

Bogotá's Ciclovía: an emblematic model of a "car-free Sunday"

Introduction



On Sundays and public holidays, the city of Bogotá bans motorized traffic on 127 kilometers of roads, and hands them over to active modes. This continuous network throughout the city, supervised by stewards, thus becomes a vast and secure space reclaimed by inhabitants to walk, cycle, skateboard or rollerblade. This event originally emerged out of a citizens' protest that united almost 5000 pro-bicycle activists in December 1974. It is now organized and managed by the city, more specifically since 1995 by its Department of Leisure and Sports (*Instituto Distrital de Recreación y Deporte, IDRD*). Ciclovía has become an unmissable weekly event and is still hugely popular: almost a quarter of the city's population takes part every week.

Since the 2000s, many cities have taken inspiration and tried to replicate its model, especially since the Covid-19 pandemic (New York, Vancouver, Milan...).

Methodology: The description and analysis of this initiative is based on data, research articles and documents in English and Spanish available online, as well as interviews with the activist who instigated the movement, Jaime Ortiz Mariño, and with those currently responsible for organizing Ciclovía within the Bogotá City Hall - Monica Duran, Luis Martinez and Daniella Hernandez - in June 2021.

To learn more about the pro-bike movement in Bogotá, see the New Voices section (*Mobilithèse*) on forumviesmobiles.org

« [Politique de la convivialité : la mobilité et le droit à la ville dans le militantisme cycliste à Bogotá](#) » [[Politics of conviviality: mobility and the right to the city in cycling activism in Bogotá](#)], by Paola Castañeda (2017)

Bogotá, a city marked by social inequalities

Geography and demography

- Area: 1775 km² (over 10 times that of Paris)
- Altitude: 2600 m, on a high plateau of the Eastern Cordillera of the Northern Andes mountain range
- Number of inhabitants (2020): 7,743,955 (over 3.5 times the population of Paris)
- Population density (2020): 4,907.45 inhabitants/km² (as dense as Mulhouse)

Economy

- The capital, the largest city in the country and the economic and industrial center
- Urbanization in the 1950s and 1970s: rural exodus in the context of violence linked to the conflict between guerrillas and paramilitary groups in rural areas
- Very high inequalities (Gini Index: 0.504 (2013)) between rich districts in the North and poor districts in the South
- Six administrative sectors for pricing home-related public services (water, energy, waste...), to which the inhabitants often refer in the same way as socio-economic classes: from *estrato 1*, the lowest price for the poorest districts that represent 39.9% of the city's population, to *estrato 6*, the highest taxation rate for the richest districts that represent 2.1% of the city's population.
- Context of economic recession throughout the country, sparking a broad social movement against neoliberal policies in April 2021 after a commodity tax reform was announced

Governance

- Current Mayor: Claudia Lopès (Alianza Verde, social democratic green party, since 2019)
- City council composition: majority Alianza Verde/Green Alliance party, allied to the left-wing Polo Democrático Alternativo/Alternative Democratic Pole party
- Distrito Capital created in 1954 and the city was divided into 20 districts, each represented in the city council from 1991
- Decentralization of urban planning powers to the local level enshrined in the 1991 Constitution

Mobility

- Sistema Integrado de Transporte Público (SITP):
 - Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) TransMilenio since 2000: championed as a model system (112 kilometers, 2.2 million passengers per day), it is now bankrupt and criticized by the public for being expensive and for overcrowding
 - Conventional bus network complementing the Transmilenio lines using shared lanes with cars
- Car Ownership Rate: 30% (equivalent to that of Paris, 70% in Ile-de-France)

Bicycle Policies

- Modal share of bikes: 5%
- Bike plan including 5 strategic points until 2039:
 1. Improving safety
 2. Designing communication and citizen awareness strategies to reduce accidents
 3. Improving the travel experience: extending and interconnecting the network of lanes, increasing the number of parking spaces, striving to make it accessible to all and especially women, strengthening economic activities around cycling...
- Permanent facilities: 559 kilometers of cycle paths (*ciclorutas*, the largest network of cycle paths in Latin America), plus 80 kilometers of sanitary paths that have since been made permanent; goal of adding 300 kilometers of paths by 2039; goal of adding 50,000 bike parking spaces to the existing 18,000 by 2039
- Temporary events: creating other types of Ciclovía events, such as the nocturnal Ciclovía that takes place once a month, the Bicycle Week, the car-free day...
- Training in bike-related jobs: creation of the bicycle center

The history of Ciclovía: an activist project that gradually became institutionalized

Ciclovía, which is almost 50 years old, has been shaped by three major phases:

1. Activist origins (1974-1976): the bicycle as a symbol of popular resistance to car domination

Ciclovía began with a large demonstration organized on December 14, 1974, by an architecture student (Jaime Ortiz Mariño) and his friends, under the banner of their Pro Cicla association. This "Great Pedal Demonstration" (*La Gran Manifestacion del Pedal*) gathered 5,000 people on foot or bike, who blocked car traffic on two main roads in the city from 9 a.m. to noon¹.

The organizers and demonstrators wanted to protest the growing number of cars and their harmful effects (air pollution, lack of green spaces, etc.), as well as to promote the use of bicycles as a real mode of travel - not just as a leisure activity or sport². It was Mariño's experience at an American university in Cleveland between 1966 and 1970 that shaped this critical view of the city. Inspired by the demands of young people and counterculture communities of the time, he returned to Bogotá, determined to prevent his own city from following the same path as North American cities, overtaken by the automobile system³. The movement thereby used the bicycle as a "symbol of resistance"⁴ at the heart of an alternative environmental and social project for the city.



Photograph of the first event organized by Pro Cicla. Source: Jaime Ortiz Mariño

In 1975, a **second event** was organised by Pro Cicla. The organization structured itself more formally, favouring a bicycle policy, rather than an associative movement based on members and activists⁵. Mariño, who is now a consultant and the owner of a well-known bike shop in the city, subsequently worked successively for the city of Bogotá, the Colombian state and other cities around the world as an architect and expert in mobility policies⁶.

¹ Montero, S., "Worlding Bogotá's Ciclovía: From Urban Experiment to International 'Best Practice'", Latin American Perspectives, Vol. 44, No. 2, Urban Latin America: Part 2, Latin American Cities Planning: Dependencies and Best Practices, 2017.

² Brabant, F., "Ciclovía ou la fièvre du vélo à Bogota" [Ciclovía or the bicycle fever in Bogota], CNCD, September 17, 2017. <https://www.cncd.be/Ciclovía-ou-la-fievre-du-velo-a>

³ Montero, S., "Worlding Bogotá's Ciclovía: From Urban Experiment to International 'Best Practice'", Latin American Perspectives, Vol. 44, No. 2, Urban Latin America: Part 2, Latin American Cities Planning: Dependencies and Best Practices, 2017.

⁴ Interview with Jaime Ortiz Mariño, June 11, 2021.

⁵ Interview with Jaime Ortiz Mariño, June 11, 2021.

⁶ Montero, S., "Worlding Bogotá's Ciclovía: From Urban Experiment to International 'Best Practice'", Latin American Perspectives, Vol. 44, No. 2, Urban Latin America: Part 2, Latin American Cities Planning: Dependencies and Best Practices, 2017.

2. Early institutionalization (1976-1995): extending and officially implementing a weekly and recreational Ciclovía

In 1976, Jaime Ortiz Mariño was hired by the City Hall as an advisor to study the conditions for the sustainable implementation of Ciclovía⁷. As a result of this study, the mayor at that time, Luis Prieto Ocampo, made several decisions:

- Designate strategically-located roads for the temporary exclusive use of cyclists and pedestrians: Ciclovía was then composed of four lanes, forming a 20-kilometer-long network
- Institutionalize Ciclovía through decrees (Nos. 556 and 567)

In 1982, 5 years later, three important developments took place:

- Ciclovía became a weekly event, whereas until then it was an occasional one-off.
- A specific organizing committee was created within the transport department of the City Hall
- The network of dedicated lanes was extended by 54 kilometers

In the 1980s, Ciclovía attracted participants every weekend, but the lack of resources and political and administrative support weakened the event (degradation of equipment, reduction of paths...). Moreover, during this period, there were fewer concerns about oil supply and fewer criticisms of the automobile system and urban sprawl⁸.

3. "The mayors of public space" (1995-2006): new political ambitions strengthened the project's governance and funding

From 1994, under the mandates of mayors Antanas Mockus and Enrique Peñalosa, Ciclovía flourished owing to three major changes:

- A tenfold budget increase.
- Opening up to private financing, which by 1997 accounted for almost 25% of the total budget.⁹
- Strengthening the recreational aspect: Mayor Antanas Mockus wanted Ciclovía to become "the largest recreational park in the world" and thereby transferred its organization from the Department of Transport to that of Sports and Recreation. It was at this time that the Recreovía was created, a program of recreational and sports activities held in the public space during Ciclovía, as well as the nocturnal Ciclovía in 1999¹⁰.

By the late 1990s, Ciclovía had 121 kilometers of dedicated lanes for active modes¹¹ and attracted almost 1 million participants each week¹². This change of scale required a team of stewards supported by hundreds of volunteers¹³.

⁷ Interview with Jaime Ortiz Mariño, June 11, 2021.

⁸ Montero, S., "Worlding Bogotá's Ciclovía: From Urban Experiment to International 'Best Practice'", Latin American Perspectives, Vol. 44, No. 2, Urban Latin America: Part 2, Latin American Cities Planning: Dependencies and Best Practices, 2017.

⁹ Montero, S., "Worlding Bogotá's Ciclovía: From Urban Experiment to International 'Best Practice'", Latin American Perspectives, Vol. 44, No. 2, Urban Latin America: Part 2, Latin American Cities Planning: Dependencies and Best Practices, 2017.

¹⁰ Brabant, F., "Ciclovía ou la fièvre du vélo à Bogota" [Ciclovía or the bicycle fever in Bogota], CNCD, September 17, 2017.

<https://www.cncd.be/Ciclovía-ou-la-fièvre-du-velo-a>

¹¹ Leon, MA., "La ciclovía: une historia en dos ruedas", Revistadc.com, August 8, 2017,

<https://revistadc.com/sin-categoria/la-ciclovía-una-historia-en-dos-ruedas/>

¹² Montero, S., "Worlding Bogotá's Ciclovía: From Urban Experiment to International 'Best Practice'", Latin American Perspectives, Vol. 44, No. 2, Urban Latin America: Part 2, Latin American Cities Planning: Dependencies and Best Practices, 2017.

¹³ Proenza, A., "Pistes cyclables: Bogota loin devant le peloton" [Bicycle paths: Bogota far ahead of the pack], Libération, May 3, 2020.

https://www.liberation.fr/planete/2020/05/03/bogota-loin-devant-le-peloton_1787225/

Chronologie de l'expérimentation

DECEMBRE 1974

Première manifestation organisée par Pro Cicla

DECEMBRE 1975

Deuxième manifestation organisée par Pro Cicla

1976

Institutionnalisation de la Ciclovía

FIN 1970s

Détérioration de la Ciclovía

1982

La Ciclovía devient hebdomadaire

1995 - 1997

Sous le mandat de Mockus : début de la gouvernance de l'IDRD et de la dimension récréative

1998 - 2001

Sous le mandat de Peñalosa : expansion de la Ciclovía, reconnaissance internationale

2015

La participation atteint les 1.5 millions de personnes

CicloVía today: an urban recreational policy

1. An extensive network of dedicated lanes and many activities around active mobility

Every Sunday and public holiday, from 7 a.m. to 2 p.m., motorized vehicles give way to nearly 1.5 million participants who reclaim the 14 lanes of the CicloVía network throughout the city. In parallel, with the Recreovía, 28 sites (parks and green spaces connected by CicloVía) are dedicated to the organization of yoga and dance classes, concerts, games, shows and awareness workshops.

CicloVía also has food and drink vendors - which nevertheless remain highly regulated - as well as bicycle rental and repair services along the way.



Map of CicloVía. source: OFFICIAL WEBSITE OF THE IDRD.

In particular, the organizers of CicloVía offer activities designed for certain groups such as children or the elderly:

- Walk Bike: play-based activities around cycling for children from 2 to 7 years old
- Sports and cultural activities for the elderly (gym, theatre, etc.)
- Cycling school: open to all and during weekdays too, located along several points of CicloVía

This event is also an opportunity to raise awareness about health and safety:

- Education and civic culture: the stewards organize awareness sessions on best practices for pedestrians and cyclists in the public space
- Covid health: the event creates an opportunity to set up testing booths and hold awareness sessions in collaboration with the health department

2. Very strong administrative, logistical and financial support

This project is mainly organized by the city's public authorities, and can be described as "top-down":

- **The Secretariat of Culture, Recreation and Sport** (*Secretaría de Cultura, Recreación y Deporte, SCRS*) of the City Hall designs public policies related to these themes, including CicloVía
- **The City's Department of Recreation and Sports (IDRD)**, which reports to SCRS, has been operationally deploying these policies, including CicloVía, since 1995.
 - The general coordinator of the project at IDRD is Monica Duran, assisted by an operational project manager, Luis Martinez. Both have been working within the IDRD for 9 years, after starting as stewards when they were students and gradually climbing the ranks of the CicloVía organization.

- A project manager, Daniella Martinez, is tasked with securing private funds to contribute to Ciclovía's budget.
 - The IDRDR is also responsible for mobilizing the necessary human resources, i.e. 250 stewards, supervised by 26 managers, 12 operational leaders and a hundred operators and volunteers, such as high school students undertaking mandatory community service.¹⁴
 - The IDRDR communication department manages the information campaign about the event and its activities, through its website and mobile application
- **The Secretariat of the Government** (*Secretaría del Gobierno, SoG*) evaluates all programs and public policies including Ciclovía

IDRDR collaborates with some 24 institutions. Most are other City departments whose public policy objectives converge with those of Ciclovía, for example the **Secretariat of Education** (*Secretaría de Educación, SoEdu*), **the Secretariat of Health** (*Secretaría de Salud, SoH*) or **the Secretariat of the Environment** (*Secretaría de Medio Ambiente y Recursos Naturales*).

- **The Secretariat of Mobility** (*Secretaría Distrital de Movilidad*) works closely with the IDRDR to implement Ciclovía, ensuring a smooth flow of users on the pathways and managing traffic lights, all the while ensuring that the event does not negatively impact traffic in the rest of the city
- **The Special Administrative Unit of Public Services of Bogotá** (*Unidad Administrativa Especial de Servicios Públicos, UASEP*) finds service providers for cleaning the roads
- A company called Mudanzas is in charge of closing lanes to cars and installing/uninstalling kiosks.
- **The Metropolitan Police** accompanies the stewards to ensure safety during the event.
- **The University of the Andes** carries out research projects around Ciclovía, mainly concerning its effects on public health and the social capital of its participants.
- **The Center for Disease Control and Prevention** (CDCP, a U.S. federal agency), which collaborates with the network of cities that hold ciclovías (Ciclovía Recreativa de las Americas, or CRA), also studies the health effects of ciclovías.¹⁵

On the day of Ciclovía, the operational preparation of the event begins at 5 a.m. when trucks drop off the temporary signage elements (cones, barriers ...) and sales kiosks are set up. After this, the stewards are "briefed" and the roads are closed off to motorized vehicles at 7am. On roads that usually have a lot of car traffic, only one lane may be closed¹⁶.

¹⁴ Data from an interview with Monica Duran, Luis Martinez and Daniella Hernandez, June 16, 2021.

¹⁵ Sarmiento, OL., Pedraza, C., Triana, CA., Díaz, DP., González, SA., Montero, S. Promotion of Recreational Walking: Case Study of the Ciclovía-Recreativa of Bogotá, Vol.9, p.275-286, 2017

¹⁶ StreetVlog, "StreetFilms – Ciclovía (Bogotá, Colombia)", January 24, 2008

The stewards, "the heartbeat of Ciclovía" (Oscar Ruiz, former head of leisure projects at IDR)

- Positions created by Guillermo Peñalosa (former director of the IDR when his brother Enrique Peñalosa was mayor of the city): called "Bikewatch" in reference to the Baywatch TV show, to attract young people
- Tasks: perform first aid, share advice and information, ensure traffic fluidity and safety
- Very strict recruitment process to select for 250 positions from one thousand applications: interview, physical exam – then training program for successful applicants
- Profile: Students aged 18 to 22
- 12-month contract, no seasonal contract
- Red and yellow uniform
- Supervised by the Ciclovía coordination team and managed through the Communication Center (7 people who manage internal communication, listening to messages on walkie talkies, identifying accidents)
- Divided by corridor and function



Source: StreetVlog, "StreetFilms – Ciclovía (Bogotá, Colombia)", January 24, 2008

The Ciclovía budget is about 1.4 million euros per year, or about 20,000 euros per event. The estimated cost per person is between \$1.70 and \$3.30.

The funding comes mainly from the public sector (63%), but also from the private sector through corporate sponsorship (37%).

The chart below summarizes the different costs (fixed/variable, per participant, paid by participants/by the City).

Costs (USD)	Bogotá ^a	
	Event	Annual
Operational costs		
Variable costs ^b	8,568	616,906
Fixed costs ^c	15,245	1,097,684
Total costs	23,813	1,714,591
Cost per user	0.04–0.05	1.71–3.32
Cost per km	245	17,676
User costs		
Total costs	32,545–75,947	2,343,059–5,468,205
Cost per user	0.05–0.06	3.91–4.54
Cost per km	335–782	24,255–56,373
Total costs (User costs + Operational costs)		
Total costs	56,536–99,761	4,057,651–7,182,797
Cost per user	0.08–0.09	5.96–6.76
Cost per km	580–1,028	74,049–41,831

Ciclovía cost chart

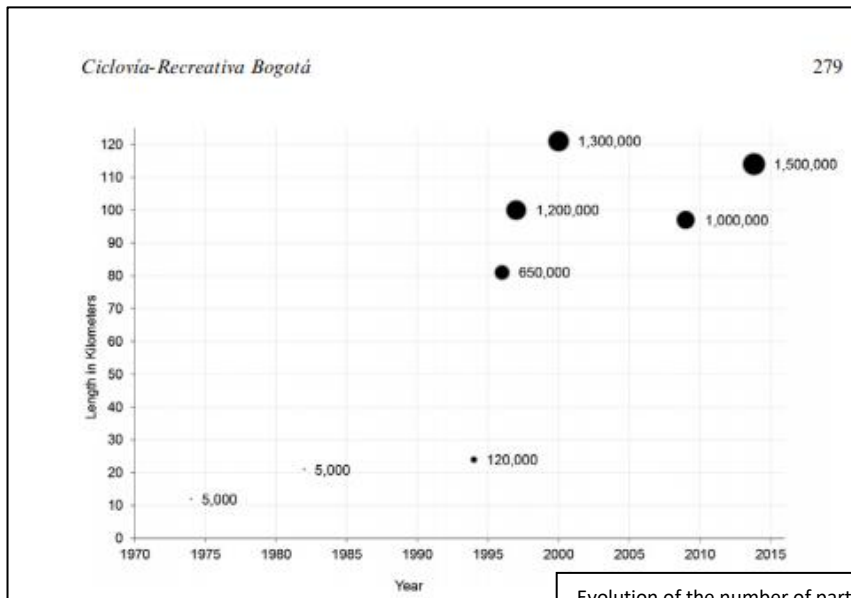
Source: Sarmiento, OL., Pedraza, C., Triana, CA., Díaz, DP., González, SA., Montero, S. "Promotion of Recreational Walking: Case Study of the Ciclovía-Recreativa of Bogotá", Vol.9, p.275-286, 2017

The effects of Ciclovía: a popular event that helps fight sedentary lifestyles in all social classes and improves air quality

It is hard to assess the impact of this fifty-year old event: its size and success have varied over time, and no recent public studies have collected the data needed to properly evaluate it. However, participant surveys are regularly conducted by academics.

We can note:

1. Massive and popular participation



From 2015 to 2021 (discounting 2020, due to the pandemic), Ciclovía gathered an average **1.5 million people** each week. The number of participants has increased significantly over the past 30 years, **growing by a factor of 15**¹⁷. In 2017, a study found that the main modes used by participants were cycling (68%), followed by walking (22%), skateboarding or scootering (10%), and jogging (10%)¹⁸. Participants stay an average of 3 hours and 10 minutes at Ciclovía¹⁹.

Evolution of the number of participants according to the number of kilometers of the Ciclovía. Spring: Sarmiento, OL., Pedraza, C., Triana, CA., Díaz, DP., González, SA., Montero, S. "Promotion of Recreational Walking: Case Study of the Ciclovía-Recreativa of Bogotá", Vol.9, p.275-286, 2017

Many studies emphasize the inclusive nature of the project, fostering **social cohesion** between different socio-economic groups. The network extends throughout the whole city and the use of active modes and free activities puts users on an equal footing – cycling is not a sport reserved for the elites in Colombia²⁰.

Former Ciclovía coordinator Bibiana Sarmiento said in an interview: "No one looks at the clothes you wear or your social class: everyone is welcome and equal."²¹ The vast majority (92%) of the participants said in 2009 that they came from socio-economic categories 1 to 4 (working and middle classes). A 2013 study also highlights the **increased social capital** among Ciclovía participants: the event strengthens a sense of trust, connection and solidarity among participants. According to surveys, participants agree especially with the following three points: the willingness of Ciclovía participants to help each

¹⁷ Sarmiento, OL., Pedraza, C., Triana, CA., Díaz, DP., González, SA., Montero, S. "Promotion of Recreational Walking: Case Study of the Ciclovía-Recreativa of Bogotá", Vol.9, p.275-286, 2017

¹⁸ Sarmiento, OL., Pedraza, C., Triana, CA., Díaz, DP., González, SA., Montero, S. "Promotion of Recreational Walking: Case Study of the Ciclovía-Recreativa of Bogotá", Vol.9, p.275-286, 2017.

¹⁹ Torres, A., Sarmiento, OL., Stauber, C., Zarama, R., "The Ciclovía and Cicloruta Programs: Promising Interventions to Promote Physical Activity and Social Capital in Bogotá, Colombia, American Journal of Public Health, 103 (2), p.23-30, 2013.

²⁰ Torres, A., Sarmiento, OL., Stauber, C., Zarama, R., "The Ciclovía and Cicloruta Programs: Promising Interventions to Promote Physical Activity and Social Capital in Bogotá, Colombia, American Journal of Public Health, 103 (2), p.23-30, 2013.

²¹ A. Guillermprieto, "The city bans cars every Sunday – and people love it," The National Geographic, March 27, 2019. <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/environment/article/bogota-colombia-ciclovía-bans-cars-on-roads-each-sunday>

other (62.4%), to get along with each other (61.4%) and to lend a helping hand in specific situations, such as repairing a flat tire or helping another person get up after a fall (73.2%)²².

²² Torres, A., Sarmiento, O.L., Stauber, C., Zarama, R., "The Ciclovía and Cicloruta Programs: Promising Interventions to Promote Physical Activity and Social Capital in Bogotá, Colombia, *American Journal of Public Health*, 103 (2), p.23-30, 2013.

2. Positive impact on health

Most studies assessing the effects of Ciclovía focus on the **correlation between participation in the event and increased physical activity**, which is something that public authorities are aiming for. These studies show that Ciclovía participants are more likely to meet public targets for physical activity than the average inhabitant. For 53% of Ciclovía participants, the main motivation is **to engage in a physical activity and maintain good health**. Only 5% of participants go to Ciclovía with environmental protection as their main motivation, while most respondents take part to exercise, have fun or spend time with family or friends²³. Following the Ciclovía program allows people on average to achieve **14% of the recommended weekly physical exercise**. In addition to offering free access to spaces for cycling, Ciclovía is also **a network of pedestrian paths**. A 2009 study highlights that among Ciclovía participants, **37% walk more than 2 hours a week**. Adult participants who had attended Ciclovía in the month prior to the survey were more likely to walk over two hours per week, and participants in general were more likely to practice recreational walking²⁴. Additionally, banning motor vehicles reduces CO2 emissions by **16% each weekend compared to the rate measured during the week** (according to 2016 figures), thus improving air quality. Noise pollution is also greatly reduced²⁵. Impact studies therefore show that public investments in Ciclovía's organization have positive effects on health (promoting physical exercise, preventing chronic diseases).²⁶

3. A symbolic impact: offering an alternative urban imaginary and championing Bogota as the "cycling capital"

Ciclovía shows **how a city without cars might look**: more spaces for **outdoor collective activities, breathable air** and less **noise pollution**. In Bogota, people have a strong attachment to this transformation of the city: according to Jaime Ortiz Mariño, the existence of Ciclovía has never been under threat, as it is a tradition that is "dear to the inhabitants' hearts".²⁷ Children's activities help **nurture and strengthen the cycling culture** for the city's future generations.

Ciclovía has been **a world-renowned model** since the 2000s, when Mayor Enrique Peñalosa and other local politicians travelled to promote the project internationally²⁸. Before the pandemic, almost 500 cities around the world had already imported this model, but none boast such a large network of lanes, nor do they ban cars as regularly as Ciclovía. Following the end of the first lockdowns in 2021 and the success of tactical urban planning, Ciclovía has emerged as a pioneer in "Open Streets" or "Pop up Streets" programs that were implemented in major cities around the world²⁹.

²³ Sarmiento, OL., Pedraza, C., Triana, CA., Díaz, DP., González, SA., Montero, S. "Promotion of Recreational Walking: Case Study of the Ciclovía-Recreativa of Bogotá", Vol.9, p.275-286, 2017

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ "Bogota's Recreational Bikeway (Ciclovía Bogota)", Climate Interactive, 2018. <https://www.climateinteractive.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/Ciclovía-Bogota.pdf>

²⁶ Sarmiento, OL., Pedraza, C., Triana, CA., Díaz, DP., González, SA., Montero, S. "Promotion of Recreational Walking: Case Study of the Ciclovía-Recreativa of Bogotá", Vol.9, p.275-286, 2017

²⁷ Quote from an interview with Jaime Ortiz Mariño, June 11, 2021

²⁸ Montero, S., "Worlding Bogotá's Ciclovía: From Urban Experiment to International 'Best Practice'", Latin American Perspectives, Vol. 44, No. 2, Urban Latin America: Part 2, Latin American Cities Planning: Dependencies and Best Practices, 2017.

²⁹ Information from an interview with Jaime Ortiz Mariño, June 11, 2021

Key figures:

- **Year of creation:** 1974
- **Cities inspired by it:** 490, in 27 different countries (Lima, Buenos Aires, Melbourne, Los Angeles...)
- **Human resources:** 250 stewards, 26 chief stewards, 12 road chiefs, 100 operators – not counting volunteers
- **Yearly budget (for the city):** approx. \$1.7 million or €1.4 million per year (about \$24,000/€20,000 per event)
- **Number of participants per event:** 1.5 million on average, out of a population of about 7.7 million
- **Number of days/year:** 72
- Nearly **16%** reduction in CO2 emissions per weekend attributed to the ban on motor vehicles compared to the rates measured during the week

The conditions for success

1. A fertile ground for a popular cycling culture

In Colombia, cycling is a **national sport** – it is no surprise that many Colombian cyclists have been successful in international competitions as well as in Colombia. Since its creation in the 1950s, the *Vuelta a Colombia*, a cycling race through the mountains, has attracted working-class men for whom this feat represents an opportunity to climb the social ladder. The popularity of cycling is not incompatible with its prestige: cycling is as much appreciated by the working classes as by the political and cultural elites. According to Jaime Ortiz Mariño, *"Rich or poor, Colombians love cycling, they have their champions, but they also have access to bicycles and know how to repair them."* Indeed, there are bike shops (known as *bicicletarias*) in every district, village or city. Most of these places are informal, which helps foster the cycling culture among the working classes. By organizing the demonstrations in the 1970s, activists wanted to preserve this spirit,³⁰ which later guided the route of Ciclovía's network (free, present in all districts, inclusive...).

2. A strong political will

Since its creation, despite difficult periods and uncertainty (declining funds, insecurity...), the existence of Ciclovía has never been under threat. It has always been supported politically - more or less strongly - in service of different goals and interests:

- Mayor Augusto Ramirez Ocampo's political support was based on the belief that **offering recreational opportunities to the poorest social groups** in a highly segregated city³¹ is very important.
- Under the mandates of Mayors Antanas Mockus and Enrique Peñalosa, Ciclovía became central to the **policies for improving the accessibility and attractiveness of the public space**. Their goal was to restore the city's image, encourage citizens to trust public institutions and reduce urban violence, which was at unprecedented levels.³²
- Finally, Ciclovía is promoted by public actors **as a health policy**, which strengthens its legitimacy and increases the administrative and financial support it receives.

³⁰ Interview with Jaime Ortiz Mariño, June 11, 2021

³¹ Montero, S., "Worlding Bogotá's Ciclovía: From Urban Experiment to International 'Best Practice'", Latin American Perspectives, Vol. 44, No. 2, Urban Latin America: Part 2, Latin American Cities Planning: Dependencies and Best Practices, 2017.

³² A. Guillemprieto, "The city bans cars every Sunday – and people love it", The National Geographic, March 27 2019 <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/environment/article/bogota-colombia-ciclovía-bans-cars-on-roads-each-sunday>

3. A weekly gathering that builds loyalty

By making Ciclovía a weekly event in 1982, the city wanted to create a tradition, so that it would become part of people's habits. This change meant higher investments and more human resources, and led to an exponential growth in the number of participants. The diversity of available activities during the day makes it a complete event and encourages participants to stay longer.

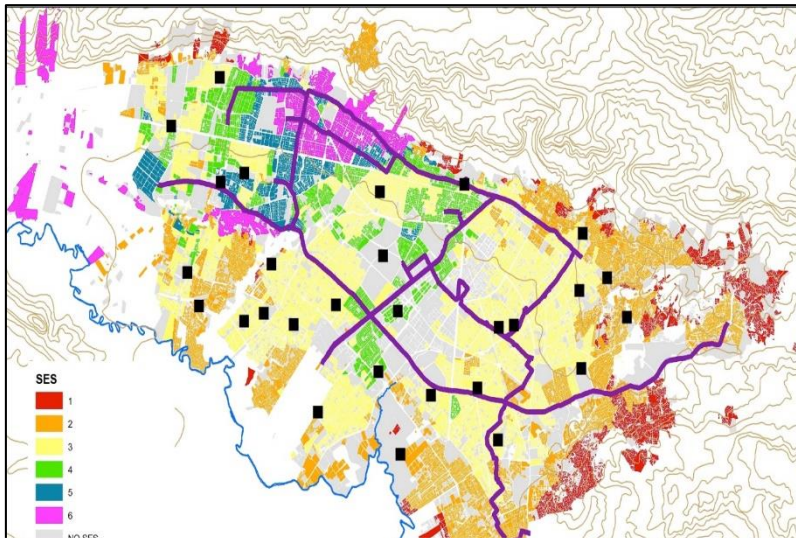
The fact that it is a temporary and recurring event (and not permanent) is considered by some to be a compromise between motorists and other road users. Reducing car traffic the rest of the week would be hard to accept and would risk creating conflicts between users, according to Jaime Ortiz's analysis. Moreover, the public transport system would not have the capacity to absorb demand in the event of a permanent ban on cars on the Ciclovía circuit.

Limits and lessons for future implementations

1. Beyond the event, encouraging cycling as a means of daily transport

The temporary and recreational nature of the event does not necessarily lead to changes in daily mobility behaviors. Pro-bike activists in Bogota point out that bike lanes remain insufficient to get around on a daily basis and reduce car dominance the rest of the time in the city.

2. Addressing inequalities and barriers to accessibility



Map of Bogotá representing the Ciclovía routes and the different districts according to their socio-economic category.

Source: Castaneda.P., "From the right to mobility to the right to the mobile city: playfulness and mobilities in Bogota's cycling activism", *Antipode*, vol 2., issue 1, 2020.

The design of Ciclovía is egalitarian and inclusive, with particular emphasis on accessibility for the working classes and women. However, one survey shows that **only 1/3 of Ciclovía's participants are women**³³. There is also no mention of targeted activities or safe spaces for people with disabilities. Another obstacle to accessibility is **safety**: half the participants do not feel safe at Ciclovía due to the risk of personal injury, and almost 60% because of crime³⁴.

Finally, while the network does connect every district of the city, the median distance to reach a Ciclovía path is longer on average for people living in a poor district (category 1 – 2). There are proportionally more Ciclovía lanes in the wealthy districts, even though they are geographically smaller.³⁵

³³ Torres, A., Sarmiento, O.L., Stauber, C., Zarama, R., "The Ciclovía and Cicloruta Programs: Promising Interventions to Promote Physical Activity and Social Capital in Bogotá, Colombia, *American Journal of Public Health*, 103 (2), p.23-30, 2013

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Castaneda.P., "From the right to mobility to the right to the mobile city: playfulness and mobilities in Bogota's cycling activism", *Antipode*, vol 2., issue 1, 2020.

3. Including citizens in governance to guarantee a genuine “right to the city”

Since becoming institutionalized, this initiative has been "top-down" insofar as it does not involve any direct participation: citizens and associations are not included in the governance or organization of the event³⁶. Integrating them could be a strong lever to enhance their appropriation of public space and participation in the production of urban space, thus guaranteeing a true “right to the city”.³⁷ In particular, citizens could be consulted and involved in decisions regarding which roads are closed off to traffic, the dates and frequency of the event, and the proposed activities.

³⁶ Castaneda.P., "From the right to mobility to the right to the mobile city: playfulness and mobilities in Bogota's cycling activism", *Antipode*, vol 2., issue 1, 2020.

³⁷ Lefebvre, H. "Le droit à la ville" [The right to the city], *Anthropos*, 1968

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