dissolution of Violence₁: The Carrot Culture

Epidemiological studies systematized by the Mockus administration in 1995 revealed that homicides and traffic fatalities in Bogotá were strongly related to alcohol consumption, and usually occurred during the weekend late at night (Mockus 1999: 16). The administration thus set off to restructure the cultural context of alcohol to reverse its relation to violent deaths.

In 1995 in Bogotá, a person who did not drink alcohol at parties was usually mocked at by being called ‘*zanahorio* [*carrot*],’ because of the similarity of this word to the sound of ‘*sano* [*healthy*].’ This negative cultural valuation of abstention often led citizens to the other extreme, which was culturally valued. The Mockus administration attempted to change the negative connotation of the word ‘*zanahorio*’ through a program of ‘*cultura zanahoria* [*carrot culture*].’ The program included closing alcohol-expending establishments by 1am, popularizing ‘carrot cocktails’ (non-alcohol beverages), and using the media to vindicate the notion of healthy partying [“*rumba sana*”] and communicate the risks of drunk driving.

Carrot measures were first experimented in 1995 during the December holidays, which paradoxically celebrate peace and present the highest rates of violence. In this report from *El Tiempo*, the biggest national newspaper, the effects of the first «Carrot Christmas» are illustrated:

Two weeks ago, three friends of mine left a liquor store at 3am, drunk. A few minutes later, they met in the street another group of people in a similar state; they felt that one of them confronted them with his eyes. They took their knives out of their pockets, as best as they could, to settle

things like ‘machos’ do. Among insults, they confronted each other, and soon two people were lying dead in the middle of the street while another suffered serious wounds in one lung [...].

This scenario —which, according to the Metropolitan Police, is quite common during the weekends— took a positive shift last weekend thanks to the application of the semi-dry law introduced by mayor Antanas Mockus as a part of the Carrot Christmas program. According to official numbers, a comparison between [the previous weekend] and last weekend reveals that the amount of crimes fell by 44 percent. Homicides in traffic accidents also dropped by 75 percent. Personal injuries fell by 23 percent (*El Tiempo* 1995b).

These measures were mainly enacted by the police (who arrested those caught drinking or drunk-driving, and revoked the licenses of establishments that remained open after 1am), but they were only a part of a broader cultural program, whose goal was to turn the concept of ‘carrot’ from a paradigm of the un-cool to a symbol of a civic, considerate and pleasant life. Other aspects of the program included encouraging citizens through the mass media to find new ways to have fun in the holidays without alcohol and encouraging inter-regulation among citizens.

This is a notorious example of the latter: the Carrot Christmas program declared that anyone caught drinking after 1am or drunk-driving would be detained for 24 hours, *and* that any companion of the offender who did not do anything to discourage her illegal behavior would also be punished (*El Tiempo* 1995c). This is a notorious illustration of how the public authorities can set up a context that promotes intensified interactions: people willing to drink, or drunk-drive, would interact with friends whose individual interests of avoiding punishment opposes that idea. This opposition of interests provides a fertile occasion for discussions about the justifications of the law, the role of alcohol in culture, and moral issues of the responsibility implied in driving. This illustrates how these public programs were not mainly designed to stop citizens from drinking, but rather to generate contexts in which positive interactions in relation to the role of alcohol in civic culture were intensified.

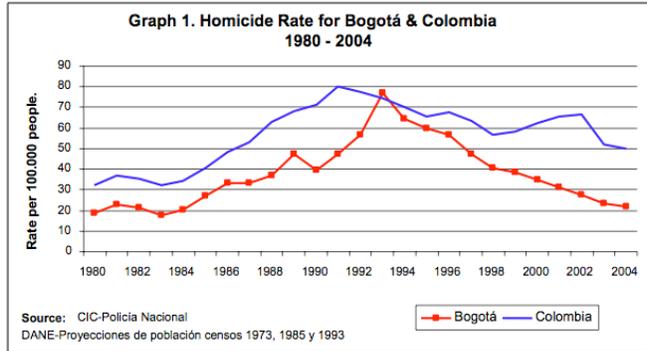
The program was a success: Violence in the key dates of the 1995 holiday season was almost cut to half with respect to 1994.

(3.4.2) The Dissolution of Violence₂: «Let Weapons Rest in Peace»

Carrot Christmas came back in 1996, this time to tackle another factor in the violence context in Bogotá. Until the proclamation of the Decree 757, “In which the Carrot Christmas season is declared,” it was legal for citizens to carry weapons in public spaces (with a permission issued by the police) as a means of self-defense, and this behavior was considered normal, due to the perceived danger that strangers represented. Through a mention of a law that prohibited carrying weapons in *public spectacles*, Mockus managed to make it illegal to carry weapons in public spaces, by «declaring everything that happens in the streets, parks and establishments open to the public a public spectacle [...]» (Decree 757 of 1996). The idea that what happens in public spaces is a public spectacle was widely diffused. The police confiscated all weapons, with and without legal permit. Homicide rates fell by 27% with respect to the 1995 holiday season, which had already presented a considerable improvement in relation to 1994 (Martin & Ceballos 2004: 537-538).

Again, this program may seem a matter of pure legal enforcement (it was the police who confiscated the guns, and they were the main agents), but this is not quite the whole story. The disarmament program’s slogan was *Let guns rest in peace this Christmas*, and its most notorious component was a that of voluntary disarmament. During specific dates, citizens were allowed to go to several parishes in the city and exchange their (legally or illegally owned) weapon for bonuses to get Christmas gifts. The justifications behind the campaign (namely that the possession of a gun is statistically more risky than facing the public space unarmed), and the campaign itself, were widely transmitted through the media. Citizens gave up 2,538 weapons over to the priests in the parishes.

Although many people—including the national Army general— protested against the measure,



some time after the holidays Mockus managed to permanently prohibit carrying weapons in public spaces, through his claim that what happens in public spaces is a public spectacle. During the month that followed

the prohibition, homicide rates dropped by 30%, and the next month by 23,3% again (Mockus 1999: 18). A cultural transformation was that citizens changed from considering carrying weapons a legitimate self-defense strategy, to firmly supporting the disarmament policy: in 1993, 90% of the population was against disarmament; in 1997, when the policy was issued, 70% of the Bogotá citizens agreed with it (Martin & Ceballos 2004: 540). During Mockus' first administration, the annual homicide rate fell from 72 per 100,000 inhabitants (1994) to 40 per 100,000 inhabitants (1998). The rate keeps falling since then (as shown in the graphic taken from Llorente & Rivas 2005).

(3.4.3) Reshaping Traffic₁: Thumbs Up & Thumbs Down

As scholars like Sennett (2003: 386) occasionally point out, cars constitute a difficult puzzle for the promotion of cooperative behavior. Their solid and opaque shell, their comparatively great speed and the danger of proximity to them drastically minimize eye contact, verbal exchange and physical interaction—if all goes well, at least— between the driver and everyone else outside of the car (authorities, pedestrians, fellow drivers). This reduction of interaction implies a minimization of effective regulation, both cultural and legal, which entails great opportunities for anti-social behavior in traffic. ¿How could interaction be intensified in this puzzling context?

The Mockus administration tackled this problem with “*tarjetas ciudadanas*” or “*civic cards*”: cardboard cards with a ‘thumbs up’ image printed on one side, and a ‘thumbs down’ image on the

other. Citizens were given the card and asked to show the thumbs up to polite drivers, and the thumbs down to uncivil drivers.

The ‘thumbs down’ symbol had a red background, which evoked the red cards that soccer referees show to players when the latter seriously break the rules of the game and are thus forced to leave. In Bogotá, ‘showing the red card’ is a common expression to talk about someone kicking someone else out (of a relationship, of a household, of a job...); this may be the origin of the idea of the civic cards. The ‘thumbs up’ side incorporates another couple of symbols: one



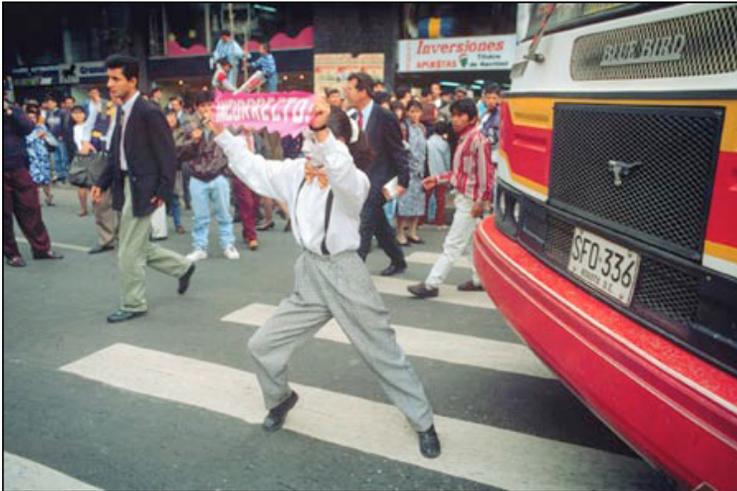
of them is a heart; the other is the expression «Bogotá Coqueta». In Bogotá Spanish, the adjective ‘coqueto’ has the double meaning ‘flirtatious’ and ‘beautiful;’ the card took advantage of the ambiguity of the word to reinforce the sense of belonging of people to their city: when a citizen was rewarded with the thumbs up, not only his good behavior was recognized and reinforced; it also had the symbolic meaning that the city became prettier through her action and that the city herself was (flirtatiously) approving the behavior.

From 1995 to 1996 1,6 million civic cards were distributed among both drivers and pedestrian. According to a December 1995 survey, 65% of the population knew about the program, and 23% had a card. 37% from the latter group showed the card to both civil and uncivil drivers, and 38% decorated their windshield with it (*El Tiempo* 1995a). The goal of these cards was to boost citizens’ powers of communication and interaction, and to replace rude verbal interactions (the previously common kind of interaction) with symbolic and thought-provoking gestures, both positive and negative. Civic cards became a popular tool of citizens’ interaction both in mass media and small-scale discussion; they were also used in diverse political contexts like marches and debates (Martin & Ceballos 2004: 512-513).

(3.4.4) Reshaping Traffic: Mimes in Crossroads

Before 1995 streets in Bogotá had no crosswalk signs. Lack of proper signalization generated chaotic behavior from all actors: pedestrians tried to cross the streets anywhere and anyway they could, and drivers did not stop to let pedestrians cross anywhere, since there was no official place to do it.

The administration painted crosswalks, or *zebras*, in main streets, and devised a plan to improve drivers' behavior in relation to pedestrians and to each other, particularly in the presence of zebras. Four



hundred street mimes were hired and trained to go to main crossroads of the city and mock at drivers who broke the civic rules of interaction in traffic (and any other citizen breaking the legal rules of interaction in public spaces). Mimes generated laughter in spectators, who

then felt free to actively express their repudiation toward the driver's illegal behavior. The mime then asked the driver to correct the action (e.g. to move the car away from the zebra). If she did not reply, a police officer would appear and give her a ticket, sometimes to the applause of the crowd. (In the image [from the *El Tiempo* archive], a mime lifts an 'incorrect' sign while a bus driver stands on a zebra stopping pedestrians from properly crossing the street.) Civic mimes became public figures thanks to extensive media coverage, resulting from the strategy's novelty.

Mimes neutralized verbal insult using more playful, less offensive, means that invited the others to do the same. While pointing at the legal context and the cultural acceptance of illegal behavior, mimes provoked shame in the driver. They «used shame to educate, until citizens themselves became the judges of offenders» (Mockus 1999: 14-15). They created a context in which the cultural validity

of illegal behavior was put into question by citizens themselves, who found an occasion to express their rejection.

The rate of annual traffic related fatalities in Bogotá fell from 1,387 (1995) to 914 (1998). This indicator keeps decreasing since Mockus' administration (Martin & Ceballos 2004: 116).

(3.5) The Results

The spectacular declines in homicide rates (from 72 per 100,000 inhabitants in 1994 to 18,8 in 2006) and traffic-related fatality rates (from 25 per 100,000 inhabitants in 1994 to 10 in 2003) are considered the clearest indicators of the success of *cultura ciudadana* programs, since they started in Mockus' administration. It is probably impossible to determine to what extent Bogotá's transformation was caused specifically by the intensification of interactions between citizens, since many other complex variables played a role in the political equation of security and civic behavior in Bogotá (e.g. the levels of efficiency and corruption of public institutions, and the impact of the wars against drug cartels and against illegal armed groups on the city). Moreover, the continuity of the radical transformation would not have been possible without a succession of consistent and efficient administrations (Mockus was followed by Enrique Peñalosa—who gave continuity to some of the former's civic policies and focused his efforts on the improvement of public space—, and then by Mockus himself in his second term).

However, as we have seen, Mockus' policies were centered around the idea of generating contexts in which culture could be modified by intensified interactions among citizens. All of the other measures (enforcement and communication, infrastructure, etc.) were directed at the generation of such contexts. So, to the extent to which the transformation was due to administrative policies, the focal cause of the transformation seems to be the intensification of interactions between citizens, or in

other words, the fact that citizens adopted a more active attitude toward their mutual regulation and communication in the public realm.

{4} Theoretical Remarks

It is a proper time for a brief summary. After presenting the active citizenship puzzle (i.e. ¿how is it possible to promote active citizenship —necessary for democracy to function properly—through interactions in public spaces, if neither external [legal] nor internal [moral] motivations seem to be adequate?) and exposing the context of Bogotá in the first half of the 1990's, we set out to explore Antanas Mockus' analysis of Bogotá's problems, his theory behind it and the strategy his administration used to tackle them from 1995 to 1998. The concepts of '*cultura ciudadana*' and 'interaction intensification' were introduced, and they were shown at work through four examples relative to violence reduction and traffic behavior modification.

This exploration has led to the thesis that the most efficient way to promote active citizenship in urban public spaces —and thus to enact democracy in an urban context— is to generate public contexts in which interactions among citizens are intensified to the point that deep communication on political issues, and criticism of culturally approved but politically harmful behavior can emerge. This strategy appeals to cultural regulation, i.e. the capacity that citizens have to influence each other's actions through their approval or refusal of their fellow citizens' behavior. The reasons for preferring this cultural approach to moral or legal ways of motivating active citizenship have been already stated: if the goal is active citizenship, the citizens should be the main actors, not the authorities. Citizens can become active and motivate others to become active through cultural regulations, and the authorities can boost this process by creating a contexts in which interactions can

be intensified in the right way. Strategies for generating such interaction-intensifying contexts may include all or some of the following actions:

- Creating or improving public spaces.
- Amplifying citizens' communication capabilities.
- Communicating (through massive media and using culturally relevant symbols) the justifications of the norms, the consequences of illegal behavior, the advantages of legal actions for the city, &c.
- Protecting the flow of communication through legal enforcement, if necessary.

The key to this approach is the idea that citizens are not actually entirely passive, that interactions between them in public spaces, superficial though they may be, are the exercise of regulatory power among equals, i.e. the exercise of cultural regulation. The problem is thus no longer qualitative (¿how can we turn passive citizens into active citizens?), but *quantitative*: ¿how do we increase the deepness of interactions so that it reaches democratically meaningful levels?

This translation of the problem from qualitative to quantitative terms allows for the solution to be found in the notion of intensification. The key to generating civic activity is to provide citizens with communicative tools (e.g. symbols like the civic cards) or with situations where firm but friendly corrections are possible (e.g. laughter and support to the mime in a crossroad as a correction to an uncivil driver), to put citizens in situations of dialogical confrontation on legal and moral issues (e.g. giving the co-pilot incentives to dissuade the driver to drunk-drive, or inviting them to invent carrot ways to have fun safely), to use the media to generate awareness of the common issues, responsibilities and rights implied in sharing a city (e.g. by explaining the risk that carrying weapons imply and) employing culturally available symbols to support the law (e.g. using Christmas terminology and the religious culture to promote voluntary disarmament).

The success of policies like these depend greatly on the creative and communicative capacities of an administration, and on the quality of the legal enforcement. However, even though the administration must use its tools for communication and enforcement, they are not the most important part of the policies. Interaction between citizens is the key component, since such interaction *is active citizenship* —it is participation of citizens in projects directed at the common interest. In everyday public space interactions, cultural regulation becomes concrete. If this regulation is aimed in the right direction, then actions of cultural inter-regulation among citizens are political activities proper of a self-regulating urban community that has common issues and common goals, and that decides to actively engage them. Bogotá's experience illustrates how intensifying interactions by creating contexts that incite communication is an effective way to generate active citizenship and improve democracy in an urban setting.

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