

The city never told

A project of the Social
Responsibility Editorial Office of
EL TIEMPO

Bogotá, Colombia
2007-2008

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2. Editorial
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7. EL TIEMPO - COLOMBIA a newspaper with a circulation of:
Monday through Saturday, 417.303 and Sunday, 660.688
8. Open the pages of the newspaper with the greatest circulation in Colombia, for anonymous citizens to write about how they see, feel and how they live the city of Bogotá.
9. Aimed at the population of Bogotá older than 15 who wish to write and to all readers of El Tiempo and eltiempo.com

PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

The city never told is a project developed and led by the Social Responsibility Editorial Office of EL TIEMPO, that opens the pages of the newspaper to the inhabitants of Bogotá furthest away from the written culture, to their stories, and the ways they tell them.

It aims at democratizing the newspaper's pages through a social inclusion and citizenry participation exercise, that aside from giving visibility to characters and stories, apart from the news agenda, renews contents, language and aesthetics of EL TIEMPO and eltiempo.com

ACTIONS CONDUCTED

Call through Casa Editorial El Tiempo (CEET) media: After defining the project's methodology, image and its communication simple terms, it was spread in a simple participation format, which could be handwritten or sent through Internet and circulated in different CEET media:

El Tiempo newspaper (format, editorial content, interviews) Citytv (local TV channel with commercials and interviews) Portafolio (weekly economic magazine with the format)

Hoy (local popular newspaper with the format)

ACTIONS CONDUCTED

Call on other spaces: Searching for people who would want to tell their story even if they were not information consumers of the CEET media, there were activities carried out in parallel such as:

Advertising on the **Semana** magazine (national) and ads in **Caracol Radio** (national).

Two thousand **posters** glued on the walls of Bogotá.

Ten thousand forms handed out one by one at the Book Fair, malls, vulnerable populations attention centers of Bogotá at localities such as Suba, Ciudad Bolívar, Mártires, Soacha; at the jails of El Buen Pastor, La Picota and La Modelo. We counted on the support of some universities and local radio stations such as the Kennedy and the National Police radio stations.

ACTIONS CONDUCTED

Reception and cataloguing stories received:

On the 2007 call 1333 persons participated in 1 month who fulfilled the following requirements:

- Be 15 years old or older
- Live in Bogotá
- Not having family ties with CEET employees
- Have something to tell and do it in 30 lines or 3,000 characters

1700 inhabitants of the city participated in 2008. This year the call was opened during 1 month and a half.

Each story according to the format (printed or virtual) was catalogued under a number and the author's name)

ACTIONS CONDUCTED

Work dynamics:

The project to build the final story, took especial care to make up teams of monitoring companions and those selected, that is, for the role of monitoring companions were invited **important cultural and creative representative figures** coming from different disciplines of the country: writers, journalists, filmmakers, scriptwriters, sociologists, anthropologists, psychologists and educators were part of the process on its two versions.

In the role of those selected were those citizens chosen to tell their story.

ACTIONS CONDUCTED

Making up the list of the monitoring companions:

Since *The city never told* calls citizens, not writers to tell, the role of the monitoring companions is vital. Their presence fulfilled two functions:

- **Read** texts received and, according to their subjective criteria, **select** the one that has the greatest narrative potential.
- **Accompanying** the author on building an extensive tale, based on the positions of the text received in the call, respecting the voice of the person who tells it.

ACTIONS CONDUCTED

COMPANIONS 2007

Felipe Aljure (filmmaker)
Mario Mendoza (writer)
Yolanda Reyes (writer)
Marta Ruiz (journalist)
José Navia (journalist)
Gustavo Bolívar (writer)
Mauricio Miranda (script writer)
Carlos A. Casas (educator)
María E. Molano (anthropologist)
Omar Rincón (communicator)

COMPANIONS 2008

Andi Baiz (filmmaker)
Daniel Coronell (journalist)
Ángela Escallón (psychologist)
Nahum Montt (writer)
Sylvia Amaya (documentary maker)
Ricardo Silva (writer)
Luis Miño (journalist)
Mario Mendoza (writer)
Piedad Bonnett (poet)
Yolanda Reyes (writer)

ACTIONS CONDUCTED

- Each companion selected **a story** as a result of reading and interviewing his/her 3 finalist stories.
- Couples comprised by companions and selected persons (10 each year) had between **2 and 3 months** to work on the story to be published.
- Both selected persons and their companions received **fees** for their work.
- All stories and their protagonists had spaces for **diffusion on CEET media**.
- All stories received in the call were published in **www.eltiempo.com/laciudadjamascontada**

ACTIONS CONDUCTED

The team of the city never told

The project had the support of the Social Responsibility Editorial Office of El Tiempo and its team:

Ofelia Corradine Brando (**Director**) assumed the financial management, logistics, and structure inside the CEET and with the entities that supported the process.

She led the assignment of tasks to the team she was in charge of, and she was the project's best and most enthusiastic speaker.

She coordinated aspects such as image, communication, information activities and the tone of the news contents.

ACTIONS CONDUCTED

The team of the city never told

Ángela Constanza Jerez (**Editor**) carried out the process coverage, structure and appearance on Citytv, El Tiempo, eltiempo.com, zonal newspapers, ADN (free national circulation newspaper in 2008). She supported information activities on local, national and international media.

Jacqueline Colmenares (**Assistant**) and Daisy Melo (**Secretary**) supported the call, selection, publication, and style correction processes. They were in charge of the administrative work and served as key players for reading and classifying the material received, contracting participants and the project's flow in general.

ACTIONS CONDUCTED

The team of the city never told

Marina Valencia (**Coordinator**) design the project's methodology and was in charge of its processes. She guided the calling stages, read and distributed the stories among companions, and was in charge of the final edition and photographic coordination, graphic design and production. She was in charge of contents of the www.eltiempo.com/laciudadjamascontada site.

Jesús Martín Barbero (**Advisor**) developed the project's conceptual framework, inspired all participants and wrote a text for each publication which served as an access route to its meaning in relation to many possible universes.

ACTIONS CONDUCTED

The team of the city never told

Alberto Sierra (2007) and Juan Felipe Rubio (2008) (Photographers) made tales with images of each story. They went into the homes, lives and dreams of each selected person, bringing us back the magnificent photographs we saw.

Constanza Rozo (Graphic designer) was in charge of designing from the project's name, logo, the call's pieces, posters, printed advertisements, up to each of the publications of The city never told. She joined texts and images so that readers would have a close and surprising product when they opened El Tiempo.

ACTIONS CONDUCTED

Writing

Along the time stipulated and, granting more time to those who needed it, each year's publications was written.

During the creative process, searching for the most significant places of the characters that appeared, companions, photographers, and the project team were also there.

There were meetings held to present the selected tales, in order to know their protagonists, so that Jesús Martín Barbero would set out his ideas about writing the city, and of course, also celebrating together.

ACTIONS CONDUCTED

Publications in El Tiempo (ANNEX # 1)

- The stories selected were published in 2007 each Tuesday between October 2 and December 4.
- In 2008 they were published Tuesdays and Thursdays, between November 11 and December 11.
- Appearing simultaneously on eltiempo.com
- During that time before the 2008 publications, there were unselected tales published in the pages of ADN and Portafolio.
- All tales received were catalogued in categories favoring their reading in www.eltiempo.com/laciudadjamascontada

FUNDING AND ASSOCIATES

All financial, logistic and human resources required for the project were in charge of the [Social Responsibility Editorial Office of El Tiempo](#). This office also arranged, with different entities, support for spreading the call:

- Media: CEET, Revista Semana and Caracol Radio
- The Mayor's Office of Bogotá (Social Integration Secretariat)
- Instituto Nacional Penitenciario (INPEC)
- The Civic Award for a Better Bogotá and Access Code projects (Social Responsibility Editorial Office's projects)
- Social Communication Faculties of some universities
- Bogotá Book Fair

PROMOTION STRATEGIES

Information activities about The city never told were carried out on a differentiated manner, first calling citizens to participate, and then, inviting readers to read the stories and comment on them.

Activities carried out to promote the call are described in slides [4](#) and [5](#).

For the 2008 call, in order to involve more Internet users, there were promos (advertising pieces on audiovisual aids) setup on screens that invited users through a link to enter into the project's page in 500 internet cafes.

[CALL PIECES \(ANNEX # 2\)](#)

EVALUATION AND RESULTS

The city never told from its conception defined that the goals sought were **qualitative in** nature:

The main purpose was citizenry inclusion by giving a voice to anonymous inhabitants of the city in the largest media of the country, in order to achieve the following:

- Democratization of El Tiempo contents
- Renewal of topics, ways of writing, characters, approach and aesthetics of the newspaper
- Extend the information agenda
- And of course, acknowledgment of the brand with an including project

EVALUATION AND RESULTS

Call

The first result of the project was a citizenry yearning to tell each other:

- 1,333 tales received in 2007 (56% of them on printed forms)
- 1.700 in similar proportions printed and virtual in 2008

Figures that surprise in a society moving away much more each time from reading, and therefore, from writing.

Between 30% and 40% of participants were youngsters in both calls.

EVALUATION AND RESULTS

Young authors

- In 2007, 2 of the 13 selected were under 25 (Omar Rincón selected and worked with 4 participants, micro-tales for publication).
- In 2008, 4 of the 10 tales published were written by persons under 25.
- The most commented tale in Internet in 2008 was from Ángela Muñoz Narváez (15 years of age) “As if we were big” that had 131 commentaries.

EVALUATION AND RESULTS

Publications (on topics)

The first call brought to the pages of El Tiempo voices of the most hidden. **Tales of marginality** related to poverty, abandonment, delinquency, mistreatment, displacement, the city of which there is no memory because it has not been told.

The second, on the other hand, approached topics that are part of the information agenda, from news about the situation, but told from **the voice of anonymous protagonists** who are part of statistics: unemployment, adolescent pregnancy, injustice, dementia, those characters who are there but we don't see such as bus drivers, watchmen and workers.

EVALUATION AND RESULTS

Publications (about readers opinion)

One of the largest conquests of the project was the readers opinion. With respect to qualifiable results, being this the most resounding.

The opinions recorded on the project's webpage, as well as those from readers of eltiempo.com created a tone of debate, an expression of intimate sentiments, and showed a great capacity of being moved, which certainly marked a singular impact on The city never told.

The most commented tale easily exceeds in number of readers (and opinions) several columns and editorials.

EVALUATION AND RESULTS

The inclusion process (on the protagonists' opinion)

Testimonies of those who gave life to the project are the most significant, there are not many, but they represent in the words of Felipe Aljure (moviemaker, companion in 2007 of Hubert Ariza author of *Yo tumbé el Cartucho con la ayuda de mi Dios y una pistola*):

“I found in The city never told many people locked in their houses thinking, feeling, wanting and needing to talk or explode at some side. Writing was like a way of not bursting out shooting bullets, of not exploding in frustrations, that would be contrary to bursting out and likewise dangerous, implosive, demolishing. Drowned voices yelling and yelling. Not only people of marginality but stories of marginality.”

EVALUATION AND RESULTS

The inclusion process (on the protagonists' opinion)

Alba Lucía Gallego wrote her story of multiple displacements guided by María Elvira Molano. The author of *Caminos de desarraigo* tells how she arrived to the project:

“Since I arrived to the door of El Tiempo, I don't know if because the heart warns you or why, I got happy. There was a lady there who said: Do you believe that story? That is the same than politicians, they make people participate as fools and they are the ones that end up winning. The truth is, it left me pensive and the happiness left me, thinking that this lady could be right. A few days after they called me and told me that María Elvira Molano wanted to meet with me. I had already forgotten the matter. I was happy, I could not believe it, I recalled the words of the lady, and no, she was not right. At that moment the world started to open.”

EVALUATION AND RESULTS

The inclusion process (on the protagonists' opinion)

Miguel Antonio Rodríguez, a carpenter who did not finish his primary school studies tells us about his entrance:

“One day when I bought El Tiempo because I was looking for a job, I found the format and I read it, it called my attention because I had a story to tell, a story that I had been writing for 35 years on a notebook. I thought that this was my opportunity. This was a story that had a little of everything, drama, suspense, maybe intrigue, because it was a very extensive story. But since the format only had 30 lines I forgot about the notebook and everything I had written. I remember that while I was writing the text I sent, I cried. I sent it with the conviction that I was going to be chosen and I waited to see what would happen later on.”

EVALUATION AND RESULTS

The inclusion process

The anecdotes are so many that we are making a book in order to tell about the experience of the process. What we guarantee and placed to the consideration of the jury that is going to choose the prize is what Jesús Martín Barbero said:

“The milestone that marks this project is that a newspaper risks to be written by those who hardly read it.”

Or the comment of Enrique Santos Calderón, President of Inter American Press Association: “Because of it’s human content and social impact, this project is beautiful, profound and full of never ending stories.”