METROPOLIS IN MOTION: URBAN MOBILITY ANT THE POLITICS OF INFRASTRUCTURE IN MARCELO EBRARD’S MEXICO CITY

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ABSTRACT

During his six years in office, former Mexico City mayor Marcelo Ebrard undertook some of the most significant investments in transportation infrastructure in several decades: three BRT lines, a bike share program and a network of bike lanes, a new metro line, and a network of urban toll roads. These highly visible projects attracted local and international attention; Marcelo Ebrard went on to play a leading role in a global network of mayors for climate change, and more recently, the city was awarded an international prize for its sustainable transportation practices at Washington’s Transportation Research Board meeting. These projects and events illustrate an important transformation in the way planners and officials in Mexico City have redefined the problem of air pollution, congestion, and transportation as a matter of “urban mobility”. Along with this concept, different dimensions and qualitative objectives for policy, including sustainability, equity, and citizen participation, were also introduced. As a result, planning for urban mobility requires that different and new actors, logics, and discourses be mobilized. By focusing on how this shift is taking place in Mexico City and by looking at urban infrastructure as a highly political system at the center of social change, this paper argues that far from being a mere discursive shift, the turn towards urban mobility signals a deeper transformation in urban governing practices. Engaging with ongoing debates about the relationality of urban politics and the politics of urban infrastructure this paper analyzes this shift and argues that urban mobility policies constitute an assemblage of global discourses, civil society demands, and technology through which a new context of urban politics and governance structures are created.
INTRODUCTION

In the last seven years transportation infrastructure in Mexico City has received more attention and that in the prior 30 years. This investment has been directed at the production of BRT Lines, urban highways and toll roads, a bike-share program and bike lines, and a new metro line. These projects are diverse and when looked at as part of an attempt to curb air pollution or solve traffic congestion it becomes clear that they are incongruent and disjointed—for instance the promotion of sustainable transportation and concurrent investment in car infrastructure. These disparate projects begin to come together, however, if reconsidered as part of a single policy oriented toward the adoption of the concept of urban mobility as the basis for transportation policy in the city. Urban mobility, as an ideal, introduces different dimensions and qualitative objectives and requirements for transportation policy, including sustainability, equity, and citizen participation. Moreover, these projects can be understood as a part of an ongoing transformation in the way transportation policy is conceived: a sort of paradigm shift from transportation policy to urban mobility policy. As this paper will argue, these very different projects represent a shift in the way transportation infrastructure is being conceptualized in Mexico City and serve as examples of how urban policymaking is changing.

The projects involved in the transition from transportation policy to urban mobility policy began, were completed, or expanded during mayor Marcelo Ebrard’s administration. Ebrard made urban mobility—an environmentally sustainable and socially inclusive way of providing transportation—one of his top priorities. Ebrard’s strategy has had very visible and concrete results: they have changed the ‘look’ of the city, as well as the way a large percentage of people move around. The visibility of the Mayor’s strategy was not only local: Ebrard positioned himself as a high-profile actor in a global network of mayors that made climate change a priority. For example, largely as a result of Ebrard’s work, Mexico City was awarded the Institute for Transportation and Development Policy (ITDP) award for sustainable transportation during this year’s Transportation Research Board meeting in Washington. While this emphasis on urban mobility and the different mechanisms by which projects were implemented were in part a response to challenges of economic development and everyday functioning of the city, in this paper
I will focus on the ways urban mobility is a result of a deeper transformation of urban politics and the production of urban space.

Ebrard’s investment in transportation, the most significant in at least four decades—is the result of several circumstances. These investments and interventions can be situated in a historical context marked by the critical problem of traffic congestion and long commute times\(^1\). These adverse conditions are the result of a series of spatial transformations in the city that in the last thirty years have made Mexico City an polycentric metropolis with highly disorganized growth in the peripheral areas, and where both poor and wealthy residents travel long distances to and from home to work bypassing central and older areas of the city. While the historical context is important, this paper and the broader research of which it is part, is concerned with how these projects came to be and the actors which both mobilized these projects, and were mobilized around them.

This paper presents preliminary findings of my dissertation project, which ultimately seeks to contribute to debates around new urban political contexts (Alsayyad and Roy 2006; Roy and Ong 2011). It is inspired by approaches that focus on the relationality of urban politics (McCann, Ward, and Cochrane 2011; C. McFarlane 2011) and the politics of urban infrastructure (McFarlane and Rutherford 2008). As such, this paper argues that urban mobility policy is generated by the localization and re-assemblage of global discourses and ideas such as ‘democracy’, ‘rights’, or ‘sustainability’, as well as best practices that rely on technologies of governing that are de-contextualized and re-contextualized in different geographies. Relatedly, my research focuses on the different networks, alliances and synergies that produce policy, borrowing from recent debates in urban studies that stem from science and technology studies (STS) and Actor-Network Theory (ANT) which are useful to understand the multiplicity of human and material actants—such as Bus Rapid Transit Systems, or electronic parking meters—that participate in the production of complex sociotechnical systems such as urban transportation

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\(^1\) The average one-way commute trip in the metropolitan zone is of 81 minutes, compared with NYC’s average of 38. (http://imco.org.mx/wp-content/uploads/2012/1/costos_congestion_en_zmvm2_final_abril.pdf)
URBAN MOBILITY AS A MOBILIZING DISCOURSE

In recent years movilidad urbana, or urban mobility has made its way from a marginal discourse employed by a limited number of NGOs and civic organizations in their critique of transportation infrastructure in Mexico City, to the center stage of city government campaigns, current policy making and city building efforts. Illustrative of this move is the recent announcement that the Secretary of Transport and Roadways (Secretaría de Transporte y Vialidad) would be rebranded as the Secretary of Mobility (Secretaría de Movilidad), a change that reflects the incorporation of urban mobility ideals into the Secretary’s official goals and strategies.

As a concept, urban mobility is of relatively recent coinage and even more recent adoption in activist and planning circles. Despite its incorporation in state policy, it lacks a legal or normative framework on which to rest. Urban mobility is a concept that is broad, ambitious and in flux; and that has
been open to several interpretations and efforts to expand its scope. What is certain is that urban mobility differs from the common transportation planning textbook definition of mobility which narrowly describes the dynamic of moving people from point a to point b (Cervero, Neil, and Paul 2001). What gives urban mobility a radically different meaning is that it actively incorporates a series of qualitative and normative dimensions that traditional definitions lack. Under the urban mobility ideal, transportation becomes environmentally sustainable, efficient and safe. Moreover, transportation becomes affordable, and oriented toward meeting users wants and needs. Transportation, in short, should provide access to the entire city, and satisfy the needs of all the users and citizens.

Also implicit in this discourse, is the notion that transportation service projects produced under urban mobility should enable a more democratic city in at least two respects. First, increased access to the different parts of the city is understood as resulting in a more democratic city, as, in theory, all the people in the city are free to circulate, maintain a livelihood (go to work), and enjoy the different amenities of the city. Second, urban mobility as a model calls for mandatory citizen input and participation in the planning of projects, which should translate into services that truly respond to user’s needs, avoid bypassing of zones, and guarantee that new constructions are not disproportionately affecting poor and disadvantaged citizens. Furthermore, several advocates of urban mobility as a transportation planning model have demanded that urban mobility become an actually existing right and that its many different components and dimensions be guaranteed by a legal and regulatory framework.

The two pillars of urban mobility: transportation as sustainable and democracy-enabling seem to be discursively included by all. However, there is lack of consensus around what these mean in practice. For instance, for social movements that oppose toll roads, urban mobility as democracy-enabling means access to participation in planning and transparency in concession contracts. While for NGOs and sustainable transportation activists, the democratic component means pedestrians taking the city back from automobiles even if the methods to achieve this goal require the imposition of certain measures against the will of the neighbors.
Urban mobility is mobilizing a diverse array of state and non-state actors, provoking unlikely alliances and setting in motion interesting governance transformations, much aided by the “coolness” factor of sustainability and democracy. In many cases alliances, especially those between state and non-state actors, have produced synergies that have enabled productive transformations in the way infrastructure is conceived, planned and constructed. But the politics of urban mobility are not always harmonious. In a context where transportation planning lacks formal channels of participation, accountability, and a clear sense of the limits of what adopting urban mobility as a model means, conflicts also arise.

**MOBILIZING AROUND URBAN MOBILITY**

In this paper, I focus on the increasing role of three types of actors that influence urban mobility policy: 1) sustainability and climate change experts, 2) international consultants and NGOs, and 3) social movement activists and independent citizen commissions. For heuristic purposes I have classified the actors in three somewhat distinct groups although in practice they collaborate and interact in multiple ways, blurring the lines between groups, changing their alliances, agreeing in some cases, and in others disagreeing.

The first group, made up sustainability and climate change experts, includes academics, scientists, and government officials who have made their careers around issues of sustainability and climate change. Several of these actors have occupied high profile positions in local government, research centers, and have extensive training in local and foreign institutions. Notable among this group is Claudia Sheinbaum, who was part of the Nobel Prize awardee UN-IPCC and a student of World Resources Institute’s Lee Schepper at UC Berkeley; Garbiel Quadri, a free-market environmentalist and former national Secretary of Environment who ran for national presidency, and Martha Delgado, a long time independent politician, and environmental activist who served as Mexico City’s Secretary of Environment under Ebrard.

A second, extremely active group is made up of international consultants and NGOs: These actors are among the most significant in policy making. Within this category there are actors with
substantially different profiles, agendas, and modes of operation. The most active organizations are ITDP (Institute for Transportation and Development Policy) and CTS-EMBARQ (Centro de Transporte Sustentable – EMBARQ), both are international organizations that advocate for the adoption of sustainable transportation infrastructure, and both educate the general public and provide training and technical assistance to the government. These NGOs describe themselves as members of civil society and as a link between citizens and the government, however, in practice they operate more as consultants that provide contract services to the city government, and promote specific technological solutions, such as the BRT, or the electronic parking meter. I consider these organizations hybrids that do not narrowly fit old definitions of NGOs, and much less traditional models of advocacy groups in the city. This is especially true in the case of CTS-EMBARQ, which dominates sustainable transportation consultancy in the country, specializing in BRT. CTS-EMBARQ was founded by Lee Shepper as part of the World Resources Institute. Currently, it receives funding from Shell and works in alliance with bus manufacturers such as Mercedes Benz and Volvo on several projects, including CTS-EMBARQ’s yearly sustainable transportation conference.

The third group is composed of social movements, activists, and independent commissions. The social movements include groups of neighbors that oppose projects that will affect their neighborhood or object that certain infrastructures will bypass them. The group of activists is made up of citizen organizations that for several years have fought for investment in alternative transportation, such as bicycling, and improving the existing infrastructure for pedestrians. These groups are increasingly working within national and global networks, producing information and technical knowledge about programs and infrastructure, and organizing independent congresses and conferences. For example Bicitekas, the city’s oldest bicycle activism group, works closely with ITDP and the city government in the design and implementation of bicycling manuals. Also under this group are independent commissions, such as CDHDF (Commission Derechos Humanos del Distrito Federal/Human Right Commission), or PAOT (Procuraduría Ambiental y Ordenamiento de Territorio/Environment and Territory Attorney’s Office), who attempt to provide a link between citizens’ claims and the state, making recommendations
on violations of rights and regulations, and advocating for urban mobility as a legally sanctioned right. However, the CDHDF and other commissions lack real authority.

THREE ILLUSTRATIVE CASES

ITDP and the Production of Livability Interventions

When Marcelo Ebrard became mayor of Mexico City he had almost no record as an environmentalist, in fact, his professional trajectory had largely been in the public security branch of government and his highest profile position before taking office had been as head of public security in the city. It was not until sometime in the first year as mayor that after a trip to Copenhagen, Ebrard, returns to Mexico City “enamored” by urban cycling and decides that he wants to have develop bicycle infrastructure in his city. Ebrard presented the idea to his cabinet and finds that it was received with little excitement. The Secretary of Transportation that logically should have taken up the project was not interested, and it is the Secretary of Environment (SMA), lead by Martha Delgado, a long time environmental activist and independent politician with a green platform, who takes the leading role.

Marcelo Ebrard, advised by Delgado, decided that sustainable transportation was going to be one of his top priorities and legacy, an agenda that Delgado describes as having a low political cost and high visibility (referring, implicitly, to the fact that nobody will argue against the need to improve the environmental and traffic conditions in the city). Ebrard and Delgado draft a plan called Plan Verde as a comprehensive, multi-agency strategy to improve and monitor sustainability in the city. The plan comprised several areas, including waste reduction and recycling, reforestation, and emissions control, but the main component and most visible one was sustainable public transportation and bicycle infrastructure. Plan Verde was highly innovative. It made use of attractive design, social media and web content to engage citizens, and incorporated them in the drafting of the Plan. Importantly, it also called for programmatic interagency collaboration and a long-term vision. Unfortunately, the plan had no real jurisdiction, it could not be enforced, and it lacked a stable budget allocation, which left it at mercy of
discretionary funds of individual secretaries. Nevertheless, most of the plan’s initiatives were implemented with a varying degree of success.

The urban cycling component of the plan was titled *Estrategia de Movilidad en Bicicleta* (Bicycle Mobility Strategy) which also became the name of a new department of the SMA, oddly under the forest management division. *Estrategia de Movilidad en Bicicleta* (EMB) includes three components: Closing Avenida Reforma to car traffic on Sundays to promote cycling and exercise, the construction of bike lanes in different central areas of the city, and the implementation of a bike-share program: ECOBICI. EMB staff at the time, composed mostly of architects, had no experience or technical knowledge in bicycle infrastructure planning. To address this, they teamed up with ITDP, the international sustainable transportation advocacy NGO who had recently opened an office in Mexico. As SMA-EMB staff describe, their agency literally started inside ITDP’s offices, where they (the 4 staff members) shared a table while taking an intense course on sustainable transportation while simultaneously developing the new agency’s plans and projects. The close relationship between the ITDP and SMA-EMB in this project allowed ITDP to have a huge influence in the final plans. For instance, ITDP provided detailed assistance in the design of bike lanes and bicycle planning manuals. ITDP was also able to modify the location of bicycle infrastructure, which in Ebrard’s plan was to be located in the upscale Polanco neighborhood, toward the more centrally Roma and Condesa neighborhoods (ECOBICI only arrived to Polanco several years later). Similarly, they collaborated in the negotiations of ECOBICI’s public private partnership contract between the city and Clear Channel, the global advertising company.

ITDP is currently involved in promoting other livability interventions in close connection with the government. A recent example is the promotion of ECOPARQ, a system of electronic parking meters that the recently founded agency–Autoridad del Espacio Público (Public Space Authority), in charge of coordinating redevelopment of central areas of the city–is deploying in several neighborhoods. This project has been highly controversial because it is being installed in mixed use zones that have complex parking problems as the result of unregulated growth of restaurant and office activities in old high density
neighborhoods that have a stock of old buildings with no parking spaces. ECOPARQ\(^2\) is also a public-private-partnership solution in which the private agrees to return a percentage of the earnings to improve public space and pedestrian infrastructure. In an effort to legitimize this measure, the government called for citizen input through a public poll that asked neighbors to vote on whether they wanted the parking meters. In this, ITDP played a key role promoting the advantages of the system—especially the idea that parking meters would reduce automobile use and promote public space—by releasing educational brochures, and appearing in editorialized articles in newspapers and magazines. The public poll backfired, as several neighborhoods rejected the measure, making it very difficult for the city to fully deploy the system. A delay which has severely curbed the alleged benefits of the program. ITDP staff argues that the benefits of this project are so large that it is a shame that people are rejecting the system and has never questioned the city government’s decision to impose the project despite the neighbor’s opposition.

Despite the close relationship that has been described, ITDP and Ebrard’s people were not always on good terms. In a well-known case among sustainable transportation planning circles, Martha Delgado stopped communicating with ITDP and banned them from negotiations for the second and third lines of Metrobús, the city’s BRT system, after ITDP openly criticized the Secretary of Environment for allowing, and supporting the construction of elevated urban highways. To add complexity to the unstable relationships, ITDP awarded Mexico City the prize for sustainable transportation during this year’s Transportation Research Board meeting in Washington.

*CTS-EMBARQ and the development of the Metrobús*

Mexico City’s BRT system, Metrobús, was first implemented shortly before Ebrard’s term, in the last years of Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador’s administration. However, as a full-fledged transportation solution, it solidified during Ebrard’s period, when three more BRT lines where built and a fifth one began construction. Metrobús is, allegedly, the first large transportation infrastructure project that was not

\(^2\) Note the use of the term “Eco”, short for *ecológico*, or sustainable. This is an obvious reference to the ECOBICI bikeshare program that tries to convey the idea that parking meters are also sustainable infrastructure.
built under the pressure of developers, politicians, or political bosses associated with the old party’s (the PRI) corporatist structure. For the climate change experts, international consulting firms, and NGOs such as CTS-EMBARQ that were involved in the project convincing Lopez Obrador of the benefits of the BRT was an unprecedented success. This, however, should be better explained. López Obrador—only the third elected major after the democratization of Mexico City in 1998—was able to enjoy unprecedented political and economic freedom from the federal government. He also had a clear idea that he wanted to run for the country’s presidency (in fact, he resigned a year earlier to run for office, but was defeated). This economic and political freedom, and the need for a highly visible legacy project that could help his presidential campaign produced fertile ground for an idea such as the BRT, something that CTS-EMBARQ capitalized on. That BRT technology was chosen, might not be surprising if one pays attention to the fact that CTS-EMBARQ is a member of Word Resource Institute, which was founded by Lee Sheppard, who was Claudia Sheinbaum professor at UC Berkeley. At the time, Claudia Sheinbaum was Lopez Obrador’s Secretary of Environment, which facilitated CTS-EMBARQ’s involvement.

Metrobús’ project was controversial at first, not only because it meant the removal of two lanes of one of the city’s most important avenues, Avenida Insurgentes, but also because it required political will to deal with the local independent bus operators that serviced the avenue. CTS-EMBARQ had been promoting BRT as a cheaper alternative to regular hard-rail Metro for several areas of the city. However, Avenida Insurgentes rose as the best option because it had the least political obstacles, and because of the high visibility of having BRT in the country’s most important avenues, which also acts as Mexico City’s linear CBD. Again, as in the case of bicycles, making this project as visible as possible was key.

Shortly after its completion, Metrobús’ first line proved to be a success: the concerns of car drivers who opposed the project fearing slower traffic turned out to be exaggerated, and most people

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3 Mexico City’s official name is Mexico Distrito Federal (Federal District, or DF). Mexico DF is not a state of the federation, but a special territory under the federal government. Up until 1996, the national president appointed the head of DF and there was no local legislature. This process of democratization is ongoing, with several proposals to strengthen political independence of the local legislative bodies.
agree that traveling along Avenida Insurgentes is much smoother today. If anything, the problem with the system is that it is running at capacity and still is not able to avoid overcrowding. Ironically, several of those that advocated for BRT today are suggesting openly that a higher-capacity solution perhaps would have been better for Avenida Insurgentes, or even that BRT should be complemented by an underground metro line to serve long-haul needs. Regardless, the apparent success of Metrobús positioned CTS-EMBARQ as a key advocate and consultant for other projects in the city and for several other cities across the country. CTS-EMBARQ today has collaborated, by providing technical assistance, in the construction and/or planning of at least eight BRT systems in the country. In Mexico City, during Ebrard’s administration CTS-EMBARQ has collaborated in the subsequent four lines, providing assistance with the design, financial, and political negotiation aspects of the projects. In fact, CTS-EMBARQ has managed to introduce several innovations in each new segment; for example, the newest line includes a bike line, bike parking structures, and accessibility retrofitting for surrounding streets. CTS-EMBARQ claims to be an NGO that represents civil society interests, however, they are also open about their funding sources, such as Shell, and their close ties with bus manufacturers such as Mercedes Benz and Volvo. CTS-EMBARQ continues to promote sustainable transportation and sustainable urbanism agendas in the city, most notably with an international congress for sustainable transportation, and with the promotion of a new plan, Reforma Urbana that signals the future of this organization’s plans.

Social movements and the conflicts over the Supervía

Ebrard’s works also included extensive expansion of automobile infrastructure with the construction of a several new sections of an urban highway system. The project mainly consisted of the construction of second levels to the Periférico (outer loop) in the south and north sections and the connection of this highway with other parts of the city via express roads. Among these, is the case of Supervía de Cuota Poniente, a toll road that connects the high-scale business and residential area of Santa Fe, in the southwest end of the city with the southern section of Periférico. This project sparked a lot of controversy
as it was considered by neighbors along the southern end of the road as an imposition and by environmental activists as a project that destroyed green areas and promoted an increased use of the automobile. It is rather obvious that these projects contradict the livability interventions and the development of the BRT discussed above, and moreover, Ebrad’s overall objective to portray himself as a champion of sustainable transportation.

The first elevated section of Periférico was constructed during Lopez Obrador’s administration, who used a public voting to determine whether people agreed with this project. The proposal of the project insisted that the second level would improve travel times to all sectors of population, with faster, private traffic going on the upper level, and freight, local and mass transit circulating in the lower level. Citizens responded favorably to Lopez Obrador’s proposal and the completed project was well received despite the long period it took to complete the construction of the first section, a period during which traffic congestion was worse. When Marcelo Ebrard decided to expand the project into a network of highways, he did not continue the practice of consulting citizens and decided to move forward without asking for further citizen input. Presumably, Ebrard assumed that everybody would support the project as they had supported it during Lopez Obrador’s tenure and considering the general satisfaction with the completed first section. Importantly, Ebrard also changed the financing scheme of the remaining sections by exploiting recent legal modifications that allowed the project to be the first privately built and operated toll road in the city. Many consider this move what justified his decision to build without public consultation. To be fair, most of the new sections have been completed under a relatively calm political climate. There are, however, a number of cases where the projects have been contested and criticized by different sectors of civil society. The most notable of these is the Supervía de Cuota Poniente, whose construction has been challenged for several years by the Frente Amplio contra la Supervía social movement. Frente Amplio includes residents of several neighborhoods located along the path of this segregated highway that connects Santa Fe with Periférico Sur, cutting through much of the Magdalena Contreras borough. The neighbors of this area have organized in response to what they perceive as an imposed project that affects their livelihood, the social fabric of their communities, and the environment.
of the city at large. *Frente Amplio* also includes a series of environmental groups and sustainable transportation activists. *Frente Amplio*’s leaders, a mix of neighborhood leaders and environmental experts, have contested the project on the basis of an inadequate environmental impact study and lack of transparency around the contracts awarded to international construction corporation OHL, who built and manages the project.

*Frente Amplio* was able to round up a large number of people against the project, as the road cuts through areas home to people from different social backgrounds. *Frente Amplio* reflects this diversity, blending experienced community leaders, with academics, and experts in the environment. A group of environmental advocacy, sustainable transportation, urban social movements, and human right organizations that do not reside in the area have also joined the group. Despite the great efforts from *Frente Amplio* to challenge Ebrard in public debates, the use of several legal recourses (amparos), a favorable recommendation from the Human Rights Commission, and open confrontation with construction workers and police forces, Supervía Poniente has been built and its currently operating.

Ebrard and his staff, including Martha Delgado, head of the Secretary of Environment, have always argued that he project is, in fact, sustainable on two grounds. First, they argue that the construction of the urban highways does not use public funds that could be used for funding other sustainable projects (transport, water, trash collection); and second, that the toll highways will have designated lanes for public transit service; these services, however, are yet be implemented. Despite these arguments, these projects sparked a great deal of opposition from several groups, especially among the sustainable transportation camp. For example, after ITDP’s director openly criticized Martha Delgado for allowing, and supporting the construction of more infrastructure for automobiles, ITDP was banned from joining roundtables to plan the most recent Metrobús lines, even when ITDP was one of the main promoters of BRT in the city. Similarly, the Secretary of the Environment’s support of the toll roads also deteriorated relations with bike activist that in the past had supported and assisted the secretary in the development of the Estrategia de Movilidad en Bicicleta. These relationships have improved over time, especially since
the new administration took office and several of the new officials have sought to continue Ebrard’s urban mobility strategy.

CONCLUSION

The actors and logics that assemble around sustainable transportation projects such as BRT and bike infrastructure are reconfiguring the roles traditionally played by the state, private actors, and civil society. These cases above show urban policy as a learning process through which certain practices—progressive and not—take hold helped by the work of networks of actors that bridge local and global scales (Healey 2013; Colin McFarlane 2011). These actors actively reconfigure governance structures, enabling the transformation of existing institutional and political structures necessary to achieve their goals (Siemiatycki 2013). Such is the case of CTS-EMABRQ and ITDP, who continue expanding their sphere of influence. While they are mostly known for the successful implementation of BRT and bicycle infrastructure, these NGOs seem to be aware of the limitations of design-only solutions and are now pushing for a deeper transformation of urban planning in the country. CTS-EMBARQ, for instance, is engaged in project called Reforma Urbana, a seven goal agenda that seeks to generate political clout to convince politicians and decision makers to make deep legislative reforms that can sustain a comprehensive restructuring of urban growth patterns in the country, privileging transit oriented development, new urbanism and compact cities, and combining technologies such as progressive tax regimes with BRT as the main transportation solution. ITDP is also trying to influence politicians and legislators with their Five Percent campaign (Campaña del 5%) which seeks to make mandatory the allocation of five percent of the federal transportation budget for funding of alternative and sustainable transportation systems.

The case of Supervía and Frente Amplio illustrates another aspect of urban mobility as an ambiguous concept and promising right. On one hand, the juxtaposition of sustainable infrastructure and automobile-centered projects show the incongruent and contradictory ways in which Ebrard’s government
conceived of mobility. While the imposition of a project such as the toll road or the parking meters make evident the city government’s doublespeak of urban mobility as a democracy-enabling initiative, and urban mobility as a goal that must be achieved by any means. These cases also come to show how urban mobility can also be used to justify disregarding legal procedures and citizen participation. Ultimately, the way in which citizens have organized to oppose this projects, and the strategies they have used to make their claims–in terms of human right violations, and of urban mobility as a right– point to the current realm of transportation planning as one lacking formal channels of effective citizen participation and state accountability.

The three cases discussed above shed light on the different ways transportation planning, conceived as a matter of urban mobility, is changing the context of urban governance in Mexico City. These cases unfold in a increasingly disjointed (Caldeira and Holston 2005) and fragmented metropolis (Hiernaux Nicolas 1999; Saravi 2008) where new practices of citizenship and new forms of spatial inequality coexist along with new methods of achieving political legitimacy (Pasotti 2010). This research proposes that in this context, it is by looking at the assemblage of infrastructure policy and by focusing on the formation of new synergies and conflicts between a multiplicity of actors and agendas, that a better understanding of urban politics can be attained.
REFERENCES


